

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**  
**Wednesday 2 December 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>

**257. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 4 NOVEMBER 2020**

**Resolved:** - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, held on 4 November 2020, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

**258. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**259. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

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

**260. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**261. PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS MADE BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD ON THE USE OF AGENCY STAFF - NOVEMBER 2020**

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Human Resources and Organisational Development attended the meeting to provide a progress report on the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the use of agency staff.

The report noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board review of the use of agency, interim and consultancy staff had reported in February 2018 and had made twelve recommendations that had been subsequently endorsed by Cabinet in July 2019. The report provided a progress report on the three recommendations that had not yet been fully implemented.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services noted that the Workforce Management Board continued to monitor and control agency costs by challenging usage across the Council and assured members that agency staff were only used to enable the continuation of services for specific and time limited periods, with

directorates having been tasked to reduce agency usage and to seek alternative solutions for flexible resourcing to maintain service delivery. The Cabinet Member noted that the Council's spend on agency staff had fallen by 77% since 2016/17 and advised that it was being forecasted that the cost of agency staff for 2020/21 would be similar to that of 2019/20 at around £3.6million.

The Cabinet Member detailed the progress made since the last progress report to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in September 2019 on the three recommendations that had not yet been fully implemented.

### **Recommendation 6**

*That the transformation plans for ASC are carefully monitored to ensure that agency and consultancy use is delivering value for money and practice improvements.*

The new Adult Social Care Pathway had been implemented in October 2019 and agency usage in Adult Social Care continued to be monitored by the Work Force Management Board. It was noted that currently the Directorate had two Social Workers in Supported Discharge Pathways whose engagements were scheduled to end at the end of the calendar year.

### **Recommendation 9**

*That further work be undertaken to lessen the requirement for seasonal agency staff. This should include annualising hours or ensuring operatives 'multi-task' and are able to share roles and functions.*

The review asked that a further report be provided exploring options. It was noted that Regeneration and Environment recruited 22 employees in Grounds Maintenance on seasonal contracts at the beginning of March 2020 and that permanent recruitment to lessen the requirement for agency workers further was due to take place in Spring 2021.

### **Recommendation 11**

*That the Work Force Management Board should explore the feasibility with other councils and public sector partners of developing an in-house 'bank' system or employment agency to reduce cost and reliance on external agencies.*

The new neutral vendor agency contract that had commenced in April 2020 had increased the number of suppliers from across the market. The supply chains included the neutral vendors internal agency whose placements were not subject to agency commission rates and had typically delivered savings of around 8%. The new agency contract had reduced agency commission costs by £48,915 in the first six months of its

operation.

Members welcomed the reduced and targeted use of agency staff and asked for further information on the neutral vendor arrangement and whether agency staff who had been in post for some time were moved onto permanent contracts with the Council. The Assistant Director – Human Resources and Organisational Development provided further information on how the neutral vendor arrangement worked and advised that where appropriate agency staff were moved to Council contracts as this both reduced costs and increased staff wellbeing.

Members asked whether further consideration had been given to the recommendation that an in-house 'bank' system or employment agency that could reduce costs and reliance on external agencies be created. The Assistant Director advised that the current neutral vendor arrangement enabled the Council to benefit from reduced costs when using agency staff without the additional administrative processes and associated costs that would be involved in the operation on an in-house agency.

Members asked that with the economic fallout of the pandemic severely impacting jobs locally, whether an in-house agency would enable more jobs to be made available for local people. The Assistant Director advised that work was being carried out to look at whether a generic recruitment process for entry level roles at the Council could be established that would create a list of suitable candidates for employment in roles as they became available. The Assistant Director noted that such a process would benefit local people in Rotherham to access jobs at the Council.

The Chair asked whether the pandemic had increased the use of agency staff across the Council. The Assistant Director advised that the pandemic had created some increase in demand for agency staff due to staff being absent from work in areas such as school cleaning and other important front-line roles but assured the Chair that all agency spend was carefully monitored.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services and the Assistant Director – Human Resources and Organisational Development for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

**Resolved: -**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That a progress report on the use of agency staff be brought to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in 12 months' time, or sooner if the costs involved in employing agency staff increase substantially.

**262. ADULT CARE - RESTRUCTURE AND PATHWAY DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRESS REPORT**

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health and the Assistant Director – Adult Social Care and Integration attended the meeting to provide a progress report on the new Adult Social Care operating structure and pathways that had been implemented in October 2019.

The report noted that the main objectives of the new structure and pathways had been to ensure a more customer focussed and responsive offer to the residents of Rotherham that resulted in reduced waiting times at the point of contact; a stronger reablement offer that enabled more people to regain independence; increased continuity of council staff involved; a simpler structure for residents and partners to be able to understand and to raise practice standards and overall performance. It was noted that once the restructure had been implemented that a 20-week coaching programme for managers had been completed in order to further develop leadership and management skills.

In introducing the report, the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health emphasised that the changes that had been implemented had been designed to ensure that services offered were more responsive and put the service user at the centre of everything that the service provided. The Cabinet Member noted the significant impact of the pandemic, that had started just four months after the implementation of the restructure, had had on the provision of adult care services, and that as such it was difficult to fully assess how far the new structure had impacted on how services were delivered.

The Cabinet Member noted that a review of the restructure had taken place in September 2020 in order to identify what had worked well, and what was not working in the way that it had been intended, so as to identify areas for learning and improvement. It was also noted that an internal audit of the restructure and pathways was currently underway and due for completion in Quarter 4 of 2020/21.

The Cabinet Member noted several areas of the new structure and pathways that were working well including:

- The introduction of broader roles within Localities Teams has allowed staff to receive a more well-rounded experience of social care.
- “Huddles” have enabled a forum for the teams to keep in touch and share best practice, virtually, noting that this facility had been has been invaluable during the pandemic.
- The alignment of First Contact / Customer Contact with Reablement had been extremely positive for supporting the use of Reablement and sharing resource across the service effectively.
- Communication within Access had improved, and it was felt there was good amount collaboration and information sharing across

teams.

- Since COVID-19, the IDT discharge process has been working well.

The Cabinet Member also noted some areas where further development and improvement were required, including:

- Part-time term working, and certain flexible working arrangements, causing issues with the consistency of staff across teams and consequently impacting on capacity to deliver services.
- Concerns about the capacity of managers to provide direction and leadership when much of their time was taken up with managing processes.

The Cabinet Member advised that overall, and despite the significant challenges of dealing with the pandemic that the restructure had been successful and had enabled the delivery of vital budget savings.

The Assistant Director noted the impact of the pandemic on the implementation of the restructure and on the ability of management to be able to fully assess its impact on the delivery of services. The Assistant Director advised that the pandemic had severely limited the planned activities around training and development that had been designed to support the restructure.

Members asked for further information on the 'Huddle Board' approach that was being used across adult care services and how it was enabling information sharing. The Assistant Director advised that the Huddle Board enabled virtual meetings to take place and for discussions to happen that highlighted areas of success and areas for improvement that then created trackable actions that could be escalated as required. The Assistant Director noted that the collaboration and best practice sharing that the platform had enabled had been very beneficial for the service.

Members welcomed the use of the 'Huddle Board' approach in how it enabled collaboration, information sharing, continuous improvement and for a clear audit trail for issues to be escalated. The Cabinet Member and Assistant Director emphasised the key role that Huddle Boards had played in ensuring teams worked together effectively during the challenges of the pandemic.

Members asked how the issue of staff lacking confidence in relation to their position in the new structure was being addressed. The Assistant Director noted that the scale of the restructure had been very ambitious, and that its implementation would have always been very challenging for all staff involved. The Assistant Director advised that the change created by the restructure of staff moving from very specific to broader roles had been planned to be supported by a full programme of training and development, but that the impact of the pandemic had meant that all of the proposed training had not happened as planned, and as such the

level of staff confidence had been impacted negatively.

The Assistant Director noted the challenges of delivering training and of developing functioning teams virtually, but assured members that managers had been empowered to support staff and that all of the planned training would be delivered in full during Spring and Summer 2021.

The Cabinet Member noted the while anxiety and uncertainty created by the pandemic and the restructure for adult care staff was to be expected, he assured members that all staff had received support with their mental health and wellbeing throughout the period of the pandemic.

Members noted that the report referred to the Regional Peer Challenge that had taken place in February 2020 and provided an overview of its outcomes. Members noted further that it would be useful for them to see the full report and the actions that had been developed following the review. The Assistant Director advised that the peer review, the pending internal audit report and the review that had taken place in September 2020 would be brought together to develop a comprehensive action plan.

The Cabinet Member noted his thanks to all Adult Social Care staff for their work during the pandemic. The Chair, on behalf of all members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board concurred with the comments of the Cabinet Member.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health and the Assistant Director – Adult Social Care and Integration for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

**Resolved: -**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the results of the Peer Challenge be circulated to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
3. That the timeline and action plan detailing the required actions to address areas in need of improvement in the Adult Care Service be circulated to members of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
4. That a progress report on the Adult Care - restructure and pathway development programme and the action being taken to address areas that require improvement be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in six months' time.

**263. WORK PROGRAMME**

The Board considered its Work Programme.

**Resolved:** - That the Work Programme be approved.

**264. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS**

The Chairs of the Improving Lives, Improving Places and Health Select Commissions provided an update on the work of the Select Commissions.

The Chair provided a progress report on the work of the sub-groups of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

**265. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS**

Members considered the Cabinet Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2020 to 28 February 2021.

**Resolved:** - That the Forward Plan be noted.

**266. CALL-IN ISSUES**

There were no call-in issues.

**267. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that there were two urgent items for pre-decision scrutiny to be considered.

**268. COVID WINTER GRANT**

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 10 December 2020 in respect of a report on the Covid Winter Grant. The Leader of the Council and the Policy and Equalities Manager attended the meeting to present the report.

The Chair advised that due to the need for the Cabinet to make a decision on the report as soon as possible, that in accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution that he, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had given his permission that the decision could be taken using the "Special Urgency" procedures as it was not practicable for 28 days' notice of the intention to take the decision to be given.

The Chair also advised that due to the urgency of the decision, that in accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution surrounding call-in, that he as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, in consultation with Councillor Cowles, as Leader of

the Opposition had agreed that the decision should be exempt from the Council's call-in processes.

In introducing the report the Leader thanked the Chair for allowing the two reports to be considered under urgency procedures, and thanked the Chair and Councillor Cowles for allowing the decisions taken by Cabinet to be exempt from the call-in process so as to enable the financial support being provided to be made available to those in need as soon as was possible.

The report stated that as part of a range of interventions to support people impacted by the COVID emergency the Government had announced a £170 million COVID Winter Grant Scheme, administered by the Department for Work and Pensions and that Rotherham MBC had been granted £1,007,395.16 from the scheme. The report noted that the COVID Winter Grant had been created to for use during the current financial year in order to provide support to vulnerable households and families during the winter period where alternative sources of assistance may be unavailable.

The report set out the Council's proposed use of the grant in Rotherham including the provision of vouchers in lieu of free school meals for the Christmas and February half term holidays. It was noted that it was expected that the holiday food vouchers scheme would account for the use of 50% of the grant, leaving the remainder to be used in to provide other targeted support that could to be provided by the scheme. The proposed allocation of the support in Rotherham was:

- Holiday Programme and Food - £492,395.16
- Struggling with utility costs / debt - £285,000
- Christmas food - £30,000
- Help with school uniforms - £200,000

The report also provided information on the proposed 'local eligibility framework and approach' that Council was required to develop in order to enable the distribution of the grant funding in a way that best supported vulnerable families and individuals. The Leader advised that the administration processes that would be used to get the support to those who required it would be relatively straightforward as they would utilise existing procedures and partnership arrangements.

Members welcomed the support that the Covid Winter Grant would provide for residents and noted the difference that it would make to residents who were struggling financially due to the economic impact of the pandemic.

Members sought assurance that residents who did not have internet access would not be disadvantaged in being able to claim the support that they were entitled to. The Leader noted that the support for families with free school meals would be administered using existing processes that



would ensure that families who were entitled for support would not miss out. The Leader advised that residents who were entitled to more targeted support would be written to directly to inform them of the processes to access the additional support, with the subsequent processes being able to be accessed by phone. The Leader advised that in addition to direct contact with residents that there would also be activities to raise awareness of the support available more generally across the community. The Policy and Equalities Manager noted that access to support with utility bills would not be as straightforward as administering other parts of the scheme, but assured members that the Council's Community Hub and partnerships with the voluntary sector, who had a good knowledge of those in need of support would be able to refer those in need of support to the scheme.

Members noted the important role that the Council's Community Hub continued to play in helping residents access the help and support that they were entitled to and the important role that it would play in providing access to the support provided by the Covid Winter Grant.

Members noted that many people struggling to purchase nutritious food may also lack the correct kitchen equipment to prepare food and asked if any plans were in place to provide this type of equipment. The Policy and Equalities Manager advised that discussions were currently taking place with voluntary sector partners on how funding received earlier in the year could be utilised to provide essential cooking and small electrical items to those residents in need.

Members noted with concern the financial challenges that families and communities would face in the coming months. The Leader advised that the Covid Winter Grant had been designed in order to provide support through to the end of March 2021 and that he was confident that the money that had been provided through the grant would be sufficient to provide the level of support needed through the Winter months. The Leader advised that consideration would need to be given to what support could be offered after March 2021 in order to address the significant financial challenges and difficulties that residents would face in the post-pandemic era.

Members noted the key role of elected members in spreading the message about the support was available within their communities and asked that they be kept up to date and informed on how they could assist with this important task.

In conclusion the Leader noted that the Covid Winter Grant funding would be used to build on previous initiatives and policy decisions taken by the Council that would improve the lives of the Borough's most vulnerable residents.

The Chair thanked Leader of the Council and the Policy and Equalities Manager for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

**Resolved: -**

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That a consideration be given to the creation of a single point of contact in order to enable all residents that are eligible for support to be able access that support easily.
3. That all members be kept updated and informed on how they can support the Council's efforts to ensure that all residents eligible for support are able to access that support.

**269. ADDITIONAL RESTRICTIONS GRANT (ARG) - ROTHERHAM MBC DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS SUPPORT SCHEME**

Consideration was given to a report that was submitted for pre-decision scrutiny ahead of the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 10 December 2020 in respect of a report on the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) – Rotherham MBC Discretionary Business Support Scheme. The Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services and the Head of Corporate Finance attended the meeting to present the report.

The Chair advised that due to the need for the Cabinet to make a decision on the report as soon as possible, that in accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution that he, as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board had given his permission that the decision could be taken using the "Special Urgency" procedures as it was not practicable for 28 days' notice of the intention to take the decision to be given.

The Chair also advised that due to the urgency of the decision, that in accordance with the procedures set out in the Council's Constitution surrounding call-in, that he as the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, in consultation with Councillor Cowles, as Leader of the Opposition had agreed that the decision should be exempt from the Council's call-in processes.

The report stated that the Government had provided a further package of support grants for businesses that had been impacted by the Tier 2 and 3 restrictions, or that had been forced to close as part of the Tier 3 restrictions and national lockdown. The Local Restrictions Support Grants (LRSG's) that had been established had been administered by local authorities and followed government guidance, had been targeted at businesses registered for business rates, with grant payments being available of up to £3,000 per four-week period.

On 24 October South Yorkshire entered into the Tier 3 (very high risk) level as part of the response to the Covid-19 pandemic and rising case

numbers in the area. As part of the agreement with the Government to enter Tier 3, the Sheffield City Region Combined Authority (SCRCA) had negotiated a business support package of £30million, known as the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG). It was noted that this new grant was a discretionary fund that SCRCA could then use to create a package of support for businesses that had been unable to access the Government's LRSG's, either because they had not been registered for business rates or were not defined as being in one of the business sectors that had been designated as being able to access the grants.

The report outlined the progress made on delivering the Government's LRSG's as well as how the ARG discretionary fund would be used to complement those grants and support wider businesses in Rotherham. The report also sought approval for the Council's proposed use of the SCRCA discretionary business support fund, for which Rotherham had been allocated £664,000, and for the proposed eligibility criteria.

In introducing the report, the Leader noted that the focus of the new ARG scheme would be for the many small and micro businesses that had been financially impacted by the pandemic, but that had not been able to apply for support previously. The Leader advised that the application process would be a straightforward procedure for applicants where they would need to provide evidence that they had been financially impacted, either directly, or indirectly due to the restrictions imposed in response to the pandemic.

The Head of Corporate Finance advised that all applications for support would continue to be submitted through a single application form, and that officers would then assess to see which support schemes the applicant was entitled to benefit from. It was noted that the scheme would be promoted on the Council website, via social media and press releases inviting businesses to submit an application using the Council's business support application form.

The officer's report provided information on the three phases of the ARG scheme and the support that each phase would provide.

The Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services advised that it was proposed that applications for support would be accepted until 31 January 2021, but that as the funds available for support were not limitless, and that as there was uncertainty about the number of requests for support that could be submitted, that applications would be processed on a first come first served basis until the fund had been exhausted. It was noted that if any funds were still available at the end of this period it was proposed that the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services, in consultation with the Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, be delegated authority to process top up payments in order to fully utilise the resources available.

Members welcomed the support that the ARG would provide to the many

small and micro businesses who had not been able to claim any financial support previously.

The Chair asked for assurances that there were sufficient safeguards in place to prevent fraudulent claims for support being made. The Head of Corporate Finance advised that robust checks had been in place when dealing with all applications for support during the pandemic and advised that checks would be made on bank statements submitted as well as checks being as social media activity in order to verify business activity.

Members noted that a balance needed to be struck between protecting against fraudulent claims and enabling a straightforward application process to be implemented that ensured claims for support were processed in a timely manner. Members noted that an efficient process was needed so as to ensure that the support reached those businesses that had been facing significant financial challenges during the pandemic as quickly as possible.

The Leader concluded the discussion in encouraging any business in the Borough that was unsure if they were entitled to support to make a claim using the single application form process so as to ensure they received any support that they were entitled to.

The Chair thanked the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services, the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services and the Head of Corporate Finance for attending the meeting and answering members' questions.

**Resolved: -**

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That consideration be given to the creation of a single point of contact in order to enable all residents that are eligible for support to be able access that support easily.
3. That all members be kept updated and informed on how they can support the Council's efforts to ensure that all residents eligible for support are able to access that support.

**270. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved: -** That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held on Wednesday 16 December 2020 at 11am as a Microsoft Teams meeting.