THE CABINET
16th August, 2021

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

Also in attendance was Councillor Clark (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board).

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

31. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Councillor Sylvester asked the following question:

The Levelling Up Fund application that has gone in regarding Thrybergh County Park is including extensive refurbishments to the car park. Can you explain the thinking in why we are looking so much into the car park and whether or not there is any potential for pedestrian and public transport access to the Park to be improved by the Levelling Up Fund?

Councillor Beck explained that there had been previous conversations by his predecessor, Councillor Hoddinott, with the Friends of Thrybergh County Park regarding access. The Levelling Up Fund was just one part of hopefully improving access, capacity and the general way in which the Council could support the use of the county parks. If the Council could work with local Councillors and the Friends of Thrybergh Country Park, to improve things, they would absolutely do that. That was a commitment from Councillor Beck and the officers involved who wanted to work to improve access and the Levelling Up Fund was just one part of that.

In his supplementary question, Councillor Sylvester explained that he was concerned about children not being able to experience country parks due to access and asked if it could be agreed in principle that if the Council can fund transport choices for those that have a choice, it also funds options for those that do not have a choice in how they travel to the Park?

Councillor Beck explained that it was hard to give a specific answer to the question but the Council was not just seeking to put out warm words on this subject; they wanted to help those who had poor pedestrian/cycling access to the Park. If, and when, the funding mechanisms were in place, the Levelling Up Fund being one of those, the Council would be looking to address those matters and work with local people to ensure that it was done in the right way.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: -

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 19th July, 2021, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

33. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that Appendix 1 to Minute 38 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.

34. PROPOSALS FOR USE OF THE CONTAIN OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT FUND (COMF) TO AID THE COUNCIL'S ON-GOING RESPONSE TO COVID-19 AND TO SUPPORT RECOVERY IN THE BOROUGH FROM THE IMPACTS OF THE PANDEMIC

Consideration was given to the report which set out proposals for the remaining unallocated spend from the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and the reasons behind the proposals. The Council had been eligible for payments from the Fund to support proactive containment and intervention measures since October 2020.

£5.177m had been spent in 2020/21 with £3.469m being carried forward for use in 2021/22. £2.241m had been committed and £1.228m remained uncommitted. An additional £2.129m of COMF funding had been allocated for 2021/22 meaning the total uncommitted Fund for 2021/22 was £3.357m. The money would help continue to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and support Public Health activities.

Commitments were already in place to support the Test and Trace team (up until 31st March 2022.) The options for expenditure of the remaining COMF allocation were broken down into three themes: support for children and young people, support for adults and all age universal support. Further details for each theme were set out in the report submitted.

It was confirmed that a seminar had been hosted by the Leader for all Members as part of the consultation process.

Resolved:-

1. That the Cabinet consider the proposals for use of the COMF and agree in principle the areas of proposed investment and allocations.

2. That Cabinet gives delegated authority to the Director of Public Health with agreement from the Section 151 Officer to commit the unallocated COMF funding, and any underspend from approved allocations, in line with grant conditions.

35. THE LOCATION OF PARKHILL LODGE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the delivery of the Parkhill Lodge Residential Care Service which had been moved to Lord Hardy Court on 22nd October, 2020, due to additional risks posed by the COVID pandemic. The facilities at Parkhill Lodge, including the design and layout, were not suitable to safely care for the number of residents who had tested positive and prevent further transmission. The staffing levels were also unsafe due to the levels of infection. The key findings of the Infection Control report in relation to Parkhill Lodge were set out in the report submitted at paragraph 2.1

The move to Lord Hardy Court meant residents had access to en-suite and modern facilities along with larger communal spaces and, overall, a larger staff compliment to support COVID-19 safe working practices. A full comparison and analysis of the different options available was outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report.

Regular meetings had been held with the residents and their views were incorporated into the report. The residents, along with their families, would be consulted on the proposal to remain at Lord Hardy Court in the medium term.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet agree to a six weeks consultation with service users and their families on the proposal to continue to provide the Parkhill residential service from Lord Hardy Court in the medium term, due to the ongoing COVID infection control risks and overall condition of the building.

2. That the outcome of the consultation and any subsequent recommendations be brought back to Cabinet in November 2021.

36. PATHWAY TO CARE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report which proposed amendments to the Pathway to Care Policy that was attached at Appendix 3. The Policy had been in place since 2012 and aimed to increase the physical capacity, through accommodation, of a carer to care for a Looked After Child or to enable a child to be permanently discharged from care. This included supporting carers with home extensions/adaptations or in the purchase of a new home where an extension was not possible or economically viable.

The revisions to the Policy would allow for the inclusion of extensions to Council housing properties and enable the Council to support a broader range of carer/proposed carers for looked after children.

The Policy would be reviewed by the leadership of Children and Young Peoples' Services every 12 months.

Resolved:-

That the amendments to the Policy are agreed, which clarifies that the Policy also applies to Council homes.

37. DOMESTIC ABUSE - NEW DUTIES FUNDING ALLOCATION

Consideration was given to the report which had been written following the passing of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021. The Act had created new statutory duties for Local Authorities in relation to Domestic Abuse and subsequent funding had been provided by the Government.

The £618k fund had to be spent within the 2021/22 financial year. The table at paragraph 2.2 of the report set out the statutory duties, current provision, gaps identified, proposal, value and provider of proposed services. These included the refurbishment of properties for Domestic Abuse victims; additional staff; and continuing wit the existing Safer Options project.

The Council already had a number of provisions in place in relation to Domestic Abuse Services such as support at Rotherham Rise and the in-house Domestic Violence Advocates.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet note the extent of the existing provision.

2. That Cabinet approve the funding proposals as outlined in section 2.2 of the report.

3. Cabinet delegates decision making for the remaining underspend (£134,000) to the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member and local Domestic Abuse Partnership Board.

38. SALE OF HRA LAND - ELDERTREE ROAD GARAGE SITE

Consideration was given to the report which explained why the Eldertree garage site should be sold to the Rotherham-based developer, CADAM Construction Ltd. CADAM had obtained planning permission to build 24 new homes on land adjacent to the garage sites but this was dependent upon the developer being able to acquire the site from the Council in order to gain access to the Eldertree Lodge site.

The Eldertree garage site had been valued and the developer and Council had agreed a position that reflected “best consideration to the Council.” By allowing the demolition of the garage sites, the Council would be facilitating the building of much needed housing in the Borough.

Eight of the garages on site were tenanted at the time the report was written meaning that the sale of the site would require existing tenants to vacate their garages. The Garage Site Development Protocol had been established and ensured tenants were provided with significant advance notice of the potential development and make provision to support any tenants who would face hardship.

Resolved:-

1. That the principle of selling the Council-owned Eldertree garage site to CADAM Construction Ltd, in order to enable residential development on an adjacent privately owned site, be approved.

2. That authority be delegated to the Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport to agree the terms for the sale, in consultation with the Council’s Section 151 Officer and subject to any conditions imposed by Planning.

3. That authority to negotiate and complete the legal documentation to give effect to the Cabinet’s decision, be delegated to the Council’s Head of Legal Services.

39. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

There were no recommendations from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to consider.

40. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Cabinet will be held on Monday, 20th September, 2021, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.