

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 28 March 2022

Report Title

Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Rotherham Community Hub

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

No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report summarises findings and recommendations from the Health Select Commission spotlight review held on 13 September 2021, which focussed on the befriending service and support for loneliness and isolation provided by the Rotherham Community Hub during the pandemic. These recommendations were agreed by Health Select Commission on 25 November 2021, and by Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 19 January 2022.

In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, Cabinet are requested to respond formally to the recommendations and indicate agreement or otherwise and what action will be taken to implement the recommendations, together with details of timescales and accountabilities.

Recommendations

1. That the following recommendations from the review be received:
 - a) That the excellent work of Rotherham Community Hub be commended, especially in respect of the befriending service which helped relieve loneliness and isolation throughout the pandemic.
 - b) That Members be encouraged to add the Community Hub to their ward priorities and e-bulletins to better support vulnerable residents and families.

- c) Whereas the current Community Hub model is due to end in March 2022, should there be a further evolution of the Community Hub model, that an update be brought in 12 months' time.
2. That Cabinet formally consider its response to the above recommendations by June 2022, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Minutes of Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 19 January 2022
Minutes of Health Select Commission – 25 November 2021
Findings from Spotlight Review on Rotherham Community Hub – Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 19 January 2022
Findings from Spotlight Review on Rotherham Community Hub – Health Select Commission – 25 November 2021

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Overview and Scrutiny Management Board – 19 January 2022
Health Select Commission – 25 November 2021

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Scrutiny Review Recommendations – Rotherham Community Hub

1. Background

- 1.1 To fulfil a statutory requirement, the Community Hub was rapidly mobilised during March 2020 to respond to the COVID-19 crisis, which left many vulnerable people without a way to get food, medicine, or emotional support during isolation. Coinciding with the launch of the Food Bank, the new Community Hub offered a simple route to request support or to volunteer. From the outset, Hub staff identified a trend of isolation and loneliness among people who were shielding or isolating during COVID-19. The Community Hub coordinated the joint response of Council services and the voluntary and community organisations sector (VCS).
- 1.2 The Rotherham Community Hub continues to provide support, and as of September 2021, 522 people had received loneliness and wellbeing support through the Hub. Many more people had received assistance in other ways, such as financial hardship support, business support grants, emergency food parcels, and emergency accommodation to prevent homelessness and for PPE distribution. At the time of reporting, a total of 6,679 requests for help had been received and 1,286 people volunteered to help their neighbours through the Rotherham Community Hub.
- 1.3 Members of Health Select Commission undertook this spotlight review with a view to understanding and highlighting the role of the Community Hub within the suite of interventions in loneliness and provision of mental health support which has been an agreed primary focus of health scrutiny for 2021-22. All members of Health Select Commission undertook the review.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 The Hub has transitioned since March 2020 from the purely COVID-focussed service into a broader model that has led to strong, efficient partner working. This asset-based, collaborative approach means residents with complex needs can get the right support even pertaining to multiple areas of their lives. The Hub brings a variety of resources within reach, which can help Members in their ward work as well. When Members encounter constituents with complex needs, the Hub can be an efficient pathway to help. Members are invited to include the Hub in their ward priorities and in e-bulletins, which directs targeted activities to those wards.
- 2.2 Financial sustainability is a significant challenge moving forward from the pandemic because the Hub is currently funded from time-limited grants. The main grants that support the hub are the Practical Support Grant and the Contain Outbreak Management Funds, both of which are due to end soon. The Community Hub model will therefore continue to evolve as the pandemic enters recovery phase. This will require political direction, and an evidence base is being amassed in order to support next steps.
- 2.3 The Hub work has also emphasised what we can all do to be a good neighbour and make an impact to reduce isolation and loneliness in the lives of people

around us. Much of the most compelling evidence of the success of the Community Hub is rooted in soft intelligence, the qualitative feedback received from service users, but the effectiveness of this work has been measured also by required Public Health assessments designed to measure their journey at the beginning and end of each intervention. Reviews have also taken place in November 2020 and June 2021.

- 2.4 The partnership takes referrals from anywhere in the Borough, as currently funding allows for intensive, face-to-face loneliness support to help people who have been isolated transition back into social activity.
- 2.5 Potential volunteers are welcome and can be directed to sign up with Rotherfed or Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR). Volunteer numbers have dipped slightly, as some opportunities have closed; however, numbers are beginning to climb again.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Recommendations were generated by Members and derived from discussion during the Q&A session with service leads.
- 3.2 Recommendation 2 is that Cabinet consider the recommendations from the review. There is no alternative option as this is in line with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Members have regard to the expressed views of their constituents in their formulation of scrutiny priorities and lines of inquiry. Recommendations from scrutiny are produced as outcomes of consultation of officers and partners providing the service with Members in their role as elected representatives of Rotherham residents.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The accountability for implementing recommendations arising from this report will sit with Cabinet and relevant officers.
- 5.2 The Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules require Cabinet to consider and respond to recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Select Commissions in no more two months from the date that Cabinet receives this report.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 No financial implications arise directly from this report, although the response to the review will need to take account of any such implications arising from consideration of the scrutiny recommendations.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications directly arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications for Children, Young People, and Vulnerable Adults are set out in the main sections of the report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Furthering equalities and human rights is an objective of scrutiny; therefore, Members give consideration to equalities in the development of scrutiny work programmes, lines of inquiry and in their derivation of recommendations designed to improve the delivery of council services for residents.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no climate or emissions implications directly associated with this report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1. Implications for partners are set out in the main section of the report outlining the Commission's findings. Cabinet will need to consider the implications for partners in its response to the recommendations from scrutiny.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Members have regard to the risks and mitigation factors associated with the services under scrutiny and have made recommendations accordingly.

14. Accountable Officers

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	14/03/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	07/03/22
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	07/03/22

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