

**THE CABINET
22nd March, 2021**

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Allen, Beck, Hoddinott, Lelliott, Roche and Watson.

Also in attendance Councillor Steele (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

123. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

124. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) Elizabeth started off by expressing concerns regarding a Stage 3 Complaint hearing she had observed the previous week. It was agreed that Elizabeth would email the Leader regarding the matter. Elizabeth then proceeded to ask her question which was, did the Leader feel current services for children at serious risk or currently involved in CSE were now fit for purpose?

The Leader responded by stating that he did think they were fit for purpose based on the information from OFSTED in terms of the inspections they undertake regarding CSE services. OFSTED had reviewed the work done by the Council in regards to Child Protection, with specific reference to CSE, over the past year and the Council had received positive feedback. The Leader stated that the Council was never complacent about the inspection outcomes and if people had specific concerns or thought things were going wrong, the Council would look into those matters.

In her supplementary question, Elizabeth stated that there was still clear evidence that children and parents were being failed and that children were being removed due to future risk. She asked if Rotherham Social Workers were able to see into the future. Elizabeth also explained that victims of CSE were being told that they were not able to identify inappropriate relationships with regards to their own children because they could not identify them when they were children. Elizabeth explained that this was not the case as the victims identified that the relationships were inappropriate but were let down by the authorities. She asked if this meant that Social Workers were unable to act on risk and if so, were their own families being scrutinised like the survivors in Rotherham? A further question was could a timetable be provided for when victims were going to be treated as victims instead of taking the blame for their own abuse?

The Leader explained that whenever a child had to come into the Council's care, that was based on an assessment of the current circumstances, not a future prediction. All of those decisions were made by the Court after an application from the Council. The Leader stated that if there was cases where children were being inappropriately put into care, particularly in relation to families of CSE survivors, then the Council would like more details on that to be able to scrutinise the situation. The Leader confirmed that he and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services would be willing to have further conversations with Elizabeth on this matter.

125. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 15 February 2021 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

126. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that Appendix 4 to Item 10, Annual Housing Development Report 2021/22, was exempt by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. However, the Appendix was not discussed during the meeting and as such, the meeting remained open to the press and public throughout.

127. YEAR AHEAD PLAN PROGRESS REPORT (SECOND QUARTERLY UPDATE)

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the progress made with the Year Ahead Plan activities since September 2020. The Plan was the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. It aimed to support residents, communities and business through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, helping to build resilience whilst also continuing to drive ambitions plans for Rotherham.

The Leader explained that the Plan was essentially a big "to-do" list. As of 25th February, 2021, 26% of the activities within the Plan had been completed; 54% were on track; 16% were behind schedule and 4% were off track. The 4% that were off track were in that position due to Covid restrictions.

The report provided detail on the actions within the five themes which were thriving neighbourhoods; better health and wellbeing; economic recovery; new ways of working and hope and confidence in Rotherham. The two cross-cutting strands of equalities and social justice and climate impact were integral to each theme.

Cabinet Members highlighted paragraphs within the report that related to their portfolios. The Leader and Cabinet Members wished to record their thanks to the CCG, NHS and volunteers for their work on the vaccine roll-out.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendation and echoed the thanks to key workers.

Resolved:-

That the progress made with the Year Ahead activities is noted.

128. UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on how the Council was responding to the COVID-19 global pandemic. The report also sought approval for the allocation of an additional £350,218 allocation of COVID Winter Grant in accordance with the priorities agreed by Cabinet in December 2020.

The report provided details on the four-step roadmap that had been set out by Government on 22nd February, 2021. Appendix 1 to the report was an overview of the announcements through the pandemic and the Council's response to those announcements.

The Leader explained that Rotherham had been allocated an additional £350,218 as part of the COVID Winter Grant. In order to ensure that the additional grant was spent within the permitted timeframe and the benefits realised by Rotherham families, proposals had been developed to allocate the grant in accordance with the priorities previously agreed by Cabinet. It involved further provision allocation of:

- £315,000 to provide food vouchers for the Easter school holidays, and support for school uniforms, to children eligible for free school meals. The food vouchers were to the value of £15 per week for each eligible child. Support for school uniforms was £20 per eligible child.
- £35,318 to increase the funding available to support families struggling with utility costs/debts.

The Chief Executive explained that the infection rate in the Borough was falling and, at the time of the meeting was 140-150 cases per 100,000. This was, however, still very high compared to other areas in England and work was on-going to try and reduce the rate further. Targeted work was taking place and plans were in place for surge testing. The vaccine roll-out had been successful with over 90,000 residents receiving their first vaccination so far.

Work was on-going with private businesses with 5,000 businesses receiving support grants. Businesses were also contributing towards the "laptops for kids" charity scheme which aimed to provide school aged children with laptops so that they could continue learning remotely. Schools were also working hard with parents and children to ensure all needs were catered for and COVID regulations were followed. The Community Hub was continuing to support families. A new cohort of vulnerable residents had been announced by the Government which equated to an additional 6,669 residents being included on the Shielded Persons List. All residents within this cohort were being contacted via letter and/or text.

Cabinet Members expressed their support for the political decisions that they had made throughout the pandemic. They were especially proud of the food voucher scheme that had been put in place.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendations. It was noted that the Chair of OSMB and the Leader of the opposition had agreed to waive the call-in period for this item so that the much needed COVID Winter Grant funds could be allocated as soon as possible.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet agrees provisional allocations of the grant subject to final adjustments for the purposes of:
 - a) School holiday food vouchers and support for uniforms - £315,000
 - b) Struggling with utility costs / debt - £35,218
2. That final allocations be apportioned across the approved uses when the final costs of food vouchers and support for uniforms is known.
3. That Cabinet note the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, including local outbreaks.
4. That Cabinet note the arrangements in place to respond to COVID-19.

129. PUBLIC HEALTH PROPOSALS FOR RECOMMISSIONING CHILDREN'S PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING SERVICES FOR THE 0-19 POPULATION

Consideration was given to the report regarding the Public Health Children's Nursing services in the Borough. The Local Authority was responsible for the commissioning of these services as described in the Health and Social Care Act 2012. These services contributed to a wide range of Public Health outcomes in infancy, childhood and adolescence including those relating to school readiness, mental wellbeing, child obesity, sexual health and education attainment. The Service was tendered in 2016 and awarded to The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT) with the contract due to expire on 31st March, 2022.

An extended procurement timescale for the replacement contract had become necessary as the Public Health resource required to develop the specification had been unavailable as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. An extended timetable also allowed for more work on the shape and specification of a new service. This would allow the Council to undertake a collaborative commissioning exercise with NHS partners and market engagement with potential providers who had been engaged with during the COVID-19 pandemic. A report would be brought back to Cabinet for a decision on the tender once this exercise had been completed.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health confirmed that other options, such as the establishment of a Section 75 Partnership Agreement with the Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group had been considered. However, it was expected that Section 75 would be replaced before the tender was published and as such open tender of the contract was the recommended option.

Resolved:-

That Cabinet:

1. Note the ongoing impact of the pandemic on NHS providers and Public Health in the Local Authority; in its role as commissioner of 0-19 Children's Nursing Services for Rotherham residents as set out in the report.
2. Agree the timeline for publication of the tender in April 2022 (subject to a further Cabinet decision confirming tender proposals at an appropriate stage prior to this date) for a period of 5 years with annual extension options after that for up to a further 5 years, making the total potential contract length 10 years. Extensions will only be utilised if performance is strong and there is evidence of continuous improvement.

3. Vary the current contract with The Rotherham Foundation Trust to allow for a further 12 months term until 31st March, 2023, to facilitate the tendering exercise.

130. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the “Rotherham Council Responding to the Climate Emergency” Policy and Action Plan. Rotherham Council had declared a Climate Emergency on 20th October, 2019, which had led to the production of the Policy and Action Plan. At its meeting on 23rd March, 2020, Cabinet resolved to establish the targets of:

- Council’s carbon emissions to be net zero by 2030 (NZ30)
- Rotherham-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040 (NZ40)

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was a progress summary and the 2021/22 action plan. Highlights included the reduced energy consumption and CO² emissions in operational Council buildings by 54% and streetlighting by 73%. Rotherham was also one of only four local authorities in England and Wales to install over 2,500 energy efficiency measures through the Energy Company Obligation Scheme.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities advised that there were several key projects detailed in the 2021/22 Action Plan. These included implementing energy awareness training for the Council Workforce; developing a site decarbonisation plan and implementing energy efficiency upgrades; expanding the electronic vehicle charging infrastructure and developing a climate emergency communication and engagement plan. There was also scope in the 2021/22 Budget for the recruitment of a research officer and a Tree Planting Engagement Officer.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendations.

Resolved:-

1. That the progress to date towards NZ30 and NZ40 targets be noted
2. That the 2021/22 Carbon Action Plan appended be noted
3. That the report and action plan be forwarded to the next ordinary Council meeting.

131. ANNUAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2021/22

Consideration was given to the second annual housing development report under the new reporting arrangements agreed by Cabinet on 21st September, 2020. The report set out the housing growth progress made in 2020/21 and proposed projects for 2021/22. The proposed projects were aligned with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan which had been approved by Council in January 2021. Appendix 3 to the report listed the sites proposed for development and Appendix 4 provided a list of potential strategic acquisition opportunities.

The Cabinet Member for Housing described the overall summary of housing growth progress over the past 12 months as set out in paragraph 1.2 of the report. The Council were projected to achieve their year-end target of 175 homes. The Bellows scheme had been completed and yielded 58 homes and the Site Clusters scheme had also been completed resulting in 217 homes. The Rotherham Town Centre housing scheme had started and was expected to yield 171 homes. The Council were also onsite at the Chesterhill Avenue and Whinney Hill programme which was expected to result in another 237 homes.

Work was on-going on the garage site residential development which would be progressed in consultation with residents and Councillors. The Council would take a blended approach to developments, combining direct Council build, strategic acquisitions and housing association delivery for the 2021/22 programme. This would allow each site to be judged on its own merits and would subsequently lead to a significant number of new homes for the Council. The new homes were needed as there were around 6,800 applicants on the waiting list for Council housing in Rotherham.

The Leader expressed his support for the plan and celebrated the achievements of the previous year, specifically the Bellow development which had taken a long time to come to fruition.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendations. The Board also requested that relevant Ward Members be made formal consultees in the process for strategic acquisition opportunities and that consideration be given to the provision of financial support to enable vulnerable tenants to empty their garage or to clear their garage plot when a garage site was being developed for housing. Cabinet accepted the 2 additional recommendations.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet approves the release of the Council owned sites listed in Appendix 3 for residential development, subject to written confirmation of agreement by the relevant Ward Members.
2. That Cabinet approves the programme of strategic acquisition opportunities listed in Exempt Appendix 4, and that authority is delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport to purchase homes from private developers or the open market to add to the Council's stock with the agreement of the Assistant Director of Housing, Section 151 Officer and Cabinet Member for Housing. This is subject to the budget parameters as set out in the Council's approved Capital Programme. This delegation is proposed to apply until April 2022 when the next annual programme will be reported to Cabinet.
3. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Housing, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Section 151 Officer, to enter into an Affordable Homes Programme grant funding agreement with Homes England, for all eligible sites listed in Appendix 3.
4. That for the programme of strategic acquisition opportunities, that relevant Ward Members are made formal consultees in the process.
5. That consideration be given to the provision of financial support to enable vulnerable tenants to empty their garage or to clear their garage plot when a garage site was being developed for housing.

132. TRANSPORT CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the Transport Capital Programme for 2021/22 and explained the sources of funding. Specific Transport Capital funding was provided to the Council via the Sheffield City Region's Integrated Transport Block allocation which is awarded to Local Transport Authorities each year from the Department of Transport. The year 2020/21 was the final year of the latest round of funding confirmed by the Government. The funds, totalling £1,053,750, supported a programme of infrastructure works across a range of schemes. The schemes focused on Local Safety Schemes, Connectivity, Traffic Management and Smarter travel. The breakdown of the figures was at paragraph 1.3 of the report.

Interim single-year arrangements were being put in place by the Government for the financial year 2021/22. It was proposed to maintain similar levels of funding to each of the themes to enable the Council to be better prepared for future funding bids. In addition to the aforementioned

programme, 3 structural schemes had also been identified for delivery in 2021-22. The Schemes are Manvers Footbridge structural painting, West Bawtry Road embankment collapse and Steadfolds Lane embankment collapse.

Local transport schemes included in the Transport Capital Programme were funded from a range of external grant funded wards totalling £81.97m. These schemes included the Parkway Widening Scheme; Greasbrough Coach Road; Get Britain Building Fund – The Whins; Transforming Cities Fund and Active Travel Fun – Broom Road.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet notes the funding, as stated in the report, that supports the delivery of major transport projects for the Council.
2. That Cabinet approves the content and scheme priorities for the 2021-22 Local Transport Plan Programme and 3 highway structures schemes referred to in section 1.10 to 1.11 and Appendix 2.
3. That, with the exception of Local Safety Schemes, decisions on any changes needed to the programme are delegated to the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy and the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety.

133. ROTHERHAM CYCLING STRATEGY 2021

Consideration was given to the report which set out the development of a new Strategy, outlining the Council's ambition for cycling. The Strategy would deliver improvements to the Council's existing cycle network and also set out its ambitions and objectives for the investing in and expanding of Rotherham's cycling provision. The Strategy would promote the use of cycling to benefit health and well-being, the economy and the environment. Cabinet were asked to approve the draft Strategy attached to the report at Appendix 2 for public consultation.

The Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy reported that cycling was growing in popularity and the cycling infrastructure in Rotherham was not set to cope with the growing demand. More funding was become available for cycling and the Council had been fully involved with the Sheffield City Region Active Travel Implementation Plan and Transforming Cities Fund bids during round 1 with Fenton Road Cycleway being installed as a result of the scheme. Approval for future funding was pending, however, Round 2 of the Transforming Cities Fund had resulted in £166m for the city region. As a result of this funding, Rotherham had a number of projects totalling almost £30m over 3 years.

The Cycling Strategy would mean cycling would become more viable both as a leisure activity and as a mode of transport. It would also assist the Council in meeting its climate change objectives of reducing carbon emissions. The Cabinet Member encouraged residents to get involved with the consultation to ensure the Strategy reflected a wide range of views.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendations and requested that further consideration be given in the development of the Strategy as to how Council staff and Elected Members could be supported and encouraged to cycle more. The Board also requested that the Improving Places Select Commission continue to monitor the development of the Cycling Strategy and the development of cycling and related infrastructure in Rotherham. Cabinet accepted both of these requests.

Resolved:-

1. That the draft Rotherham Cycling Strategy 2021 attached at Appendix 2 be approved for public consultation.
2. That further consideration be given in the development of the Cycling Strategy to how Council staff and Elected Members can be supported and encouraged to cycle more.
3. That the Improving Places Select Commission continues to monitor the development of the Cycling Strategy and the development of cycling and related cycling infrastructure in Rotherham.

134. SCC/RMBC CLEAN AIR ZONE PROGRAMME - APPROVAL TO DELIVER ROTHERHAM'S AIR QUALITY MEASURES PROJECTS

Consideration was given to the report which sought approval for the commencement of 3 highways works projects to enable the Council to be in a position to achieve NO² compliant as soon as possible. The works were required as air quality was a major issue of growing interest and significance at a national and international level. Work had begun on this project in December 2018 with a report to Cabinet where it was agreed that a consultation on the proposed measures could begin in early 2019.

RMBC and Sheffield City Region were still undertaking work on the full business case for the Clean Air Zone prior to submission and full approval by Government. However, RMBC had assessed the Outline Business Case to identify which parts of the scheme could be delivered without Government approval. The 3 schemes identified were:

- Sheffield Parkway 50mph speed limit (to be delivered as part of Parkway Widening)
- Wortley Road Weight Restriction
- Rawmarsh Hill Bus Priority and Routing Changes.

Work was also ongoing in relation to Meadowbank Road. However current modelling suggested that it was not likely to be required to achieve air quality compliance. The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety confirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had delayed some of the work on projects.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board were fully supportive of the recommendation.

Resolved:-

That approval was given for commencement of 3 highways works projects detailed in paragraph 1.10 to enable the Council to be in a position to achieve NO² compliance as soon as possible and that these projects, fully funded by Government grant, be added to the Council's approved Capital Programme.

135. STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF ROTHERHAM'S HIGHWAYS - INDICATIVE HIGHWAY REPAIR PROGRAMME FOR 2021/2022

Consideration was given to the report which described how Rotherham's highways were strategically managed and maintained; reviewed the current strategy for the management and maintenance of the highway network and described the current performance both in terms of the condition of the highways and the delivery of maintenance services.

The Council had a statutory duty to maintain its highways through Section 41 of the Highways Act 1980. The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety confirmed that the Council had been investing in the highway network despite cuts from Central Government. It was also confirmed that the number of potholes throughout the Borough had reduced by one third. The aim was to reduce the number by a half by 2024. In 2020/21 the Council had repaired 271 roads, equating to 48.6 miles and an area of nearly 507,800 square metres.

The roads and footways included in the Indicative Highway Works Programme 2020/21 at Appendix 2 to the report were determined by a scoring matrix. The Programme showed that during 2021/22 the Council aimed to repair 154 roads with a total length of 22.5 miles covering an area of 252,000 square metres.

The Cabinet Member expressed her pride that all of the work was done by the in-house highways team and she thanked them for their hard work. The Leader confirmed that the indicative programme was a baseline and additional works would be added in the new Municipal Year.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet note the strategic approach to the management and maintenance of Rotherham's Highways.
2. That a period of consultation with Members, to collate local recommendations for inclusion in the indicative programme, is undertaken in May and June 2021.
3. That the intention for the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment to subsequently approve the indicative Highway Repair Programme for 2021/2022 be noted.
4. That it be noted, where any additional in year funding to deliver highways repairs is allocated from Central Government, the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment may utilise that funding in accordance with the strategic approach to the Management and Maintenance of Rotherham's Highways laid out in this report.

136. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly.

Consideration was also given to the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board Working Group on Building Use. The Chair of OSMB explained that the Working Party had been established in order to feed into the planned review relating to the return to and use of Council buildings following the reduction and removal of COVID-19 restrictions. The review took place over a period of time when 2 national lockdowns and local tiering arrangements were in place.

Resolved:-

1. That the recommendation of the Scrutiny Review of Building Use, as set out in paragraph 2.1 of the report, be received.
2. That the Cabinet formally respond to the recommendations from this review at tis meeting in June 2021, in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 8(2).

137. NEW APPLICATION FOR BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF FOR SAFE HAVEN ROTHERHAM

An application for the award of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Safe Haven Rotherham had been received. In accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy, Cabinet were asked to consider the application.

Safe Haven Rotherham was a charity that provided food and clothing to disadvantaged people and those in need from their premises in the centre of Rotherham. Service users can be in need by reason of youth, age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantages such as long-term unemployment and homelessness. The application for discretionary relief was in line with the qualifying criteria as set out in the policy. As the organisation became a registered charity from 20th January, 2021, they were entitled to 80% mandatory relief which was not subject to a decision of the Council. As such Cabinet were being asked to consider the application for an award of 20% discretionary rate relief for the period 20th January, 2021, to 31st March, 2021.

Resolved:-

That Cabinet approve the application for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Safe Haven Rotherham in accordance with the details set out in Section 6 to this report for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 financial years.

138. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

The next meeting of Cabinet would take place on Monday, 21st June at 10.00 a.m. The venue for the meeting was yet to be confirmed.