

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday, 3rd July, 2019

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Cowles, Cusworth, Jarvis, Keenan, Mallinder, Taylor, Tweed, Walsh and Wyatt.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Napper.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

244. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

245. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

246. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair reported that there were no items of business on the agenda which would require the exclusion of the press and public.

247. REVISED FOSTER CARER FEES AND ALLOWANCES PAYMENT SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report submitted by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services which was presented for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 8 July 2019 in respect of the proposed revision of Foster Carers Fees and Allowances Payment Scheme. It was reported that the Council had sought to improve the care experience for children in Rotherham by ensuring that wherever possible they were looked after in a foster family environment. In the spirit of that ambition, it was proposed to revise the 'offer' to foster carers with regard to the fees and allowances that they receive. It was anticipated that this would also lead to a reduced overall cost in line with Budget assumptions. It is well understood that the needs of children and young people could only be met effectively if they lived in an environment that provided a high quality of care and support, generally within a family home setting and in a geographical location that was familiar.

Members further noted that the placement of children within the borough would ensure a better oversight and control over educational provision and other support services such as Health and Community Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). Recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers was at the heart of LAC Sufficiency Strategy. As part of the overall strategy it was intended to change the placement mix, profiling a net increase of 36 new in-house foster placements over a 12 month period. It was noted that increasing the number of in-house carers was critical to ensuring that Rotherham:

- Had a range of suitable placements available to meet current and future placement needs.
- Was able to reduce overall placement costs and avoid more expensive Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) and out of borough residential placements.
- Was able to meet the needs of individual children and young people in care by creating stable, secure and high quality family placements
- Supported children and young people in care to maintain contact with birth families, essential services and their local community.

A revised foster carer fees and allowance payment scheme was proposed in in order to ensure that Rotherham is best placed to meet the above objectives.

Members expressed support for the proposals, welcoming the potential removal of the independent agencies as a 'middle man', and sought assurances that the monitoring of figures would assist the authority in making a difference. In response, the Strategic Director reassured Members that data would be monitored and progress tracked, especially in light of budget assumptions in respect of demand and how many children and young people that the authority would be working with during current and next financial year. The impact of the change would be closely monitored to provide assurance that the decision was correct.

It was noted that the focus was not solely on driving down cost, but rather making a good offer to increase the sustainability of the pool of foster carers available to the authority. It was recognised the remuneration was only part of the offer and the support provided by the Council was of greater importance to existing foster carers, who wanted to work with the authority rather than agencies. The Strategic Director agreed with this observation and indicated that this was just one element of the strategy, but acknowledged the need to communicate the foster carer offer more effectively and market the opportunity better.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

248. ADVICE SERVICES REVIEW - PHASE 2

Consideration was given to a report submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 8 July 2019 in respect of the review of Advice Services. It was reported that continuing austerity and the impact of welfare reforms including the roll out of universal credit were having a significant effect on many of the most vulnerable Rotherham residents especially people with disabilities and families with children. The provision of good quality advice services was essential support. The need for advice support continued to increase with many individual cases covering a number of complex issues which required specialist help and guidance.

The second phase of the review which the report to Cabinet related to, includes advice services provided directly by the Council and the enhancement of partnership working through Advice in Rotherham Partnership (AiR). The report proposed bringing together under one management Council provided advice services and enhancing partnership working and referral systems. This would provide a more efficient set of inter-related services and improve access and referral routes for clients through a new "Single Advice Model". It was projected that bringing services under one management could be achieved by September 2019. Some of the components of the "Single Advice Model", including a new referral system, were being introduced. Further enhancements to partnership working would be developed in discussion with partners. The changes were anticipated to be achievable within existing budget and staffing allocations.

Assurances were sought in respect of the proposed timescale of co-location for September 2019 and Members queried whether this was ambitious. In response, officers confirmed that the transfer of responsibility for the service was achievable by September 2019 to ensure that all services were under a single management structure. Following on, Members expressed concerned in respect of the proposed single point of access, given the problems that residents presently faced with not being able to contact the authority. In response, officers confirmed that the only change to the service to be implemented by 1 September 2019 would be the transfer of management responsibility. Further developments in respect of the service offer would be delivered further down the line, but people would not see any changes from 1 September. Looking to the future, there would be a need test the target operating model thoroughly and understand the levels of demand to ensure that services meet demand and expectations.

Members sought clarification as to when Phase 3 would be reported to Cabinet. In response, the Assistant Chief Executive advised that work would commence on developing Phase 3 in September 2019 after going live with the implementation of Phase 2. However, timescales had not been set for the reporting and approval of Phase 3 and it was acknowledged that this may take up to twelve months to progress.

It was suggested that Members would have found a list of organisations useful ahead of the meeting and assurances were sought that there was capacity to deliver the service that was expected. It was confirmed that a list of organisations had been detailed within the body of the report and there was assurance that there was capacity to deliver and the need to deliver was absolutely recognised across the authority and the partnership. It was noted that a third of the organisations listed were provided with funding towards advice. Further clarification was sought as what work had been done to ascertain what partners were bringing to the borough. Officers advised that the information could be shared outside of the meeting, but assurances were provided that the contract was monitored.

Assurances were sought that there would be capacity to take someone from filling in a form right through to the end of the process without individuals being turned away. Officers reiterated that their proposal in the report was to extend the outreach provision to ensure that services covered all parts of the borough. As part of the move into Phase 3 of the review, capacity would be monitored on an ongoing basis, but it was critical that the work was delivered in partnership to develop a preventative approach and to embed the work with the neighbourhoods agenda.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That a monitoring report on the implementation of Phase 2 be brought back to a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, along with outline proposals for Phase 3.

249. LOCAL PLAN CORE STRATEGY FIVE YEAR REVIEW

Consideration was given to a report submitted by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment which was due to be determined by the Cabinet at its meeting on 8 July 2019 concerning the Local Plan Core Strategy review. It was reported that in line with legislative requirements, a desk based review of the Local Plan Core Strategy had been undertaken to assess whether some or all of the document may need updating. The review indicated that, although the Core Strategy continued to be broadly up to date and complied with requirements set out in national planning policy, a number of areas required an update. Members scrutinised the proposal to give approval to commence a partial update of the Core Strategy to update policies relating to housing, flood risk and water management, climate change and carbon reduction, and the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and to update infrastructure requirements to support new growth.

Members were supportive of the approach proposed and commended the work undertaken by officers which appeared to be appropriate.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

250. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT 2018-19

Consideration was given to a report which presented the final draft of the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2018-19 for Members to recommend for approval to the Council meeting on 24 July 2019. It was reported that the scrutiny work programme, outlined in draft in the annual report, helped to achieve corporate priorities by addressing key policy and performance agendas and the outcomes would focus on adding value to the work of the Council.

The Chair thanked Members and officers for their efforts in the supporting the scrutiny function during 2018-2019 municipal year. Furthermore, he thanked Member colleagues for their contributions to the emerging work programme for the 2019-20 municipal year.

Resolved:-

1. That the draft Annual Report 2018-19 be received and it be approved for publication ahead the Council Meeting on 24 July 2019.
2. That it be noted that membership details for 2019-20 may be subject to change following the Council meeting on the 24 July 2019 and that this be reflected in the final published version on the Council's website.

251. COUNCIL PLAN REFRESH

Consideration was given to a report which detailed the recent update to the Council Plan Performance Management Framework, which had been approved the Cabinet earlier in the year. It was reported that services across the authority had reviewed performance throughout the 2018-19 financial year in order to determine new targets for 2019-2020. It was noted that, although the 2017-2020 Council Plan was intended to cover three financial years, it was considered good practice to carry out an annual review of the performance measures included in it. The refreshed performance measures and targets had been set by services using reference to both in year performance, benchmarking data and the priorities for the coming year. The overall number of measures had reduced from 72 in 2018-2019 to 69 for 2019-2020.

It was further reported that to ensure that the delivery of actions and their impact was assessed, formal quarterly performance reports would continue to be presented in public at Cabinet meetings, with an opportunity for scrutiny by non-executive Members.

Members referred to indicator 2A1 (Completion of Drug Treatment) and explained that they could see the measure for successful treatment, but wanted to know what the information for non-opiate users was and whether it was reported elsewhere. In response, officers confirmed that this information would be supplied to Members outside of the meeting and could be shared with the Health Select Commission if requested.

By way of general feedback, Members welcomed the presentation of the report and compared it favourably to the Scrutiny Annual report, citing the use of infographics to convey complex information without use of lengthy narrative.

Reference was made to net new business as a measure, which represented something of a difference between floor space and new business take up. Members requested that consideration be given to restoring the previous measure on that basis. In response, officers confirmed that the Council Plan was reviewed annually and a much more radical review of the plan would follow in 2020.

Resolved:-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Health Select Commission consider receiving performance information in respect of non-opiate drug users at a future meeting.
3. That responses be provided by the relevant Strategic Directors to Members on the points raised in the debate on the above item.

252. CALL-IN ISSUES

The Chair reported that there were no call-in issues requiring the consideration of the Board arising from the Cabinet meeting held on 10 June 2019.

253. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair reported that there were no items of business requiring the urgent consideration of the Board.

254. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be held on Wednesday 10 July 2019 commencing at 11.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.