

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 20 September 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**

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**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 original plan set out the headline themes and corresponding outcomes and key actions for September 2020 through to June 2021. An extension to the Plan, featuring these same themes and outcomes, was agreed on 21 June 2021 and is now in place for period until the new Council Plan is agreed for 2022 onwards.

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 December 2020 and have since been presented on a quarterly basis on 22 March 2021 and 21 June 2021.

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

## **Recommendations**

1. To note the progress made with the Year Ahead activities.

## **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 – Year Ahead Plan milestone tracker

Appendix 2 – Case studies

Appendix 3 – Timeline

Appendix 4 – Equality Screening

Appendix 5 – Carbon 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, 22 March 2021 and 21 June 2021

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

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 16 December 2020

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 16 June 2021

## **Council Approval Required**

No

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

No

## 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 June 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 replaced the Council Plan for 2020/21 and was approved by Cabinet on 21 September 2020. This original plan ran to June 2021, and an extended Year Ahead Plan, agreed at Cabinet on 21 June 2021, is now in place for the period until the new Council Plan for 2022 onwards is agreed. 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 2021 were identified by liaising with current activity leads across directorates, with roadmap for easing lockdown restrictions factored into these. The current report provides an update on the extended Year Ahead Plan activities.

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:

- Social Justice
- Climate Impact.

1.5 In delivering against these themes, the extended version of the Year Ahead Plan outlines a total of 75 actions. In addition, fourteen actions from the original version of the Plan are still being reported on.

## 2. Key issues

### 2.1 Progress update

2.1.1 This is the fourth 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 closed. The work is ongoing and will continue to be delivered by the relevant service.

2.1.2 As of 11<sup>th</sup> August:

- 13% (11) of the activities outlined within the extended Year Ahead Plan have been completed
- 63% (55) are on track
- 14% (12) are behind schedule
- 2% (2) are off track
- 9% (8) have been closed.

There is also a specific action in the plan to ensure that 'Initiatives and activities across all themes are on track' which has not been rated.

2.1.3 Some actions from the original version of the plan were ongoing, with no fixed completion date, at the time of the last report. Where activities are classed as ongoing, these actions have now been closed and a closing position statement provided for each at the end of Appendix 1. Ongoing actions will continue to be delivered by the relevant service.

2.1.4 A small number of activities within the plan have been delayed, further details are available within each section of this report. Of the 14 actions which are 'behind schedule' or 'off track', 12 of these will be complete or the work will have commenced by November 2021, when the Plan comes to an end. The two actions that are expected to extend beyond the duration of the Plan are: commission new services to prevent financial exploitation (Thriving Neighbourhoods), and Moor Road, Manvers cycleway construction (Better Health and Wellbeing); both of which are subject to unavoidable

delays.

## **2.2 Thriving Neighbourhoods**

2.2.1 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.

2.2.2 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.

2.2.3 The Valuing Volunteers Policy is due to go to Staffing Committee in September, with Volunteer Co-ordinators currently liaising with council services to identify volunteering opportunities and putting preparations in place for this to commence from October 2021.

2.2.4 Neighbourhood working remains a key priority. Early development of new ward plans for 2021/22 has now begun with Members, and the spend of ward budgets has commenced (though this is a small amount of spend to date due to the number of new Members and the development of ward priorities needing to take place first). The Grounds Maintenance service is also now starting to initiate engagement with new ward councillors to develop the local priorities and plan community days for the coming year.

2.2.5 Following the May elections, ward-based partnerships and networks are being realigned with the new wards and Neighbourhood officers are meeting with Members to address any issues. In addition to this, 25 new ward web pages are now live and can be accessed on the Council's 'Your Neighbourhoods webpage'.

2.2.6 The Joint Working Agreement with Parish Councils was finalised during July and has been signed off.

2.2.7 The Member Induction programme commenced on 17 May 2021, with 11 sessions delivered during May and 15 during June. The programme covered a range of areas, including introductions to the Council, each directorate and its leadership team, roles and responsibilities for officers and Members, neighbourhood working, safeguarding, equality and diversity and specific sessions for committee members. Following the conclusion of the programme, a report detailing feedback received on the induction process and programme from Members, presenters and the Member

Induction Task and Finish group was presented to the Member and Democratic Panel. A revised Member Development Plan has now emerged from this and protocols have been put in place for the Member Support Team to manage this going forward, with the new Development Programme set to commence in September 2021.

- 2.2.8 The Member Induction programme was also used as an opportunity to help Members in ensuring that they carry out their roles effectively and safely, with a session delivered focusing on Member support, development and safety. Following this, channels of communications were also re-enforced to ensure the Members are proactive in coming forward to raise any issues which the Member Support Team can assist with resolving.
- 2.2.9 To support vulnerable residents across the borough into training or work, the Pathways to Success Programme continues to exceed targets set within the funding agreement. The project aims to engage 469 participants (across both projects) and sets a target to achieve 170 confirmed results by March 2022 (this consists of participants accessing confirmed training and education). As of 5<sup>th</sup> August 2021, the team have a current caseload of 434 participants against the project total of 469. 128 people have gained confirmed employment and 80 people have completed a recognised training course.
- 2.2.10 For further support for vulnerable residents, a bid was submitted to the Government's Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP) in April 2021 for 20 units of move on accommodation for rough sleepers, with further bidding rounds to take place in July and September. The bid is to enable South Yorkshire Housing Association to purchase 15 homes and Action Housing to purchase five homes. A decision is expected imminently.
- 2.2.11 The COVID Local Support Grant of £237,034 from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) for spend during May / June was fully spent to deliver holiday vouchers in lieu of free school meals and school uniform support for a number of children starting secondary school in September 2021. There has been a further summer COVID Local Support Grant from DWP of £948,137, which was used to fund food vouchers for those in receipt of free school meals over the summer school holidays.
- 2.2.12 A range of initiatives to tackle loneliness and isolation, including carrying out befriending calls via the tenant federation provider, delivering social activities within Neighbourhood Centres following re-opening and empowering community groups to provide support within their communities through the tenant federation contract, are taking place. Since April 2020, Rother Fed have supported 363 Rotherham residents (172 tenants) and currently have 43 active volunteers making calls to 168 residents involved at present. Referrals per month average 30 and they have 11 new volunteers, pending necessary approvals. Neighbourhood centres reopened from 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021, with Rother Fed working with resident groups to prepare them for reinstating activities.

- 2.2.13 In relation to the recommissioning of domestic abuse services, both the refuge and support services are proceeding as planned. The tender process for the refuge is now complete and the service will mobilise towards the end of September 2021. The market engagement process has now ended for the support service offer, and officers are beginning to prepare the future service specification.
- 2.2.14 Youth work has continued throughout the pandemic with Rotherham's young people. The Early Help Outreach and Engagement Team has delivered 28 Keepsafe Two operations, the purpose of which was to engage with Rotherham's young people to ensure that they are keeping safe and also to reassure the community that services are all still working collaboratively to promote safety within their area, with regard to both concerns raised around anti-social behaviour in the area and those around the pandemic. These operations generated a good amount of engagement from young people and will continue to be delivered going forward as full face-to-face provisions are opened up. A full case study is attached to this report (see Appendix 2).
- 2.2.15 Refurbishment works at Wath Library were completed and the library reopened to the public on 9 August 2021.
- 2.2.16 Finally, the action to develop social supermarkets in the borough is well underway, with additional detail to support the proposals being developed; the timetable has been revised accordingly.
- 2.2.17 One action within the Thriving Neighbourhoods theme is rated as 'behind schedule' and one action is rated as 'off track'. Realigning the ward partnerships and networks with the new wards is at risk of delay and there are ongoing discussions to ensure sufficient capacity and to align operational footprints. The commissioning of new services to prevent financial exploitation remains 'off track' due to the delivery partner being unable to go ahead until autumn 2021. Work is ongoing to identify a suitable route to market for the appointment of an organisation with the capacity and capability to meet the requirements of this work.

## **2.3 Better health and wellbeing**

- 2.3.1 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.
- 2.3.2 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, young people and families are safe, resilient and successful

- 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.

- 2.3.3 The current infection rate for Rotherham is 441.2 per 100,000 and the over 60s rate is 286.5 (as at 6 September). This compares to the England average of 303.2 and 162.6 for over 60s. Infection rates have remained high since the removal of restrictions and are predominantly in groups of people who are yet to be vaccinated, such as younger adults. With supervised testing of all secondary school pupils taking place twice during the first week of the new term, a rise in recorded infections is anticipated.
- 2.3.4 The review of the Local Outbreak Management Plan saw a strengthening of outbreak response processes. The daily huddle has developed into an Incident Review Meeting, at which all cases and clusters reported to the team are considered and decisions are made regarding the need for an Incident Management Team (IMT) to be stood up. The focus is currently on high-risk settings, care services, schools and workplaces.
- 2.3.5 The Council took on responsibility for contact tracing from the national NHS Test and Trace system from Monday 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021 which is referred to as the 'Local 0' approach. The Council has a target to achieve an 89.1% completion rate for contact tracing for all cases in Rotherham. The Local 0 approach has enabled quicker follow up of cases and the ability to not only carry out contact tracing, but to also offer guidance and support around self-isolation and to offer a wider welfare check with the opportunity to make links to the support available through the Rotherham Community Hub. Faster follow up and support to adhere to self-isolation are key to breaking chains of transmission at the local level.
- 2.3.6 Engagement work continues to take place within high-risk places, including targeted work in town centre neighbourhoods, ethnic minority communities and amongst the working age population. This includes regular liaison with local community organisations, targeted messaging, and joint working with the CCG to put on targeted vaccination sessions for low uptake and high-risk groups.
- 2.3.7 The Community Testing programme incorporating supervised lateral flow testing has now ended, with the Riverside House café and satellite sites no longer offering this approach from 30 June. The Council replaced the supervised offer by moving to the Community Collect model of home testing kits, rolling this out across the library, leisure and customer service points within the borough and working with partners to identify other external distribution outlets to target unvaccinated people or those at higher risk of contracting Covid-19. This approach has been well received by the Department of Health and Social Care and was approved from 1 July until 30 September.
- 2.3.8 The Council continues to work with health partners to manage the flow of



people with social care needs in and out of the hospital. Although the system is under pressure, Rotherham compares well across South Yorkshire and Bassetlaw in terms of discharge from acute care. The rate of discharge home also compares favourably and is in line with the national target of 95%.

- 2.3.9 Work is ongoing to co-produce a refreshed Carers Strategy with partners and Rotherham carers. Phase 1 of the Carers Strategy, which will be focussed on Covid recovery and stabilisation, was due to be in place by June 2021 and this has now slipped to the end of August 2021. This delay was due to resources and capacity challenges within partner organisations which impacted on the timescales.
- 2.3.10 Extensive work is taking place across schools to promote the use of catch-up opportunities. A significant proportion of secondary schools and special schools (just under 85%) had either a summer school or extended school programme summer break.
- 2.3.11 Elective Home Education (EHE) numbers have been 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. A series of multi-agency summits focussed on elective home education (EHE) were held in June and July 2021, which has supported greater visibility and a partnership focus on safeguarding of the EHE cohort.
- 2.3.12 The implementation of the Looked After Children Sufficiency Strategy and development of local residential provision continues to progress. Staff recruitment is underway, and additional managerial capacity has been recruited to, including a Registered Manager and an Operations Manager. Building adaptations are being made to prepare for the opening of the next homes.
- 2.3.13 Work is ongoing to enable active travel and improve air quality in Rotherham. Consultation on the draft cycling strategy closed on 27 August, and work should be completed shortly on phase 1 of the Sheffield Road cycleways scheme.
- 2.3.14 Building on the Beat the Street initiative, a programme of activity was developed to encourage local people to stay active over the summer holidays. Copies of this programme were sent to all schools prior to breaking up and printed copies were also placed in locations around the borough (inc. supermarkets, Clifton Park, Thrybergh and Rosehill Park cafes), along with nature trail sheets for families to take part in in their own time. An Olympic trail for families also took place in Clifton Park on 6 August and in Rosehill Park on 16 August, with an opportunity to win prizes.
- 2.3.15 Three actions within the Better Health and Wellbeing theme are rated as 'behind schedule' and one action is rated as 'off track'. The actions at risk of not being delivered within the original timescales are due to delays relating to negotiations with Government regarding the Clean Air Zone programme, a project being rescheduled within the Transforming Cities Fund programme

and Herringthorpe Stadium being used as a testing centre. The Carers Strategy is rated as 'off track' as it missed the original timescale outlined within the Plan. This is now projected to be complete by the end of August 2021.

## **2.4 Economic recovery**

2.4.1 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, South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SY MCA) and national government to ensure Rotherham gets the investment it needs to support and build its economy for the future.

2.4.2 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.

2.4.3 Support to local businesses affected by the pandemic continues, with more recent focus being on supporting businesses with Digital Innovation and Capital Investment support. The Local Restrictions Support Grant (LRSRG) and the Restart Grant (RG) schemes are now closed, having provided over 1,700 Rotherham based businesses with financial support, to a total value of £30.3 million. Further support has also been provided via South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority, through the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG), with over 2,000 businesses supported for a total grant value of £8.1 million. These grants are in addition to the business grant support provided during the first national lockdown, meaning a total grant value of £85.5 million has been awarded to over 5,000 local businesses since the start of the pandemic.

2.4.4 In January 2021, 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. As at the beginning of August 2021, payments have been made on the local scheme to 659 claimants at a cost of £167,750, whilst claims to the government scheme have been made to 1,699 claimants at a cost of £849,500.

2.4.5 Three bids totalling almost £60 million were submitted to the Government's Levelling Up Fund by the 18<sup>th</sup> June deadline. If successful, they would see a range of activity taking place across the borough, including:

- Creation of a new library and community hub in Wath, with improvements to the surrounding area
- Improvements to Dinnington High Street and markets
- Supporting the local leisure and tourism industry via projects at Wentworth Woodhouse, Thrybergh Country Park, Magna and Rother Valley Country Park
- Enhancing the town centre regeneration programme, focusing on the Riverside residential quarter and the leisure and culture quarter

2.4.6 In common with the construction industry nationally, the town centre housing programme is experiencing minor delays, with a shortage of materials as the economy recovers from the pandemic. Despite this, the first homes at Wellgate Place are expected to be completed in November 2021, with a show home opening in October. Further sites at Westgate Riverside and Millfold Rise are on course for completion in summer and autumn 2022 respectively.

2.4.7 On the Forge Island site, essential infrastructure work to pave the way for the new development remains on track. Demolition and site preparation works at Riverside Precinct have been completed and, subject to agreement with Muse Developments, further elements such as a vehicle restraint system to protect the flood wall will be carried out in the coming months.

2.4.8 In June 2021, the Government confirmed funding of £31.6 million for Rotherham's Town Deal. Work has now begun on developing full business cases for the projects, which are due to be submitted in June 2022. The Town Deal 'accelerator' project to create a pocket park and high-quality public space on the old Primark site on High Street, is progressing well.

2.4.9 Following confirmation of funding for redevelopment of Rotherham markets and a new central library, detailed designs for the market redevelopment are being prepared as part of the planning application. Also in the town centre, the public realm scheme on College Street is on track to be completed in September, when work is also due to begin on Frederick Street subject to market conditions (e.g. ability to secure materials on time).

2.4.10 On social value, an application has been submitted to recognise the Council as an accredited Real Living Wage employer. Discussions continue with local partners about working together to deliver maximum social value from procurement activity, building on the commitments already secured via the Council's social value policy. An anchor organisation network has been established with involvement from Voluntary Action Rotherham, South Yorkshire Police and Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust.

2.4.11 Six of the actions within the Economic Recovery theme are rated as 'behind schedule', with all the delays expected to be relatively minor and progress is being made. This includes the Greasbrough roundabout improvement scheme, which is now set to be completed in early 2022, and improvements to business centres, with the Moorgate Crofts heating, cooling and lighting

project now underway.

## **2.5 New Ways of Working**

2.5.1 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.

2.5.2 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.

2.5.3 Work has continued to develop new and existing digital processes to make it easier for customers and communities to access the services they need.

2.5.4 New systems and processes are in development to allow customers to choose a collection date for requesting bulky waste online, including a redesigned form to improve the customer experience. This work is currently on track for completion by September 2021, although further work is needed to upgrade/test back-office software and design the digital workflow to accommodate the booking facility, allocation of work, and actioning of all associated tasks within the process.

2.5.5 Customers are now able to pin a location on a map when reporting an issue, such a faulty streetlight, bollard or sign. The facility will be added to other forms over the next few months e.g. reporting a pothole, applying for skip permit etc. Once a customer has reported an issue, they receive an auto acknowledgement and their request is sent to the relevant service to action accordingly, dependent upon the nature of the request and urgency. Projects are also currently underway to improve the end-to-end process, including tracking the issues reported and improving customer communications to ensure customers are kept updated once action has been taken.

2.5.6 A new enhanced pre-booked appointment model for face-to-face customer appointments went 'live' in 5 locations in May 2021 (Aston, Dinnington, Maltby, Rawmarsh and Swinton). The same model was implemented in Riverside House on 19 July. The new model operates as a 'meet and greet' service whereby staff triage customer enquiries and signpost and/or support as appropriate. Customers unable to 'self-serve' are offered assistance by telephone; or, where appropriate offered a pre-booked appointment at one of the six Customer Service centres.

- 2.5.7 The New Housing Management System is planned to go live on 30 September 2021. This will bring five existing IT systems into one integrated system. Given the speed of project implementation the IT Governance Board agreed all existing IT functionality will go live as planned on 30 September 2021, and new functionality including the customer portal and mobile working will be rolled out by the end of March 2022. All costs for this variation are contained within the existing project budget.
- 2.5.8 To successfully deliver a place based Digital Inclusion Programme, the Council needs to understand the level of digital exclusion across the borough as a whole and identify the barriers that stop the people accessing and benefiting from online services and digital activities. To help identify the barriers a 3<sup>rd</sup> party organisation will be commissioned to engage with residents, communities, businesses, and organisations to:
- Identify and profile the target group. For example, adults, children and businesses who are offline and/or lack basic digital skills/confidence to engage online
  - Understand the local barriers to digital inclusion at an individual and Rotherham place level
  - Analyse the level of investment required (linking the level of investment to potential economic growth)
  - Identify existing digital inclusion activity (and the gaps) across the Rotherham place
  - Identify best practice digital inclusion activities and programmes at a local and national level to inform the type of digital inclusion activities that best respond to the borough wide needs and aspirations.

A specification has been drawn up to procure the research and the route to market is currently under discussion which will then determine when the works will be able to commence.

- 2.5.9 A digital inclusion project manager post has been established and will be advertised in August 2021. In addition, the first digital inclusion steering group will take place in September 2021 and will involve a range of stakeholders across the local authority, health, and voluntary sectors.
- 2.5.10 Online videos have been used since the start of the pandemic to communicate key messages, share updates about community initiatives and provide customers with online self-help. 62 videos have been added to the Council's YouTube channel in 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 21,000 views. In terms of video tutorials, there were 546 views of the lateral flow testing video, and 1,845 views of housing repair videos. An evaluation exercise was undertaken in August 2021, to help determine how the pace and number of online tutorials can be increased.

- 2.5.11 Due to current local infection rates, the Council continues to operate flexible working, including staff working from home, to ensure services are delivered in a covid secure way and to reduce the risk of infection in workplaces. Future hybrid working arrangements are currently being discussed with teams across the Council. The Hybrid Working Policy will go to Staffing Committee in September 2021 but will not be formally implemented until infection levels decrease nationally and locally.
- 2.5.12 A series of workforce focus groups have been undertaken between January and March 2021 to gather staff feedback and identify positive stories to help develop an organisational narrative which will promote behaviours and ways of working. The feedback from these groups has been shared with the wider leadership team and four key areas of focus have been agreed, including:
- Wellbeing & mental health – health and wellbeing of employees is prioritised through compassionate management and leadership; the approach which has supported resilience over the past year and a half continues.
  - Setting & managing expectations – tasks and deadlines are communicated as clearly as possible, and expectations and scope concerning these are clarified at the outset to avoid reactive ways of working.
  - Recognition and thank yous – remembering the importance of the informal thank you, recognition and signs of appreciation.
  - Succession planning – in line with workforce planning activities, review available management information specific to the service to identify areas where succession planning would be beneficial to support future resource/demand requirements.

The areas of focus will be used to inform the workforce and development initiatives outlined in the new Workforce Strategy which will be developed and launched in line with the new Council Plan in January 2022 and will be reported through the Big Hearts Big Changes Programme.

- 2.5.13 A key priority for workforce engagement is ensuring that employees have a voice and can share their thoughts and ideas on change and ways of working. One of the ways staff can do this is by becoming a Change Champion and staff are now able to register their interest in becoming a Change Champion to input into the Big Hearts Big Changes programme's key areas and act as a critical friend, become an early adopter of new ideas and collectively help to find solutions to challenges.
- 2.5.14 Work is continuing to further develop the Council's Wellbeing Programme and monthly themes are identified and shared, along with promotional activities/ideas, with the Wellbeing Champions Network. There is also a dedicated wellbeing page which is accessible from the intranet home page providing details of upcoming events, access to workshops and signposts to the support available. Since September 2020, 41 wellbeing sessions have been delivered and 720 staff have attended.

- 2.5.15 The Council successfully applied to be a Kickstart employer in early 2021 and identified 89 potential placements that would be suitable as part of this scheme. Recruitment started in May 2021 and has been undertaken in cohorts. As of 5 August, 29 young people were undertaking a placement. Placements that are available in cohort four and five are currently open for applicants and the placements for cohort six were advertised from mid-August. Two contracts were terminated due to behaviours/attendance. In addition to the six-month paid work placements, all individuals also receive three days of personal and employability development and have access to a monthly peer support session. Reports on the scheme's overall progress are produced on a quarterly basis.
- 2.5.16 One action relating to the New Ways of Working theme is 'behind schedule'. This relates to the safe return to Riverside House and other Council buildings and implementation of a new Hybrid Working Policy by July 2021. The delay is due to the local infection rates and Council staff are currently continuing to work from home. The Hybrid Working Policy will be presented to staffing committee in September.

## **2.6 Hope and Confidence in Rotherham**

- 2.6.1 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.
- 2.6.2 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.

- 6.6.3 'Rotherham Round-up' was launched in June 2021 to provide regular news, video and event updates from the Council and help celebrate Rotherham as a place. Although its early days, the distribution list is growing and is being actively promoted via various channels, such as social media and the Council website. As of 21 July, 7,144 people had subscribed to the 'council news' topic, from which this newsletter is sent. The topic subscribers have grown by around 1,000 since the newsletter was launched. Residents can subscribe to the email newsletter via the Council website.
- 2.6.4 The Great Big Rotherham To Do List is the resilience toolkit and was launched in July 2021. The toolkit is a fun, engaging, vibrant and comical fold-out guide to remind people of the positive things they're already doing for their mental and physical wellbeing, and to inspire them to try new things. The guide also shows how these activities relate to the Five Ways

to Wellbeing - a nationally recognised, evidence-based set of actions that help people function and feel at their best. 34,000 people have received a hard copy since it's July launch. A full case study is attached to this report (see Appendix 2).

- 2.6.5 Preparations are underway for the Rotherham Show, a three-day festival to take place 3 - 5 September incorporating Clifton Park, Clifton park Museum and Rotherham Civic Theatre. Whilst planning is underway the final go ahead will depend on the outcome of announcements relating to the Government's road map, the restrictions in place and the infection rate in Rotherham.
- 2.6.6 The Civic Theatre is undergoing a major front of house renovation programme to create new performance spaces, a coffee shop encouraging daytime use, new box office facilities and a refurbished bar area. Refurbishment is on track for completion in August 2021, with the reopening of the theatre planned for Friday 3 September 2021.
- 2.6.7 Progress is underway to carry out a range of environmental improvements around the borough. Progress includes:
- 2024 Roads Programme – An additional £24m funding being invested over a four-year programme focussed on the unclassified road network to improve its condition to the national average. The improvements being made make up around 700km of the total network of 1170km. £12m of the repairs are being managed and delivered by in house teams. 2021/22 is the second year of the programme and the Highways Service has published the new Indicative Highway Repair Programme 2021/22 on the Council website which includes 138 estate roads, totalling 30km. As of 5 August 2021, 77 roads and 25 footways have been resurfaced. The next three months will see a large amount of works on the strategic and unclassified network around schools to take advantage of reduced impact on road users due to the summer school holidays.
  - £489k investment in zonal cleansing teams - Programme developed for delivery of gateway cleansing and four zonal teams established. Areas have been identified which will receive enhanced attendance and staff deployed to undertake this work. Additionally, staff will support requests from residents to address ad-hoc enhancement activity. The service has also established a works programme for the maintenance of cycleways across the borough and initial visits to these areas are being undertaken.
  - Pollinator-friendly places initiative – The funding has been agreed and twelve wildflower trial areas have been established across the borough, with all now seeded, and signage put in place to inform residents.
  - Three-year litter bin programme – As of 5 August 2021, 38 solar powered bins have been installed at locations in the Town Centre, following a trail. 110 will be installed in total across the borough. Implementation of solar powered bins on track for completion by



November 2021.

- Fly tipping and non-payment of fixed penalty notices - New reporting and monitoring arrangements have been established in relation to successful outcomes which are now reviewed monthly. During April and May 2021, 22 formal actions were taken in relation to environmental crime offences, which included six fixed penalty notices for fly tipping. The service had one successful conviction in April with 16 further pending prosecution under the Environmental Protection Act 1990.
- Promotion of the seven day out of hours service – The new seven-day service launched in March 2020. The service has been promoted through use of social media and is available in the out of hours section on the Council’s website. As a result, access has increased dramatically. In 2019/20 during April and May 427 actions were delivered by the team. In 2020/21, following launch of the new service this increased to 1,434, though a large proportion of demand related to Covid enforcement. Despite this the numbers remain significantly higher than the 2019/20 baseline with 838 actions during April and May of this year. As the impact of Covid-19 decreases, the Council will seek to publicise the out of hours service more widely.

2.6.8 One action within the Hope and Confidence theme is rated as ‘behind schedule’ due to COVID-19 and supply issues within the construction sector.

## **2.7 Cross-cutting strands**

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

- A borough based on social justice where all residents have a good quality of life and are able to achieve their potential
- Carbon emissions for the Council and the borough are reduced.

2.7.2 In delivery of the social justice strand, Cabinet approved the proposal to undertake an equality 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.

2.7.3 The Equalities Annual report was presented to Cabinet in June 2021. This set out progress to date and identified issues to be addressed going forward. These issues, alongside the baseline work undertaken have provided the priority direction for project development in the next stage of the Equality Review.

2.7.4 Projects have now been developed that will be implemented over the coming months. These involve collection and use of data; engagement with communities, along with engagement in public life; embedding equalities into service planning aligned to the new Council Plan process and engagement and support for Council staff. Between them, the projects address the Equality Framework for Local Government Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) which require development to achieve excellent.

- 2.7.5 A critical development is the adoption of refreshed Equality Objectives. Draft objectives aligned to the draft themes of the new Council Plan have been produced and consulted on. They will be presented to Cabinet later this year. The refreshed objectives, along with guidance, will provide high level direction to inform the embedding of equalities into service planning.
- 2.7.6 The Council published its first Climate Emergency Annual Report in March 2021, the report included a Carbon Action Plan for 2021/22, which outlined actions to be undertaken to reduce emissions, and a progress update. Since then, a tree management protocol/guidance has been produced and consulted on and a heating decarbonisation plan has been developed for council operational buildings. Further inclusions are being considered for all energy contract points and leased buildings. Preparations are also underway to expand community events (workshops, face to face stands etc.) to help reduce Rotherham residents' energy costs, reduce fuel poverty and reduce domestic emissions. During the pandemic the Council made active use of social media channels which has led to 202,940 web hits relating to energy support, as of end July 2021.
- 2.7.7 All actions relating to the cross-cutting strands are 'on track'.

## 2.8 Measuring our impact

- 2.8.1 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.
- 2.8.2 The key indicators that the Council will focus on are outlined in the table below.

Themes	Measures
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)

- 2.8.3 The most recent Resident Satisfaction Survey was conducted in June 2021 and the results are currently being analysed.

### **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.

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

4.1 A series of workshop sessions have previously taken place with elected members around the themes within the Year Ahead Plan.

4.2 Partners were also engaged as part of the development of the plan through the Rotherham Together Partnership.

4.3 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 this report 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 fourth 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.

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 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 health inequalities are understood and responded to, ensuring that vulnerable adults are protected, and adult social care is able to adapt to the changing conditions, and that Children, young people and families are safe, resilient and successful.
- 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, 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 4).

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 Climate Impact is one of two cross-cutting themes within the Plan and is integral to its delivery. For all themes, it is considered how actions can contribute towards the Council's carbon reduction target and improved environmental outcomes. A Carbon Impact Assessment has been produced (Appendix 5).
- 11.2 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. See paragraph 2.7.6 which provides further information.

## **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

12.3 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.

### 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

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Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:

	<b>Named Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	03/09/21
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	27/08/21
Head of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	01/09/21

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