

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday, 16th September, 2020

Present:- Councillor Steele (in the Chair); Councillors Cusworth, R. Elliott, Jarvis, Jepson, Keenan, Mallinder, Napper, Taylor, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence: - There were no apologies for absence. .

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

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

210. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 2ND SEPTEMBER 2020

Resolved: -

That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 2 September 2020 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

211. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cusworth declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8, Advice Review and Advice Services Service Level Agreement as she was a member of the Rotherham and District Citizen's Advice Bureau Board.

212. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

213. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items requiring the exclusion of the public and press.

214. THE YEAR AHEAD

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 September 2020 in respect of the Council's Year Ahead Plan.

The Leader, the Chief Executive and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement attended the meeting to present the report.

The Leader noted that the Council's Year Ahead Plan had been designed to set out how the council planned to support residents and businesses, helping them to build resilience and adapt during the uncertain times created by the pandemic. It was noted that the document would be the Council's Plan for operating within, and recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, capturing the key actions through to May 2021, and also providing a basis for the development of a longer-term plan for the

borough. The Leader advised that while the plan acted as an interim document that was focussed on enabling recovery from the pandemic in advance of a longer term, plan being developed, it also included details of normal non-pandemic related activities.

The Leader advised that the Year Ahead plan was based around five key themes of

- Thriving neighbourhoods
- Better health and wellbeing
- Economic recovery
- New ways of working
- Confidence and hope in Rotherham.

It was noted that the Year Ahead Plan document outlined the outcomes that each theme would be focussed on delivering as the key activities that would need to take place between September 2020 and May 2021 in order for these outcomes to be delivered. The Leader advised that in addition to the five key themes that the plan also included two cross-cutting strands: climate impact and equalities and social justice. The Leader also noted the importance of using the new powers provided by the South Yorkshire Devolution Deal to advance the priorities as detailed in the plan.

The Leader noted the key theme of new ways of working and how that would impact on not only how and where staff worked, but also how customers interacted with the council. The Leader advised that with new ways of working it was essential that all residents were still able to access the services that they needed in a way that was suitable for them.

Members noted that with new ways of working, and very limited face to face access to services for residents that many residents were being left behind and asked how in light of these changes, that had been accelerated by the pandemic how effective communication with all residents could be enabled. The Leader noted that it was essential that all residents should always receive excellent service regardless of the method that they used to contact the council and advised that since the pandemic had started waiting times for phone enquiries had decreased with many staff who had formally dealt with customers face to face dealing with customers over the phone. The Leader advised that with the Borough's libraries reopening different options for using them to enable face to face access to council services for residents in their local community were currently being looked at.

Members asked how it would be ensured that residents would always be able to get in touch with the council in order to access services. The Leader advised that the extra staff resource that was now available to deal with phone enquiries and noted that while staff resource was an important factor, that if a service was delivered efficiently first time then residents did not need to make repeat contacts regarding the same enquiry. The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement noted that

lessons learned from the operation of the Community Hub helpline during pandemic would be used to develop future plans around customer contact and how customer contact could be managed most effectively. The Chief Executive advised that an analysis of repeat contacts for the same enquiry was taking place and would be fed into subsequent service planning activity.

Members welcomed the focus on community spirit and working together that was contained in the Year Ahead plan.

Members asked for further information on the proposed timescales for the review of how council buildings were used that was taking place. The Chief Executive advised that staff had been surveyed in order to gather information on their experiences of new ways of working over the previous months and noted that these responses would feed into the review, noting that the results of the review would start to come through in early October. The Chair asked how staff were being engaged with and consulted in order to ensure that they had a safe and productive working environment to work in, whether they were working at home or in a council building. The Chief Executive noted that the capacity for council buildings had been reduced in line with government guidance and advised that priority for a return to working in council buildings was being given to teams and individual staff members who needed, for varying reasons to have some time in an office base. The Chief Executive noted that due to the ever-changing situation and guidance around the pandemic, flexibility regarding working practices was needed, but assured members that staff who were working at home would continue to be supported to enable them to work productively. The Chief Executive noted that the staff survey on working practices had not highlighted any major areas of concern from staff.

Members welcomed the proposed review of the council's approach to equalities and noted their approval for how equalities and social justice considerations ran through the entire document. The Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement outlined the proposed approach and objectives to the review of the council's approach to equalities. Members agreed that it would be beneficial for a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be established to feed into the Council's review of its approach to Equalities.

The Chair thanked the Leader, the Chief Executive and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

- 1) That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
- 2) That the sub-group of the Improving Places Select Commission be established to in order to feed into the planned review relating to

the return to, and use of Council buildings, and that the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be invited to be a member of the sub-group.

- 3) That the sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on Communications be re-established in order to review how customers access council services.
- 4) That a sub-group of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be established to feed into the Council's review of its approach to Equalities.

215. VOLUNTARY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 September 2020 in respect of Voluntary Sector Infrastructure.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement attended the meeting to present the report.

The report stated that in November 2017 Cabinet and Commissioners had approved a review on a renewed approach to the delivery of Voluntary Sector Infrastructure Services in Rotherham and that this had resulted in the awarding of a three-year service level agreement (SLA) with Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) running from April 2018 to March 2021. The SLA brought together working with both VAR and Rotherham Ethnic Minority Alliance (REMA) into a single SLA.

The report made recommendations for the next three-year Infrastructure SLA for the period April 2021 to March 2024 that would take forward the commitments set out in the Rotherham Compact, build on experience gained through the current SLA and take into account research on the impact of COVID 19 in order to set out a aspirational strategic approach for the future of the voluntary and community sector in Rotherham.

The report also provided information on the approach that would be taken in order to enable the Council to achieve an "excellent" accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government and for it to be able to address the equalities implications that had arisen from the COVID 19 emergency. The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities advised that details on the processes and timescales for this work would be provided in a future report to Cabinet.

The Cabinet Member advised that in order to enable this review to take place and also to enable a new SLA for VCS Infrastructure to commence in March 2021 it was being recommended that the equalities component of the current SLA be separated from the future VCS Infrastructure arrangements and incorporated into the equalities review. The Cabinet

Member advised that the recommended approach would protect the services currently provided by REMA around increasing capacity of ethnic minority organisations for at least a year, whilst the Council undertook a wider piece of work to improve equalities but also allow for the wider VCS infrastructure to continue. The Cabinet Member advised that Voluntary Action Rotherham and REMA had been consulted and had advised that they were supportive of the proposed approach.

Members welcomed the proposed approach to reviewing how Voluntary Services would be provided and noted their approval for the integral role that Voluntary Organisations would play in the design process of the new SLA.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement for attending the meeting and answering members' questions

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

216. ADVICE REVIEW AND ADVICE SERVICES SLA

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 September 2020 in respect of the Advice Review and Advice Services Service Level Agreement.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement attended the meeting to present the report.

The report provided an update on the provision of advice services across council in-house and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) providers and set out a proposed process for a new three-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) through co-design with VCS advice providers for the period 2021/22, 2022/23 and 2023/24. It was noted that it was proposed that this would be done through inviting a lead VCS organisation to work with the Council.

The report noted that the provision of advice services across a range of topics, and especially in relation to benefits and debt, both through council services and the voluntary sector, provided essential support to thousands of vulnerable people in Rotherham each year. The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities noted that demand for advice services remained high, and was expected to continue to rise, particularly as the economic impact of the COVID emergency, and end of financial support schemes created increased financial difficulties for residents. The Cabinet Member advised that experiences and learning gained from operating the Community HUB throughout the COVID emergency had been captured and would be used to inform the development of improved

referral pathways for advice services. The Cabinet Member advised that it was proposed that all advice service providers that would be delivering services under the SLA would be signatories to the agreement in order to enable them to access further grant funding.

Members asked how the council's in-house advice services were being engaged in the review and the development of a new SLA. The Cabinet Member noted the remit of, and the services provided by the council's in-house advice services and assured members that they would be part of the discussions regarding the development of the new SLA. Members asked for assurances that new SLA for advice services would have the capacity to cope with the projected increase demand for services. The Cabinet Member advised that the design process would include considerations around how services delivery was designed that would enable the SLA to have the capacity to provide for the anticipated increases in demand for services.

The Chair asked whether it was feasible for the proposed annual budget for the SLA not to be increased from the current budget or increase over the period of the SLA given the predicted increase in demand. The Cabinet Member advised that there were no plans to increase the budget allocated for the SLA but noted that the design process could potentially impact on this.

Members asked whether there was a risk of smaller advice organisations being not being included in the new SLA. The Cabinet Member assured members that the new SLA would be an inclusive and a partnership between the council and advice providers.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities and the Head of Policy, Performance and Improvement for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

217. ANNUAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 September 2020 in respect of the Annual Housing Development Report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing, the Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and the Head of Strategic Housing Development attended the meeting to present the report.

The Cabinet Member for Housing noted that the 2020/21 Housing

Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan that had been approved by Council in February 2020 included an additional £65million for housing growth over the next five years, using both existing reserves and HRA borrowing that would bring the total forecast HRA investment in the development of new homes in the Borough to approximately £130million. The Cabinet Member advised that each year a report would be presented to Cabinet that set out a housing programme for the year ahead, with the 2020/21 report being the first of these reports.

The report provided information on the Council-owned sites that were being proposed for inclusion in the annual programme that would be delivered through a combination of direct delivery by the Council, transfer of land to Registered Provider (Housing Association) partners, and by sales of land on the open market. It was noted that whilst the majority of these sites were small garage and infill sites located within existing neighbourhoods, they were capable of delivering small numbers of homes and would be an important part of the Council's housing development programme.

The report also set out proposals for new governance arrangements and delegated powers surrounding housing delivery that would ensure that officers had the ability to act swiftly and ensure that opportunities that would enable the delivery of the objectives set out in the Annual Housing Plan were not missed when they arose. The Head of Strategic Housing Development noted that ward members would be consulted at any early stage regarding the development of garage and infill sites in their wards.

The Head of Strategic Housing Development noted that there had been an error in "Appendix 3b, Strategic pipeline of Council-owned sites – 2021/22 projected schemes" as originally included in the agenda pack, in that it had identified some sites for proposed development in error. The Head of Strategic Housing Development advised that the appendix had now been amended and the error corrected.

Members asked how the Section 106 agreements that were linked to new housing developments would contribute to the delivery of the housing plan. The Cabinet Member advised that Section 106 agreements would play an important role in the council's plan for housing delivery as they enabled via the planning process a simple and easily to administer way to enable housing to replace stock lost through right to buy purchases. Members noted their approval the proposed use of garage sites for infill development and welcomed the plans for working with ward members on the proposals for these sites. Members asked how the council would enable smaller local building companies to have the opportunity to develop these sites. The Cabinet Member advised that the council ran an annual housing developers summit in order to engage with local builders on the council's development plans. The Head of Strategic Housing Development noted that the council also produced a newsletter for smaller local developers and that regular communication was also maintained with them on the council's future development plans. The

Chair noted that it was essential that local businesses be supported by engaging with them on the delivery of housing in the Borough.

Members asked how the changes to planning regulations would impact on the delivery of the council's housing plan. The Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment advised that services were working together regarding the implications of the new planning regulations for the delivery of the housing plan.

The Chair asked how a potential fall in house prices related to the pandemic could impact on the delivery of the housing plan. The Cabinet Member advised that potential variances in house prices had been taken into consideration in the development of the plan, and that thorough preparatory work for each site would ensure that any issues that had the potential to impact on the successful delivery of a site were highlighted and addressed at any early stage. The Head of Strategic Housing Development noted that demand for housing and house prices were currently in healthy position.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Housing, the Strategic Director for Adult Care, Housing and Public Health and the Head of Strategic Housing Development for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

218. TOWN CENTRE PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER, AND A DOG CONTROL PUBLIC SPACES PROTECTION ORDER

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 21 September 2020 in respect of Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) Proposals – September 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Assistant Director - Community Safety and Street Scene attended the meeting to present the report.

It was noted that the report to Cabinet in July 2020 that had detailed proposals for consultation on the details of the PSPO's had been delayed significantly due to Covid-19 pandemic, and as such a request had been made for the decision to implement the new PSPO's be exempt from call-in in order to prevent a potential gap between the old PSPO's expiring and the new proposed PSPO's coming into force occurring. It was noted that as such the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, in consultation with the Leader of the Opposition had agreed to exempt the decision from the normal call-in procedure.

The report noted that the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014 had created powers to introduce PSPO's in order to prevent individuals or groups committing anti-social behaviour in public spaces, and that the introduction of these powers had superseded previous legislation, such as Dog Control Orders. This change of legislation had subsequently enabled the Council's Dog Control Order, that prohibited the fouling of land by dogs, to be transitioned into a PSPO. It was noted that this PSPO was due to expire on 19 October 2020. In addition, on 11 September 2017, the Cabinet and Commissioners' Decision-Making Meeting had agreed the implementation of a new PSPO from 1 October 2017 that prohibited a number of anti-social behaviours in the town centre. It was noted that this PSPO was due to expire on 30 September 2020.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety noted the role that scrutiny had played in the development and consultation process for the new proposed PSPO's. It was also noted that an extensive consultation process had taken place on the proposals. Full details of the consultation process and responses were included in the officer's report and it was noted by the Cabinet Member that the responses from the consultation had been overwhelmingly in favour of the proposals for the renewal of the two PSPO's.

Members noted that some respondents to the consultation had asked for changes to the PSPO's to be made and asked for further information on the changes that they had wanted to see. The Cabinet Member advised that the requests had been regarding extending the area covered by the Town Centre and Clifton Park PSPO. The Assistant Director - Community Safety and Street Scene noted that there had also been requests to increase the penalties for breaching the PSPO's.

Members noted the significant number of complaints that they received regarding dog fouling, on the frequency of dog bins being emptied and on the lack of bins in public spaces. Members agreed that residents must be urged to report incidents of bins not being emptied or being located in unsuitable locations, as well as regarding dog fouling not being cleaned up so that action could be taken to locate bins in the most suitable areas and to deploy enforcement activity in problem areas. The Cabinet Member agreed that only by residents reporting problems could a picture be created of where problem areas were and to enable appropriate deployment of resources. The Cabinet Member stated that 22 penalty notices for dog fouling had issued in the last year and noted that this was a considerable achievement given that enforcement officers had to be on the spot and witness an offence taking place. The Cabinet Member noted that more enforcement officers were being recruited and that the new officers would have links to specific neighbourhoods that would enable them to develop good local knowledge of their areas and to build relationships with local residents and ward members.

The Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities noted that new

bins were currently being installed but that these bins would be for the replacement of damaged or missing bins, not for creating additional bin locations. The Assistant Director noted that bagged dog waste could be placed in any bin and not just in designated dog fouling bins and advised that where bins were missing that ward members would be consulted on the most suitable site for the replacement bin to located.

The Chair asked about whether there were any exemptions for fines regarding dog fouling. The Assistant Director advised that owners of assistance dogs were exempt from fines and assured members that in all cases of enforcement activity equality issues were always considered and noted that any enforcement action taken would always need to meet the public interest test in being pursued.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety and the Assistant Director - Community Safety and Street Scene for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

Resolved: -

That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

219. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

220. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 11am on Wednesday 14 October 2020 as Microsoft Teams meeting.