

**THE CABINET
26th November, 2014**

Present:- Councillor Lakin (in the Chair); Councillors Beaumont, Beck, Doyle, Godfrey, Hoddinott and Hussain.

Also in attendance were:-

Councillor Steele, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

Councillors Reeder and Turner (UKIP Opposition Party).

C93 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) A member of the public asked now the Sites and Policies Consultation had just closed what processes would be put in place to ensure all the representations sent in on paper, via the website or by email would be considered equally, fully and fairly and how this would be demonstrated in due course?

The Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services confirmed that a Feedback Report would be produced, which would set out what had been considered, how the representations had been received and which sites were being considered as the final proposed allocations. The Local Plan Steering Group also had discussions with local Members about specific issues and locations and all representations would be considered.

The process would start shortly running into next year. Further consultation would take place as part of the examination in public of the Sites and Policies Document with an Independent Inspector, where members of the public would have the added opportunity to raise any concerns about other sites, which the Inspector would consider.

In a supplementary question, the member of the public suggested that the Feedback Report be included as part of the consultation document that would be published on the website, as on previous occasions it had been omitted.

The Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services was in agreement with this process given the importance of local issues and the effect that this may have on people's lives.

(2) A member of the public referred to the excellent public debate held at the Unity Centre which featured on the radio and asked what action was being taken to ask the victims of child sexual exploitation about the support they required, given that this was central to the content of the Jay Report and the Children's Commissioner Report. Victims were still

waiting for support and many of the voluntary and community organisations providing support had a six month waiting list or like the N.H.S. were under extreme pressure.

Taking this into account reference was also made to the report also on today's agenda which would consider "Improvements to ICT Use Within Social Care" and some of the terminology used within it and it was suggested that plain English be used in future. The Cabinet were asked how they could approve the report moving forward when it may not be the system that was inadequate, but the users who were struggling with the functionality and which was resulting in poor quality data being accessible and leading to poor case management.

The proposals for consideration as part of this report referred to the system costing around £2.6 million to replace, which was fifteen times more than the financial support being provided for victims. From experience it was highly likely that the true cost of a system replacement would be over £3 million. The Council were, therefore, asked to look at alternatives for which the Northgate system could be used for and it was suggested that the Leader of the Council, Chief Executive and the Strategic Directors responsible for Social Care and Children's Services meet with representatives with Northgate to explore all options of using the current system better.

The risks associated with a full system replacement were set out in the report, but it was important that strong child support systems were in place to meet the needs of those at risk and the existing victims of child sexual exploitation. It was unacceptable to use taxpayers money to fund a replacement system when this could well be the wrong approach.

The Leader of the Council explained that he had requested the inclusion of the report due to the issues raised by Ofsted and the Children's Commissioner.

The Acting Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services explained that support for victims was being co-ordinated across a range of different agencies, to which victims would be engaged in the process.

It had always been made clear that the immediate resources put in place were a drop in the ocean to what was needed, but discussions were taking place with various organisations to put in place a single helpline for victims, which would then signpost them to the right kind of support. The helpline would be Rotherham focused and a single number, which would ensure victims were being properly advised and supported.

Discussions were also taking place with two organisations, which would feed into the needs analysis once it was known how many people were coming forward for support.

The representative from Public Health confirmed how the needs analysis would inform future arrangements across the whole system in relation to victim support. This would involve working closely with Voluntary Action Rotherham and the voluntary and community sector. An event on the 5th November, 2014 kick started the process of consultation with clients to ascertain what kind of support was required to meet unmet need. The consultation process should be concluded by the end of the week and inform the needs analysis of support requirements from April, 2015. It was all about listening to service users and the voices of the victims and having a robust evaluation of service requirements.

In a supplementary question the member of the public welcomed this approach, but pointed out it was three months since the publication of the Jay Report and it would appear the Council was not being quick enough to respond to victims. The improvements now taking place would hopefully enable the Council and its partners to grasp the extent of the problem and put the support in place what was needed.

(3) A member of the public referred to the matters relating to Abbey School. New management arrangements from Winterhill School, a comprehensive school with no S.E.N. provision, introduced a new staffing structure in December, 2013, which resulted in strike action when the numbers of staff were proposed to be reduced by six. Reducing the numbers of staff in a special school for vulnerable children would have a detrimental effect on the learning provision. This led to seven teachers either resigning or requesting voluntary redundancy as a result of stress and as predicted the behaviour of the students deteriorated. Why had the Local Authority and the relevant officers not intervened sooner to prevent this situation occurring. The final straw being the recent Ofsted report which was instrumental to the proposals being put forward for the school's closure.

The Cabinet Member for Education and Children's Services pointed out that no decision had yet been made to close Abbey School and the proposal was still out for consultation. It was important that the children were at the centre of the proposals being put forward and that any decision would be placing their needs first.

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning pointed out that the Local Authority had put in arrangements to support Abbey School. The school had given the Local Authority concern for the past eighteen months, long before the Ofsted inspection.

Significant support was provided to the Executive Head Teacher and the Head Teacher of the school to secure the improvements that the Local Authority deemed necessary. The recent Ofsted inspection deemed the school to be "Inadequate" as a result of the culture, historical issues and challenges.

The consultation proposal to close Abbey School was based on the concerns that pupils were not receiving the best education that they deserved and their educational needs were not being met in the short or long term.

Consultations were also taking place on an individual basis with parents and pupils to ascertain if their specific needs could be met in other special schools. Parents were engaging positively with the process about the future needs of their children.

In a supplementary question the member of the public expressed his discontent with the answer, but pointed out that many of the children had already moved out of Abbey and it was anticipated that only half of the pupils would be left by December.

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning expressed the importance of children receiving the best education and alternative arrangements, where possible, were put in place to secure their needs and for them to move schools as quickly as possible.

(4) A member of the public also referred to Abbey School and expressed concern about the events that had taken place and asked why the Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning had not responded to calls, letters or emails.

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning confirmed she had responded to any correspondence received in whatever format and asked that she be informed of any concerns to which she needed to reply.

In a supplementary question the member of the public confirmed she too had not received a reply to an email she herself had sent in September, 2014.

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning agreed to investigate this further and would respond accordingly.

(5) A member of the public referred to the recent "Inadequate" report by Ofsted for Abbey School and confirmed it was indeed a good school and could return to the success it once had with the right Management Team in place. It was believed that a potential cover up had been managed by the Local Authority with health and safety issues gone unreported. The Ofsted report lay the blame at the management of the school. It appeared the Local Authority had not investigated a report that a senior manager's experience/background was incorrect. It appeared that the decision to close Abbey School had already been made given the level of consultation already taking place with parents to move children. This was not proper democratic engagement in a consultation process and Elected Members should ensure that this practice ceased immediately.

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning again reiterated the historical concerns about the school and the need to ensure the pupils that attended Abbey School received the education they deserved. The Local Authority would be failing in its responsibility by not offering alternative arrangements that currently existed in other schools in Rotherham.

The Interim Chief Executive asked that any information available be passed onto herself or the Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning.

In a supplementary question the member of the public pointed out that information was available via the Council's Health and Safety Section and that it amounted to complete denial by the management of the school.

The ideal situation for all involved would be for a complete change of management and leadership at Abbey School and return it to its former glory rather than this being a managed situation towards closure.

(6) A member of the public referred to comments that the children's best interests and welfare/wellbeing were at the heart of the consultation, why were the management at Abbey School still in post if this was an unsuitable position for the children to be in?

The Director for Schools and Lifelong Learning confirmed that the arrangements for Abbey School were being enhanced with extra support being provided to support the education at Abbey School.

Forty-seven pupils were being provided with alternative educational placements and a similar number at the school were being given extra support. Parents were being assured that pupils were safe and being provided with a good education. An Interim Executive Board was now taking responsibility for the governance arrangements to ensure any concerns about the safety or the education of pupils were being met.

(7) A member of the public asked if schools were failing and some children of Rotherham were not receiving appropriate education, then why were Elected Members and officers not taking responsibility? In addition, the member of the public also asked why was the Council spending £4.2 million on industrial units at the Advanced Manufacturing Park for big businesses when Elected Members were voting in favour of cuts to children's services and special schools?

The Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration provided some background to the decision to spend over £4 million to purchase three industrial units at the Advanced Manufacturing Park. The essence of the purchase was to pump prime business growth in Rotherham and to create jobs and stimulate the global economy. The intention was to sell on these industrial units and then make a profit. The Council had already been inundated with approaches to purchase two of the units and

safeguards were in place to ensure the Council had a return on its investment.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked why the Council were investing £4.2 million at the Advanced Manufacturing Park, supporting the Three Cranes Project and New York Stadium when it was reporting it had no money for essential services due to Government cutbacks in funding. How much profit was the Council likely to make from the sale of one unit?

The Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration confirmed the Council was set to see a return of around £40,000 once all the legal fees were taken into account and would assist in the stimulation of the local economy. The investment was provided from the capital programme rather than the revenue budget, which had seen a reduction in the Early Intervention Grant in terms of children's services.

In terms of New York Stadium and the Three Cranes Building, these were loans at commercial rates for which the Council were in a position to benefit.

The Deputy Leader clarified the position with regards to Local Government finances in relation to capital and revenue budgets. The revenue budget was made up from grants from Government, business rates and council tax and was set to be reduced by a further 16% for next year. Councils were becoming more reliant on business rates as income to support essential services and would support stimulating business growth in the local economy.

(8) A member of the public referred to the former Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services' reports of improvements to children's services, which was also the same message provided by the Leader of the Council who also had responsibility. Given the recent result of the Ofsted inspection, did the Leader still stand by that statement?

The Leader of the Council confirmed that the recent Ofsted inspection report was regrettable. The service was not good enough and Elected Members or Cabinet Members did not get involved with frontline services. Cabinet Members were expected to demonstrate the seven principles of Local Government and take their responsibility seriously, which he had done.

In a supplementary question the member of the public referred to the Jay Report, comments by Ofsted and Members of Parliament about the raft of measures in place to protect children and asked why Elected Members had not scrutinised this in more detail to demonstrate they were fit for purpose. The failure was not just in Social Services or Social Workers but also in the Council because they had not scrutinised to ensure that arrangements were put in place.

The Leader of the Council confirmed scrutiny of children's services had taken place. In consultation with the Children's Commissioner the Council were in the process of putting arrangements in place to turn children's services around as quickly as possible.

C94 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

C95 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF STANDING ORDERS AND CABINET RESPONSE

Further to Minute No. 51 of the meeting of the Council held on 10th September, 2014, Councillor Watson, Chairman of the Scrutiny Review Group, introduced a report which set out recommendations of the scrutiny review of Standing Orders, undertaken by the Self Regulation Select Commission.

The Review Group met on five separate occasions and examined the Standing Orders in detail; followed by webcasting and petitions. Information was sought from other Councils to examine how they addressed general questions, questions to decision makers and representatives on other bodies and committees and questions from members of the public. The proposed amendments were discussed with the Monitoring Officer and Legal and Democratic Services Officers. The final meeting agreed the report for submission to Cabinet to inform its recommendations to Council.

A number of other issues arose during the review relating to the wider Constitution and procedural rules. However, due to the time frame for reporting its findings, the Review Group were not able to give proper consideration to these issues. It was recommended, therefore, that a further review be undertaken to report back to Cabinet early in the new Municipal Year.

Taking matters forward the Review Group were suggesting:-

- The time limit in which to ask questions that have previously been asked and answered, be reduced from six months to three Council meetings.
- The length of notice required for submission of general questions be extended; in effect all questions must be submitted in writing to the Chief Executive by 10.00 a.m. three working days before the day of the Council meeting (usually the Friday preceding the Council meeting held on a Wednesday).
- If a Member who had submitted a valid question, was unable to attend and had submitted apologies, a written answer be supplied.

- The guillotine on general question be removed.
- If submitted questions were ruled to duplicate other submitted questions and one was excluded; that the Member who submitted the excluded question be allowed to ask a supplementary question on the subject of the excluded matter.
- A new provision to ask 'urgent' questions be introduced.
- In line with the amendment to submission of general questions; the length of notice required for questions from members of the public be extended to 10.00 a.m. three working days before the Council meeting (usually the Friday preceding the Council meeting held on a Wednesday).
- That Paragraph 19 of the Council's Scheme for Handling Petitions be amended to 2,000 signatures to trigger a debate of the Council.
- The current threshold of 750 to ask for a senior council officer to give evidence at a public meeting be maintained and extended to include member(s) of Cabinet.

It was suggested that the proposed amendments be reviewed after six months to ascertain if they were fit for purpose.

There were no changes proposed to Paragraph 9: Moving the minutes of the Cabinet, Members of the Cabinet and Committees and the Council's Standards Committee (commonly referred to as questions to the White Book).

In terms of the recording of questions asked of Council minutes contained in the White Book it was suggested that:-

- That all questions and responses (including questions from public) should be recorded in the minutes.
- That written responses should be 'captured' and appended to minutes.
- Written responses to questions to be circulated to all Members within a defined timescale (which was administratively practical i.e. seven working days).

The Review Group was not able to undertake a full review of the Council's Scheme for Handling Petitions in the time allocated to the review. In the interim, the Review Group recommended that, with the proviso of the changes outlined above and with minor administrative amendments, the scheme remain in place pending the wider constitutional review.

In the interest of openness and transparency, the Review Group fully endorsed the move towards regular webcasting of meetings. Given the resource implications attached to this the Group were suggesting:-

- Given the layout and existing audio system, that the Council Chamber be used for webcasting meetings.
- That consideration be given to the installation of 'fixed' microphones in the public galleries.
- Further consideration be given to how the staffing of webcast meetings was resourced to ensure that it was sustainable.
- In principle, each meeting of full Council; Cabinet, Planning Board and Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be webcast. Other meetings of 'significant interest' may be webcast as an exception.

In addition to the review of Standing Orders the Review Group explored web-based models for recording executive decisions. For example, based on the plan of key decisions the 'Doncaster' model set out the decision to be made, who would take it and when and what consultation had been undertaken.

As part of the wider constitutional review, it recommended that alternative models be explored to see if this was appropriate for adoption.

Cabinet Members welcomed the outcome of the review and the speed in which it was conducted. Removal of the guillotine could lead to the general business of the meeting being disrupted and could be left to the Mayor to use his discretion to extend. However, in the main any removal could be closely monitored and reviewed in due course.

The proposals to seek a permanent solution to webcasting and the reduction in the numbers for the handling of petitions were moves in the right direction for the Council to demonstrate more openness and transparency.

Cabinet Members noted the concerns of the Monitoring Officer about the removal of the guillotine, but having heard comments from the Chairman of the Review Group about the reasons for no guillotine, the changes to the submission date and the reluctance to place a guillotine on the length of the meeting, were happy for Council to agree the recommendations being put forward.

In addition, Cabinet Members were in agreement with the proposal to safeguard any disruption to the conduct of general business by moving the agenda item for questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairmen to the end of the agenda.

- (1) Resolved:- That the report be received and the contents noted.
- (2) Recommended:- (a) That the proposed amendments to the Council's Standing Orders be approved.**
- (b) That the proposals regarding web-casting be adopted.**
- (c) That the recording and circulation of responses to written questions be approved.**
- (d) That the further consideration of web-based models for recording executive decisions be explored.**
- (e) That the Self Regulation Select Commission conducts a further review of the Constitution, the Council's Scheme for Handling Petitions and the potential for web-based models for recording executive decisions and reports its findings to Cabinet after the 2015 summer recess.**
- (f) That the agenda item for Questions to Cabinet Members and Committee Chairmen be moved to the end of the Council Meeting agenda to allow for normal business to be conducted first.**

C96 WEBCASTING RMBC MEETINGS

Councillor Hoddinott, Deputy Leader, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which referred to the introduction of webcasting for Council meetings as a permanent arrangement, following an initial trial during late 2014.

The Council trialled the use of this technology to webcast several high-profile meetings which took place following the publication of the Alexis Jay report. Given the significant public interest in these proceedings the Council wanted to ensure as many people as possible could access the discussion and decision-making process. The service was provided by an external company, as the technology and resources did not currently exist in-house.

The webcasts attracted significant viewing figures and whilst these could not be taken to be representative of what could be expected of other meetings, it demonstrated the ability and appetite that existed to access local government through digital means.

It had been proposed that the meetings of Council, Cabinet, Planning Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be webcast and it was suggested that this also be opened up to other Select Commissions for consideration.

This report was to also be considered at the delegated powers meeting of the Deputy Leader on the 2nd December, 2014 where the support issues to webcasting meetings would be considered further.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny welcomed the invitation to webcast Select Commission meetings, which further demonstrated a willingness to be more open and transparent. This could be a little more problematic when alternative venues were used, but it was noted that the webcasting model was not transferrable from the Town Hall.

Resolved:- (1) That the implementation of webcasting selected meetings as part of the Council's commitment to improving engagement and transparency in local democracy be approved.

(2) That the webcasting contract be awarded to Public-i at an annual cost of £15k per year, initially for a period of two years.

C97 DISPOSAL OF LAND AT ASTON CLOSE TO GREAT PLACES HOUSING ASSOCIATION TO ENABLE AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT (12 UNITS)

Councillor Godfrey, Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services, which sought approval for the freehold disposal of a Housing Revenue Account site located at Aston Close, Aston to Great Places Housing Association.

Subject to approval, the site would be developed by Great Places Housing to provide twelve new affordable homes. Of these, eight units would be two bed houses and four units would be three bed houses. The Council would receive 100% nomination of residents from the Council waiting list, in perpetuity for all the new homes.

Great Places Housing Association had secured £176,000 of grant funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) to support the scheme. They would utilise approximately £624,000 of their in house finance to build the new homes. The estimated total development cost of the twelve units was £800,000.

To enable the development to proceed, Great Places Housing required the land to be transferred from the Council at £5,000 per plot – total consideration £60,000. This was in line with previous land transfers by the Council to Housing Associations and complies with the Homes and Communities Agency requirement that land should be transferred at either NIL value or a nominal value as a condition of the grant funding allocation. Discounted land was in effect the Council's contribution to the Affordable Housing scheme.

Resolved:- That the freehold disposal of Housing Revenue Account land at Aston Close, Aston to Great Places Housing Association for a total consideration of £60,000 on the basis that the Council receives all of the benefits detailed in this report be approved.

C98 CRISIS CARE CONCORDAT

Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which sought approval to join partner organisations in South Yorkshire in formally agreeing to the principles in the national Concordat for Mental Health Crisis Care.

The Crisis Concordat was a key element of the Better Care Fund (BCF01) workstream, which was working to develop a Mental Health Liaison Service that supported the outcomes of the Better Care Fund and the principle of 'parity of esteem' between physical and mental health care.

It was, therefore, proposed that the Council supported the aims of the Concordat formally by becoming signatories to the South Yorkshire Declaration Statement.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and the contents noted.

(2) That the commitment of the Local Authority to the Declaration be endorsed and the involvement of Council officers in implementing the recommendations contained in the Concordat within the Better Care Fund Action Plan be approved.

(3) That the onward progress of the report to Health and Wellbeing Board, Children and Young People's Services Department Leadership Team and Cabinet Member for Children and Education Services for information and support for the Action Plan be approved.

C99 WHITE RIBBON CAMPAIGN

Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services which detailed how the White Ribbon Campaign Award was for Towns to demonstrate their commitment to the aims of the White Ribbon Campaign (WRC).

To achieve White Ribbon status required a commitment by partners across Rotherham Borough to involving men in sending a clear message that Domestic Abuse against women would not be tolerated. In particular involving men in preventative activities, addressing and altering social norms that lead to violent behaviour against women, increasing awareness on the issue and providing services aimed at reducing domestic abuse. The White Ribbon Campaign claimed that by mobilising men the anti-violence against women and girls (VAWG) message

increased in effectiveness and reach and mobilised the entire local community under the goal of ending violence against women and girls.

An action plan, demonstrating the town's commitment to reducing domestic abuse, had been developed with the Partnership Violent Crime Forum and Domestic Abuse Priority Group (DAPG).

On the 30th October, 2014 the plan was approved as 'Excellent' by the White Ribbon Campaign Director and Rotherham had been provided 'White Ribbon Status'.

Councillor Doyle, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, also confirmed he was now an Ambassador for the White Ribbon Campaign.

Cabinet Members welcomed this Campaign and work taking place with partner agencies to take this forward and change attitudes.

Resolved:- (1) That the partnership commitment to achieving the aims of the White Ribbon Campaign be endorsed.

(2) That the work be driven by Chief Inspector Ian Womersley in conjunction with the Domestic Abuse Priority Group and Partnership Violent Crime Forum.

(3) That a joint media strategy be developed between the Council, Police and Rotherham United Football Club.

(4) That the Council celebrate the White Ribbon Status with the flying of a White Ribbon flag during the International White Ribbon Campaign period from 25th November to 10th December, 2014.

C100 IMPROVEMENTS TO ICT USE WITHIN SOCIAL CARE

Councillor Lakin, Leader of the Council, introduced a joint report by the Strategic Directors for Environment and Development Services and Children and young People's Services, which provided an update on the findings of the recent Ofsted inspections with relation to the use of technology within children's social care and to outline work being taken to improve the way that social care ICT systems and tools were used within the Children and Young People's Service.

The Ofsted reports have highlighted the need for officers to take some immediate steps to improve the functionality and improve the use of ICT systems within Children and Young People's Services. In the longer term the Council was to reevaluate the social care case management products available on the market with a view to procuring replacement software ahead of the end of the current contract end date in 2018.

It was proposed that three distinct workstreams be undertaken to address the issues raised as part of the Ofsted inspection. The workstreams would be run in parallel, overseen by a strategic steering group and in conjunction with the programme of organisational change led by the Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families.

The work stream details of what they would primary focus on were set out in detail as part of the report:-

- Workstream 1 – Immediate System and Process Improvements
- Workstream 2 – Social Care System - Market Testing and Procurement
- Workstream 3 – Greater use of Mobile Technologies

The three workstreams described formed a part of the overall improvement programme which was led by the Director of Safeguarding, Children and Families. It was proposed that a sub-group be formed to manage these ICT projects and that this sub-group report back to Members with updates on a monthly basis.

The current Northgate system was in use for both Adult's and Children's social care so careful consideration would need to be given to whether any potential system changes were done across the whole of social care or were just limited to Children and Young People's Services. Neighbourhoods and Adult Services Directorate already used the Northgate system effectively and had no strong desire to change to an alternative product. This was in part motivated by an acknowledgement of the significant resources (human and financial) that Neighbourhoods and Adult Services would need to invest in any migration project.

To mitigate this risk it was likely that prospective suppliers would be invited to indicate if they wished to bid for just a Children and Young People's Services system or for an integrated adult's/children's system. Neighbourhoods and Adult Services would be fully engaged in Workstream 2 from the outset.

A further risk was that of the likelihood of nugatory investment in the development of the incumbent system between now and going live with any replacement. The Council already had system several development projects underway with Northgate that have been necessitated by the Care Act 2014 and other recent legislation changes. This work (which affected both Children and Young People's Services and Neighbourhoods and Adult Services) would need to go ahead if the Council were to fulfil its obligations in this regard and could not be postponed until a new system was in place. This risk would be mitigated by keeping any development work to a minimum until the future of the system was clear and ensure that any replacement system had functionality which would fulfil the demands of current and emerging legislation.

All three workstreams required significant changes in working practices and formed part of a much more substantial change management programme. There may be insufficient capacity within the business to adapt to the changes and ensure the benefits were released and translated into improved practice and outcomes for children.

Cabinet Members, in considering this matter, took into account the points raised in the public questions at the start of the meeting, but sought clarification on whether or not additional hardware was required, security of data, transition of children through to adulthood and the migration between two different ICT systems and data sharing with partners.

Cabinet Members were informed that some hardware would be required, but that security between mobile devices was not a barrier to mobile working. In terms of migration, a decision had to be made on whether this was an ICT system just for children or whether it would be combined to include adults.

Discussions had to take place around the functionality of the current system, given that this was effectively used for adults, and data sharing with partners would be included.

It was noted that Neighbourhoods and Adults Services had embarked on a huge programme of training to address some of the initial concerns with the Northgate system and had worked closely with the company on the system interface.

The priority was clearly to assist social workers in their roles to protect children, which had resulted in the former Chief Executive corresponding with the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Home Affairs Select Committee about the reductions in resources and the implications for the Council.

Reduction of staffing numbers within the Children and Young People's Services system team meant that there were insufficient staff numbers to support the three workstreams running currently whilst also maintaining existing commitment to support other core systems and day to day operations.

Whilst every effort would be made to ensure the safety of children was maintained any changes to an ICT system would impact on the capacity of staff. To mitigate this additional agency staff were being maintained to continue safeguarding children through this difficult period.

The need to move away from a silo approach was recognised and this issue needed to be dealt with corporately to drive forward the direction of travel needed in the future.

The current Northgate system was used by a number of Councils and it must be ascertained as a matter of some urgency whether the system in Rotherham was any different to those being used elsewhere. However, the short term improvements to safeguard children needed to be implemented immediately.

On this basis Cabinet Members suggested that a Project Group be established to corporately oversee this work involving both officers and Elected Members to work closely with other partner agencies on the system interface.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress in relation to achieving the short term priorities set out in Appendix B of the report.

(2) That the implementation of additional functionality within the existing Children's Social Care Case Management system be approved.

(3) That that work begin immediately on testing the market with a view to procuring an alternative Children's and/or Adults Social Care Case Management system.

(4) That the likely resource implications (staffing and financial) associated with these improvement works be noted.

(5) That a Project Group be established corporately to oversee this work involving both officers and Elected Members to work closely with other partner agencies on the system interface.

C101 RATIONALISATION OF THE PROPERTY PORTFOLIO: 49 - 53 ST ANN'S ROAD, ROTHERHAM

Councillor Beck, Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration, introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services, which sought approval for the disposal of the above-mentioned asset which had been declared surplus to the requirements of the Department of Audit and Asset Management.

The asset comprised three former terraced residential properties which were converted in the early 1980's to form an office which had been used since then as the main Rotherham headquarters for Age UK. The Council owned the unencumbered freehold title to two of the properties, namely Nos. 51 and 53 St Ann's Road and Age UK owned the effective freehold title to the property known as 49 St Ann's Road.

The premises were now surplus to the requirements of Age UK and they have approached the Council to enter a joint marketing agreement to dispose of the premises on the open market.

The Director of Planning, Regeneration and Cultural Services had confirmed that the asset was allocated within a residential area. The continued use of the premises for office use would be acceptable and it was also considered that a change of use for conversion back to residential use would also be an acceptable use.

The proposal for the future use of the site was to sell the whole asset as shown edged in red on the Open Market subject to agreeing a bi-partite marketing agreement with Age UK. As the Council owned two of the three properties, a capital split of 2:1 in the Council's favour had been negotiated. If this recommendation was approved then the asset would be marketed for sale on the open market. This option would produce a receipt for the Capital Receipts Programme. This option represented the best value for money arising from a disposal and was the recommended option to be pursued.

Resolved:- (1) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management be approved to negotiate a bi-partite agreement with Age UK in order to dispose of the asset on the basis recommended in Section 7 in the report.

(2) That the Director of Audit and Asset Management negotiates the terms of the disposal of the assets as described in the report.

(3) That the Director of Legal and Democratic Services completes the necessary documentation.