

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 14 February 2022

Report Title

The Year Ahead Plan (up to November 2021) – final progress report

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Simon Dennis

Acting Head of Policy, Performance & Intelligence

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

Simon.Dennis@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The Year Ahead Plan, approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020, is the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of the plan is to support residents, communities and businesses through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, helping to build resilience whilst also continuing to drive our ambitious plans for Rotherham.

The original plan set out the headline themes and corresponding outcomes and key actions for September 2020 through to June 2021. An extension to the plan, featuring the same themes and outcomes, was agreed on 21 June 2021 and has been in place until the new Council Plan comes into effect from 2022 onwards.

Formal quarterly progress reports are presented in public at Cabinet meetings, with an opportunity for Scrutiny consideration if required. The first public report was presented to Cabinet on 21 December 2020 and reports have then been presented on a quarterly basis on 22 March 2021, 21 June 2021 and 20 September 2021.

This fifth and final progress report to Cabinet reports on progress up to the end of the plan (November 2021) and provides an overview of the progress made since it commenced in September 2020.

Recommendations

1. To note the progress made with the Year Ahead activities.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – Year Ahead Plan milestone tracker

Appendix 2 – Case studies

Appendix 3 – Timelines

Appendix 4 – Equality screening

Appendix 5 – Carbon impact assessment

Background Papers

The Year Ahead Plan – report to Cabinet on 21 September 2020

The Year Ahead Plan progress report to Cabinet on 21 December 2020, 22 March 2021, 21 June 2021 and 20 September 2021.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 16 December 2020

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 16 June 2021

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 15 September 2021

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

The Year Ahead Plan (up to November 2021) – progress report

1. Background

1.1 The Year Ahead Plan is the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the plan is to support residents, communities and businesses through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, helping to build resilience whilst also continuing to drive the Council's ambitious plans for Rotherham. It is based around a number of themes with corresponding outcomes and actions.

1.2 The key aims of the Year Ahead Plan are to:

- Work with our residents and stakeholders, supporting them and adapting with them to meet current needs in light of the pandemic
- Manage the ongoing effects of the pandemic, including the local outbreak control plan
- Drive our ambitious plans for the borough wherever possible
- Develop and embed new ways of working.

1.3 The Year Ahead Plan replaced the Council Plan for 2020/21 and was approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020. The original plan ran to June 2021, and it was agreed at Cabinet on 21 June 2021 that the Plan would be extended until the new Council Plan for 2022 onwards was agreed. The themes within the extended Year Ahead Plan remain the same, with a minor change made to the outcome relating to children and young people (Better Health and Wellbeing theme). New actions through to the end of November 2021 were identified by liaising with activity leads across directorates, taking into account the roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions.

1.4 The plan is framed around 5 themes:

- Thriving Neighbourhoods
- Better Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Recovery
- New Ways of Working
- Hope and Confidence in Rotherham.

The plan also includes the following cross-cutting strands, which are integral to each theme:

- Social Justice
- Climate Impact.

1.5 In delivering against these themes, the extended Year Ahead Plan outlines a total of 75 actions. In addition, six actions from the original plan are still being reported on.

1.6 Formal quarterly progress reports are presented in public at Cabinet meetings, with an opportunity for Scrutiny consideration if required. The

first public report was presented to Cabinet on 21 December 2020 and reports have then been presented on a quarterly basis on 22 March 2021, 21 June 2021 and 20 September 2021.

2. Key issues

2.1 Progress update

2.1.1 The current report provides a final update on the extended Year Ahead Plan activities, up to November 2021, along with a summary of key achievements since the plan commenced in September 2020.

2.1.2 The Year Ahead Plan milestone tracker (Appendix 1) outlines progress against all the actions within the plan. Each action has been rated as follows:

Action fully complete
Action started and on track to be delivered by the deadline originally set
Action has some risk/delay to delivery or is behind the original schedule – deadline may not be met
Action will not be met within original timeframe, or the deadline has been missed
Action closed. The work is ongoing and will continue to be delivered by the relevant service.

2.1.3 As of 28 January 2022, 85% of the activities outlined within the extended Year Ahead Plan are either complete or on track and ongoing. The total split of activities is:

- 70% (52) have been completed for the purposes of the plan, even if activity is continuing
- 15% (11) are on track
- 9% (7) are behind schedule
- 5% (4) are off track.

There is also one action for which a progress rating is not applicable.

2.1.4 In addition to the above, six actions from the original version of the plan were ongoing at the time of the last report and are still being reported on. The status of these is as follows:

- 50% (3) have been completed for the purposes of the plan, even if activity is continuing
- 17% (1) is on track
- 17% (1) is behind schedule
- 17% (1) is off track.

2.1.5 Further details and updates are available within the thematic sections of this report and in Appendix 1.

2.2 Thriving Neighbourhoods

2.2.1 The Thriving Neighbourhoods theme is focused on building and supporting community resilience. This includes working with local people and the voluntary and community sector to deliver the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and provide effective support to those affected by COVID-19, particularly the most vulnerable residents.

2.2.2 Within this theme, the Council is focused on the following outcomes:

- Putting communities 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.

Key areas of progress to deliver on these outcomes are outlined below.

2.2.3 Neighbourhood working remains a key priority. Ward plans, setting out local priorities for action, have been agreed and are published on the Council website. Activity to deliver against these plans is now underway, utilising elected members' ward budgets. Cleaning and grounds maintenance staff continue to engage with ward councillors to identify priorities and arrange community clean-up days.

2.2.4 Officers have been aligned to the new wards that came into effect with the May 2021 local elections. Regular ward-level meetings are taking place across services to jointly plan local activity. South Yorkshire Police's ward data will be realigned in 2022.

2.2.5 Continuing to ensure democratic arrangements are effective and accountable, the member development plan is being delivered, with regular sessions taking place to support new and existing members in their roles.

2.2.6 The Council and local partner organisations remain focused on providing wide-ranging support for vulnerable residents. The Pathways to Success programme has helped 211 local residents to find work, with a further 95 completing accredited training to improve their skills. 599 participants have started on the programme against a target of 469 and it has been extended to December 2023.

2.2.7 Rotherham Federation won an award for excellence in community action in October and have secured funding to extend and expand their befriending service. As well as continuing to provide 'friendship calls' to people who are feeling lonely and isolated, they will work with partners to provide more

opportunities for people to engage in local activity, including training courses.

- 2.2.8 To further develop local partnership activity around food crisis, a food sustainability development officer has been appointed and began work in January 2022. The post holder will develop a grants fund to aid the establishment of social supermarkets, working with voluntary and community sector partners to provide holistic support to local residents.
- 2.2.9 In relation to commissioning new services to prevent financial exploitation, delivery has been impacted by challenges in the market to deliver specialist services of this nature and the pandemic, resulting in capacity issues for the preferred service provider. The Council's service requirements have now been agreed and next step is to finalise the delivery model and agree the implementation timetable. This is the only action in the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme that is rated as 'off track'. The action has been carried forward into the new Council Plan Year Ahead Delivery Plan and is now expected to be complete by March 2023.
- 2.2.10 On volunteering, the supported volunteering policy for employees was approved in September by the staffing committee, which will also be considering a 'Valuing Volunteers' policy in early 2022. The supported volunteering policy is focused on creating opportunities for the workforce to engage in social action days/events, which will have a direct positive impact on local communities throughout the borough.
- 2.2.11 As well as the activity above, achievements across the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme for the duration of the Year Ahead Plan include:
- Covid local support grant utilised to provide food vouchers and other support during school holidays, helping more than 10,000 children across the borough.
 - The Council has almost doubled its annual domestic abuse budget and is recommissioning services, setting aside five additional council homes for families leaving abusive relationships and increasing the number of refuge spaces.
 - New lighting and CCTV installed in Clifton Park as part of an initiative to make women and girls feel safer in public spaces. Reclaim the Night event returned in November 2021 to stand against violence towards women and girls.
 - Library strategy approved along with capital funding to refurbish neighbourhood libraries and, in some areas, relocate or co-locate libraries to make them more accessible and increase community involvement. Wath library was refurbished and reopened in August 2021.
 - Targeted community clean-up days implemented from February 2021
 - New £126,000 multi-use games area opened in Greasbrough in May 2021.

2.3 Better health and wellbeing

2.3.1 Within the Better Health and Wellbeing theme, the Council is taking steps to address the health impacts of the pandemic, including managing any future outbreaks, assessing the effect the pandemic is having on health inequalities and building on positive behavioural changes such as increased physical activity.

2.3.2 The Council is focussed on the following outcomes:

- Local incidents and outbreaks are managed effectively
- Health inequalities are understood and responded to
- Vulnerable adults are protected and adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions
- Children, young people and families are safe, resilient and successful
- Active travel is accessible, and local people reap the associated health and environmental benefits.

2.3.3 By the last week of December, the number of COVID-19 cases had increased significantly, following a national trend. The seven-day case rate for Rotherham was 1,081.6 per 100,000, more than double the rate of the week before (547.2 per 100,000) and the highest COVID-19 case rate recorded in Rotherham since the pandemic began.

2.3.4 By the end of December, there was also a rise in the number of people in hospital with COVID-19 and pressures were beginning to build on local health services, with some elective procedures planning on being delayed, and an impact on social care.

2.3.5 The situation is fast changing due to the spread of the Omicron variant.

2.3.6 Outbreak response processes remain strong, following the refresh of the Local Outbreak Management Plan. All cases and clusters continue to be reported and considered at an incident review meeting, where decisions are made on whether an incident management team (IMT) needs to be activated. The focus continues to be on high-risk settings, care services, schools and workplaces, with timely implementation of IMTs when required and weekly reporting of status by sector.

2.3.7 The weekly target of an 89% completion rate for contact tracing for all cases in Rotherham has been consistently met, despite rising case numbers since the implementation of Local 0 on 29 March 2021. The Local 0 approach saw the Council take responsibility for cases from the national NHS Track and Trace system. This has enabled quicker follow up of cases and the ability to also offer guidance and support around self-isolation and to offer a wider welfare check with the opportunity to make links to the support available through the Rotherham Community Hub. Faster follow up and support to adhere to self-isolation are key to breaking chains of transmission at the local level.

- 2.3.8 On 26 November 2021, the Council returned to the Local 4 model as the case rates were starting to reduce, meaning no cases were retained for contact by national teams. Local 4 provides all over 18s with a 4-hour digital window to complete the contact tracing survey online before they are referred for local contact. This digital approach enables a faster interface with the contact tracing function and supports successful engagement.
- 2.3.9 Engagement work continues to take place within high-risk places, including targeted work in town centre neighbourhoods, ethnic minority communities and amongst the working age population. This includes regular liaison with local community organisations and targeted messaging in relation to the reduction of transmission risk and in support of the vaccination programme. The Council continues to work jointly with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to continue to promote the Evergreen programme for low uptake and high-risk groups to enable them to obtain their first or second vaccine dose.
- 2.3.10 The Council continues to work with health partners to manage the flow of people with social care needs in and out of the hospital. The Improved Better Care Fund has been utilised to support effective flow. This includes initiatives such as additional transport capacity at peak times of discharge, extending the community bed base at Lord Hardy Court (RMBC) to meet winter pressures for short stay, and developing a community hub across health and social care to discuss complex patients and support both flow from acute and hospital avoidance.
- 2.3.11 The action to promote and continue to develop the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), including incorporating further needs assessments for the 0-19 and drug and alcohol services, is ongoing. Health needs assessments for the two commissioning projects are broadly complete, although both are being kept live whilst consultation and engagement work around the projects progresses.
- 2.3.12 The JSNA, along with other insight and intelligence, has formed the basis on which the Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities and action plan were refreshed at the September 2021 board meeting. This process has reaffirmed that the high-level priorities still reflect the needs of Rotherham and has seen some reshaping of the second-tier priorities, creating more focus on the biggest preventable causes of ill health, including tobacco. It has also provided greater clarity with regard to the position of work on individual behaviours and the supporting societal conditions that influence those behaviours between the *Living Well for Longer and Healthy, Safe and Resilient Communities* aims of the board.
- 2.3.13 The action to deliver the Learning Disability Transformation programme, focusing on strength-based assessments and the community options programme, remains on track, with the remaining people finalising their community-based support arrangements.
- 2.3.14 Work has been ongoing to co-produce a refreshed Carers' Strategy with partners and Rotherham carers. Following delays due to capacity issues in

partner organisations, carers have now expressed support for the objectives and priorities within the Carers' Strategy. Final amendments are being made, based on feedback from carers, including the inclusion of additional case studies. The strategy was approved at the Health and Wellbeing Board in January 2022 and will be launched by June 2022.

- 2.3.15 Work is complete to ensure that a strong network is in place to align with the Carers' Strategy. The unpaid carers' group continues to meet monthly. From April 2022, this group will become the "Borough That Cares" strategic group and will continue to govern the strategy and progress activity.
- 2.3.16 The extensive work across schools to promote the use of catch-up opportunities, including holiday activities and summer school activities mentioned above, brought positive sustained engagement, with 1,019 individual children taking part, and overwhelmingly positive feedback from providers, children and parents, as well as from the Department for Education. The Winter Holiday programme, which took place in the school Christmas holidays, was also a success, with 23 programmes delivered across the borough. 13 schools participated in total, four of which were new to the project.
- 2.3.17 Actions to support collaborative safeguarding practices in relation to Elective Home Education (EHE) have been implemented. EHE numbers have risen during the last year, primarily due to fears around Covid. A series of multi-agency summits earlier in the year helped shape a reformed and enhanced governance group to support the approach to EHE in the borough. Within this academic term, EHE has been on the agenda at Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership (RESP) to look at the response from the education system and identify how earlier support can mitigate the risk of EHE prevalence. Additional staff have been recruited and a focus on disadvantaged students developed.
- 2.3.18 Work is ongoing to enable active travel and improve air quality in Rotherham. Public consultation on the draft cycling strategy has been completed and analysed and the strategy was approved by Cabinet in January 2022. Work on phase 1 of the Sheffield Road cycleways scheme is now complete as is the action to start construction for Sheffield Parkway 50mph speed limit (to be delivered as part of the parkway widening scheme).
- 2.3.19 Further work to improve air quality is ongoing, including actions to start construction for Wortley Road Weight Restriction TRO (Traffic Regulation Order) and to start construction for Rawmarsh Hill bus priority and routing changes. Previously behind schedule, both are now on track to be delivered by March 2022.
- 2.3.20 Within the Better Health and Wellbeing theme, one action is rated as 'off track', and two 'behind schedule'. The action to ensure emergency accommodation was operational by the end of 2021 was delayed due to the impact of the Covid-19 Omicron variant on staff capacity issues and has therefore been rated as 'behind schedule'. The new completion date is

March 2022.

- 2.3.21 The action to deliver £250,000 investment works at Herringthorpe Stadium has been delayed due to the site being used as a Covid testing centre, and because of delays in the procurement process. It is now progressing and scheduled to complete by March 2022.
- 2.3.22 The final action to be rated off track is the action to commence Moor Road, Manvers cycleway construction, which is projected to start in summer 2022. This is due to initial delays in design and consultation, but the scheme is expected to be completed by March 2023, as planned.
- 2.3.23 Since the start of the plan, key achievements across this theme have included:
- The Community Testing programme was delivered and is still ongoing, initially by offering supervised lateral flow testing at Riverside House café and satellite sites, which was then replaced by the supervised offer by embracing the Community Collect model of home testing kits. This was rolled out across library, leisure and customer service points within the borough, whilst working with partners to identify other external distribution outlets to target unvaccinated people or those at higher risk of contracting Covid-19.
 - A targeted prevention and promotion funding bid to Public Health England was successful and the funding is now used to implement a novel 'Team Around the School' model to support pupils and their families with their mental health and wellbeing (see case study attached).
 - The use of the catch-up premium, any educational recovery opportunities, holidays activity and food, and summer school activity has been promoted. A range of holiday activities and summer school activities focused on year 6 to year 7 transition were in place across the 2021 summer break. Through the Rotherham Healthy Holidays programme, children who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals were offered the opportunity to attend free holiday club activities, which include receiving a high quality, nutritious meal.
 - The next home (Quarry House) as part of the delivery of the residential strategy has been opened and registered, and children transitioned to it in December 2021.
 - A 'Beat the Street' summer programme was delivered, comprising activities delivered by the Council and partners to encourage people to continue getting out and about during summer holidays. Once the summer events were completed, a schools competition continued with pupils devising a poster to reflect sustainable travel and the promotion of the environment as key messages.

2.4 Economic recovery

- 2.4.1 Within this theme, the Council is taking action to provide immediate help to local people and businesses affected by the pandemic, whilst maintaining progress on longer-term priority regeneration schemes. This combined focus on recovery and renewal is critical and the Council is working with

local partners, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SY MCA) and national government to ensure Rotherham gets the investment it needs to support and build its economy for the future.

2.4.2 The theme is focussed on the following outcomes:

- The Rotherham economy can adapt and start to recover from the pandemic
- The vision for the regeneration of the borough rejuvenates communities and businesses
- Social value is maximised to create more local jobs, apprenticeships and benefits in communities.

Progress updates are set out below.

2.4.3 Support to local businesses affected by the pandemic continues, with more recent focus being on supporting businesses in the culture sector, as well as continuing capital investment support. The Local Restrictions Support Grant and the Restart Grant schemes are now closed, having provided over 1,700 Rotherham-based businesses with financial support, for a total value of £30.3 million. Further support has been provided via South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, through the Additional Restrictions Grant, with over 2,000 businesses supported for a total grant value of £8.1 million.

These grants are in addition to the business grant support provided during the first national lockdown, meaning a total grant value of £85.5 million has been awarded to over 5,000 local businesses since the start of the pandemic. In December 2021, Government announced further financial support for businesses that will be administered by the Council. The Omicron Hospitality and Leisure Grant, providing one-off cash payments to businesses in these sectors where they are business rates payers and a top up allocation of Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) to be managed through the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority.

2.4.4 In January 2021, the Council launched a local scheme offering financial assistance to people who fell outside the national criteria for self-isolation support payments. The intention was that anyone who needed to self-isolate and who would otherwise lose income as a result, was entitled to cash support. As at the end of December 2021, payments have been made on the local scheme to 1,296 claimants at a cost of £324,000, whilst payments for the government scheme have been made to 2,812 claimants at a cost of £1,406,000.

2.4.5 To further support Rotherham's economic recovery, the Council is investing in its business centres. The procurement process is underway for construction of the new Century centre at Manvers, and work to improve the heating, cooling and lighting systems at Moorgate Crofts is nearing completion.

2.4.6 The Council is part of a South Yorkshire-wide skills project – Advance – which is now up and running with European funding. It will work with employers in sectors with the greatest employment potential, focusing on

retraining and upskilling staff and increasing productivity.

- 2.4.7 Three bids totalling almost £60 million were submitted to the Government's Levelling Up Fund in June last year. Two bids were approved, securing £39.41m to enhance the town centre regeneration programme and deliver a range of initiatives across the borough to boost the leisure industry, including the creation of a skills village at Gulliver's Valley resort. A further £2.93m was secured for local projects through the Community Renewal Fund.
- 2.4.8 On the Forge Island site, demolition and site preparation works at Riverside Precinct have been completed. Further elements, including removal of the existing bridge to Riverside Precinct, have been delayed slightly to May 2022, however this work is still on track to be completed prior to the main construction works commencing. A pre-let has now been signed with a cinema operator and hotel.
- 2.4.9 Elsewhere in the town centre: the College Street public realm scheme was completed in November and work on Frederick Street started on 27 January; the housing development at Wellgate Place has been delayed due to national labour and material shortages, but the first homes have been completed and the whole scheme is due to finish in March 2022; and the pocket park on High Street has also been delayed and is due for completion by June 2022.
- 2.4.10 With regard to social value, the Council is now a formally accredited Real Living Wage employer, recognising that all staff are paid a fair wage. Discussions continue on how local partners can develop joint approaches to ensure the money they spend has maximum benefit for local people and communities. This will build on the growing list of commitments already secured via the Council's social value policy.
- 2.4.11 Three of the actions within the Economic Recovery theme are rated as 'behind schedule' and two – the pocket park and the construction of new Century business centre – are 'off track'. Most of these are construction projects that are being affected by national market conditions.
- 2.4.12 Since the Year Ahead Plan was approved in September 2020, achievements within the Economic Recovery theme, in addition to those outlined above, include:
- £31.6 million secured from the Towns Fund to carry out ambitious regeneration projects across the town centre, Eastwood and Templeborough
 - £12.6m awarded from the Future High Streets Fund to redevelop the markets and deliver a new central library
 - Funding approved and work began on Parkway (A630) improvements
 - 44 new apartments completed at Broom Valley as part of the Rother Living development programme
 - Work has started on the upgrade of Greasbrough roundabout.

2.5 New Ways of Working

2.5.1 In response to the pandemic, the Council has rapidly adapted and embraced new ways of working and developed new digital processes. This theme has focussed on steps to support staff and improve outcomes for local residents; utilising technology, acting on feedback and continuing to evolve to meet current and future challenges.

2.5.2 Within this theme, the Council has focussed on the following outcomes:

- High quality customer services which are efficient and accessible
- Staff are supported to work flexibly, building on recent experiences of home working
- An empowered and agile workforce, feeling valued and embracing new ways of working.

2.5.3 Progress updates are set out below.

2.5.4 Work has continued to develop new and existing digital processes to make it easier for customers and communities to access the services they need.

2.5.5 New systems and processes are now in place to allow customers to choose a collection date for requesting bulky waste online, including a redesigned form to improve the customer experience. The new web form went live on 9 November 2021 and as at end December 2021 there have been 596 bookings (404 online and 192 supported access through contact centres). The new digital process has delivered a bookable slot for customers, with automated customer reminders and updates, enabled alignment with the operational zonal working model, and improved the effectiveness of back-office processes.

2.5.6 To successfully deliver a place-based digital inclusion programme, the Council needs to understand the level of digital exclusion across the borough and identify the barriers that prevent people accessing and benefiting from online services and digital activities. To help identify the barriers, a third-party organisation has been commissioned to engage with residents, communities, businesses, and organisations to:

- Identify and profile the target groups (i.e. those who are offline and/or lack basic digital skills/confidence to engage online)
- Understand the local barriers to digital inclusion
- Analyse the level of investment required (linking the level of investment to potential economic growth)
- Identify existing digital inclusion activity (and gaps)
- Identify best practice digital inclusion activities and programmes at a local and national level to inform the type of activities that best respond to the borough's needs and aspirations.

2.5.7 An independent research provider was appointed in December 2021 to

undertake this work, which began in January 2022.

- 2.5.8 The findings from the evaluation are now expected to be available by the end of August 2022 (dependant on further Covid restrictions being implemented).
- 2.5.9 Digital inclusion remains a priority in the new Council Plan and Year Ahead Delivery Plan.
- 2.5.10 The new housing management system went live on 25 November 2021, bringing five existing IT systems into one integrated system. The online customer portal and mobile working will go live at the end of March 2022, as originally planned. The new system allows staff to deal with customer queries quicker as it provides a 360-degree view of the customer in one IT system, rather than staff reviewing multiple systems for information.
- 2.5.11 There are currently long waiting times for some customers who choose to phone the Council's Corporate Contact Centre. A priority for Customer Services is to ensure that both demand on the telephone and the subsequent lengthy call waiting times are minimised.
- 2.5.12 Following extensive engagement, a new Hybrid Working Policy was agreed by Staffing Committee on 22 September to enable employees to maximise performance and productivity, whilst maintaining a good work life balance. A phased transition to the new hybrid model commenced in October 2021, whilst maintaining 2m social distancing measures and the use of masks when walking around buildings. The new working arrangements will be kept under review to ensure service delivery is maintained and to comply with government announcements in the coming months. A formal review of the transition to hybrid working will be completed between January–March 2022.
- 2.5.13 To help promote the policy, a new microsite on the staff intranet site was launched in September 2021, which includes several videos showing staff the safety procedures at Riverside House.
- 2.5.14 A key priority for workforce engagement is ensuring that employees have a voice and can share their thoughts and ideas on changes and ways of working. One way that staff can do this is through the opportunity to become a Change Champion to act as a critical friend, become an early adopter of new ideas and collectively help to find solutions to challenges. The Change Champion Network was launched on 1 October 2021.
- 2.5.15 The champions have been engaged in the intranet upgrade focus groups and in promoting the range of supportive resources that have been developed as part of the transition to hybrid working.
- 2.5.16 The role of the champions will continue to develop, and the group are currently providing feedback on the development of the Workforce Plan 2022-2025, corporate learning and disabilities offer and other activities related to the Big Hearts, Big Changes programme.

- 2.5.17 The new wellbeing programme, “Discover Wellbeing”, was launched in early 2021 following engagement with the Wellbeing Champions and feedback from ‘pulse’ staff surveys.
- 2.5.18 Monthly themes continue to be identified, informed by national guidance and feedback from the Wellbeing Champions Network.
- 2.5.19 A series of wellbeing webinars have been commissioned and are available to the workforce. The topics covered include ‘the power of positive thinking’, ‘pace life better’, ‘developing mental resilience’ and ‘dealing effectively with high-pressure situations’. In addition, Public Health have supported the wellbeing programme by delivering workshops throughout the year on topics such as ‘mental health awareness’, ‘sleep’, ‘healthy eating’ and ‘the menopause’.
- 2.5.20 The overall programme is supported by the Council’s comprehensive employee assistance programme and occupational health offer. Wellbeing also forms a key area of focus within the new Workforce Plan.
- 2.5.21 Since September 2020, 57 wellbeing sessions have been delivered and 972 staff have attended.
- 2.5.22 The Council successfully applied to be a Kickstart scheme employer in early 2021 and identified 89 potential placements that would be suitable as part of this scheme. The first cohort of young people started in May 2021 and recruitment continued throughout the year. The Council is offering a range of roles, across all directorates, under the Kickstart Scheme. By 5 January 2022, 47 people had started a Kickstart role, 2 people will start in late January and interviews are about to take place for a further role.
- 2.5.23 The level of interest in the scheme by young people has been less than anticipated by the Department for Work and Pensions, which has impacted on the overall recruitment process.
- 2.5.24 In Autumn 2021, the Government extended the Kickstart Scheme so that employers had until the end of March 2022 to start their Kickstart recruits, extending the initial deadline of December 2021. 31 vacancies, covering 14 different job roles and 3 directorates, have application closing dates during January. If all posts are filled, this will take the total to 81. Discussions with managers are ongoing to help the Council achieve the target of 89 posts.
- 2.5.25 Progress reports, including the success stories of young people securing longer term employment, as a result of the scheme are provided to the Strategic Leadership Team on a quarterly basis.
- 2.5.26 One action relating to the New Ways of Working theme is ‘off track’. This relates to the delivery of phase one of the Rotherham Digital Inclusion Strategy due to the preparatory work taking longer than anticipated. The findings from the evaluation are now expected to be available by the end of

August 2022.

2.5.27 Key achievements for this theme since the outset of the Year Ahead Plan include:

- Introduced new online systems to enhance the customer experience:
 - Housing rent balance service launched, to keep in touch with tenants
 - Online garden waste collection service launched
 - Customers now able to choose a collection date when requesting a bulky waste collection online
 - Customers able to pin a location on a map when reporting an issue, such as reporting a faulty streetlight
- Pre-bookable face to face appointments now available for customers
- New housing case management system bringing five existing IT systems into one integrated system
- Staff have returned safely to Riverside House and new Hybrid Working Policy agreed and implemented to enable employees to maximise performance and productivity, whilst maintaining a good work life balance
- Online videos have been used since the start of the pandemic to communicate key messages, share updates about community initiatives and provide customers with online self-help. From January - December 2021, 47 new videos were uploaded to the Council's YouTube channel for public access. Over the 12-month period these videos attracted 15,470 views. Three 'Town Centre Development' videos attracted the most interest with 5,062 views in total; Forge Island being the most popular at 2,900 views and eight Covid related videos attracted 2,578 views
- Since September 2020, 57 wellbeing sessions have been delivered and 972 staff have attended
- 47 Kickstart placements have been filled with 2 more set to commence.

2.6 Hope and Confidence in Rotherham

2.6.1 This aim has been focussed around fostering a sense of optimism within Rotherham by delivering on the commitments in the plan, engaging with local people and seeking feedback, keeping streets and public places clean and welcoming, and by providing a range of activities that aim to inspire joy and hope.

2.6.2 Within this theme, the Council has focussed on the following outcomes:

- People trust the Council to deliver on its commitments
- Communication messages are clear along with opportunities to engage and provide feedback
- Local people feel more connected to their community by engaging in positive activities: getting active, creative and outdoors more often
- Places are clean, welcoming and well-maintained.

Key areas of progress to deliver on these outcomes are outlined below.

- 2.6.3 'Rotherham Round-up' was launched in June 2021 to provide regular news, video and event updates from the Council and help celebrate Rotherham as a place. The distribution list is growing and is being actively promoted via various channels, such as social media and the Council website. As of December 2021, 7,869 people had subscribed to the 'council news' topic, from which this newsletter is sent. The topic subscribers have grown by just over 1,000 since the newsletter was launched in June 2021. Residents can subscribe to the email newsletter via the Council website.
- 2.6.4 Rotherham Show took place from 3-5 September with an estimated audience of 90,000 over the three-day festival. A new site layout was introduced at the event to accommodate COVID-19 measures and reduce crowd gathering. 300 people also received vaccinations at the COVID-19 vaccination bus.
- 2.6.5 The Civic Theatre reopened on 3 September 2021, following a major front-of-house renovation programme to create new performance spaces, a coffee shop encouraging daytime use, new box office facilities and a refurbished bar area.
- 2.6.6 Work has commenced on the restoration of Keppel's Column. This was initially delayed due to COVID-19 and supply issues. However, the construction contract has now been awarded, and work started on site in October 2021 with an expected completion date of April 2022.
- 2.6.7 Progress is underway to carry out a range of environmental improvements around the borough and updates are provided below.
- 2.6.8 Work has continued to deliver the £24m four-year programme focussed on the unclassified road network to improve its condition to the national average. The unclassified network makes up around 700km of the total highway network of 1,170km. The delivery of the repair programme is being managed and delivered by in-house teams.
- 2.6.9 The delivery of the highway repair programme 2021/22 is ahead of schedule, with 276 schemes delivered from the 360 projects within the repair programme as at the end of December 2021. The road repair works suggested by Councillors have been integrated into the published programme and will be delivered within the current financial year. The Council has also invested around £900,000 to repair footways, with 32 of the 37 sites repaired by the end of December 2021.
- 2.6.10 A programme is in place for the delivery of gateway cleansing. Areas identified as requiring immediate attention are being addressed and delivery is ongoing. Three zonal teams have been established and have been completing the removal of local weed growth. Programme delivery is focussed on townships initially but will broaden out once this work is completed. As at the end of November, over 130 areas have been subject

to enhanced cleansing. All cycle route scheduled work was also completed by November 2021. Resources have been allocated to continue proactive works on cycle routes throughout the winter period and reduce weed growth. This work will continue through to March 2022.

- 2.6.11 The service has had recruitment challenges in filling seasonal permanent posts, which has resulted in less work than expected being carried out during the summer months. Some staff contracts have therefore been extended from October 2021 to March 2022 to complete additional cleansing works over the autumn and winter.
- 2.6.12 The service has developed schedules of work, including Elected Member priority areas, in each zone. Work has commenced on this programme which will include:
- Litter picking
 - Hand sweeping detritus
 - Grubbing and weeding
 - Strimming and spraying
 - Pathways and ginnels
 - Additional shrub bed works.
- 2.6.13 Work has commenced to develop the approach to delivering a 'pollinator friendly' borough. The commissioning of an ecological survey to support the development of pollinator and biodiverse approaches is now complete. The survey commenced in December 2021, with the aim of having the report complete in March 2022. The report will assess the Council's current wildflower and biodiversity approach and will also help define recommendations for the future.
- 2.6.14 Twelve additional wildflower areas continue to be trialled and the Council has received numerous positive comments.
- 2.6.15 Zonal managers are also working to identify suitable grass locations for reduced maintenance and exploring appropriate maintenance regimes to promote naturalising of current maintained areas in the spring. The service is also working with the internal Council landscape design team, who currently incorporate pollinator friendly plants into their designs.
- 2.6.16 As part of the 3-year litter bin programme, all 110 solar bins are now in place, as follows:
- 48 in town
 - 50 in townships
 - 12 in selected other locations across the borough.
- 2.6.17 The larger refresh programme of all streets litter bins is taking place over a two-year period and commenced on 13 September 2021.
- 2.6.18 The programme is initially focusing on:

- Litter bins that need replacement and repair immediately
- Badly damaged but useable litter bins
- Fibre glass bins in high footfall areas across each ward
- All plastic bins.

- 2.6.19 To date 380 litter bins have been replaced as part of the programme.
- 2.6.20 New reporting and monitoring arrangements have been established in relation to successful outcomes of fly tipping and non-payment of fixed penalty notices. These are now reviewed monthly. During December 2021, 29 formal actions were taken in relation to enviro-crime offences, which included three fixed penalty notices for fly tipping. There were no convictions in December 2021, although at a case hearing, the court issued a warrant for arrest of the offender. Four cases were pending prosecution under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 for fly tipping.
- 2.6.21 The new seven-day out of hours service was launched in March 2020. The service has been promoted through use of social media and is available in the out of hours section on the Council's website. As a result, access has increased dramatically. In 2019/20 during April to August 1,204 actions were delivered by the team. In 2021/22, following launch of the new service, this increased to 2,091.
- 2.6.22 Demand for service from the public has increased since the extension of the out of hours noise service to seven days per week, as have the actions taken by officers. Between April and December 2021, the out of hours service conducted 2,478 visits.
- 2.6.23 Promotion of the new operating times of the service is ongoing, with a particular focus on those who have contacted the Council with problems.
- 2.6.24 There are no actions within the Hope and Confidence theme which are rated as 'behind schedule' or 'off track'. There are however two actions which are rated as 'on track' as they are on course to meet revised target dates, which are beyond the original target dates. These relate to the delivery of £489,000 investment in four additional zonal cleansing teams, which is ongoing; and the development of a strategic approach to support the future delivery of a 'pollinator friendly' borough.
- 2.6.25 Key achievements in relation to this theme across the lifetime of the Year Ahead Plan include:
- 7,869 Rotherham Round-up subscribers
 - The Great Big Rotherham To-Do List toolkit launched, and 44,000 copies distributed - a fun, engaging, vibrant and comical fold-out guide to remind people of the positive things they're already doing for their mental and physical wellbeing, and to inspire them to try new things
 - 90,000 attended Rotherham Show in a COVID-19 safe way over the

three-day festival

- Hope Fields COVID-19 memorial opened to the public at Thrybergh Country Park
- Civic Theatre has undergone major front-of-house renovations
- #GetRidReyt campaign against fly tipping launched
- Three zonal teams were established in October 2020 and have been completing the removal of local weed growth – over 130 areas have been subject to enhanced cleansing and all cycle route schedules are complete
- Twelve wildflower areas trialled and positive feedback received
- 110 solar bins are now in place and to date 380 litter bins have been replaced as part of the 3-year litter bin programme
- Strengthened enforcement action relating to fly tipping and non-payment of fixed penalty notices
- New seven-day out of hours service launched – in 2020/21, the service actioned 2,091 requests.

2.7 Cross-cutting strands

2.7.1 The Year Ahead Plan also includes the following cross-cutting strands, which are integral to all themes:

- A borough based on social justice where all residents have a good quality of life and are able to achieve their potential
- Carbon emissions for the Council and the borough are reduced.

2.7.2 In delivery of the social justice strand, Cabinet approved the proposal to undertake an equality review at its meeting in November 2020, setting out the goal of attaining “Excellent” accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government by the end of 2022.

2.7.3 The Equalities Annual report was presented to Cabinet in June 2021. This set out progress to date and identified issues to be addressed. These issues, alongside the baseline work undertaken, have provided the direction for project development in the next stage of the Equality Review.

2.7.4 Projects have now been developed that will be implemented over the coming months. These involve collection and use of data; engagement with communities, along with engagement in public life; embedding equalities into service planning aligned to the new Council Plan process; and engagement and support for Council staff. Between them, the projects address the Equality Framework for Local Government Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) which provide the basis for achieving excellent accreditation.

2.7.5 The Council’s equality objectives are being reviewed as part of production of a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy that will underpin the new Council Plan. Consultation on the new objectives and key actions is currently being undertaken and the new strategy is due to be presented to Cabinet in April 2022. An equalities annual report will also be presented to Cabinet in late spring/summer to review progress on equalities over the past

year and address future priorities.

- 2.7.6 The Council published its first Climate Emergency Annual Report in March 2021, including a Carbon Action Plan for 2021/22, which outlined actions to be undertaken to reduce emissions. Since then, a tree management protocol/guidance has been produced and consultation with ward members to identify sites for tree planting across the borough is underway, including the development of a shared tree planting strategy. An initial heating decarbonisation plan has also been developed for primary Council operational buildings and further inclusions are being considered. The Council has been making active use of social media to help reduce Rotherham residents' energy costs, reduce fuel poverty and reduce domestic emissions. During the pandemic, the Council made use of social media channels, which has led to 318,725 web hits relating to energy support (as at end December 2021).
- 2.7.7 One action relating to the Cross-cutting theme is 'behind schedule'. This relates to the work to develop a proactive tree planting strategy, which is now underway.

2.8 Measuring our impact

- 2.8.1 Measuring the impact against the Year Ahead Plan is crucial to ensure that the Council is focussed on the right things for Rotherham's residents. This is done through both the delivery of the milestones and activities within the Year Ahead Plan and the monitoring of the Resident Satisfaction Survey, as well as other key indicators, such as the total funding dispersed to businesses affected by Covid restrictions and the increased social value from Council spend.
- 2.8.2 As stated in paragraph 2.1.3 above, 52 of the activities outlined within the extended Year Ahead Plan have been completed and 11 remain on track, demonstrating the success of the plan. Eleven actions are delayed and seven of these will be delivered in the next two months. Two actions from the original plan are also delayed.
- 2.8.3 Through the delivery of the new Council Plan, work will continue to monitor the impacts on Rotherham residents.
- 2.8.4 The key measures and current performance are included within the table below:

Themes	Measures	Current performance
Thriving neighbourhoods	Satisfaction with local area (Resident Satisfaction Survey)	80% reported feeling 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' in June 2021 which is the average recorded level across all waves.
Better health and wellbeing	Council's response to the Coronavirus crisis (Resident Satisfaction Survey)	In June 2021, 79% said that the Council had responded very or quite well. An increase of 9% since 2020.

Economic recovery	Number of grants and total funding dispersed to businesses affected by Covid restrictions Increased social value from Council spend	Total grant value of £85.5 million awarded to over 5,000 local businesses since the start of the pandemic (including support provided via SY MCA) Social value commitments secured as part of contracts let in the one-year reporting period to end of November 2021 are £6.74 million, taking total commitments to £8.14 million. Social value outcomes delivered over the same period (the first year of reporting outcomes) are £1.53 million.
New ways of working	Satisfaction with how the Council runs things (Resident Satisfaction Survey)	52% were 'very satisfied' or 'fairly satisfied' with the way RMBC runs things in June 2021, in comparison to 54% in 2020.
Hope and confidence	Trust in the Council (Resident Satisfaction Survey)	51% said they trusted Rotherham Council 'a great deal' or 'a fair amount' in June 2021, in comparison to 56% in 2020.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The recommendations of this report are for Cabinet:

1. To note the progress made with the Year Ahead activities.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 A series of workshop sessions have previously taken place with elected members around the themes within the Year Ahead Plan.
- 4.2 Partners were also engaged as part of the development of the plan through the Rotherham Together Partnership.
- 4.3 As part of the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan, engagement with the public will be an ongoing priority.
- 4.4 Each of the action leads have been involved in providing the progress updates included within this report and these have been shared and discussed with Assistant and Strategic Directors and Cabinet Members.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 This is the fifth quarterly performance report relating to The Year Ahead Plan. Subsequent performance reports will be considered by SLT and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report, but the plan's delivery will require close financial management to ensure that financial implications are within budget and longer-term implications that may be generated by the Plan are factored into the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- 6.2 The financial impact of delivery of the Year Ahead Plan will therefore need to be monitored as part of the Council's financial management arrangements and considered alongside the ongoing financial impact of COVID and the Council's overall financial position.
- 6.3 Aside from the project specific updates detailed in the report, there are no direct procurement implications as a result of the recommendations detailed in this report. However, any identified need to procure goods, services or works in relation to achieving the Year Ahead Plan objectives should be referred to the Corporate Procurement Service. This will ensure all projects are procured in line with both the relevant internal financial and procurement procedure rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended), and that social value commitments are secured.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the plan itself; however the delivery of the plan in achieving the identified outcomes will require ongoing legal input to assess the legal implications relevant to each theme and support individual services in the delivery process.
- 7.2 In the delivery of the plan, the Council will need to continually consider its statutory and non-statutory duties to ensure that these are identified and met at all stages, in order to minimise the risk of legal challenge. Certain duties, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty and the requirements placed on the Council through the Clean Air Directive, have already been identified and clearly addressed through the identification of the cross-cutting strands in the plan.
- 7.3 The law is continually changing and even more so due to the impact of the pandemic. It is vital that all relevant legislation and any changes are fully considered at all stages in the implementation of the plan to ensure that all decisions are made in accordance with the most up to date legislation.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 The human resources aspects of the plan are set out within the New Ways of Working theme, including delivering high quality customer services which are efficient and accessible, ensuring staff are supported to work flexibly, building on recent experiences of home working, and ensuring that the Council builds on the response to the pandemic, using the learning to shape organisational development and how the Council will work in the future. A

new Workforce Plan is being developed based on this learning that will support delivery of the new Council Plan.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 Underpinning the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan is a cross-cutting strand relating to social justice. This includes considering the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups, including children and young people and vulnerable adults.
- 9.2 The Better Health and Wellbeing theme has a focus on supporting children and young people and vulnerable adults. Specific outcomes include ensuring health inequalities are understood and responded to, ensuring that vulnerable adults are protected, and adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions, and that children, young people and families are safe, resilient and successful.
- 9.3 Protecting the most vulnerable residents is also a key component of the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 COVID-19 impacts on everyone in the borough, with those who are older, with pre-existing health conditions, disabled people and BAME communities particularly at risk. In addition to the direct impacts of infection, the indirect effects of the pandemic are also likely to disproportionately impact on disadvantaged groups. An equality analysis was produced alongside the Local Outbreak Control Plan, which outlined the implications of the pandemic for protected characteristic groups in further detail.
- 10.2 In recognition of these implications, social justice has been included as a cross-cutting strand within the Year Ahead Plan. This means that consideration of issues relating to equalities and social justice has fed into the development of each theme.
- 10.3 As agreed at the November Cabinet meeting, the Council is also delivering on the equalities review, which will help build an understanding of the issues in Rotherham and identify how the Council can make a measurable difference to furthering equality. This will be framed around the four key lines of enquiry within the Equality Framework for Local Government:
- Understanding and working with your communities.
 - Leadership and organisational commitment.
 - Responsive services and customer care.
 - Diverse and engaged workforce.
- 10.4 Different leads and directorates will be responsible for equalities within their themes and ongoing analysis of data and intelligence with regards to equalities will continue to take place. Any Cabinet decisions linked to the themes within the Year Ahead Plan will include an equality screening to assess the equality impacts. An equality screening assessment is attached

to this report (Appendix 4).

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 Climate Impact is one of two cross-cutting themes within the plan and is integral to its delivery. For all themes, it is considered how actions can contribute towards the Council's carbon reduction target and improved environmental outcomes. A Carbon Impact Assessment has been produced (Appendix 5).
- 11.2 The Council published its first Climate Emergency Annual Report in March 2021. This report included both a Carbon Action Plan for 2021/22, which outlined actions to be undertaken over the subsequent year to reduce emissions, and a progress review of current actions. See paragraph 2.7.6 which provides further information.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Working with partners will be integral to the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan. Partners have therefore been engaged and consulted as part of the plan's development.
- 12.2 A complementary partnership year ahead plan was developed and agreed by Rotherham Together Partnership in September 2020. This focused on key milestones relating to the five "game changers" within the Rotherham Plan:
- Building stronger communities
 - Integrated health and social care
 - Skills and employment
 - Town centre
 - A place to be proud of
- 12.3 Building and supporting community resilience is a key part of the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme. This will include working with local councillors and residents on ward priorities and plans.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 There are significant and serious risks associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Each workstream has undertaken a risk assessment, including mitigating actions to be taken. The risks are captured in the threat and risk assessment and are reviewed regularly by workstream leads. This is fed up to the Gold and Tactical groups.
- 13.2 The risks and issues flagged in Appendix 1 have been shared with Directorate Risk Champions to ensure directorate risk registers are updated/amended where required.

14. Accountable Officers

Simon Dennis,
Acting Head of Policy, Performance & Intelligence
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
Simon.dennis@rotherham.gov.uk

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Jo Brown on behalf of Sharon Kemp	31/01/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	27/01/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	26/01/22

Report Author:

Simon Dennis,
Acting Head of Policy Performance & Improvement
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate
Simon.dennis@rotherham.gov.uk

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