

ROTHERHAM IMPROVEMENT BOARD
Friday, 26th September, 2014

Present:-

Mr. R. Vincent, Independent Chairman
Ms. E Grant, National Children's Improvement Adviser, Local Government Association
Councillor E. Hoddinott, Deputy Leader
Councillor P. Lakin, Leader of the Council
Councillor C. Middleton, Conservative Group Representative, Rotherham
Councillor P. Reeve, Local Government Association Independent Group – UKIP
Mr. D. Skinner, Local Government Association

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Ms. C. Downs, Chief Executive, Local Government Association
Councillor S. Houghton, Local Government Association Member Peer
Councillor C. Vines, UKIP Group Leader, Rotherham

C1 INTRODUCTIONS

Rob Vincent, Chairman of Rotherham's Improvement Board, welcomed everyone to this first meeting and explained its purpose which would provide oversight, support where needed, and challenge where appropriate following the publication of the Professor Alexis Jay report into child sexual exploitation in Rotherham.

C2 CONTEXT FOR THE WORK OF THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the context of the work of the Improvement Board.

The recommendations on Professor Jay's report were focussed on CSE and Child protection matters. The Board also noted the recommendations of earlier reviews and inspections, which had been summarised by professor Jay. It was important to read the report in full, so that the balance of the findings could be appreciated.

Rotherham currently undergoing an inspection by Ofsted looking specifically at children's safeguarding .

Rotherham was also one of eight Local Authorities selected to undergo a thematic inspection of child sexual exploitation. No judgement would be made in this inspection and the findings (both from Rotherham and the other seven authorities being inspected) would be published in a composite report later this year. The Council was informed that this would not identify individual authorities, but instead look at common themes and

areas of good practice.

In addition, a Government appointed independent inspection was to take place headed up by Louise Casey CB, which the Secretary of State had indicated would review current governance arrangements and how the Council could improve the delivery of services to children and young people, taxi licensing, examine how the Council works with other providers and can improve care. It will also look at the capacity of the Council to address the issues identified by the Jay report. The Leader and Deputy Leader had already met Louise Casey who would be in Rotherham from the 30 September, 2014 and is due to report back on the 29th November, 2014.

The Board requested that copies of the Terms of Reference for these inspections be provided with detail as to how they were being managed along with a copy of Louise Casey's report, once this had been published.

Reviews commissioned into the practices of South Yorkshire Police may also have some implications for the Council. The Board needed to be aware of the terms of reference for these reviews, and of their findings in due course

The Board acknowledged that the restoration of public confidence was an important issue, especially as the focus of Rotherham had been on the Council which had already resulted in the resignation of a number of officers and Elected Members. Whilst there were some wider national attentions on child sexual exploitation any recommendations developed nationally needed to be included at this stage for the Board's consideration.

Resolved:- That the context and work of the Improvement Board be noted and that the relevant Terms of Reference for the various inspections be received.

C3 ROLE OF THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Council's Legal Adviser, Jacqueline Collins, introduced the proposed terms of reference and governance arrangements for the Improvement Board, which would provide the oversight, support and challenge to the Council's improvement and transformational journey.

The Board in considering the document submitted suggested that the description on the terms of reference be amended to now read "The Improvement Board is jointly established by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Local Government Association .." and that No. 5 as part of the Board's role include the words "and to receive regular reports on progress." at the end.

Resolved:- That the revised terms of reference and governance arrangements be approved.

C4 STYLE AND APPROACH ISSUES, INCLUDING FREQUENCY AND STYLE OF MEETINGS

The Board considered the style and approach for its meetings.

There should be periodic formal reporting to Council via Cabinet, to ensure transparency as much as possible with some consideration to a short report being submitted to Council to report on the Board's progress to enable Elected Members to ask questions about the process.

It was envisaged that the Board would meet on a monthly basis initially over the next twelve months and whilst the Board was not a formal decision-making body of the Council, it was recommended that it complied with the access to information requirements of the Local Government Act 1972 with the regard to the entitlement of the public to attend the formal meetings and have access to documents.

The suggestion of having a full day session with an opportunity in the morning to undertake activity or workshops associated with key issues for the Board's discussion followed by a formal update for the public meeting in the afternoon, was supported.

It was agreed that any media statements from the Board should be managed jointly by Rotherham's Press Office and the Local Government Association Media Team. For all future meetings a representative from the Press Office should be invited to manage the appropriate communications with the Chairman and the Local Government Association. Board members present agreed to refer any media contacts to the Rotherham Press Office.

In terms of any relevance to overview and scrutiny it was suggested that the minutes of the Improvement Board be circulated to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for information.

The style and approach to the meetings of the Board would need to take account of the other reviews commissioned by South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham's Local Safeguarding Board and early connections were important.

Resolved:- (1) That arrangements be made to facilitate full day sessions for the Improvement Board, with the public meeting in the afternoon, in accordance with the Local Government Act, 1972.

(2) That a representative of the Press and Communications Team be invited to attend all forthcoming meetings.

(3) That short reports of Improvement Board meetings be provided to Full Council.

(4) That periodic fuller progress reports be submitted for Cabinet discussion, and then taken to Full Council

(5) That minutes of the Improvement Board be included on the agendas for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for information only.

(6) That media statements be managed through the Rotherham Press Office.

C5 REQUIREMENTS TO ALLOW THE IMPROVEMENT BOARD TO BE EFFECTIVE

The Chairman of the Board urged the Council to develop its draft Improvement Plan as soon as possible.

The Improvement Plan should be constituted jointly with the Local Government Association who offered to provide some support to the Council to produce a draft Plan as soon as possible with the usual programme management requirements detailing specific timelines and outcomes.

The Leader and Deputy Leader welcomed the approach with support from the Local Government Association incorporating the recommendations from the Jay Report which the other reviews would also feed into.

It was suggested that a specific officer be appointed to oversee the programme management and delivery of the Improvement Plan. Additional expertise may also need to be called upon when required. Hard copies of the respective reviews would also be provided to Board Members.

Resolved:- That actions be taken to prepare and develop the Improvement Plan and for this to be programme managed by a specifically named officer.

(THE CHAIRMAN AUTHORISED CONSIDERATION OF A TABLED ITEM IN ORDER TO PROGRESS THE MATTERS URGENTLY)

C6 MANAGEMENT LEADERSHIP CONSIDERATION

Phil Howe, Director of Human Resources, introduced the report which asked the Improvement Board to affirm the approach proposed by the Council to secure new management leadership capacity in the Council following the announced departures of the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services.

The two options to be considered to source interim cover arrangements were outlined in detail and the involvement of the Local Government Association in this process was welcomed given the urgency for filling

positions.

The Board considered in detail the proposed processes to cover the temporary situation until more formal replacement arrangements could be confirmed. The appointment process going forward was also outlined in more detail.

The Board fully supported Option 1 going forward, but also endorsed the arrangements for Option 2 to be initiated should it prove impossible for Option 1 to be implemented.

Resolved:- That Option 1 be approved going forward involving support from the Local Government Association, but authorisation be given to officers to move to Option 2, should Option 1 not be feasible.

C7 EXPECTED TIMELINE

The Improvement Board had considered the timeline for involvement as part of earlier discussions, but considered these typically were in place for up to twelve months dependent upon progress towards satisfactory implementation of the proposed Improvement Plan.

Resolved:- That an early draft of the Improvement Plan be submitted for consideration and for this to inform the likely duration of the Improvement Board.

C8 DATE, TIME AND ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

The Improvement Board anticipated meeting on a monthly basis and asked that programme of meeting dates be circulated for the next six months for consideration by all Members.

Resolved:- That dates and times for future meetings be circulated as soon as possible.