

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 20 June 2022

**Report Title**

Cabinet Response to the Outcomes from the Review Group of the Health Select Commission on the Rotherham Community Hub

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

**Report Author(s)**

Nathan Atkinson, Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

[nathan.atkinson@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:nathan.atkinson@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

To report on the response to the findings and recommendations of the Health Select Commission Review Group on the Rotherham Community Hub.

**Recommendations**

1. That Cabinet approve the response to the recommendations, as detailed in Appendix 1, and note the report.

**List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1: Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review – Rotherham Community Hub

Appendix 2: Rotherham Community Hub Final Activity Report

Appendix 3: Initial Equality Screening Assessment

Appendix 4: Carbon Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

[Cabinet Report - 16 August 2021 - Contain Outbreak Management Fund \(COMF\)](#)

**Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Health Select Commission Spotlight review 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Cabinet Response to the Outcomes from the Review Group on the Rotherham Community Hub**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 The Rotherham Community Hub was established rapidly as part of the Council's response to the Covid-19 crisis. Its purpose was to provide support to any Rotherham resident who has been affected by Covid-19 and may be self-isolating or experiencing hardship, with no other support networks available to them. The Rotherham Community Hub call for volunteers was launched on Wednesday 25 March 2020; the offer of support to people requiring help was launched on Monday 30 March along with the Riverside House foodbank.
- 1.2 Residents were able to make a request for help/support via an online form or by calling the helpline number managed by Customer Services. Assistance from the Rotherham Community Hub included help with food shopping, prescription collection, dog walking and befriending, as well as providing emergency food parcels for those in urgent need, including people shielding after being identified by government as being Clinically Extremely Vulnerable and advised to remain at home to avoid contracting Covid-19. This support was co-ordinated centrally by the Council.
- 1.3 The Rotherham Community Hub was initially established by the Assistant Chief Executive's directorate, but staff were subsequently redeployed from across the Council. This progressed during the pandemic period to a dedicated team being set up within Adult Care, Housing and Public Health. The referral process was developed for the team to take responsibility from triage to brokerage of services either through Council services, the Rotherham Heroes volunteers or via community organisations.
- 1.4 The national shielding support programme ceased on the 1 April 2021 with much of the expected Council support at local level coming from the Rotherham Community Hub. The Community Hub was originally retained by the Council until the end of June 2021 in line with the proposed date for Step 4 of the national roadmap and the easing of Covid-19 restrictions. However, infection rates continued to rise and therefore the need for self-isolation support for the general population continued. It was determined that the Community Hub would support a wider cohort than just the former shielded population, with any adult/family in the borough who required assistance arising from the pandemic impacts, but who did not meet statutory requirements for formal support able to access the service.
- 1.5 Funding for the Community Hub was met from Government grants for self-isolation and practical support for Covid-19 during 2020/1. Additional funding was agreed by Cabinet on the 16 August 2021 as part of a suite of proposals for use of the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) to aid the Council's on-going response to Covid-19 and to support recovery in the borough from the impacts of the pandemic. The overall sum of £400,000 was allocated to support operation of the Community Hub until the 31 December 2021. It was agreed by Cabinet that separate to the COMF proposals a review

of the Community Hub was to be conducted and taken through scrutiny to consider its long-term future and whether or not there is value in incorporating the model as part of the Council's wider pre-front door approach.

- 1.6 The emergence of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 in late November 2021 meant that the Council's Covid-19 Response Gold group agreed to extend the operation of the Rotherham Community Hub until the 31 March 2022. This was in line with the funding period for the COMF monies.

- 1.7 The Rotherham Community Hub service ceased to operate from the 31 March 2022 as Government published the *Covid-19 Response: Living with Covid-19* strategy on 21 February 2022 signalling an end to the expected statutory responses from the Council and the removal of specific Covid-19 central grant funding to support the operation of the service through the Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) for 2022/3.

- 1.8 The Rotherham Community Hub received 8,252 support requests during the period of operation from the 24 March 2020 until the 8 March 2022 (the Community Hub ceased to formally exist on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, but due to Community Hub officers moving to alternative roles, interventions ended slightly earlier on the 8 March to facilitate a safe closure of the service). Further detail of the summary of Rotherham Community Hub activity is provided in Appendix 2 of the report.

- 1.9 In line with the Cabinet recommendations from the 16 August 2021, the Health Select Commission Scrutiny function held a spotlight session on the 10 September 2021 focusing on the Rotherham Community Hub and the support for loneliness and isolation.

- 1.10 The three recommendations were generated by Members of the Health Select Commission which derived from discussion during the spotlight session with service leads from the Council with responsibility for the Rotherham Community Hub and colleagues from the Rotherham Federation of Communities and the Rotherham Volunteer Centre representing the Rotherham Befriending Network. This report provides an update on progress against the recommendations, together with details of timescales and accountabilities.

## **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The recommendations to Cabinet from the Scrutiny Review – Rotherham Community Hub were:
- a) *That the excellent work of Rotherham Community Hub be commended, especially in respect of the befriending service which helped relieve loneliness and isolation throughout the pandemic.*
  - b) *That Members be encouraged to add the Community Hub to their Ward priorities and e-bulletins to better support vulnerable residents and families.*
  - c) *Whereas the current Community Hub model is due to end in March 2022, should there be a further evolution of the Community Hub model,*

*that an update be brought in 12 months' time.*

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 The recommendation is that Cabinet approve the response to the recommendations, as detailed in Appendix 1, and note the report.
- 3.2 All the recommendations have been accepted and Appendix 1 sets out further detail on how the recommendations have been actioned.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 The Strategic Director Adult Care, Housing and Health has been consulted about the response to the recommendations.
- 4.2 The Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Health and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion have been consulted with regarding the report and its recommendations.

### **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The timetable and accountability for implementing the recommendations from Scrutiny are detailed in Appendix 1 (Cabinet's Response to Scrutiny Review – Rotherham Community Hub).

### **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 The Rotherham Community Hub is no longer operating. The financial information pertaining to the operation of the service is detailed at paragraph 1.5 of the report.
- 6.2 There are no direct procurement implications associated with the recommendations detailed in this report.

### **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 There are no legal implications within the report.

### **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications within this report.

### **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The implications for Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults are set out in the main body of the report, with responses to the specific Scrutiny recommendations contained within Appendix 1 and an overall summary of the Rotherham Community Hub service activity provided in Appendix 2.

### **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 The recommendations in this report do not impact directly on current service provision as the Rotherham Community Hub is no longer in operation.
- 10.2 An Initial Equality Screening Assessment is attached as Appendix 3. The screening indicates that there is no requirement for a detailed Equality Analysis to be completed as the Rotherham Community Hub ceased to deliver services to the public from the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2022.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 There are no direct implications arising from this report. A Carbon Impact Assessment is attached as Appendix 4.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 Implications for partners are set out in the main sections of the report.
- 12.2 The Council continues to work with the Rotherham Befriending Network comprised of local voluntary and community sector organisations, offering befriending support to people of all ages. The organisations within the Network share a wealth of information on what is happening within communities and who best to support them. The emergence of the Rotherham Befriending Network has been one of the positive legacies of the pandemic response. The Network continues to meet, recognising that the needs are still prevalent in the community across all ages.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

- 13.1 There is an on-going need for support for loneliness and isolation across all ages within Rotherham. The Rotherham Befriending Network continues to exist to provide a conduit for support. However, the ending of grant funding from central Government to the Council for Covid-19 response interventions such as through the COMF has removed the primary funding source to provide practical support and limited the potential reach for befriending.
- 13.2 The Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board Loneliness Action Plan is due for a refresh in September 2022. This strategy, aligned to the emergence of the Population Health Management approach from the new South Yorkshire Integrated Care System may present opportunities to identify funding for a systems approach across Rotherham. This would look to support voluntary sector organisations under the Rotherham Befriending Network umbrella to provide further practical interventions to prevent loneliness and isolation.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

Nathan Atkinson, Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	31/05/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phillip Horsfield	01/06/22

*Report Author: Nathan Atkinson, Assistant Director, Strategic Commissioning, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health  
nathan.atkinson@rotherham.gov.uk*

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