

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 02 November 2021

Report Title

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2020/21

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Progress on the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model

Recommendations

Note the progress of the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy 2018-2025

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2020/21

1. Background

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (2018-2025) in November 2018 following the introduction of the new Neighbourhood Working model in May 2017.
- 1.2 The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy aims to put communities at the heart of everything we do and to make people healthier, happier, safer and proud by:
 - Working with communities on the things that matter to them
 - Listening and working together to make a difference
 - Supporting people from different backgrounds to get on well together
- 1.3 This is the fourth annual report to be presented to the Improving Places Select Commission and covers the municipal year from May 2020 to May 2021.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy is constructed around 5 themes:
 - Engage & Develop the Workforce
 - Councillors as Community Leaders
 - Communication & Engagement
 - Asset Based Community Development
 - Integrated Place Based Working, which includes collaborative working with our Parish Councils
- 2.2 Like with all public services, 2020/21 has been a unique and challenging year. From March to Autumn 2020 the Neighbourhoods Team were heavily involved in the Council's response to the COVID19 pandemic. Initially setting up and running the Community Hub and latterly a key service in outbreak management and promoting vaccinations amongst various communities. Despite this the Neighbourhoods Team still delivered on its core business and supported ward members who were serving an extra year in office following the postponement of the May 2020 elections.
- 2.3 **Engage and Develop the Workforce –**
Ensuring the Thriving Neighbourhoods strategy and Neighbourhood working as an approach is embedded and understood across the Council and partner organisations.
 - 2.3.1 Year Ahead Plan (2020/21)
Thriving Neighbourhoods is one of the five themes and includes activity around –
 - Communities are at the heart of everything we do
 - Democratic arrangements are open, transparent and accountable
 - Vulnerable residents affected by Covid-19 are supported by the council
 - Rotherham residents, VCS organisations and businesses use their skills and assets to help others

2.3.2 Big Hearts Big Changes

Thriving Neighbourhoods is now receiving cross-council focus and support through the Big Hearts, Big Changes programme, which is an internal programme of activity supporting the delivery of the Council's priorities. Thriving Neighbourhoods is one of the five themes and includes activity and projects around –

- Place Based Working – delivering ward plans
- Asset Based Approaches – staff development
- Volunteering & Community Action

2.3.3 Engaging with ward members and local communities - providing opportunities and support for council officers and partners to work at ward / neighbourhood level, e.g. Streetscene zonal working, Transport, SY Police, etc.

2.3.4 Ward Plans – services invited to inform ward priority setting and work jointly with other stakeholders to tackle those identified

2.3.5 Delivery of Corporate Strategies and programmes – Neighbourhoods represented on various Strategic Boards / Partnerships / Steering Groups

2.3.6 Cabinet report and service plan guidance - includes requirement to consider ward priorities.

2.3.7 Employee Supported Volunteering – policy and programme which will allow council staff/teams up to 3 days paid leave to work on community projects or support community organisations.

2.4 **Councillors as Community Leaders**

2.4.1 Ward member briefings - 276 taken place across all wards in 2020/21, supported by the Neighbourhoods Team

2.4.2 Ward priorities and plans – a light touch review took place in May/June 2020 as a result of the pandemic. The Plans were published on the website. The 2021/22 ward planning process for the new 25 wards is much more thorough using data, input from service providers and community organisations along with local community intelligence - [Ward Plans – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

2.4.3 Ward budgets - £303,500 was allocated to projects, services and activities tackling ward priorities in 2020/21. A total of 239 community organisations were supported. This was significantly less than previous years as many groups were not operating during the pandemic. A summary of the allocations made in each ward is published on the website – [Ward budget summaries – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#). In addition Members allocated £203,700 Ward Housing Hub monies on projects that benefitted council tenants and were in line with their ward priorities.

2.4.4 Ward reports – the majority of ward members presented their report at Council. These provide numerous stories and case studies illustrating the

impact of neighbourhood working, the role of members as community leaders and progress on ward priorities. The reports are published online - [Ward reports – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)

2.4.5 E-casework – the new system was developed throughout 2020/21 and tested in early 2021. It went live after the May 2021 elections.

2.4.6 Member Development – was limited in 2020/21 as a result of the pandemic. The 2021/22 Member Development programme, including the induction, has been well received. The wider Development Programme is scheduled to continue throughout the 2021/22 municipal year.

2.5 Communication and Engagement

2.5.1 Ward webpages and newsfeeds – continued to provide information about the individual wards throughout the year.

2.5.2 Monthly ward e-bulletins - well established providing numerous stories and case studies illustrating the impact of neighbourhood working. Subscriptions increased from 3,337 to 6,125 in 2020/21. An increase of 2,788. The 'engagement rate' is 80%, which is significantly higher than most other bulletins of this nature.

2.5.3 Community engagement – community meetings and events were obviously impacted by the pandemic. The main engagement activity was based around the pandemic. The Neighbourhoods Team lead on engagement with communities and community groups in relation to public health messages, local outbreaks, vaccinations, etc

2.6 Asset Based Community Development

2.6.1 Support for community organisations – 150 community groups were supported directly by the Neighbourhoods Team in 2020/21. Again, this was much lower than in previous years due community groups not operating during the pandemic. 18 new organisations were established, the majority of which were in response to the pandemic.

2.6.2 Response to COVID19 Pandemic - Rotherham benefitted from having an established neighbourhood working model and excellent relationships with its VCS partners when it needed to respond to the COVID19 pandemic. Building on local assets, the Neighbourhoods Team and ward members worked alongside the VCS sector –

- Rotherham Community Hub – worked with up to 430 community organisations, Parish Councils and local businesses to provide support to those who needed it across our communities. The evaluation of the Community Hub identified the importance of asset-based approaches and how the relationship between the Council and VCS had strengthened as a result of this joint working.
- Rotherham Heroes volunteer programme – received 1,286 offers of support from individuals. This led to the recruitment of three temporary Volunteer Co-ordinators to support the programme and to develop the

Council's future approach to supporting volunteers. An Evaluation of the Rotherham Heroes programme was completed in April 2021.

- Humanitarian & Community Group – regular dialogue with VCS infrastructure / umbrella organisations to co-produce an approach to communication and engagement and local support services
- Befriending Network – range of VCS organisations that came together to provide a range of befriending services for those experiencing isolation and loneliness

2.7 Integrated Place Based Working

- 2.7.1 Ward Plans – council services and partners can shape ward priorities by providing local intelligence and information, which informs ward members decisions. The priorities within the ward plans form the basis for local projects, partnerships and networks supported by the Neighbourhoods Team and ward members. Priorities are shared across all Council services and key partners to help inform delivery, strategies and the allocation of resources - [Ward Plans – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council](#)
- 2.7.2 Community Action Partnerships (CAPs) / multi-agency meetings – 358 neighbourhood based multi-agency meetings were co-ordinated and supported by the Neighbourhoods Team in 2020/21. These shifted to online Teams meetings in Spring 2020 as a result of the pandemic. This has ultimately been well received by all partners due to ease of attendance. As a result attendance at CAPs and other multi-agency meetings have tended to be more consistent. A new Terms of Reference for the CAPs was agreed in Summer 2020.
- 2.7.3 Locality Area Managers groups (North, Central & South) – includes senior managers from Neighbourhoods, Housing, Environmental Enforcement / CPU, Early Help, Streetscene and SY Police. Responsible for strategic delivery of services across the area in response to ward plan priorities and issues raised by CAPs, etc. as well as translating borough-wide strategies into local action.
- 2.7.4 Locality Area Joint Tasking Groups (North, Central & South) - includes senior managers from Neighbourhoods, Housing, Environmental Enforcement / CPU, Early Help and SY Police. Responsible for tackling specific community safety related cases and issues that require a multi-agency response
- 2.7.5 Parish Councils – the operation of the Parish Councils was also impacted by the pandemic. Meetings were conducted online but there was less opportunity for wider network events, etc. However, during 2020 and 2021 significant progress was made on –
- The Joint Working Agreement – between RMBC and the Parish Councils. Led by the Joint Working Group and provides the framework for future collaboration.
 - Flood Resilience - consortium of Parish Councils were successful in securing £66k funding via SYCF for flood resilience activity. Whiston Parish Council secured a further £12k for flood prevention along Whiston Brook

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The report presented is for information.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The report presented is for information

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The report presented is for information

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications, other than those relating to the Neighbourhoods core budget and the Members' ward budgets

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 There are no direct legal implications

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct staffing implications other than the recruitment and deployment of Neighbourhoods staff.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The outcomes within the Thriving Neighbourhoods strategy support the delivery of the Better Health and Wellbeing Theme within the Year Ahead Plan and the outcomes relating to Vulnerable Adults and Children and Young People.

9.2 The ward plans and priorities published online illustrate that ward members are targeting activity and resources towards Vulnerable Adults and Children and Young People. During 202/21 there was an increased focus on support for Vulnerable Adults as a result of the pandemic.

9.3 The Rotherham Heroes continue to support Vulnerable People within communities.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The neighbourhood working model enables the Council to respond to the specific needs of Rotherham's increasingly diverse communities. Engagement with residents takes into account the assets and needs of different communities of interest, which differ in each neighbourhood and ward. Neighbourhood working allows the flexibility to respond to these needs.

10.2 The ward plans and ward budget allocations published online illustrate that ward members have targeted activity and resources toward communities with protected characteristics. The introduction of community impact assessments linked to the future ward plans and ward budgets will assist in measuring impact going forward

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are few implications other than the potential for ward plans to have a specific ward priority around air quality and climate change. This would lead to projects and awareness raising that would contribute to tackling this agenda.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Multi-agency working referred to in sections 2.7 of this report illustrates the importance of partners (in the public, voluntary and private sector) and Parish Councils in the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. The ward plans are informed by the experience and intelligence from these partners which encourages the establishment of shared priorities and goals.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risks relating to the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy are captured in the Assistant Chief Executive Directorate Risk Register.

13.2 Risk - failure to enhance community cohesion throughout the borough
Mitigation -

- Opportunities provided for people from different backgrounds to interact;
- Community Action Partnerships and other ward-based partnerships/networks in place (which involve local VCF sector) to ensure early identification of community issues and a local co-ordinated response
- Ward e-bulletins and social media platforms being utilised to promote cohesion including postcode targeted promotion.

13.3 Risk - Failure to take account of the new ward boundaries in service design
Mitigation -

- Council Heads of Service and key partners informed to prepare and align service delivery and ensure new or existing data is captured in line with the new wards

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods
Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Assistant Chief Executive	Jo Brown	12/10/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	12/10/21
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	N/A	N/A
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A

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This report is published on the Council's [website](#).