

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 9 February 2022

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, A Carter, Cooksey, Elliott, Hoddinott, Pitchley, Wyatt and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence: - Apologies were received from Councillors Barley and Burnett.

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

107. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19 JANUARY 2022

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 19 January 2022 be approved as a true record.

108. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

109. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

110. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items that required the exclusion of the press or public.

111. DECEMBER 2021/22 FINANCIAL MONITORING

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 14 February 2022 that detailed the Council's financial position as at the end of December 2021 based on actual cost and income figures for the first nine months of 2021/22. It was noted that the report was the fifth of a series of financial monitoring reports for the current financial year. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services, the Assistant Director - Financial Services and the Head of Corporate Finance attended the meeting to present the report.

The report stated that as of November 2021 the Council was expecting to deliver the overall outturn within budget for the financial year 2021/22. It was noted that while the Directorates had a current forecast year end overspend of £8.2m on General Fund expenditure that this should be mitigated by the Government's provision of COVID-19 emergency support grant and Sales, Fees and Charges Income Compensation. It was noted

that the longer-term impacts of Covid-19, public health measures and the pace at which services could return to normal was unknown and that was situation was being further exacerbated by current uncertainties that had been brought about by the Omicron Covid-19 variant that had the potential to create further financial implications for the Council.

The report also provided a detailed narrative for the budget position of each directorate. The report also provided information on the delivery of previously agreed savings, the position of the Housing Revenue Account and the delivery of the Capital Programme.

Members noted the projected overspend and the delayed delivery of savings in the Children and Young People's Services directorate and asked whether in this context that the directorate's budget was realistic. The Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance advised that the budget was realistic but noted the pressures that the budget was under due to the high cost of placements for looked after children. The Cabinet Member noted that the challenges presented by high costs of placements was not unique to Rotherham as this was an issue facing local authorities across the country. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services, who was in attendance at the meeting advised that the transformation activity that was being carried out in the directorate aimed to reduce slowly and safely the number of children who required to be placed into care as the high cost of some placements was a key area of budget pressure. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services advised that activity around commissioning and working collaboratively with regional partners would aim to get better value and drive the costs of placements down. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services also advised that increased spending on Early Help Services would also help to reduce demand for more costly interventions by supporting families at early stage and reducing the number of children that required being taken into care at a later stage.

Members sought further information on the Children and Young People's Services budget and asked whether the budget was realistic given that the budget had been overspent for a number of years. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services noted the pressure that the cost of placements had been placing on the Children and Young People's Services budget for a number of years. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services assured members that that all budgets across the Council were set after having given consideration to challenging but realistic assumptions. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services advised further that with regard to the cost of placements that a single placement for a child with a number of complex needs could have a significant impact on the budget. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services assured members that whilst reducing the cost of placements was a key objective for the Council that the activity required to do so would take time. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services also noted the impact of the pandemic and the pressure that it

had placed on budgets across the Council.

Members asked whether the pandemic related pressures that had been experienced by children and families, including safeguarding issues had impacted on the Children and Young People's Services budget and on the level of overspend. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services assured members that significant work was being carried out in the directorate to look at the impact of the pandemic on children and families. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services noted the work of the Education Recovery Cell that was looking to establish the impact of children being away from school and to determine the required actions that may be needed to be implemented in order to mitigate the impact. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services also noted the work that had been carried out across the Rotherham Safeguarding Partnership in in order to keep children safe throughout the pandemic. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services advised that demand for services throughout the pandemic had fluctuated, and that whilst the number of children coming into care had not increased, that due to other factors such as court delays it had meant that children had spent longer in the care of the Council than had been the case previously that had resulted in an increase in the cost of placements overall.

Members asked for further information on the predicted outturns for the directorate budgets across the Council and how confident officers were that balanced budgets would be able to be delivered when the Covid related grants that had been received from the Government were no longer available. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services advised that due to the huge uncertainties that had been created by the pandemic that it was very difficult to assess its ongoing impact into the future on Council budgets. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services also noted that the Government had not provided support for all lost income that had been experienced by the Council and the redirection of resources within the Council had also had an impact on budgets. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services noted that as not all the funding from reserves that had been allocated to support budgets in the current year had been fully utilised then these would be available to support budgets in future years.

Members noted the pressure on Adult Care services and asked for further information on how in this context the service had been able to deliver £3million of budget savings. The Acting Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, who was in attendance at the meeting advised that during the pandemic many services that would have previously been funded by the Council had been funded by health partners. The Acting Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health also noted the impact of some services not being accessed as they normally would have been and by lower numbers of people in residential care during the pandemic on the Adult Care budget and underspend.

Members asked for further information on the factors that had enabled the Assistant Chief Executive's directorate to achieve a predicted underspend of £400,000. The Assistant Chief Executive, who was in attendance at the meeting advised that the underspend had been created by a review of the structure of the HR Service and a resulting period where several posts were vacant. The Assistant Chief Executive advised that as these posts had now been filled the underspend would not be repeated in future years.

Members asked for further information on the reasons for the projected overspends on the transport for children budget. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, who was in attendance at the meeting advised that much of the pressure on the budget was related to home to school transport and factors such as increased demand and the increased costs being faced by the transport providers. Members were assured that a working group had been established that was looking how to the pressures that were being faced could be mitigated.

Members noted the current cost pressures being faced by the Children and Young People's Services budget and asked how much of this pressure would move to adult services budgets as young people transitioned to adult services. The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services advised that joint working between the two directorates to plan these transitions would always take place at the point where a young person was moving to adult services. The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services noted that a financial assessment would also always be carried out at the point of transition between services.

Members noted the significant impact that the restrictions that had been imposed during the pandemic had had on the budget for culture, sport and tourism and asked for information on how audiences were being encouraged to return to the Civic Theatre. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment noted that after taking the opportunity provided by the enforced closure of the theatre during the pandemic to carry out maintenance and improvements, that the theatre had reopened in September 2021. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment advised further that audiences had been returning to the venue and noted that work was being carried out with partners and in the service in order to encourage more people to return to the theatre.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance, the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services, the Assistant Director - Financial Services and the Head of Corporate Finance and the other Strategic Directors for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

112. BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX 2022-23

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 14 February 2020 in respect of the Budget and Council Tax 2022/23 and Medium-Term Financial Strategy. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services, Community Safety and Finance - the Chief Executive, the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services, the Assistant Director - Financial Services and the Head of Corporate Finance attended the meeting to present the report.

The Assistant Chief Executive, the Acting Strategic Director – Adult Care, Housing and Public Health, the Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services and the Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment, were also in attendance at the meeting.

The report provided information on the Council's Budget and Council Tax for 2022/23 based on the Council's Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement for 2022/23, budget consultation and the consideration of Directorate budget proposals through the Council's formal Budget process, alongside a review of the financial planning assumptions contained within the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

In setting the proposed 2022/23 budget increases of 1.5% in the Rotherham MBC element of Council Tax and of 3% in the Adult Social Care precept were being recommended. The report also detailed the proposed revenue budget for 2022/23, an updated capital programme to 2025/26 and the updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy to 2025/26.

The report stated that the Council had continued to face considerable challenges during 2021/22 in its response to the global pandemic, and that whilst the financial impact of COVID-19 had reduced, it had still seen a change in how the Council had been able to provide services to residents. The report noted that the Council had worked at a national, regional and local level to continue to respond to the COVID-19 emergency and that it had continued to ensure that critical services had been delivered so that the most vulnerable residents had continued to be supported. The report noted that the impact of the COVID-19 emergency had continued to create significant financial pressures for the Council due to additional expenditure, lost income and further delays to the delivery of planned savings and cost reductions. The report stated that these financial pressures were being covered in the current year by financial support grants from Government and Covid-19 funding provided.

The report also noted that whilst some uncertainties remained with regard

to the ongoing impact of the pandemic that the Council would continue to manage these and that the Council's priorities for future service delivery had been set out within the Council Plan 2022- 2025 and the Year Ahead Delivery Plan.

In introducing the report, the Leader noted the unprecedented levels of uncertainty that had surrounded the budget setting process that had included issues related to the ongoing impact of austerity measures, the impact of pandemic in relation to lost income, increased costs and challenges in relation to the delivery of services. The Leader also noted that uncertainty around the long-term impacts of the pandemic on people's behaviour had created additional uncertainty around the budget setting process. The Leader also noted the challenges that had been created by the impact of inflation and the increase in National Insurance contributions in April 2022.

The Leader noted that the Council still needed to deliver £11million of the required savings that had been agreed in the 2019 budget and reaffirmed his commitment to not only safely reducing the number of children in the Council's care, but to also reducing the cost of placements for looked after children. The Leader advised however that the most significant budget challenge that the Council faced was around the increasing costs of providing Adult Care Services, noting that the proposed budget for Adult Care Services for 2022/23 was £94million. The Leader welcomed the additional funding that had been provided by the Government to support the challenges of providing Adult Care Services but noted the ongoing challenges that would remain in the delivery of Adult Care Services that remained due to the funding not increasing in future years. The Leader advised that unfortunately due to these circumstances that the Adult Social Care element of the Council Tax was being proposed to increase by 3% in 2022/23 to bridge the gap between the available funding and the budget required to deliver services.

The Leader noted that for the majority of residents in the Borough that the proposed increases in the basic element of Council Tax of 1.5% and of 3% for the Adult Social Care element would mean an increase in their bills of 90p per week. The Leader advised that the proposed Budget and Council Tax for 2022/23 ensured that the Council could maintain a sustainable financial position moving forward that would enable services to be delivered and for adequate financial reserves maintained.

The Leader advised that despite the challenges that the Council faced he was pleased to announce that the budget contained proposals for reinvesting in services that focussed on the priorities of residents that included:

- Being able to pay personal care assistants the Real Living Wage.
- Maintaining the funding that had been allocated in the 2021/22 budget for:

- the library book fund
- Planning Enforcement
- Youth work
- Environmental improvements, including tree planting and wildflowers.

The Leader also advised that eight seasonal Streetpride operative positions would now become permanent, creating extra capacity to enable a real difference to be seen in the local environments of communities across the Borough. The Leader also noted that there would be extra funding made available to deliver improvements to road safety and for delivering more services for children with additional needs. The Leader also noted with concern the increase of Child Criminal Exploitation and how extra funding for the Youth Offending Service would create a change of focus to enable children involved in criminal exploitation to be supported, rather than being treated as someone who purely needed to be guided away from criminal activity.

The Leader advised that whilst the proposed budget would not undo all of the damage created by austerity since 2010, that it would enable the Council to start investing again in some of the vital services that had been subject to budget cuts in the past.

The Leader noted and detailed the proposed Capital Programme up to 2025/26.

The Leader concluded by noting that while it was regrettable that it was being proposed that Council Tax should increase, that with the proposed continuation and expansion of the Additional Council Tax Support Scheme, extra support would be made available to help those households on the lowest incomes with their cost-of-living pressures over the next two years.

Members noted with concern the proposed £7million cut to the Children and Young People's Service budget and asked whether it could be guaranteed this reduction would not negatively impact on the welfare of children across the Borough. The Leader confirmed that the proposed reduction would not negatively impact on the welfare of children across the Borough noting that the proposed budget contained a cash increase of £3million for Children and Young People's Services. The Leader reaffirmed the commitment to deliver savings across Children and Young People's Services and the ambition to safely reduce the number of children in the Council's care that would not only deliver budget savings but would also ensure better outcomes for children and young people. Members sought assurance that the budget for therapeutic services would be protected from any potential budget cuts. The Leader stated that he could guarantee that the budget for therapeutic services would not be reduced. The Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services assured members that the savings that needed to be made in the Children and Young People's Services budget would be achieved by

providing the same services in a more cost-effective way and not by cutting service provision.

Members welcomed the proposed budget and noted their approval regarding the proposal to support the most disadvantaged and vulnerable residents across the Borough with additional support with their Council Tax. Members asked for further information on how the budget would work to support residents as they faced a cost-of-living crisis. The Leader advised that whilst it had been a difficult decision to propose an increase in Council Tax that the increase would prevent cuts to services having to be made that would disproportionately impact the poorest and most vulnerable residents. The Leader noted the financial support that was available to the poorest households provided by the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and the Additional Council Tax Support Scheme and stated that it was the right thing to do to concentrate support on those residents who were the most in need.

Members asked how the £150 Council Tax rebate that had been announced by the Government would be paid to the residents across the Borough who would not be paying any Council Tax as they would be entitled to support from the Additional Council Tax Support Scheme. The Leader advised that the Council had not yet been provided with the full details of the scheme and the exact requirements with regard to how it would be administered. The Leader noted that the Government Scheme was somewhat misleadingly named as eligibility was not related to how much Council Tax an individual actually paid, but rather that they lived in a property rated in Council Tax Bands A – D. The Leader assured members that whilst the scheme could be logistically difficult to deliver due to the vast majority of households in Rotherham being entitled to the payment, that he was confident of the Council's ability to ensure everyone who was entitled received their payment.

Members asked how residents who lived in Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO's), who did not receive a Council Tax bill would be able to receive the payment. The Leader advised that the payment would be made to whoever was the bill payer at a property, and that in the case of HMO's that this would be the landlord. The Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services advised that many questions regarding entitlement to, and the administration of the scheme had been submitted to the Government and that responses to these would be received in due course. The Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services noted that in the addition to the main scheme that there would also be a discretionary scheme to support those in financial hardship who lived in properties in Council Tax bands E and above.

Members noted their thanks to all of those who had been involved in the budget preparation processes. Members again expressed their concerns regarding the cost-of-living crisis and how the proposed increase in National Insurance contributions would reduce the incomes of households across the Borough. Members also noted with concern that the proposed

increase in National Insurance contributions would also not provide the additional financial support for adult care services that the Government had said the increase would do. Members welcomed the many investments that were being proposed to services that would make a positive impact on residents lives and communities.

Members in particular welcomed the proposal to increase the number of staff who would be available to deal with telephone enquires as members noted that it was important to residents that they could contact the Council easily when they needed to access services. The Leader noted his concern that the “social care levy” that would be collected by increased National Insurance contributions was more focussed on protecting the properties and inheritances of the wealthy and not on providing the much needed funding for adult care services.

Members expressed further concern regarding the overspends in the Children and Young People’s Services budget and asked how the overspends could be managed in a way that did not undermine the proposed, as well as future budgets. Members also noted the information that been provided regarding the pressure that the high cost of some placements for looked after children and asked why Rotherham had a higher proportion of looked after children than in neighbouring authorities. The Leader noted his agreement that the number of looked after children in Rotherham was too high. The Leader advised that other areas where local Children and Young People’s services had been high performing for a sustained period of time would have had a history of being able to provide the type of interventions that were successful at keeping children out of the care system, and as such would have fewer looked after children in their areas. The Leader assured members that the number of looked after children in Rotherham would decrease in the future as the significant improvements that had been delivered across Children and Young People’s Services over recent years would have meant that the right interventions to keep children out of the care system would have been able to be delivered. The Leader advised that the budget for Children and Young People’s Services had not been increased to cover the overspends as this would have hidden the significant activity that was being carried out to reduce costs and to reduce safely the number of children in the Council’s care. The Strategic Director – Children and Young People’s Services noted that type of interventions required to keep children out of the care system could take a considerable amount of time to be seen in the number of children entering the care system.

Members noted the assurances that had been given regarding the Children and Young People’s Services budget and how the overspends would be brought down by reducing safely the number of children in the Council’s care. Members advised that they would continue to monitor the Children and Young People’s Services budget closely to give themselves assurance that the overspends were reducing over time.

Members sought further information and assurances regarding the levels

of borrowing and debt and asked how Rotherham compared to other similar local authorities on this issue. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that information on how Rotherham compared to other similar local authorities could be circulated to members outside of the meeting. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that the Council's position with regard to borrowing and debt was sustainable and that it was also comparable to other similar metropolitan authorities. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that the Council had been able to take advantage of borrowing money at very preferential rates over the long term that had enabled the Council to utilise other short-term borrowing opportunities.

Members noted that in the proposed budget that there was no allocated budget for the provision of additional bin storage facilities at Council properties. Members asked that as there were still properties that had not had the storage facilities installed, what plans there were to provide bin storage facilities at these properties. The Leader advised whilst the planned programme of installing bin stores had ended that any residents at properties that needed the installation or adaptation of a bin store would be able to have the required work completed.

Members noted the commitments that were detailed in the proposed Capital Programme around roads and road safety and asked that given these commitments why that there appeared to be no allocated budget for the forthcoming year for the potholes fund and also why the budget for roads appeared to be reducing in future years. The Leader assured members that there was a four-year roads programme that had an allocated budget of £24million. The Leader noted that due to the different types of projects included in the programme that the amount spent each year could vary, but assured members that £24million would be invested in the Borough's roads over the full four-year period. The Head of Corporate Finance noted that the pothole fund was a government grant for which the details for 2022/23 had not yet been received. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that the allocated funding would be added to the Capital Programme as soon as confirmation from the Government on the amount of the grant had been received.

Members asked for further information on how the Council planned to ensure that there was sufficient funding to ensure the sustainable funding for the provision of services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). The Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services advised that the budget that had been allocated would enable the Council to work more closely with parents and carers so as to enable an improved and more timely approach to be taken when working with children and young people with SEND. The Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services advised that the Council's SEND Sufficiency Strategy would also enable the Council to look ahead and plan for demand for SEND services across the Borough in the future. The Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services also noted the opening of the Newman School at Dinnington that would provide support

with the social, emotional and mental health needs of children and young people as well as the close working with health partners with regard to developing the Council's SEND provision that was taking place. The Strategic Director – Children and Young People's Services advised that the additional funding that had been proposed for SEND provision would ensure excellent and sustainable SEND provision for children and young people and support for their families across the Borough.

Members noted the Council's commitment to decarbonisation and its commitment to net zero emissions for the Council by 2030, and for the Borough by 2040. Members asked what consideration had been given to rationalising the number of Council buildings to help support its decarbonisation ambitions. The Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment noted that the Council had reduced the number of its operational buildings over a number of years and advised that the proposed budget aimed to address how the carbon impact of the remaining buildings could be reduced and support the Council's Climate Change commitments. Members asked whether the Council's office space could be reduced following the introduction of the hybrid working policy and increased numbers of staff working at home. The Chief Executive advised that the Council had very few buildings that were solely office buildings for Council use and noted that Riverside House also housed office space for many partner organisations with this type of use being expected to increase in the future. The Chief Executive advised that new hybrid ways of working would ease pressure on office space at Riverside House as pre-pandemic the available space in the building had not been quite sufficient to meet the demands at that time for office space.

Members noted the proposed increase in Council Tax for 2022/23 and sought assurances that residents would not be subjected to future larger Council Tax increases should the Council's borrowing commitments and debt become unsustainable in the future. The Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services assured members that the Council's borrowing commitments were sustainable in the long term and advised that a set of robust and strict budget setting and treasury management policies were in place that ensured the Council and residents were not exposed to the risks caused by any unsustainable borrowing commitments.

Members welcomed the proposed freezing of various fees and charges in areas such as market rents and town centre car parking and noted that this showed that the Borough's residents and their needs had been listened to in the creation of the budget.

Members asked how they could be assured that the equalities implications of the budget proposals had been fully considered when the Equalities Impact Assessment attached to the budget report lacked specific information on how these had been considered. The Chief Executive advised that as the proposals detailed in the budget were developed, then further detailed consideration of equalities issues would be considered at an individual service level. The Chief Executive assured

members that the budget had been developed with detailed consideration of how the proposals would affect those residents who would be most impacted by budget. The Chief Executive advised that the budget had been designed to protect the most vulnerable by providing extra support in areas such as additional Council Tax support and assistance with school uniforms.

Members noted with approval that approximately 10,500 households across the Borough would not have to pay any Council Tax in 2022/23 because of the Additional Council Tax Support Scheme but asked what support would be available for those households who just missed out on being eligible for support. The Leader advised that the Council's Council Tax Support schemes were provided on a sliding scale that ensured support was provided to those households who required it. The Leader also noted that households could also be assisted in other ways, such as flexible payment plans and the provision of free financial advice, so that their Council Tax bills were affordable and manageable for them. The Leader advised that once further details of the funding that was being made available from the Government became available that additional discretionary support may be able to be provided for residents with their Council Tax. The Leader noted however that as some households that may be entitled to support may not claim from a discretionary scheme that it was preferable to distribute support via existing support schemes that would ensure all of those entitled to support would receive it. The Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services noted that the Additional Council Tax Support Scheme would support approximately 14,000 households with their Council Tax bills, with approximately 10,500 households paying no Council Tax at all.

Members asked for further information on how the proposed budget would support members with their ward working and community leadership roles. The Leader advised that the Council would continue to provide £10,000 a year to each ward for capital projects and that the Community Leadership Fund allocation would return to £1,000 for each member to utilise after being increased for one year during 2021/22. The Leader also noted the funding that would become available via the local element of the Community Infrastructure levy to deliver locally led improvement projects.

Members noted with concern the low level of public response to the consultation that had been carried out regarding the proposed budget and asked how the Council could improve the response rate to consultations. The Leader noted that numerous methods of engagement regarding the budget had been tried over the years but advised that engaging residents over something, that to them was quite abstract was not always easy. The Leader advised that responses to consultations on specific proposals always attracted a higher response rate as residents could see how such proposals may impact on them, and as such found these consultations easier to engage with.

The Chair thanked the Leader, the Cabinet Member - Corporate Services,

Community Safety and Finance - the Chief Executive, the Strategic Director – Finance and Customer Services, the Assistant Director - Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Finance, the Assistant Chief Executive and the Strategic Directors for attending the meeting and answering member questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

Councillor A Carter requested that his vote against supporting the recommendations be recorded.

113. YEAR AHEAD PLAN FINAL PROGRESS REPORT

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 14 February 2022 that provided information 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 Acting 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 had originally set out key activities for the Council for the period September 2020 to May 2021. It was noted that following an extension to the Plan that the plan had been put in place until the new Council Plan for 2022 onwards had been produced and approved.

The report stated that the original plan had set out headline themes and their corresponding outcomes and key actions for the period September 2020 to June 2021. It was further noted that an extension to the plan had been agreed by Cabinet on 21 June 2021 that had enabled the plan to remain in place until a new Council Plan came into effect from the start of 2022. The report noted that following regular progress reports to Cabinet, that this fifth and final progress report detailed Council activity up to the end of the plan in November 2021. The report also provided an overview of the progress made since the plan had commenced in September 2020.

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

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

The Leader also noted that in addition to the activities noted above, that

six actions from the original version of the plan had still been in progress and as such and were still being reported on. The Leader noted that the status of these were:

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

Members welcomed the report and noted with approval that 85% of the activities that had been detailed the plan had either been completed or were on track to be completed on schedule. Members noted that this achievement was particularly commendable as this had been achieved against the background and challenges of the pandemic. Members expressed their thanks to all of the staff across the Council who had contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the plan.

Members asked whether there was a key performance indicator that related to the number of plan items completed on time. The Chief Executive noted the significant achievement of 85% of activities in the plan having been already completed or being on track. The Chief Executive advised that for the new plan that there would be a target of between 80 and 90% activities being completed on time. The Chief Executive also thanked members for their comments regarding the hard work of staff across the Council on delivering on the plan's priorities.

Members asked whether a greater involvement of the Parish and Town Councils in the delivery of the tree planning strategy would have enabled the objectives of the strategy to be delivered more quickly. The Leader advised that greater partnership working with the Parish and Town Councils would be looked at by the service in the future delivery of the tree planting strategy.

Members noted the success of the clean-up days that had been delivered by the Streetpride teams across the Borough with local communities and sought assurance that these would continue. Members also noted the benefits of having more than one Streetpride worker allocated to each ward and asked whether there were any plans to make Streetpride teams ward based so that they could be more responsive to local needs as the current areas covered by teams were often quite large. The Leader advised that there were no plans currently to make Streetpride teams ward based. The Leader noted his agreement with members that the current areas covered by the Streetpride teams were too large and that advised that once the recent restructure of the service had settled in that the service's ways of working needed to be further developed to ensure that ward members could have meaningful and regular contact with their local Streetpride team.

Members noted the success that the Council had had in accessing

various funding streams to enable improvements to be made across the Borough. Members noted that even more funding could be secured locally if the Council was able to offer greater support to local voluntary and community groups in making bids for funding. The Leader noted his agreement that the Council had been very successful in securing funding and expressed his thanks to the teams who had worked so successfully to secure the additional funding that had enabled improvements to be made in communities across the Borough. The Chief Executive noted that as part of the Council's funding given to Voluntary Action Rotherham that there was a commitment from them to support voluntary and community organisations write and submit funding bids.

Members noted the success of how the Council had worked with local business to drive forward its Social Value Policy and asked how the Council planned to work with the voluntary and community sector in future in this area. The Chief Executive noted that as part of the Council's work regarding Social Value that it engaged with Voluntary Action Rotherham as well as many public sector organisations in order drive forward the Council's Social Value aspirations for the Borough.

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

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

114. WORK PROGRAMME

The Board considered its Work Programme.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme be approved.

115. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

The Chairs of the Improving Places Select Commission and the Health Select Commission provided an update of the work of their commissions.

Resolved: -

That the updates be noted.

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116. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 FEBRUARY - 30 APRIL 2022

The Board considered the Forward Plan of Key Decisions 1 February to 30 April 2022.

Resolved: - That the Forward Plan be noted.

117. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

118. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair requested that members consider moving the start time of meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to 10am from the first meeting of the Municipal Year 2022/23.

Resolved: -

That from the first meeting of the Municipal Year 2022/23 that meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board commence at 10am.

119. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: -

- 1) That the Children's Commissioner Takeover Challenge meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 5pm on Wednesday 16 March 2022 at Rotherham Town Hall.
- 2) That the next ordinary meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 11am on Wednesday 23 March 2022 at Rotherham Town Hall.