

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 17 March 2021

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors R. Elliott, Jarvis, Jepson, Mallinder, Napper, Taylor, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Cusworth and Keenan.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at: -
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

323. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS HELD ON 10 AND 24 FEBRUARY 2021

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, held on 10 and 24 February 2021, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

324. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

325. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

326. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the public or press.

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

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 that provided an update on how the Council was currently responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and 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 Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive attended the meeting to present the report.

The Chair advised that due to the need for Cabinet to make a decision on the report as soon as possible, that in accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution that the decision was being taken using the "General Exception" procedures as it had not been practicable for 28 days' notice of the intention to take the decision to be given.

The Chair also advised that due to the urgency of the decision, that in

accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution surrounding call-in, that he as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, in consultation with Councillor Cowles, as Leader of the Opposition had agreed that the decision should be exempt from the Council's call-in processes.

In introducing the report the Leader advised that as part of the Government's COVID roadmap, the COVID Winter Grant Scheme had been extended up to 16 April, and that this would provide an additional £59.1 million across England of extra targeted financial support for those in need during the pandemic, with Rotherham having been allocated an additional £350,218 of funding. The Leader advised that in order to ensure that the additional grant was spent within the permitted timeframe and for the benefits to be realised by Rotherham families, proposals had been developed to allocate the grant in accordance with the priorities previously agreed by Cabinet through extending and enhancing the established provision.

It was proposed that the additional funding would be used as follows:

- £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 be to the value of £15 per week for each eligible child. Support for school uniforms would be £20 per eligible child.
- £35,218 to increase the funding available to support families struggling with utility costs / debt.

The Chief Executive provided a summary of how the Council was currently responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and on the current situation Rotherham including:

- Latest infection levels in Rotherham.
- The roll-out of the vaccination programme.
- Testing sites and the introduction of workplace testing.
- The provision of laptops for children.
- Financial support for businesses.
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The report provided a full narrative of how the Council was currently responding to the pandemic.

Members asked whether the effectiveness of local contact tracing being

carried out by the public health team had been impacted by poor quality data being received from the national contact tracing service. The Chief Executive advised that there had been problems with the quality of data that had been received but assured members that activity was continuing that would address these problems.

Members asked whether the problems that had impacted on the effectiveness of local contact tracing would impact on the delivery of any surge testing for variants of Covid-19 that may be required in Rotherham in the future. The Chief Executive advised that the processes for surge testing were separate from the standard contact tracing processes, and as such would not be impacted as surge testing involved offering tests to every resident in a defined geographical area.

Members welcomed the activity that had been carried out to ensure that children across the Borough that had not had access to IT equipment or the internet had been assisted throughout the pandemic, but noted that ideally this support should have been provided directly by the Government. Members asked for information on the number of laptops that had been provided in Rotherham. The Chief Executive advised that exact information on numbers would be circulated to members of the Board. The Leader advised that around 2,000 devices had been provided, with the information on those children and young people in need being provided by schools.

The Chair thanked the Leader and the Chief Executive for attending the meeting and for answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

328. THE YEAR AHEAD PLAN – PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 that provided a report on the on progress made in delivering the key activities as set out in the Council's Year Ahead Plan in the plan. The Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence attended the meeting to present the report.

The report noted that the Year Ahead Plan was the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and that it set out key activities for the Council for the period September 2020 to May 2021. The report stated that the plan detailed in the key activities that would be undertaken in order for the Council to support residents, communities and businesses through the ongoing challenges and uncertainties of the pandemic and also direct the Council's ambitious plans for Rotherham's future.

The Leader noted that of all the activities contained in the Year Ahead Plan:

- 26% (20) of the activities outlined within the Year Ahead Plan had been completed
- 54% (41) were on track
- 16% (12) were behind schedule
- 4% (3) were off track.

The Leader advised that the three activities that had been delayed had been impacted by the restrictions surrounding the pandemic.

The Leader provided further information surrounding the activity that had been taking place to deliver on the actions detailed in the Year Ahead Plan. The Leader also noted the activity that had been carried out regarding the cross-cutting objectives contained in the plan regarding climate change and equalities.

A document that outlined progress against all of the actions contained within the Year Ahead Plan was attached as an appendix to the officer's report.

Members acknowledged the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of some of the actions contained in the plan but noted that the reasons for the activity of "£425,000 of investment in the borough's other business centres" being off track appeared to be around problems with the allocated budget being insufficient and asked for further information about this. The Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence advised that she would look into the reasons for this activity being off track and circulate the information the members of the Board.

Members welcomed the increase in the number of residents who had subscribed for ward information email updates from the Council and asked what type of information they had subscribed to receive. The Leader advised that the majority of the increase in subscribers for email updates were related to information on the pandemic. The Chair asked that further information on the number of email subscribers, broken down by ward, be circulated to members of the Board. Members noted the importance of promoting this facility as widely as possible.

Members noted the work that had been carried out by Parish Councils to support the development of their websites to enable them to share Borough Council information with residents. The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities, who was in attendance at the meeting noted the key role that Parish Councils played in information sharing and advised the additional work that had been carried out to provide them with briefings on numerous local issues that had included the pandemic and flooding.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised the recommendations be supported.

329. CLIMATE EMERGENCY ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 that provided an update on the progress made during 2020 around, and detailed a framework for action for 2021 regarding the Council's response to the Climate Change Emergency. The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence attended the meeting to present the report.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities noted that the report was the first Annual Report on the Council's response to Climate Change since the Council had declared a Climate Emergency in October 2019. The Cabinet Member advised that subsequently on 23 March 2020 Cabinet had approved two overarching goals for the Council that were for the Council's carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2030 (NZ30) and for Rotherham-wide carbon emissions to be at net zero by 2040 (NZ40). It was noted that an action plan, based around the themes of Energy, Transport, Housing, Waste, Built and natural environment, Influence and Engagement would provide a framework for action for each year would be used to manage the activities required to meet the NZ30 and NZ40 targets.

A summary of progress and updates for each of the key themes was detailed in the officer's report. The action plan for 2021/22 was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Cabinet Member noted the plans that had been included in the Council Budget for 2021/22 would contribute to the delivery of the objectives contained in the action plan including £253,000 for a managed tree planting scheme across the Borough. The Head of Policy, Performance and Intelligence noted that even though the approval of the NZ30 and NZ40 targets had coincided with the first Covid-19 lockdown and a diversion of resources towards managing the Council's response to the pandemic, significant activity and progress on the action plan had been made in many areas. The Cabinet Member noted that a new Climate Change research officer post would ensure that the Council had sound baseline data and information on which to build future activity.

Members welcomed the report and the data that showed reduction in the amount of carbon produced by the Council in recent years. Members asked how much of this reduction was long term, and how much could be

attributed to the very different way that people had been living and working during the pandemic, with less travel and increased numbers of people working at home. The Cabinet Member advised that the Council was keen to capture the impacts of the last year and work would be done to see which changes would continue to have a lasting effect on the environmental impact created by both the Council and in the wider Borough.

Members asked whether the NZ30 and NZ40 targets for net zero carbon were realistic. The Cabinet Member advised that the targets were achievable and that in setting the targets previous performance had been analysed to see what was achievable. The Cabinet advised however that it was essential to note that these targets could not be met by Council activity alone and that the Council would need to work hard to influence positive behaviour amongst the public, partners and businesses.

Members asked for further information about the tree planting scheme and how this linked into the national DEFRA scheme. The Cabinet Member noted that plans were well advanced on how the Council could link into the DEFRA scheme and advised that the possibility of a coordinated approach to the scheme with the Parish and Town councils would be looked at.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy and Performance for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

330. ANNUAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 regarding the Annual Housing Development Report – 2021/22. The Cabinet Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic Housing Development attended the meeting to present the report.

It was noted that the report was the second annual housing development report that had been produced under the new reporting arrangements that had been agreed by Cabinet on 21 September 2020. The report set out housing growth progress made in 2020/21 and proposed the housing projects for delivery in 2021/22 that were aligned with the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Housing advised that the recommended option for the housing development programme for 2021/22 would be a blended approach that combined direct Council direct build, strategic acquisitions, and housing association delivery. The

Cabinet Member noted that this proposal would enable there to be a balanced approach of capital outlay and risk that would also deliver a significant number of new homes and enable an agile and responsive approach to be taken to deliver across a wide range of development sites.

The Head of Strategic Housing Development noted that the majority the homes that would be built would be on small, or former garage sites but that there were two larger scale sites included in the proposed plan. The Head of Strategic Housing Development advised that strategic acquisitions would continue to be an important part of the housing delivery programme as they offered a more efficient and better value for money option to replacing Council homes that had been lost through Right to Buy sales, compared to homes built directly by the Council. The report detailed the proposed delegations to the officer that would be in place for one year that would enable the Council to take an agile approach to the programme of strategic acquisitions.

Members welcomed the proposed plan and delivery method for housing development for 202/22 but asked that while the proposed option of a blended approach had many advantages, it was the most complex approach, and as such did the Council have the resources to manage its delivery. The Cabinet Member agreed that it would be a challenging programme to deliver but that he was confident that the programme was deliverable. The Head of Strategic Housing Development assured members that staffing restructures in the directorate had created the extra capacity needed to successfully deliver the proposed development programme, and that this would be supported by strong processes and good relationships with local developers.

Members noted the importance of engaging with ward members where developments or strategic acquisitions were planned for their ward. The Cabinet Member noted his commitment to engaging with ward members as fully and as widely as possible.

Members noted that many garage and garage site tenants may not be able to afford to empty their garage, or to safely clear their garage off the garage plot if the site had been identified for housing development and stated that in these circumstances the Council should offer financial assistance, as required to enable tenants to clear their garage plot.

Members asked how the Council was performing in ensuring that new developments had the required amount of affordable housing included. The Head of Strategic Housing Development advised that the Planning Service had an excellent record in negotiating with developers on affordable housing and that the Planning and Housing Development teams worked closely together on this issue.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing and the Head of Strategic Housing Development for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

1. That Cabinet be advised the recommendations be supported.
2. That for the programme of strategic acquisition opportunities that relevant ward members be made formal consultees in the process.
3. That consideration be given to the provision of financial support to enable vulnerable tenants to empty their garage/clear their garage plot when a garage site is being developed for housing.

331. SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL/ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL CLEAN AIR ZONE PROGRAMME - APPROVAL TO DELIVER ROTHERHAM'S AIR QUALITY MEASURES PROJECTS

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 regarding the Sheffield City Council/Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Clean Air Zone Programme that sought approval for the delivery Rotherham's Air Quality Measures Projects. The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Interim Head of Transport Infrastructure attended the meeting to present the report.

The report stated that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs had published its National Air Quality Plan in July 2017 that had detailed how compliance with the European Union Ambient Air Quality Directive would be delivered in the UK by improving air quality in a number of Local Authority areas. The Local Authorities in areas that were found not to be compliant with the Directive had subsequently been identified through national air quality modelling, with 28 Local Authorities, including Rotherham MBC and Sheffield City Council being identified as areas requiring improvement. Consequently, Sheffield City Council and Rotherham MBC had been jointly mandated to take action on the basis that the Parkway in both Sheffield and Rotherham had been identified as being non-compliant with the required air quality standards.

The report stated that the delivery of the full business case to the Government on the actions required to deliver the required improvements to air quality was now underway. However, an initial funding allocation had been confirmed by Government at the outline business case stage that was sufficient for the Council to deliver three key projects that would support the delivery of the targets to reduce NO₂ levels. The report detailed these proposals and sought approval to proceed with the three schemes, noting that they would be delivered within the 2021-22 Capital Programme.

The three projects that were proposed to be delivered were:

- Sheffield Parkway 50mph Speed limit (to be delivered as part of

Parkway Widening)

- Wortley Road Weight Restriction TRO
- Rawmarsh Hill Bus priority and routing changes

It was noted that the value for delivery of the projects was estimated to be £2.885million, with the projects being funded by Government grants.

In introducing the report the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety noted the impact of the pandemic on the activity around the delivery of the proposed schemes, as well how the long term impact of the pandemic on how people travelled had meant that some of the proposals in the original business case could need be reassessed. The Cabinet Member advised however that the three schemes being proposed for implementation would still make a positive impact on improving air quality, even with reduced levels of traffic. The Cabinet Member noted further that there would be further consultation on the proposed changes related to the Rawmarsh Hill Bus priority and routing changes.

The Chair noted the ongoing role that the Improving Places Select Commission had played throughout the processes that had led to the recommendations being proposed and that this had enabled effective scrutiny to take place throughout the development of the proposals.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Interim Head of Transport Infrastructure for attending the meeting and presenting the report.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

332. ROTHERHAM CYCLING STRATEGY 2021

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 22 March 2021 regarding the proposed Rotherham Cycling Strategy 2021. The Assistant Director - Planning, Regeneration and Transport and the Interim Head of Transport Infrastructure attended the meeting to present the report.

The Assistant Director – Planning, Regeneration and Transport in introducing the report stated that the report set out the development of a Cycling Strategy that built on the Council's ambition to promote cycling and active travel in the Borough. The Assistant Director advised that increased levels of cycling would have a positive impact on health and well-being, the economy and the environment. The Assistant Director noted that the proposed strategy would not only deliver improvements to the Council's existing cycle network but also set out the Council's ambitions and objectives for investing in and expanding Rotherham's

cycling provision. The Interim Head of Transport Infrastructure noted that a wide-ranging consultation process would take place on the draft strategy.

The draft strategy that was proposed for consultation was attached as appendix to the officer's report.

Members noted the problem of parked vehicles obstructing cycle lanes and how this behaviour both made using them difficult and also discouraged people from using them. Members noted with concern how many cycle lanes across the Borough ended abruptly and then forced cyclists to re-join the main road with little prior warning and asked whether there were plans to make cycle lanes continuous wherever was possible. The Interim Head of Transport assured members that it was the ambition of the Council to make cycle lane infrastructure continuous and fully integrated as possible and that the activity that would be driven by the strategy would help to achieve this objective. The Interim Head of Transport noted however that this ambitious objective would take time to be fully realised.

Members asked whether work had been done to assess how well used the existing cycle lanes in the Borough were. The Interim Head of Transport noted that there was currently little monitoring activity on the usage of cycle infrastructure in the Borough but advised that it was planned to introduce technological solutions on some cycle lanes and paths in the future that would monitor usage. The Interim Head of Transport noted that the number of cycle journeys completed in Rotherham was below the national average and that the strategy would focus activity that would increase the number of cycle journeys completed. Members asked for further information on the activity that was currently carried out regarding cycling safety and promoting cycling with young people. The Interim Head of Transport advised that this activity was carried out and that plans for its continuation and development were included in the draft strategy.

Members noted that the overall objectives of the strategy were slightly vague and asked whether these would be developed as part of the planned consultation process. The Interim Head of Transport advised that the consultation would feed into the further development of the strategy and its main objective of increasing the number of people cycling.

Members noted the detailed discussions on developing cycling in Rotherham that had taken place at the Improving Places Select Commission and requested that schemes be looked at to get more people cycling such as discounts and offers on bikes and safety equipment.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director - Planning, Regeneration and Transport and the Interim Head of Transport Infrastructure for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

1. That Cabinet be advised the recommendations be supported.
2. That further consideration be given to how council staff and elected members can be supported and encouraged cycle more.
3. That the Improving Places Select Commission continues to monitor the development of the Cycling Strategy and the development of cycling uptake infrastructure in Rotherham.

333. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

334. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

335. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

336. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 2pm on Thursday 18 March 2021 as a Microsoft Teams meeting.