

# Overview and Scrutiny Update



November 2020 -  
February 2021

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# Overview and Scrutiny Update

## Overview and Scrutiny Management Board

### Pre-decision Scrutiny

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in its pre-decision scrutiny work has examined the following reports and made recommendations in advance of them being considered by Cabinet.

- Medium Term Financial Strategy
- Financial Monitoring Reports
- Equalities Review - going for Excellent accreditation
- Special Educational Needs Sufficiency Development Phase 3
- Year Ahead Plan - Quarterly Progress Report
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2020-21
- Housing Rent and Service Charges 2021-22
- Neighbourhood Road Safety Fund Programme
- Covid-19 - Update
- Community Energy Switching Scheme
- Domestic Abuse Support Services
- Budget and Council Tax 2021-22 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy Update
- Digital Strategy
- Amendment to the Hackney Carriage and Private Hire Licensing Policy (vehicle license plates)
- Revisions to the Housing Allocation Policy and the Strategic Tenancy Policy

### Other Scrutiny work

The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has also carried out other scrutiny work based on its Work Programme for 2020/21.

The Work Programme for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, as always covers a diverse range of topics within its remit, but also reflects the many issues surrounding the current pandemic, including its impact on the Council and the services that it delivers and also on its impact on the residents of the Borough. The Overview and Scrutiny Management's Board Work Programme for 2020/21 is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Since the last update to Council in November 2020, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board has scrutinised reports and made recommendations on:

- Safer Rotherham Partnership Annual Report
- Adult Care - Budget Update
- Customer and Digital Programme - Progress Report
- Progress Report on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the use of agency staff
- Adult Care - restructure and pathway development progress report
- Annual Compliments and Complaints Report

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## Sub and Project Group Work

In addition to the scrutiny activity carried out in Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meetings, members are also currently carrying out work in project groups on:

- **Call Centre Communications** - This group looked to review how residents accessed council services and also how the way that services were accessed by residents had changed during the pandemic. The sub-group sought assurances that services were and would continue to be accessible by all residents as more services were delivered online. The sub-group met on 8 October 2020 to receive a detailed presentation regarding figures associated with call centre demand. Following this meeting, a further meeting was held on 16 December to view further information which Members had requested regarding additional data breakdowns.

After concluding its review, the sub-group made the following recommendations:

- That the Council further promotes a digital-first route for customers to access Council services.
- That regular data updates be provided to the Leader and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on a six-monthly basis.
- That the Customer Service Standards of the Council be reaffirmed to officers, in particular, in respect of written communication with customers.

The recommendations were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 10 February 2021 and will now be referred to Cabinet for their consideration.

- **Equalities** - The Council's Year Ahead plan contains a commitment to carry out a comprehensive review of equalities and social justice in order to fully understand equality issues in Rotherham and to identify how the council can make a measurable difference in this area. A project group was established to enable Overview and Scrutiny Management Board members to feed into this review. The review's recommendations around how scrutiny members could be involved in this work and be kept up to date with its progress were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in November 2020.
- **Safer Rotherham Partnership** - The Annual Safer Rotherham Partnership report was received by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 4 November 2020 where it was resolved:

*That a meeting be arranged for the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to meet with the Chairs of the Select Commissions to review the report further in order to highlight any further areas of concern and to consider the role of scrutiny in addressing these issues.*

At the meeting the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Chairs of the Select Commissions discussed the Safer

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Rotherham Partnership and identified areas of concern on which they wished to receive further information and reassurance on including:

- CSE Intelligence/Investigations.
- The number of Hate Crimes reported and the number reaching a successful conclusion.
- The increase in the amount of knife crime being reported.
- Activity around extremist activity and how the Prevent strategy was currently working.
- Increased levels of sexual offences and delays in these being processed through the courts.

On 15 December 2020 the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Chairs of the Select Commissions met with Chief Superintendent Steve Chapman of South Yorkshire Police and the Head of Community Safety and Regulatory Services where members received a detailed presentation on the issues of concern that they had expressed. From the information received and the subsequent discussion members were assured on the activity being carried out by the Safer Rotherham Partnership. It was also agreed that further information on the Prevent Strategy be circulated to members and that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should write to the Crown Prosecution Service to request a meeting regarding delays in the Court Service as a result of the pandemic.

**Housing Development on Garage Sites** - During the pre-decision scrutiny of the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan members sought further information on the programme of development of Council owned garage sites for housing across the Borough. The Strategic Housing and Investment Manager advised that plans for their development were being progressed and that members would be consulted with on developments in their wards in order to ensure that local needs were met. It was agreed that a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be established to feed into the work being carried out to develop housing on garage sites. The sub-group has had its first meeting and will be reporting soon.

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## Health Select Commission

### Scrutiny work

The Health Select Commission has also carried out a wide-ranging programme of scrutiny work based on its Work Programme for 2020/21.

The Work Programme for the Health Select Commission reflects the priorities of improving health and health care for all residents in the Borough. The Health Select Commission Work Programme for 2020/21 is attached at **Appendix 2**.

Since the previous update in November, Members of the Health Select Commission have scrutinised reports and made recommendations on:

**Mental Health Trailblazer in Schools** - Based on a recommendation from Health Select Commission, investigation by Improving Lives Select Commission is being undertaken to address young patients' access to technology with a view to preventing their digital exclusion from accessing mental health services.

**Neurodevelopmental Pathway** - To ensure that support for children with learning disabilities be emphasised in future work and that future reports reflect this work.

**COVID-19 Vaccination Programme** - A briefing was requested and presented regarding the ongoing delivery of the delivery of the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

**Adult Care and Support Services** - A working group was set up to feed into the development of the new Medication Policy that is currently in development.

The Commission also monitored progress regarding:

- **Learning Disability Transformation**
- Updates on the work of various partner organisations including TRFT and Healthwatch.

### Sub and Project Group Work

In addition to the scrutiny activity carried out in Health Select Commission meetings, Members are also currently carrying out work in project groups on:

- **Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework** - This sub-group met on 25 January 2021, to review a briefing on the ASCOF performance measures from 2019-20 as well as the performance measures from the previous year. The sub-group developed the following recommendations that will be endorsed at the March meeting of Health Select Commission. The group recommended that future presentations include the previous years' data measures alongside current ASCOF data measures to show the change over time and that further efforts be made to let the public know about the good work that is being done and the schemes that are available for support in respect of Adult Social Care. It was also recommended that policy options be considered which would give parity to social care relative

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to health-based care. Further information was also requested to be reported back to the Commission in respect of the following:-

- a) Analysis of the cohort of people receiving reablement services, including those who live alone and those who may have lower confidence, and other such factors that could adversely affect perceptions around safety. And that data from the Community Hub be analysed where possible to explore any possible correlation between cohorts requiring reablement and perceptions of safety.
  - b) Data from other authorities which may become available, especially those who likewise have received response rates below the minimum reporting threshold with a view to analysing trends, identifying good practice and sharing learning.
  - c) Development of a timeline for planned actions.
  - d) Analysis of over-reliance on residential care with a view to giving social care more parity with the need to deliver health-based care.
  - e) Ways of bolstering support for people with disabilities to have gainful employment.
  - f) Liaison with Libraries with a view to incorporating relevant expertise into the investigation into digital access.
- **South Yorkshire Doncaster and Nottinghamshire Joint Health Scrutiny Commission (SYDNo JHOSC)** - The Chair of the Health Select Commission represents the Members at this regional Joint Scrutiny Commission which scrutinises the delivery of health care services and policy at the regional level. The upcoming meeting of the JHOSC will examine the evaluation of the Hyper Acute Stroke changes and proposals for Gluten Free prescribing.
  - **Adult Mental Health Workshop** - This one-off group met to discuss the provision of Mental health services across Rotherham as a place. Recommendations included that creative arts initiatives be explored as useful avenues for suicide prevention, that suicide prevention and self-harm prevention trainings for mental health professionals and voluntary sector personnel be prioritised for delivery in response to the mental health implications of COVID-19, that all partner organisations proactively publicise available resources to support access to mental health services, and that basic mental health first aid training for suicide awareness and prevention be included as part of the Member Development Programme.

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## Improving Lives Select Commission

### Scrutiny work

The Work Programme for the Improving Lives Select Commission, as always covers a diverse range of topics within its remit, but also reflects the many issues surrounding the current pandemic, including its impact on the Council and the services that it delivers and also on its impact on the residents of the Borough. The Improving Lives Select Commission's Work Programme for 2020/21 is attached at **Appendix 3**.

Since the last update to Council in November 2020, the Improving Lives Select Commission has scrutinised reports and made recommendations on:

- Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership - Annual Report
- Update report regarding children's social care service in the light of Covid-19 pandemic
- SEND Peer Challenge Outcomes and Progress Update
- Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board - Annual Report
- Youth Offending Team Inspection Report

### Sub and Project Group Work

In addition to the scrutiny activity carried out in Improving Lives Select Commission meetings, members are also currently carrying out work in project groups on:

- **Domestic Abuse Strategy** - Following a report submitted at the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission on the development of a refreshed Domestic Abuse Strategy it was agreed that members of the commission should receive further a briefing on the activity surrounding the refresh to enable members to feed into its development.

Members took this opportunity to learn more about the development activity being carried out on the strategy and to feed into the work surrounding the development of the revised strategy. Members raised several areas for consideration for the ongoing development work. Issues raised by members included how the strategy would be communicated with stakeholders as well as more widely across the Borough, their concerns about how domestic abuse services were funded by Government and amendments to wording that would ensure clarity on the issue of victims being supported to stay in their own home and that this choice was in all circumstances the choice of the victim.

Members of the Improving Lives Select Commission were also invited by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to contribute to the pre-decision scrutiny discussion on Domestic Abuse Support Services.

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- **The impact of school closures during the pandemic** - The commission carried out a survey with members of the Rotherham Youth Cabinet to understand the impact of school closures due to COVID19 on Rotherham pupils. Members also received a briefing in January 2021 from the Commissioning, Performance and Quality Team in Children and Young People's Services on the results of two wide ranging surveys that had been carried out with children and young people across the Borough in June and October 2020 on the impact of the pandemic. The information gathered from these surveys will be used and to identify future areas for scrutiny work for the commission.
- **CSE - Post Abuse Support** - The review will build on the benchmarking work that members of the commission carried out in 2019 where provision in Rotherham was compared to provision made by councils in other areas. Research activity has included meetings have been held with officers at other local authorities to gain an understanding of their approach to post-CSE support. Members have already discovered a wide variety of innovative approaches to providing post-CSE support and hopes to be reporting its finding soon.
- **Liquid Logic** - This one-off spotlight review will provide members with assurance that the case management system used across Children's Social Care is enabling robust case management and supporting social work teams to effectively manage caseloads as they work to support children and families.
- **Holiday Hunger and Food Poverty** - This review will look at the challenges of food poverty and holiday hunger across Rotherham, the provision that already exists to support people who are going hungry across the Borough and the role of the Council in supporting efforts to combat the problem. Members have received a written progress report on the issue and will use this to inform the direction of future work.



## Improving Places Select Commission

### Scrutiny work

The Improving Places Select Commission has also carried out a wide-ranging programme of scrutiny work based on its Work Programme for 2020/21.

The Work Programme for the Improving Places Select Commission reflects the priorities of improving and revitalising the environment in the Borough and making Rotherham a better place to live. The Improving Places Select Commission Work Programme for 2020/21 is attached at **Appendix 4**.

Since the November update, the Improving Places Select Commission has made recommendations on:

- **Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report** - The recommendations were made that ward meetings such as housing hubs be further publicised among relevant partner and community organisations with a view to improving attendance and communication, and that a Working Group be set up to review the development of a new approach to Housing Hubs.
- **Cultural Strategy Implementation** - Members recommended that objectives be measured clearly in future reports and that future consultation efforts ensure that the perspectives of hard-to-reach residents are incorporated in the consultation.
- **Clean Air Zone** - The Commission also monitored progress in respect of the initiative to improve air quality in Rotherham, with the recommendation that further scrutiny of progress be conducted in February 2022.
- **Performance Measures - Exception Reporting (2019-20)** - With a view to helping new businesses survive the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, the recommendation was made that that Members be briefed regarding the survival rate of new businesses for 2019-20 and 2020-21 as soon as the ONS data becomes available.
- **Code of Practice for Highways Inspection, Assessment, Maintenance** - The Commission also noted an update report on the exemplary work done by the Highways Team, especially in view of recent severe weather events.

## Sub and Project Group Work

In addition to the scrutiny activity carried out in Improving Places Select Commission meetings, members are also currently carrying out work in project groups on:

- **Major Incident Plan (MIP)** - This sub-group held discussions in February 2020, and formally convened in October 2020, to monitor compliance with previous recommendations. Recommendations from this sub-group included the continued review of the Major Incident Plan every two years and the inclusion of information regarding the MIP in the induction programme for newly elected Members of the Council.
- **Flooding Alleviation** - This sub-group met on 30 November 2020, to review the progress made in respect of flooding prevention and resiliency efforts, including the ongoing procurement of funding for various flood defences in the Borough. It was recommended that the progress be monitored again in November 2021.
- **Building Use** - This sub-group met in November and December 2020 to review three use of Council Operational buildings that are not designated exclusively for service delivery. After consulting with officers in Human Resources and Asset Management, the Working Group made the following recommendations:-
  - a) That the principle be agreed that the future usage of buildings be determined in accordance with the needs of services located therein.
  - b) That, prior to buildings being brought back into use by staff or the public, consultation take place with Trade Unions and staff following completion of risk assessments in respect of the building or location concerned.
  - c) That any decision to return employees to Council buildings beyond the minimal number that have been required to be present throughout the pandemic be made having regard to advice from the Corporate Health and Safety Team and Human Resources, as well as being subject to Government guidance around the safe use of Council buildings.
  - d) That Members be notified when main operational buildings are to be brought back into use, specifically the Town Hall as the civic hub of the Borough.
  - e) That, having regard to the positive implications associated with virtual meetings in respect of the Council's carbon footprint, the Leader of the Council lobby the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to legislate for the ongoing provision of virtual meetings beyond 7 May 2021.
  - f) That Asset Management and Digital Services work together to identify the necessary changes or solutions required in Riverside House and Rotherham Town Hall, as well as any changes required to equipment or software for Members and officers, to enable continued use of remote working whilst permitting physical presence in a Council building.

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- g) That the Head of Democratic Services prepare guidance and training on the procedures and operation of hybrid meetings.
- **Homes Allocation Policy** - This sub-group met on 08 January 2021, to review the 15 proposed changes to the Homes Allocation Policy. With a view to promoting fairness and sustainability in the homes allocation process, the following recommendations were made.
  - a) That sustained funding be safeguarded for staff on the temporary accommodation team who do not have sustained funding.
  - b) That revisions to the Homes Allocation Policy be undertaken to ensure clarity and readability throughout the document, especially as regards application processes and shortlisting criteria.
  - c) That notation about prolific offenders be included in the information provided to the Housing Assessment Panel.
  - d) That quality standards regarding the proper completion of housing forms be reaffirmed to officers.
  - e) That rent arrears be added to the scrutiny work programme for 2021-22.
  - f) That single occupants of larger homes owned by the Council be given the opportunity to downsize.

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## Scrutiny Minutes

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[4 November 2020](#)

[18 November 2020](#)

[2 December 2020](#)

[16 December 2020](#)

[20 January 2021](#)

### Health Select Commission

[10 December 2020](#)

[4 February 2020](#)

### Improving Lives Select Commission

[27 October 2020](#)

[15 December 2020](#)

[26 January 2021](#)

### Improving Places Select Commission

[8 December 2020](#)

[2 February 2020](#)