

THE CABINET
28th March, 2022

Present:- Councillor Read (in the Chair); Councillors Alam, Beck, Brookes, Cusworth, Lelliott, Roche and Sheppard.

Also in attendance Councillor Clark (Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board)

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Allen.

115. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

116. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

- (1) Councillor Ball asked a question in relation to referrals from the Fire Service to Rotherham Council Social Services. He noted that there were 45 referrals in Rotherham but that Sheffield had over 700 and this had been the case for the last 3 years. There had been some training by the Fire Service over the past couple of months but Councillor Ball asked whether Cabinet could look at why the figures were low and look at what could be done to improve them?

The Leader agreed to provide a written response in consultation with South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority.

- (2) Councillor Tinsley asked a question in relation to the recent severe delays caused by the traffic lights at the roundabout at Junction 1 of the M18 in Hellaby. He queried whether the new industrial unit on Cumwell Lane would have the same impact with traffic backing up into Maltby and what could be done to alleviate the problems?

The Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment responded and explained that the motorway traffic light junctions were controlled by National Highways. Following conversations between National Highways and the Council, the sequencing problems had been rectified. In terms of the new unit on Cumwell Lane, all traffic matters were considered at the time of the planning application and deemed acceptable as the application was approved.

- (3) Councillor Bennet-Sylvester asked a question in relation to Rotherham Town Centre and specifically about delays and how delays were communicated. He expressed concerns as the pocket park had been delayed and the Forge Island development had been announced in 2018 yet was not due for completion until 2024. Councillor Bennett-Sylvester asked if the announcement of delivery

dates could be better communicated and the communication in general be looked at?

In response, Councillor Read explained that there had been some delays, mainly due to COVID-19. However, the development was nearing the construction phase and it was hoped that construction would begin in late 2022.

Councillor Lelliott explained that work had continued on Forge Island since 2018 with major works on flood alleviation completed. Councillor Lelliott expressed pride in what had been achieved so far and credited the officers with the work on what will be a quality development. She agreed that communication could be improved.

In his follow up question, Councillor Bennett-Sylvester expressed frustration with the delays and was concerned that the Forge Island development was announced in 2018 as a way of rejuvenating the town centre but with the completion not due until 2024, he queried what happened in terms of rejuvenation in the meantime?

Councillor Lelliott explained that work on the communications strategy was underway now that funding had been provided through the Levelling Up and Towns Funds.

The Assistant Director of Planning, Regeneration and Transport explained that the website had recently been updated and more information would be provided shortly.

117. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:-

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th February, 2022, be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

118. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that appendices to Minute Nos. 121, 123 and 124 were exempt by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. However, none of the appendices were discussed during the meeting and as such, the meeting remained open to the press and public throughout.

119. ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE WI-FI

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the potential options to provide free public Wi-Fi within parts of Rotherham Town Centre. In May 2018 it had been agreed by Cabinet that public access Wi-Fi be delivered across Rotherham town centre through a

concessionary contract. A contract was tendered in December 2019 and a chosen supplier identified in January 2020. However, by November 2020, the Council had been unable to progress the formal award and enter into contract with the chosen supplier due to changes within the company and a general lack of engagement from them in progressing the contract award. As such the Council took the decision to withdraw the award and abandon the procurement.

Alternative options had been investigated by the Council and a number of discussions had taken place with commercial organisations and telecommunication providers already working with the Council. Since the Council originally agreed to the project, the landscape had changed and other Councils were facing difficulties with similar schemes in that concessionary contracts were not achieving the level of projected income for the chosen supplier to make them viable. This had been attributed to the communications market reducing the cost of personal data and more town centre businesses offering free Wi-Fi to customers.

It was, therefore, proposed that the Council explore the potential to utilise its own building assets to extend the current corporately managed free public Wi-Fi network to key areas of the public realm within Rotherham town centre. This would include Forge Island, the new library and markets development. The option of the Council's ICT Service providing the infrastructure management and support for free town centre Wi-Fi and the option of commissioning a third party provider to deliver a free town centre Wi-Fi offering had both been rejected on the basis of viability, affordability and sustainability.

Further, the Council was due to start a range of digital inclusion initiatives and it was recommended that the Council use that opportunity to assess the demand for free town centre Wi-Fi.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet agree to the delivery of free public Wi-Fi provision to the new town centre library and markets development.
2. That Cabinet agree that the potential for providing free public Wi-Fi within other areas of Rotherham town centre, utilising existing Council buildings and assets, be explored.

120. SUPPORT FOR ENERGY BILLS - COUNCIL TAX REBATE SCHEME

Consideration was given to the report which outlined how the Council intended to administer the Energy Bills Rebate scheme that had been announced in February 2022. The purpose of the scheme was to help households with rising energy bills. The guidance for the Council Tax Rebate and Discretionary Fund had been released on 23rd February, 2022, with the Council allocated £16.421m for the Council Tax Rebate scheme and £0.616m for the discretionary fund.

The main scheme required the Council to design a process that, in Rotherham's case, would allow up to 112,000 households in bands A-D to receive a payment of £150. The discretionary scheme would allow the Authority to provide support to other energy bill payers who were ineligible for the rebate scheme. The Council's proposed scheme would equally share the discretionary funding using the same criteria as the main scheme but across all households in bands E-H. It was estimated that this scheme would generate a payment from the Council to these households of £82. All households in the Borough that were liable for Council Tax, provided they were not second homes, would therefore receive some level of support.

During the meeting the Leader explained that those residents who paid their Council Tax via Direct Debit would receive the rebate back directly into their accounts by the end of April 2022. Those who did not pay by Direct Debit would be sent a cheque by the end of May 2022. It was confirmed that there was no application process; the Council would automatically pay the rebate as per the scheme.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed approach to providing the £150 Council Tax rebate payment to liable Council Tax payers in bands A-D.
2. That Cabinet approve the Council's proposed discretionary scheme as set out within section 2.17 of the report submitted.

121. NEW APPLICATION FOR BUSINESS RATES HARDSHIP RELIEF

The Council had received an application for Business Rates Hardship Relief that did not meet the Council's qualifying criteria. In line with the Council's Business Rates Discretionary Relief Policy, having regard to the financial cost of the proposed relief, it was recommended that Hardship Relief be refused.

The details of the organisation were exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 as to disclose the applicant's business financial information could jeopardise the reputation of the business and place competitors at an unfair advantage. The details were available to Cabinet Members in exempt Appendix 1 to the report.

Resolved:-

1. That the application for Hardship Relief be refused.

122. NEW APPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS RATES DISCRETIONARY RELIEF FOR TREETON COMMUNITY CENTRE AND THE PAROCHIAL CHURCH COUNCIL OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL PARISH OF ALL SAINTS ROTHERHAM

Consideration was given to the report which set out the applications for the award of Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Treeton Community Centre and The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish of All Saints Rotherham. This was in accordance with the Council's Discretionary Business Rates Relief Policy which was approved by Cabinet on 12th December, 2016.

Treeton Community Centre was a registered charity who supported and benefitted the residents of Treeton and the surrounding area by running a luncheon club for elderly and disabled residents, a keep fit group, sports groups for children/young people and support groups offering advice and training amongst other activities. The application met the Council's criteria as set out in the Policy. It was recommended that the application for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be approved.

The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish of All Saints Rotherham was a registered charity and had set up a social supermarket which aimed to provide food for those in needs. It also offered support to those in financial hardship. It was recommended that the application for 2021/22 and 2022/23 be approved.

Section 6 of the report set out the total costs of granting the relief for the financial years 2021/22 and 2022/23.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet approve the applications for Discretionary Business Rate Relief for Treeton Community Centre and The Parochial Church Council of The Ecclesiastical Parish of All Saints Rotherham in accordance with the details set out in Section 6 to the report for the 2021/22 and 2022/23 financial years.

123. FORGE ISLAND DELIVERY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report which provided an update on the positive progress towards delivery of the Forge Island Scheme which was a key regeneration priority. If approved, the recommendations would allow for a successful negotiation of commercial terms for the construction of the development to start.

The Council had entered into a development agreement with Muse Developments Ltd. In December 2018 and since then, work had been undertaken to bring forward viable proposals to develop a leisure hub on the site within the agreed parameters. Planning permission had been granted in June 2020 and enabling works had been completed. Pre-let

agreements had been secured with The Arc Cinema and Travelodge and Heads of Terms had been agreed with 2 restaurants. Other significant achievements included flood alleviation works, demolition and site clearance.

Following discussions, it was reported that it may be possible to enhance the investment value of the Scheme through variations on the head lease terms. The first variation would allow the Council to have an option to "buy out" the investor's leasehold interest at the end of the head lease for a nominal sum. The second variation would allow for flexibility in relation to the head lease length to maximise the investment value. A further variation would include moving away from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to Consumer Price Inflation or Consumer Prices Index including Owner Occupiers Housing Costs in relation to rent review provisions. This was due to the expectation that the Bank of England would phase out the RPI from 2030.

It was reported at the meeting that work was expected to start on the site later in 2022 ready for the scheme to be open in early 2024.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet notes the positive progress towards delivery of the Forge Island scheme and, to allow successful negotiation of commercial terms for construction of the development to start, it reaffirms the agreement of December 2018 to authorise the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment and the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy (subject to confirmation by the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services that the final proposal was affordable within the Budget and Financial Strategy) to agree the final proposal for the scheme to be funded through a head lease arrangement with an investor.
2. That a provision be made from the remaining balance of the Town Centre Investment Fund to provide a potential capital contribution to the scheme, as detailed in the exempt appendix 1.

124. REGENERATION PROGRAMME: STRATEGIC LAND ASSEMBLY

Consideration was given to the report which outlined the necessary approvals to enable the negotiation and subsequent acquisition by private treaty agreement of all third-party land and property rights to deliver the Regeneration Programme. The Council had secured over £70m from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities through the Town Deal and Levelling Up Fund. This was in addition to the £12.6m from the Future High Streets Fund. The funding would allow the Council to embark on its most significant regeneration opportunity for many years and bring benefits to the entire Borough. Specific areas referenced in the report included the Riverside Residential Quarter, the Leisure and Cultural Quarter, Mainline Station and Eastwood.

The report also addressed the need for public sector intervention to acquire land and property owned by the private sector which was required for the regeneration programme. The sites in question were set out in exempt Appendix 1. Whilst it was the preferred option that the sites be acquired by agreement with the private land owners, it was vital that the Council be prepared to acquire the land via Compulsory Purchase Order powers (CPO) if need be. If a CPO was required, a further report would be brought back to Cabinet.

Consultation with affected landowners had taken place where appropriate and in most cases the first stages of negotiations had begun. Specific consultation on project proposals would take place as schemes moved forward. A further report would be brought back to Cabinet at a later date in 2022 on the subject of a development partner for the town centre residential sites.

At the meeting it was reported that the Regeneration Programme would help deliver economic and social benefits to the Borough both in residential and commercial settings. It would also help improve connectivity. Approval of the recommendations would allow the Council to move at pace to take full advantage of the funding opportunities and deliver its longstanding aims for the entire Borough.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet authorise the acquisition of the Freehold and Leasehold interests in the land and properties shown edged red for identification purposes only on the plans at Appendix 1.
2. That the Assistant Director for Planning, Regeneration and Transport be authorised to negotiate the acquisition by agreement of the property interests at Appendix 1, in consultation with the Council's Section 151 Officer and the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, and the Assistant Director of Legal Services be authorised to complete the necessary transactions.
3. That Cabinet grant a Resolution in Principle to investigate the use of Compulsory Purchase Order powers. In the event that terms cannot be agreed in relation to all or any of the property interests, or cannot be agreed within the prescribed timeframe, a further report may be submitted to Cabinet seeking a formal resolution to acquire those property interests through the exercise of the Council's Compulsory Purchase Powers.

125. COVID RECOVERY FUND

Consideration was given to the report which explained that the Council's Financial Outturn Report 2020/21 to Cabinet in July 2021 earmarked £2m for a Covid Recovery Fund. The Fund had been created to take proactive

steps in order to support local residents as they emerged from the pandemic. The funding was being brought forward in March 2022 to help residents against the backdrop of growing concerns around the cost of living due to inflation and significant increases in energy and fuel bills in particular. The Citizens Advice Bureau reported a 50% increase in the use of their services for financial support, with Advocacy and Appeals reporting a 66% increase in residents seeking support in the year from January 2021. Homelessness numbers were also increasing.

It was proposed that £500k be used in a cash grant scheme to provide support for households with the rising cost of energy bills. This support would take the form of a one-off grant of £250 which would be paid directly to the energy provider where possible. This grant would be available to those households unable to pay their energy bill. The support would also be available to those who paid their bills through pre-payment meters but only where the Council had been assured that those households were unable to pre-pay for their energy.

It was also proposed that £300k of the Covid Recovery Fund be used to top up the Council's allocation from Government for 2022/23 for providing Discretionary Housing Payments. These payments were to help pay rent and could be awarded to residents if they were already receiving Housing Benefit or received the housing element of Universal Credit.

A further £100k would be directed towards support for cultural recovery events and opportunities for people to reconnect. This Fund would work alongside the revenue budget investment that had been agreed as part of the 2022/23 budget setting process for the Women's Euro 2022 football tournament. It was anticipated that some of the additional £100k would be used to enable participation in events related to the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations that would be taking place across the country in June 2022.

It was explained that the remaining £679k would be retained within the Covid Recovery Fund so that further support could be targeted at issues as they arose as the Borough's recovery from Covid continued.

This report was considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. The Board was fully supportive of the recommendations but requested that guidance on the application process for community events be issued as soon as practicable, especially since the Jubilee celebrations were due to take place in a matter of weeks.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet approve the proposed use of the Covid Recovery Fund for the following purposes:

- £500k Cash grant scheme to provide support for households with the rising cost of energy bills.
- £300k additional funding to top up the Council's Discretionary Housing Payments Fund.
- £100k to support cultural recovery events.
- £50k to facilitate the administration of these proposals

2. That Cabinet note that a report will be presented to a future meeting regarding the remaining funding of £679k.
3. That guidance be issued as soon as is practicable on the application process for community events.

126. SOCIAL VALUE ANNUAL REPORT

Consideration was given to the report which set out the key achievements over the year to the end of November 2021 in relation to social value. The Council had adopted the Social Value Policy in 2019 and had made significant progress to secure social value commitments as part of the Council's contracts and had also achieved accreditation as a "Living Wage Employer" by the Living Wage Foundation. As well as the key achievements, the report also set out key priorities for 2022.

The aim of the Social Value Policy was to maximise the local impact of the Council's spend, with key elements taking forward:

- Raising the living standards of Rotherham residents and commitment to working towards the Living Wage Foundation Living Wage.
- Increasing the proportion of the Council's expenditure which goes to local businesses and providers.
- Building social value into all council contracts and maximise the impact gained from every pound spent, through the introduction of a rigorous system for assessing and measuring social value.
- Commit to the principle of co-designing services wherever possible

The Council had either achieved or made progress against all of the commitments agreed in February 2021. These included:

- The Social Value Commissioning Toolkit was in the final stages of development and about to be rolled out.
- Accreditation as a "Living Wage Employer" was awarded in September 2021.
- Anchor networks development was underway with key partners building on the commitments from the partnership Social Value Charter.
- The Council was positively engaged in the development of Social Value Policy and practice in the Mayoral Combined Authority.
- A workshop had been held to explore further community wealth building opportunities.

- An event had been held to engage with suppliers and provide real examples of good practice. This event would be repeated annually.

The report had been positively received by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as part of the pre-decision scrutiny process. However, it had been requested that consideration be given as to how the impact of the Social Value Strategy was demonstrated in future annual reports and how businesses and voluntary/community organisations' contributions to "social responsibility" could be captured. It was also requested that a further report be submitted to the BoardB in 6 months outlining the mid-year position.

Resolved:-

1. That the annual report is received noting the increased social value commitments along with outcomes achieved.
2. That the key priorities for 2022 include:
 - a) Launch of the Social Value Commissioning Toolkit to be held in May.
 - b) Further embedding Social Value across the Council.
 - c) Focus on increasing social value commitments for skills and employment.
 - d) Engagement with the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority in development and delivery of social value in the sub-region.
 - e) Building on anchor network development as part of the Rotherham Together Partnership Social Value Charter.
 - f) Undertake further research to build local market intelligence.
3. That consideration be given as to how the impact of the Social Value strategy was demonstrated in future annual reports.
4. That consideration is given to how businesses and voluntary/community organisations' contribution to 'social responsibility' is captured.
5. That a further report is submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board in 6 months outlining mid-year position.

127. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – ROTHERHAM COMMUNITY HUB

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the findings and recommendations from the Health Select Commission spotlight review held on 13th September, 2021. The review focused on the befriending service and support for loneliness provided by the Rotherham Community Hub during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

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 co-ordinated the joint response of Council services and the voluntary and community organisations sector (VCS).

Members of the Health Select Commission undertook the 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 had been an agreed primary focus of the Health Select Commission for 2021-22. All Members of the Health Select Commission undertook the review. Recommendations were generated by Members and derived from discussion during the question and answer session with service leads.

At the meeting the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health agreed with the praise for the Community Hub and confirmed that loneliness and befriending was a focus of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Resolved:-

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 was 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.

128. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - SUPPORT FOR YOUNG CARERS

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the findings and recommendations from the 22nd October, 2021, spotlight review in respect of support for young carers. These recommendations were

agreed by the Health Select Commission on 25th November, 2021, and by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 19th January, 2022.

As part of the discussions of the Adult Carer's Strategy at the 8th July meeting of the Health Select Commission, a spotlight review was undertaken in tandem with the Improving Lives Select Commission to examine the support available for young carers both during the pandemic and entering the recovery phase. Members met with service leads from the Council's Early Help Service and partner organisation Barnardo's on 22nd October, 2021. The spotlight review was undertaken by Councillors Baum-Dixon, Pitchley, Thompson, and Yasseen.

Recommendations were generated by Members and derived from discussion during the question and answer session with service leads.

Resolved:-

1. That the following recommendations from the review be received:
 - a) That action plans and performance matrix be supplied as part of the next update in 6 months' time.
 - b) That a plan be developed to address the current data gap in respect of young carers who mature into adult carers, with a view to providing the best preparation possible and making this transition as seamless as possible for young carers who may continue to have caring responsibilities into adulthood.
 - c) That consideration be given to how best to provide additional support to young carers seeking to access employment skills, education and training.
2. That Cabinet formally consider its response to the above recommendations by June 2022, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

129. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS – EXTERNAL FUNDING

Consideration was given to the report which summarised the findings and recommendations from the Improving Places Select Commission spotlight review held on 12th November, 2021. The review examined external funding sources to fund regeneration and transformation projects around the Borough. Several bids have been successful, whilst others had been unsuccessful. The Improving Places Select Commission received a presentation illustrating the status of the bids and funding packages and outlining the project that would be delivered. These recommendations were agreed by the Improving Places Select Commission on 14th December, 2021, and were endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 19th January, 2022.

The spotlight was undertaken by Councillors Wyatt, Burnett, Havard, Miro, and Tinsley.

The discussion included some possible ways to strengthen bids in the next round including sharing with the Service the outcome of the upcoming spotlight review on markets. Recommendations were developed by Members and derived from discussion during the question and answer session with service leads.

Resolved:-

1. That the following recommendations from the review be received:
 - a) That the ambition of the Service in submitting bids be commended.
 - b) That the feedback from the Government regarding the Dinnington and Wath bids for Levelling Up Funds be circulated when available.
 - c) That the Governance Advisor liaise with the Regeneration Strategy Team to co-ordinate upcoming scrutiny work on markets with a view to feeding into future bids involving markets.
 - d) That efforts to ensure Rotherham receives its fair portion of gainshare or “single pot” funds from the Mayoral Combined Authority be noted.
2. That Cabinet formally consider its response to the above recommendations by June 2022, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.

130. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

Consideration was given to the circulated report, the contents of which were included as part of the relevant items and the details included accordingly.

131. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

That the next meeting of the Cabinet be held on Monday, 25th April, 2022, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.