

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 21 June 2021

**Report Title**

The Year Ahead Plan – progress report

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

**Report Author(s)**

Jackie Mould

Head of Policy, Performance & Intelligence

Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

[Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk)

**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The Year Ahead Plan, approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020, is the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The purpose of the plan is to support residents, communities and businesses through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, helping to build resilience whilst also continuing to drive our ambitious plans for Rotherham.

The plan sets out the headline themes and corresponding outcomes and key actions for September 2020 through to May 2021.

Formal quarterly progress reports are presented in public at Cabinet meetings, with an opportunity for Scrutiny consideration if required. The first public report was presented to Cabinet on 21<sup>st</sup> December 2020 and the second public report was presented to Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021.

This is the third quarterly progress report to Cabinet, focusing on the progress made since September 2020.

In addition, the report includes the proposal to extend the plan to November 2021 in order to provide time to develop a longer-term Council Plan.

## **Recommendations**

1. To note the progress made with the Year Ahead activities.
2. To agree the proposal to extend the Year Ahead Plan to November 2021.
3. To note that the Year Ahead Plan extension will be replaced by a new medium-term Council Plan, to be recommended by Cabinet for adoption by the full Council in January 2022.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 - Year Ahead Plan milestone tracker  
Appendix 2 - Case studies  
Appendix 3 - Timeline  
Appendix 4 – Year Ahead Plan Extension  
Appendix 5 – Equality Screening and Analysis  
Appendix 6 – Climate Change Impact Assessment

## **Background Papers**

The Year Ahead Plan – report to Cabinet on 21 September 2020  
The Year Ahead Plan progress report to Cabinet on 21 December 2020 and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2021

## **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 16 December 2020

## **Council Approval Required**

No

## **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **The Year Ahead Plan – progress update March 2021**

The Year Ahead Plan – progress report

### **1. Background**

1.1 The Year Ahead Plan is the Council's plan for operating in and recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The purpose of the plan is to support residents, communities and businesses through the challenges and uncertainty of the pandemic, helping to build resilience whilst also continuing to drive our ambitious plans for Rotherham. It sets out the headline themes and corresponding outcomes and key actions for September 2020 through to May 2021.

1.2 The key aims of the Year Ahead Plan are to continue to:

- Work with our residents and stakeholders, supporting them and adapting with them to meet current needs in light of the pandemic
- Manage the ongoing effects of the pandemic, including the local outbreak control plan
- Drive our ambitious plans for the borough wherever possible
- Develop and embed new ways of working.

1.3 The Year Ahead Plan replaces the Council Plan for 2020/21 and was approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020.

1.4 The plan is framed around 5 themes:

- Thriving Neighbourhoods
- Better Health and Wellbeing
- Economic Recovery
- New Ways of Working
- Hope and Confidence in Rotherham.

The plan also includes the following cross-cutting strands, which are integral to each theme:

- Equalities and Social Justice
- Climate Impact.

1.5 In delivering against these themes, the plan outlines a total of 77 actions.

### **2. Key Issues**

#### **2.1 Year Ahead Plan extension and Council Plan refresh**

2.2 The current Year Ahead Plan runs to June 2021. In light of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the need for a continued focus on recovery, it is suggested that the existing Year Ahead Plan is extended until November 2021 through the identification of actions for two additional quarters. This will also allow time to engage with members and Cabinet post-election on

priorities that will inform a new longer-term Council Plan from 2022. A draft of the extended Year Ahead Plan is included at Appendix 4.

- 2.3 The Year Ahead extension takes the Council through to when the new Council Plan is approved.
- 2.4 The new Council Plan will establish medium-term priorities and actions. This will follow direction from Cabinet and engagement and consultation with members, partners, communities, and stakeholders over the summer to early autumn. The Plan will build on and take forward commitments made by members to the Rotherham community. Cabinet will agree the draft new Council Plan and recommend it for adoption at the full Council meeting in January 2022.
- 2.5 The themes within the extended Year Ahead Plan remain the same, with a minor change made to the outcome relating to children and young people (Better Health and Wellbeing theme). New actions through to November have been identified by liaising with current activity leads across directorates. The national roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions, announced by the Prime Minister on 22 February 2020, has been factored into the new actions identified.
- 2.6 **Progress update**
- 2.7 This is the third quarterly progress report to Cabinet, focusing on the progress made since September 2020. The Year Ahead Plan milestone tracker (Appendix 1) outlines progress against all the actions within the Year Ahead Plan. Each action has been rated as follows:

Action fully complete
Action started and on track to be delivered by the deadline originally set
Action has some risk/delay to delivery or is behind the original schedule – deadline may not be met
Action will not be met within the original timeframe or the deadline has been missed
Action not yet scheduled to start and status is not relevant

2.8 As of 17<sup>th</sup> May:

- 36% (27) of the activities outlined within the Year Ahead Plan have been completed to date
- 47% (36) are on track
- 13% (10) are behind schedule
- 4% (3) are off track.

In addition to the above, there is a specific action in the plan to ensure that 'Initiatives and activities across all themes are on track.'

2.9 A small number of activities within the plan have been delayed. This has been in the context of delivering the ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2.10 **Thriving Neighbourhoods**

2.11 The Thriving Neighbourhoods theme is focused on building and supporting community resilience. This includes working with local people and the voluntary and community sector to deliver the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and provide effective support to those affected by COVID-19, particularly the most vulnerable residents.

2.12 Within this theme, the Council is focused on the following outcomes:

- Putting communities at the heart of everything we do
- Democratic arrangements are open, transparent and accountable
- Vulnerable residents affected by COVID-19 are supported by the Council
- Rotherham residents, VCS organisations and businesses use their skills and assets to help others.

Key areas of progress to deliver on these outcomes are outlined below.

2.13 To build on the Rotherham Heroes programme and strengthen relationships with the voluntary and community sector, a range of activity has taken place. Volunteer coordinators for the north, south and central area were recruited in December 2020. Since they have been in post, they have engaged and built up relationships with individual Rotherham Heroes volunteers and reviewed and refined the Rotherham Hero volunteer process through the Community Hub.

2.14 Additionally, the Staff Volunteering Policy is on track to be considered for approval by the end of June and is set to go to Staffing Committee after Annual Council, whilst the new service level agreement for voluntary and community sector infrastructure support is now completed and is operational from 1 April 2021 for three years.

2.15 Neighbourhood working continues to be a key priority, allowing Elected Members to drive local activity. Streetpride zonal managers have attended ward briefings over the last few months and worked with both Members and the Neighbourhoods Team to agree local priorities and target resources. As a result of these discussions, 'Community Days' have now been delivered for each ward in the borough, with Streetpride officers undertaking street cleaning work in areas identified by Members as a priority. These have been well-received by local people and have made a positive impact in improving the targeted areas.

- 2.16 Ward budgets and Ward Housing Hub budgets were agreed in April 2020. As at end of March 2021, all ward budgets have been fully allocated to projects and activities that address ward priorities. In relation to the Housing Hub budget, this was also fully spent with the exception of £318 relating to projects which could not be delivered in time for the financial year end.
- 2.17 The Library Strategy for 2021-26 was approved by Council in November. Key aspects of this strategy include improvements to library buildings in neighbourhoods, making libraries more accessible, and increasing community involvement in the delivery of library services. The capital programme of works to improve libraries is well underway, with the majority of works set to be completed in 2021/22. The capital IT programme for all libraries was completed in December 2020.
- 2.18 Youth work has continued throughout the borough during the pandemic, and work is now taking place to enhance the Council's youth work offer as lockdown restrictions ease. Recruitment for three additional youth work posts is underway and once commenced in post, the new coordinators will work to produce and publish a youth work summer programme which will comprise more places to go and things to do for Rotherham's young people. The new programme will include indoor youth work and trips and residential outside the borough. This will be in addition to the targeted youth work offer already in place, working with and supporting the most vulnerable adolescents across the borough.
- 2.19 Details of the Member Induction programme for 2021/22 were finalised and the programme began following elections in May. The content of the programme focuses on ensuring councillors have the skills and knowledge to fulfil their roles and provide effective community leadership, including sessions on key topics such as governance and decision-making, roles and responsibilities, neighbourhood working and safeguarding. The sessions are being delivered virtually and are recorded and uploaded to the Elected Member Portal shortly after taking place.
- 2.20 As part of supporting vulnerable residents across Rotherham, government hardship funding continues to be utilised to increase crisis resources and provide food and other essentials to vulnerable residents. The Hardship Grant from MHCLG has been used for council tax reduction, while the Local Authority Emergency Assistance Grant for Food and Essential Supplies provided by DEFRA was used to provide a range of support, including providing non-food stock to supplement crisis food, grants to VCS organisations, school uniforms, household goods and enhanced advice services. Additionally, the COVID Winter Grant and Covid Winter Grant Extension provided by DWP was used for support for utility costs, vouchers in lieu of free school meals, school uniforms and grants to VCS organisations to provide food parcels. Finally, the COVID Local Support Grant provided by DWP is being used to provide vouchers in lieu of free school meals and

school uniforms and must be spent by 20<sup>th</sup> June.

- 2.21 Further support to people requiring advice across the borough will be provided through the new service level agreement for the provision of advice services, which is now operational and in place for three years from 1 April 2021.
- 2.22 Additionally, the recommissioning of both the refuge and support services for those affected by domestic abuse is proceeding as planned. The refuge has been out to tender for interested parties to prepare submissions, which are currently being evaluated. The new contract will mobilise towards the end of September 2021, with the current level of provision seeking to be retained as a minimum. In relation to the support service offer, market engagement and co-production is being conducted in order to ensure the service meets the needs of victims and survivors. The engagement programme was launched at the end of March via a live webinar made available across the provider sector – this was well attended and generated a good level of engagement.
- 2.21 One action within the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme around supporting vulnerable people, 'commission new services to prevent financial exploitation', is rated as off track. This is due to the intended delivery partner, West Yorkshire Financial Exploitation and Abuse Team, being unable to go ahead until the autumn. Other options are being explored. In the meantime, process mapping to understand how concerns of financial exploitation are currently reported is complete and the Financial Exploitation Toolkit is awaiting final feedback before finalisation.
- 2.22 **Better health and wellbeing**
- 2.23 The better health and wellbeing theme is about taking steps to address the health impacts of the pandemic, including managing any future outbreaks, assessing the effect the pandemic has had on health inequalities and building on positive behavioural changes such as increased physical activity.
- 2.24 Within this theme, the Council is focussed on the following outcomes:
- Local incidents and outbreaks are managed effectively
  - Health inequalities are understood and responded to
  - Vulnerable adults are protected and adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions
  - Children and young people are protected, safeguarded and able to achieve their potential
  - Active travel is accessible, and local people reap the associated health and environmental benefits.

Key areas of progress to deliver on these outcomes are outlined below.

- 2.25 The Rotherham 7-day infection rate (all ages) was 27.9 per 100,00 (for 7 days to 14<sup>th</sup> May), compared with the UK rate of 22 per 100,000. This is a

much improved position with respect to Rotherham's rate just prior to the Easter break (when it reached 170), and is also improved in respect of Rotherham's ranking when compared to other England lower tier local authorities. The rate amongst the over 60s age group for the same week was 7.3 per 100,000, which equates to just 5 cases in that age group over the week.

- 2.26 Delivery of the Communications Strategy is integral to the work around outbreak control. Since the national roadmap was announced, the key messages have remained the same. These are:
- Following 'hands, face, space' guidelines.
  - Encouraging people to get tested regularly. Every adult is now entitled to get tested twice a week for free.
  - Ensuring that if residents do test positive, they respond by self-isolating. This includes promoting services that are still available to support self-isolation.
- 2.27 The Communications Strategy is also now focussing on recovery and how the Council can support residents to move into recovery safely as restrictions start to ease. A COVID-19 roadmap is in development for Rotherham to show when services will reopen. The 'Let's Get Rotherham Moving' campaign has also been launched to boost residents' confidence to get back out, explore the borough and support local businesses. Additionally, the COVID-19 email bulletin that has been in place since the start of the pandemic will be repurposed into a 'recovery bulletin.'
- 2.28 PCR testing sites continue to run 7 days a week in Rotherham, including the drive-through testing site at the Midland Road old bus depot and the walk-through sites at Herringthorpe Stadium, Dinnington and Maltby.
- 2.29 The roll-out of the Community Testing Programme (CTP) commenced in January 2021 and is operating from Riverside House Café. Informed by engagement with communities, a walk-in testing site at the Unity Centre opened in April and is currently operating two days per week. The use of lateral flow tests has also been implemented in care homes, to enhance existing COVID-safe visiting policies and practice. More recently, the Council has also approved 'community collect' for LFD home testing kits. The intention is for this to operate out of customer service venues and libraries with Council staff being supported to access testing. Currently, the CTP is set to run until 30<sup>th</sup> June, with options being considered whilst awaiting an update from government.
- 2.30 The Council is playing a proactive role in supporting the NHS to roll-out vaccinations. For example, the Council continues to use existing channels to communicate key messages, particularly to groups that may be considered harder to reach.
- 2.31 Work has been ongoing to co-produce a refreshed Carers Strategy with partners and Rotherham carers. Resources and capacity challenges within



partner organisations have impacted on the timescales for developing the strategy. However, activity is on track to have phase 1 of the Carers Strategy, which will be focussed on COVID recovery and stabilisation, in place by June 2021. Work will then continue to develop phases 2 and 3; phase 2 will be focussed on improvement work and creating communities of support for carers, and phase 3 will be focussed on transformation and ensuring that support for carers is everyone's business.

- 2.32 The Council continues to work closely with education providers to empower all children to fulfil their potential. An Education Recovery cell has now been developed, which is focused on supporting all areas of education to have a proactive approach to challenges across the final part of the academic year. Key areas of focus include additional support for vulnerable groups, education recovery curriculum, school attendance and maximising the use of central government investment in 'catch-up' premium.
- 2.33 Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers remain higher than in a typical year, with the primary reason given by those opting for EHE being fears around COVID-19 and contraction of the virus in schools. Work has continued to address the increase in EHE cases across this term, including a series of multi-agency EHE summits looking at support and oversight to make sure this cohort are visible and supported. The EHE multi-agency governance group has remained a robust mechanism to make sure a strong level of support is available for students/families who have elected to home educate.
- 2.34 Schools have shared the positive support that has been put in place in response to findings from the children and young people's mental health surveys, including a full recovery curriculum delivered through PSHCE (Personal Social Health and Citizenship Education), targeted work with specific year groups and producing both student and parental wellbeing newsletters. A third survey is currently open and will capture the response of children and young people following the second period of limited school opening and the subsequent return to school/relaxation of lockdown. The Education Recovery cell will retain oversight of this agenda.
- 2.35 The implementation of the LAC Sufficiency Strategy and development of local residential provision continues to progress. The implementation of the strategy remains on track (the second home is now operational with plans to open the third home by Sept 2021). The opening of emergency accommodation in March 2021 is behind schedule. The home is complete and ready to be registered with Ofsted, however recruiting high quality staff has been challenging. Very recent recruitment activity has been successful and registering the provision will progress alongside staff taking up posts.
- 2.36 Work is ongoing to enable active travel and improve air quality in Rotherham. A draft cycling strategy has been completed with approval from Cabinet on 22<sup>nd</sup> March to go to public consultation. The online mapping facility is now in its final stages with the prototype released for internal comment. As well as the online mapping feature, the webpages contain a range of information to supplement key corporate messages around sustainable travel. Work has

also started on construction of Sheffield Road Cycleways and the scheme is expected to reach completion in quarter 1 of 2021/22.

2.37 Five of the actions within the Better health and wellbeing theme are rated as 'behind schedule' because they are at risk of not being delivered within the original timescales. The reasons include the recruitment of staff and partner capacity. One action is also 'off track' due to Herringthorpe Stadium being used as a COVID test centre.

## 2.38 **Economic recovery**

2.39 Within this theme, the Council is taking action to provide immediate help to local people and businesses affected by the pandemic, whilst maintaining progress on longer-term priority regeneration schemes. This combined focus on recovery and renewal is critical and the Council is working with local partners, Sheffield city region (SCR) and national government to ensure Rotherham gets the investment it needs to support and build its economy for the future.

2.40 The theme is focussed on the following outcomes:

- The Rotherham economy can adapt and start to recover from the pandemic
- The vision for the regeneration of the borough rejuvenates communities and businesses
- Social value is maximised to create more local jobs, apprenticeships and benefits in communities.

Progress updates are set out below.

2.41 Support to local businesses affected by the pandemic continues. From the outset of the tiered restrictions, government introduced the Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSG) and then from 1st April the Restart Grant (RG) schemes, through which over 1,700 businesses have received further support, with a total value of £30.3m. Further support has also been provided via Sheffield City Region, through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), with over 1,600 businesses supported for a total grant value of £6.3m. These grants are in addition to the business grant support provided during the first national lockdown, meaning a total grant value of £83.7m has been awarded to over 5,000 local businesses since the start of the pandemic.

2.42 In January, the Council launched a local scheme offering financial assistance to people who fell outside the national criteria for self-isolation support payments. The intention was that anyone who needed to self-isolate and who would otherwise lose income as a result, was entitled to cash support. Payments have been made on the local scheme to 236 claimants at a cost of £59,000, whilst claims to the government scheme have been made to 1,176 claimants at a cost of £588,000.

2.43 Work coaches from both the Council's Pathways Employment Solutions project and Coalfields Regeneration Trust are operating across the borough

to support people into employment and training. Discussions to locate Department for Work and Pensions work coaches in local libraries will restart after lockdown.

- 2.44 Major regeneration schemes are continuing, with good progress being made on all three town centre housing developments. Wellgate Place (54 homes) is on track for the first completions in October 2021. Construction of superstructures is underway at both Westgate Riverside (72 homes) and Millfold Rise (45 homes), which are on course for completion in spring and summer 2022 respectively.
- 2.45 On the Forge Island site, essential infrastructure work to pave the way for the new development remains on track. The Arc Cinema has signed a long-term lease with national urban regenerator, Muse Developments, to operate the cinema, and discussions with a hotel are at an advanced stage. Construction work is expected to begin later in 2021.
- 2.46 The Towns Fund bid was submitted to government in January, seeking investment of £35 million. A decision is expected shortly. Demolition work has been completed at the Primark site, which is to be transformed into a pocket park as part of the Towns Fund accelerator programme.
- 2.47 Funding of £12.6 million has been offered from the government's Future High Streets Fund, representing 69% of the submitted bid. The Council has allocated its own resources to address the shortfall and made minor amendments to the design. In addition, public realm schemes across the town centre are underway, with work completed on Bridgegate.
- 2.48 Finally, good progress has been made on social value. £1.5m of social value commitments have been secured through Council procurement, and online events have been held for local businesses and partners to raise awareness and explore further opportunities.
- 2.49 Three of the actions within the Economic Recovery theme are rated as 'behind schedule', all of which are physical schemes that have been unavoidably delayed. One action, relating to investment in the borough's business centres, is 'off track' due to the need to seek additional funding as tenders have come in over budget.
- 2.50 **New ways of working**
- 2.51 In response to the pandemic, the Council rapidly adapted and embraced new ways of working and continues to develop new digital processes. This theme will see further steps taken to support staff and improve outcomes for local residents; utilising technology, acting on feedback and continuing to evolve to meet current and future challenges.
- 2.52 Within this theme, the Council is focussed on the following outcomes:
- High quality customer services which are efficient and accessible
  - Staff are supported to work flexibly, building on recent experiences of

- home working
- An empowered and agile workforce, feeling valued and embracing new ways of working.

Progress updates are set out below.

2.53 New online processes have been developed, which will make it easier for customers and businesses to contact the Council to get the help they need during the pandemic.

2.54 Work has continued to develop new and existing digital processes to make it easier for customers and communities to access the services they need. Recent examples of the progress made are provided below:

- In April 2021, the Kickstart application process was launched online. Kickstart is a 6-month government funded placement scheme for young people aged 16-24 who are currently on Universal Credit and at risk of long-term unemployment.
- Customers are now able to request a £5 refund for the six-week Covid-related disruption to the garden waste collection service in spring 2020
- Rotherham residents experiencing fuel debt or poverty as a result of Covid-19 were able to apply for a winter grant online whilst the scheme was operating.
- On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021, voluntary and community sector organisations were invited to bid online to provide holiday activities for disadvantaged families less likely to access organised out-of-school activities, more likely to experience 'unhealthy holidays' in terms of nutrition and physical health, and more likely to experience social isolation.
- Parents and guardians who are not legally required to self-isolate, but who need to take time off work to look after a child or young person who is self-isolating, can now apply online for support via the track and trace support payment scheme.

Enhancements have also been made to the online Covid support application process to ensure the Council continues to respond to local needs. Work is also continuing to improve the bulky waste collection process to enable customers to book a date for collection online. To support this development the waste management software is being upgraded and is estimated to go live in September 2021.

2.55 Between January and March 2021, the Council website was visited 685,000 times by 401,000 customers and there were 68,000 online transactions. This is a considerable increase from January–March 2020, where the website was visited 550,000 times by 325,000 customers. The increase demonstrates how the Council is embracing new ways of working.

2.56 Online videos have been used since the start of the pandemic to communicate key messages and provide customers with online self-help. To

date, 48 videos have been added to the Council's YouTube channel over the past 12 months. This includes Covid-19 related broadcast messages such as information about test and trace, restrictions and staying safe, and pandemic life experiences. The online public self-help videos also remain popular (lateral flow testing, housing repairs, taxi vehicle application) with work continuing to develop similar tutorials for other services. The videos have attracted a total of 14,000 views. In terms of video tutorials, there were 520 views of the lateral flow testing video, 489 views of taxi licensing and 1,628 views of housing repair videos.

- 2.57 Face to face services are now available via a pre-booked appointment for vulnerable customers at one of five sites convenient to the customer (Aston, Maltby, Rawmarsh, Swinton, Dinnington). This service will also be available from Riverside House (date to be confirmed but not expected to be earlier than July). All libraries can provide support for customers who wish to self-serve digitally.
- 2.58 The Council continues to operate flexible working, including staff working from home, to ensure services are delivered in a Covid-safe way and in line with national guidance. New hybrid working guiding principles and policy are currently out for staff and trade union consultation. Further engagement will take place during June with colleagues across the Council and with elected members prior to being presented to the staffing committee in July for approval.
- 2.59 A new wellbeing programme was agreed in November 2020 and will run until June 2021. The programme sets out the wellbeing support and initiatives that are available for all staff. The wellbeing initiatives have been developed based on the feedback from the July staff wellbeing survey and will continue to evolve considering the feedback from future surveys and staff engagement activities.
- 2.60 A total of 838 members of staff attended 24 wellbeing sessions between January and March 2021. Work is currently taking place on a microsite, accessible for non-IT enabled staff, which will be launched in June 2021. Directorates are continuing to drive forward actions based on the results of the second staff wellbeing survey conducted in December 2020.
- 2.61 Organisational development staff workshops also took place between January and March 2021 to gather staff feedback and build a narrative which can be used to promote desired behaviours and ways of working; as well as identifying gaps in learning and development within the Council. The feedback is currently being analysed and will be used to develop a new workforce strategy for the Council. The new strategy will be aligned to the extended Year Ahead Plan and the new Council Plan.
- 2.62 One of the actions within the New Ways of Working theme, 'continue to develop and implement effective flexible working practices', is rated as 'behind schedule'. This is because details of the new hybrid working model are still being consulted and plans will need to take account of government guidance which is due to be updated prior to 21<sup>st</sup> Jun, as per paragraph 2.58

above.

## 2.63 **Hope and confidence in Rotherham**

2.64 Through this theme, the Council aims to foster a sense of optimism within Rotherham. This will be achieved by delivering on the commitments set out across the themes in this plan, by engaging with local people and seeking feedback, by keeping streets and public places clean and welcoming, and by providing a range of activities that aim to inspire joy and hope.

2.65 Within this theme, the Council is focussed on the following outcomes:

- People trust the Council to deliver on its commitments
- Communication messages are clear along with opportunities to engage and provide feedback
- Local people feel more connected to their community by engaging in positive activities: getting active, creative and outdoors more often
- Places are clean, welcoming and well-maintained.

Key areas of progress to deliver on these outcomes are outlined below.

2.66 A communications strategy was put in place at the start of the COVID-19 crisis. Its aim is to provide a reliable source of information to all audiences, including residents, businesses, elected members, staff and all partners. This has been achieved by delivering coordinated, frequent and clear public messaging in weekly electronic briefings, COVID-19 specific web pages, printed leaflets for members and households, and by targeting specific groups. As a result of the efforts to improve communications, the following progress has been made:

- 23.8% increase in email subscriptions (94,249 subscribers compared to 76,149 for the same period last year) as of April 2021
- Content continues to be posted online using the hashtag #HopeandConfidence linked back to the Year Ahead Plan and promoting Rotherham as a place. Recent examples have included 'Beat the Street', a fun, free initiative to see how far people can cycle, run, scoot and roll in just 6 weeks, the launch of Hope Fields at Thrybergh Country Park and the 'GetRidReyt' campaign urging residents to identify fly tippers and take pride in their neighbourhood.
- Short videos produced for social media channels (as mentioned in paragraph 2.56 above) focussed on the Covid response and positive messaging.

2.67 The Rotherham Together programme, a creative programme of events, activities and workshops built around the three core themes of Joy, Gratitude and Hope, came to an end in March 2021. There were an estimated 400,000 'hits' across the range of activities over the seven-month programme. The programme launched on 4th September to coincide with what would have been Rotherham Show, delivered the Wildflower Park land art installation at Clifton Park, a demonstration of thanks in the town centre and the Life in

Lockdown exhibition at the museum. Other events have included Black History Month, Christmas activities, and Chinese New Year celebrations. No Leotard Necessary, a programme of outdoor activity aimed at supporting continued physical exercise during lockdown, has also been running across all monthly programmes and Sparks of Joy, a series of pop-up performances in care home settings, ran throughout March.

- 2.68 All four leisure centres (Wath, Central, Maltby and Aston) and nine libraries reopened on 12th April and the 'order and collect' service will remain available until the end of June. Clifton Park museum reopened on 17<sup>th</sup> May and the café has remained open for takeaway service. It is anticipated that the Civic Theatre will reopen from September with a refurbished front of house.
- 2.69 The new memorial garden at Thrybergh opened on Saturday 27th March incorporating a memorial for key workers, an area for personal tributes, play sculptures and natural habitats. The 'Flock' art installation which details stories of life in lockdown will also be on loan from Wentworth Woodhouse.
- 2.70 A call has gone out through the press, social media, partner organisations and community groups to ask Rotherham residents to share what's helped them stay strong through the past year in a bid to inspire people to continue with good habits. The Council will use residents' ideas to create The Great Big Rotherham To-Do List – a free pocket guide full of inspiration to find everyday moments of calm, interest, health and fun based on the 'Five Ways to Wellbeing'.
- 2.71 Progress is underway to carry out a range of environmental improvements around the borough. Progress includes:
- Successful delivery of the first year of the 2024 roads programme. Despite significant challenges, 201 roads covering a length of 29.8miles or 47.8km have been repaired. The number of actionable defects (potholes) required to be repaired across the network have continued to fall from 34,000 in 2014/15 to 24,751 in 2019/20 and 16,386 in 2020/21, a significant reduction.
  - Programme developed for delivery of gateway cleansing; areas identified as requiring immediate attention are being addressed and delivery is ongoing. Three zonal teams established and have been completing the removal of weed growth.
  - Litter bin programme tender stage now complete and formal contracts signed. Now progressing to delivery stage. 2-3 year delivery programme now in development and to be agreed by Cabinet Member.
  - New campaign launched #getridreyt on 1<sup>st</sup> March to make the public aware of their duty of care as a householder when disposing of their waste, but also to appeal for information on offenders who the Council are keen to speak to in relation to fly tipping offences caught on CCTV. (see case study in Appendix 2).
  - Additional funding to support the 'pollinator-friendly' places initiative, which includes the engagement of an ecologist to support the

development of this programme, has been agreed and the commissioning of this work will now proceed.

- Seven-day night-time anti-social behaviour and noise nuisance response service launched in March 2020 continues to be promoted on the Council's website and through social media. Currently reviewing demand to inform future communications activity.
- Household waste sites open seven days a week since 1 November 2020.
- Street cleaning service commenced weekend working arrangements from Saturday 4 October 2020.

2.72 One action within the Hope and Confidence theme is rated as 'behind schedule' due to the current national lockdown and capacity issues.

### 2.72 **Cross-cutting strands**

2.73 The Year Ahead Plan also includes the following cross-cutting strands, which are integral to all themes:

- Equalities and Social Justice
- Climate Impact.

2.74 In delivery of the equalities and social justice strand, Cabinet approved the proposal to undertake an equalities review at its meeting in November 2020, setting out the goal of attaining "Excellent" accreditation under the Equality Framework for Local Government by the end of 2022.

2.75 Work is underway to assess and prioritise the actions that are required to strengthen the Council's approach, working towards "Excellent" accreditation. The is based around the four key lines of enquiry within the Equality Framework for Local Government, which are:

- Understanding and working with your communities.
- Leadership and organisational commitment.
- Responsive services and customer care.
- Diverse and engaged workforce.

2.76 Engagement with directorates across the Council and with external organisations is in progress, embedding ownership of the review work and making equalities everyone's business.

2.77 In addition, the Council published its first Climate Emergency Annual Report in March 2021. This report included both a Carbon Action Plan for 2021/22, which outlined actions to be undertaken over the subsequent year to reduce emissions, and a progress review of actions carried out/in progress so far.

### 2.78 **Measuring our impact**

2.79 Continuing to measure impact against the Year Ahead Plan will be crucial to ensure that the Council is focussed on the right things for Rotherham's



residents. This will include monitoring the Resident Satisfaction Survey, as well as other key indicators, such as the total funding dispersed to businesses affected by Covid restrictions and the increased social value from Council spend.

2.80 The key indicators that the Council will focus on are outlined in the table below.

<b>Themes</b>	<b>Measures</b>
Thriving neighbourhoods	Satisfaction with local area (Resident Satisfaction Survey)
Better health and wellbeing	Council's response to the Coronavirus crisis (Resident Satisfaction Survey)
Economic recovery	Number of grants and total funding dispersed to businesses affected by Covid restrictions  Increased social value from Council spend
New ways of working	Satisfaction with how the Council runs things (Resident Satisfaction Survey)
Hope and confidence	Trust in the Council (Resident Satisfaction Survey)

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 The recommendations of this report are for Cabinet:

1. To note the progress made with the Year Ahead activities.
2. To agree the proposal to extend the Year Ahead Plan to November 2021.
3. To note that the Year Ahead Plan extension will be replaced by a new medium-term Council Plan, to be recommended by Cabinet for adoption by the full Council in January 2022.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 A series of workshop sessions took place in August with elected members around the themes within the Year Ahead Plan. Through these seminars, councillors have had the opportunity to influence the development of the plan.

4.2 The Year Ahead Plan was approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020.

4.3 Partners were also engaged as part of the development of the plan. The themes were presented and discussed at the Rotherham Together Partnership and several actions identified within the plan will involve close working with partners.

4.4 As part of the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan, engagement with the public will be an ongoing priority.

4.5 Each of the action leads have been involved in providing the progress

updates included within Appendix 1 and these have been shared and discussed with assistant and strategic directors and Cabinet members.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 This is the third quarterly performance report relating to The Year Ahead Plan. Subsequent performance reports will be considered by SLT and Cabinet on a quarterly basis.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the report, but the plan's delivery will require close financial management to ensure that financial implications are within budget and longer-term implications that may be generated by the plan are factored into the Council's medium term financial strategy. As indicated in the Finance Update Report on this cabinet agenda the Council has delivered a balanced financial outturn as expected. This is after taking account of the financial impacts of Covid 19 and after taking account of the emergency COVID-19 funding provided by Government for 2020/21.
- 6.2 The financial impact of delivery of the Year Ahead Plan will therefore need to be monitored as part of the Council's financial management arrangements and considered alongside the ongoing financial impact of COVID and the Council's overall financial position.
- 6.3 Aside from the project specific updates detailed in the report, there are no direct procurement implications as a result of the recommendations detailed in this report. However, any identified need to procure goods, services or works in relation to achieving the Year Ahead Plan objectives should be referred to the Corporate Procurement Service. This will ensure all projects are procured in line with both the relevant internal financial and procurement procedure rules and the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (as amended), and that social value commitments are secured.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the plan itself; however the delivery of the plan in achieving the identified outcomes will require ongoing legal input to assess the legal implications relevant to each theme and support individual services in the delivery process.
- 7.2 In the delivery of the plan, the Council will need to continually consider its statutory and non-statutory duties to ensure that these are identified and met at all stages, in order to minimise the risk of legal challenge. Certain duties, such as the Public Sector Equality Duty and the requirements placed on the Council through the Clean Air Directive, have already been identified and clearly addressed through the identification of the cross-cutting strands in the plan.
- 7.3 The law is continually changing and even more so due to the impact of the

pandemic. It is vital that all relevant legislation and any changes are fully considered at all stages in the implementation of the plan to ensure that all decisions are made in accordance with the most up to date legislation.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 The human resources aspects of the plan are set out within the New Ways of Working theme, including delivering high quality customer services which are efficient and accessible, ensuring staff are supported to work flexibly, building on recent experiences of home working, and ensuring that the Council builds on the response to the pandemic, using the learning to shape organisational development and how the Council will work in the future.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Underpinning the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan is a cross-cutting strand relating to equalities and social justice. This includes considering the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable groups, including children and young people and vulnerable adults.

9.2 The Better Health and Wellbeing theme has a focus on supporting children and young people and vulnerable adults. Specific outcomes include ensuring that vulnerable adults are protected and adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions, and that children and young people are protected, safeguarded and able to achieve their potential.

9.3 Protecting the most vulnerable residents is also a key component of the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 COVID-19 impacts on everyone in the borough, with those who are older, with pre-existing health conditions, disabled people and BAME communities particularly at risk. In addition to the direct impacts of infection, the indirect effects of the pandemic are also likely to disproportionately impact on disadvantaged groups. An equality analysis was produced alongside the Local Outbreak Control Plan, which outlined the implications of the pandemic for protected characteristic groups in further detail.

10.2 In recognition of these implications, equalities and social justice has been included as a cross-cutting strand within the Year Ahead Plan. This means that consideration of issues relating to equalities and social justice has fed into the development of each theme.

10.3 As agreed at the November Cabinet meeting, the Council is also delivering on the equalities review, which will help build an understanding of the issues in Rotherham and identify how the Council can make a measurable difference to furthering equality. This will be framed around the four key lines of enquiry within the Equality Framework for Local Government:

- Understanding and working with your communities.

- Leadership and organisational commitment.
- Responsive services and customer care.
- Diverse and engaged workforce.

10.4 Different leads and directorates will be responsible for equalities within their themes and ongoing analysis of data and intelligence with regards to equalities will continue to take place. Any Cabinet decisions linked to the themes within the Year Ahead Plan will include an equality screening to assess the equality impacts. An equality screening assessment is attached to this report (Appendix 5).

## **11. Implications for Ward Priorities**

11.1 The Year Ahead Plan is a borough-wide plan, so has implications for all wards.

11.2 Building and supporting community resilience is a key part of the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme. This will include working with local councillors and residents on ward priorities and plans.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 Working with partners will be integral to the delivery of the Year Ahead Plan. Partners have therefore been engaged and consulted as part of the plan's development.

12.2 A complementary partnership year ahead plan has been developed and was agreed by Rotherham Together Partnership in September 2020. This focuses on key milestones relating to the five "game changers" within the Rotherham Plan:

- Building stronger communities
- Integrated health and social care
- Skills and employment
- Town centre
- A place to be proud of

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1. There are significant and serious risks associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Each workstream has undertaken a risk assessment including mitigating actions to be taken. The risks are captured in the threat and risk assessment and are reviewed regularly by workstream leads. This is fed up to the Gold and Tactical groups.

13.2 The risks and issues flagged in Appendix 1 have been shared with Directorate Risk Champions to ensure directorate risk registers are updated/amended where required.

## **14. Accountable Officers**

Jackie Mould,  
Head of Policy, Performance & Intelligence  
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate  
[Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk)

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	07/12/20
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	01/06/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	02/06/21

Report Author:

Jackie Mould,  
Head of Policy Performance & Improvement  
Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate  
[Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk](mailto:Jackie.mould@rotherham.gov.uk)

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