

Select report type
Improving Places Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 20 September 2022

Report Title

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2021/22

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

No

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

Progress on the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model

Recommendations

Note the progress of the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

- Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy 2018-2025
- Rotherham Council Plan 2022-25
- Rotherham Council Year Ahead Plan 2022/23

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Thriving Neighbourhoods Annual Report 2021/22

1. Background

- 1.1 This is the fifth annual report to be presented to the Improving Places Select Commission and focuses on the municipal year May 2021 to May 2022.
- 1.2 Cabinet approved the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (2018-2025) in November 2018 following the introduction of the new neighbourhood working model in May 2017.
- 1.3 The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy aims to put communities at the heart of everything we do and to make people healthier, happier, safer and proud by:
 - Working with communities on the things that matter to them
 - Listening and working together to make a difference
 - Supporting people from different backgrounds to get on well together
- 1.4 This vision was further developed under the 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving' theme within the Council Plan (2022-25) -
'Our vision for Rotherham is for every neighbourhood to be a thriving neighbourhood, where people are able to work together to achieve a good quality of life. We want to work with local people to find solutions to local issues and to build on our heritage and assets. We will help create vibrant communities in which people feel happy, safe and proud. To do this, we will make it easier to get involved in the local community, work closely with our partners and local voluntary and community groups, enhance our town and village centres, green spaces and libraries, and effectively tackle community issues'
- 1.5 The 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving' theme within the Council's Year Ahead Delivery Plan includes the following outcomes the Council aims to achieve in 2022/23 under this theme –
 - Work with communities on the things that matter to them
 - Residents, organisations and businesses use their skills and resources to help others
 - Neighbourhoods that are welcoming and safe
 - Local people have access to libraries, cultural activities, parks and green spaces
 - Local towns and villages are improved

2. Key Issues

Elected Members as Community Leaders

- 2.1 Elected Members are at the centre of Rotherham's neighbourhood working model, which provides them the opportunity to maximise their role as community leaders.

Member Induction, Development and Support

- 2.2 The May 2021 elections saw a move from 21 to 25 wards and resulted in 32 new Members being elected, the majority of whom had never been Members before. The Elected Member Induction programme included an introduction into the Council's Neighbourhood Working model which covered the role of key council services, various initiatives and programmes (such as Towns and Villages) and the importance of involving community stakeholders (such as the VCS and Parish Councils). Running alongside this Elected Members were provided with a detailed introduction to their new ward.
- 2.3 Over the last year a wider Member Development Programme has been established, which is overseen by the Deputy Leader and the Member Democratic Group. This programme has included neighbourhood working related topics such as the role of Parish Councils, the role of the Voluntary Community Sector, Towns and Villages programme and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Other 'neighbourhood working' related opportunities are in development, which will form part of the Member Development programme over the next year. A Good Practice Guide is also being developed as additional resource for Members and officers. This will showcase examples of neighbourhood working and strengths-based approaches across the Borough.
- 2.4 In April/May 2021 a survey took place which allowed Elected Members to feedback on the neighbourhood working model and support from Democratic Services (which included Member Development). 30 Elected Members responded to the survey, 67% of whom felt that the neighbourhood working model was good or very good. Specific comments were received around -
- Support given to Elected Members in their community leadership role
 - Ward budgets
 - Community engagement
 - Neighbourhood partnership working
 - Council service and partner response to local issues
- The results of the survey will help shape the progression of the Council's Neighbourhood Working model and the support Members will receive in their community leadership role. The results have been presented to the Member Democratic Panel and the necessary responses / actions will be considered over the next few months. This will be fed back to all Elected Members in due course.
- 2.5 Ward Members are supported on a day-to-day basis by the Neighbourhoods Team. During 2021/22 the Neighbourhoods Team facilitated 289 ward Member briefings. These ward briefings are fundamental to the neighbourhood working model as they provide members with the opportunity to review their ward plans and budgets, engage with various partners and services, consider any emerging issues, take a lead on any projects or initiatives and discuss how to involve the local community.

Ward Priorities and Plans

- 2.6 Between May – September 2021 Elected Members were supported by the Neighbourhoods Team to identify and agree their ward priorities and plans. These were informed by ward data, input and advice from council services and partners and local community intelligence. The priorities were published on the Council's website in October 2021 and covered priorities such as –
- Environment – including street scene, parks and green spaces
 - Community safety & ASB
 - Community resilience & infrastructure, including covid recovery
 - Physical & mental health and well-being
 - Children and young people
 - Transport & road safety
- 2.7 Elected Members were given the opportunity to refresh their ward priorities and plans in May/June 2022. The majority of Members chose to broadly keep their existing priorities. A number of wards have now included reference to the 'Cost of Living' crisis. The refreshed ward priorities were published on the Council's website in July 2022.
- 2.8 Since their publication in October 2021 Elected Members have been working with the Neighbourhoods Team, the local community and a range of partners to develop projects and improve local services to tackle their ward priorities. Details of these initiatives are included in the monthly ward e-bulletins and will be summarised in Ward Members' reports to full Council,
- 2.9 The Ward Members' reports to Council include numerous stories and case studies illustrating the impact of neighbourhood working, the role of Elected Members as community leaders and progress on ward priorities. The reports started in May 2022 and will continue to January 2024. They are published online once presented.
- 2.10 As well as forming a basis for local action the ward plans and the priorities identified within them are considered and inform Council decision making, policies, strategies, service plans and resource allocation.

Devolved Ward Budgets

- 2.11 The 2021/22 budget included revenue and capital budgets that were devolved to individual Elected Members (Community Leadership Fund) or the ward as a whole (Capital Budget) -
- Each Elected Member received £2,584 Community Leadership Fund (revenue)
 - Two member wards received £7,120 Capital Budget
 - Three member wards received £10,680 Capital Budget
- 2.12 The budgets for 2022/23 and 2023/24 are –
- Each Elected Member will receive £1,584 Community Leadership Fund.
 - Two member wards will receive £7,120 Capital Budget
 - Three member wards will receive £10,680 Capital Budget

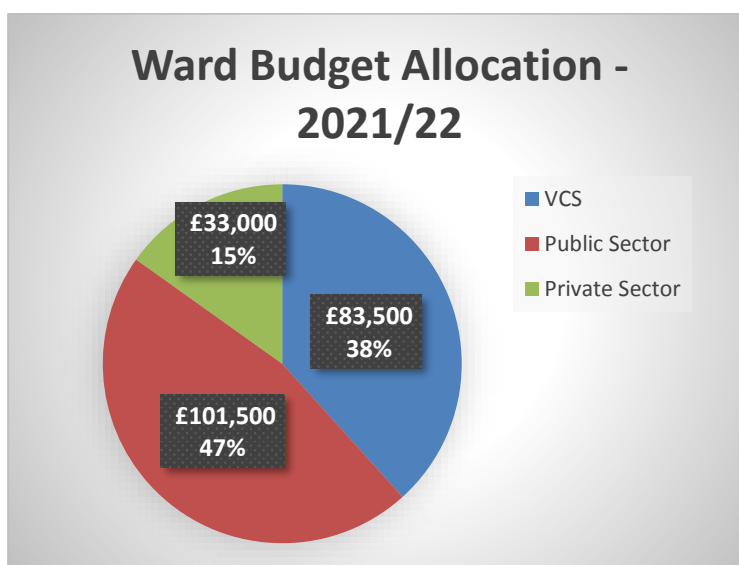
2.13 Both CLF and Capital budgets can be carried over to the following financial year up until 2023/24. This means that any underspend at the end of March 2024 will not carry over to the new financial year commencing April 2024.

2.14 In addition, Ward Members have access to –

- Ward Housing Hub monies - a revenue budget from the Housing Revenue Account that can be spent on environmental improvements that benefit council tenants
- Community Infrastructure Levy - a charge that councils can apply to new developments to raise funds for local infrastructure. Wards that are not covered by a Parish Council will retain the CIL 'Neighbourhood Portion'. This equates to 15% of the total CIL. This was only made available to Members from April 2022.

2.15 In 2021/22 Elected Members allocated approximately £218,000 to projects, services and activities tackling their ward priorities. £111,000 came from their CLF and £107,000 was from the ward Capital budget. Summaries of the allocations made in each ward in 2021/22 have been published on the website.

2.16 Approximately £83,500 was invested directly into the Voluntary and Community Sector, supporting a total of 238 community organisations. £101,500 went into the public sector for additional activities, services or equipment. The remaining £33,000 was used to purchase items/equipment from the private sector for community activities.



2.17 In addition, Members allocated a further £66,000 Ward Housing Hub monies on projects that benefitted council tenants and were in line with their ward priorities.

Community Engagement

2.18 How Elected Members and the Neighbourhoods Team communicate and engage with residents, stakeholders and partners is fundamental to Rotherham's neighbourhood working model. From September 2022 the

Neighbourhoods Team will start to use ward focused Communication & Engagement Plans. These will be developed, monitored and evolved in consultation with Ward members.

- 2.19 The Neighbourhoods home webpage includes information on the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy, an interactive map of all the wards, details on how to apply for devolved ward budgets, links to the Parish Councils section of the Council website and links to all 25 ward pages. In 2021/22 there were 6,618 unique views of this webpage.
- 2.20 The 25 ward webpages include Elected Members details, a latest news feed, and useful links to other websites. They also allow people to access the ward priorities, ward data profile, annual ward budget statements and the Members' report to Council. There were very few articles posted on the newsfeed in 2021/22. This has been picked up as an area of improvement going forward, as has increased use of the Councils' social media accounts.
- 2.21 Each ward produces and circulates a monthly e-bulletin. These are written in consultation with Ward Members and provide local information and numerous stories illustrating the progress made in tackling ward priorities and the impact of neighbourhood working within the ward. Subscriptions increased from 6,515 to 7,860 in 2021/22, an increase of 1,345. The 'engagement rate' remains at 80%, which is significantly higher than most other bulletins of this nature. The target within the Council's Year Ahead Plan is to increase subscriptions up to 10,000 by the end of the financial year.
- 2.22 Supporting local community groups and meetings who provide local activities or tackle local issues which relate to the ward priorities is a core function of the Neighbourhoods Team. In 2021/22 the team supported 323 community organisations with general advice, legal status, funding, volunteer recruitment and linking them into various partnerships and services. This figure includes the establishment of 26 new community organisations. This work was alongside, and in addition to, the ward budget funding which was received by 238 community organisations.
- 2.23 The Neighbourhoods Team will continue to work alongside Ward Members to bring communities together through a range of enjoyable, cultural and social activities and events, which will inspire hope and pride in local communities across the Borough.
- 2.24 The Neighbourhoods Team continue to advise and support council services and partners who wish to consult within wards and neighbourhoods, such as with the Towns and Villages programme. This is in accordance with the Council's Consultation and Engagement Policy.
- 2.25 The recently agreed Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy has further emphasised the need to promote and provide opportunities for all communities within the Borough. Over the next 12 months, and beyond, the Neighbourhoods Team will work with Elected Members to provide more opportunities for communities with protected characteristics to get involved in local consultation, activities and community action.

Neighbourhood Co-ordination and Partnership Working

- 2.26 The priorities within ward plans form the basis of local projects, partnerships and networks which are supported by the Neighbourhoods Team and Ward Members. These priorities are shared across all Council services to help inform strategies, service plans, the allocation of resources and the delivery of services. Further work needs to take place to increase the visibility of the ward priorities to all staff across the council.
- 2.27 A range of neighbourhood based partnerships and networks have been continued or established in order to tackle the priorities within the ward plans. This includes Community Action Partnerships (CAPs) which operate in all 25 wards and provide a vehicle to tackle community safety related issues. In 2021/22 the Neighbourhoods Team co-ordinated 825 neighbourhood partnership and network meetings. These have been a mix of face-to-face and online Teams meetings.
- 2.28 Securing more regular and consistent Police attendance at CAPs and the quality of the data provided has been a regular issue raised by Elected Members over the last 12 months. This has been acknowledged and dialogue continues to take place with SY Police to improve this. Work is also ongoing to improve the data received at CAPs.
- 2.29 Parish and Town Councils are key to partnership working. The Neighbourhoods Team includes a Parish Council Liaison Officer who has supported the Parish Councils to –
- Develop a Joint Working Agreement with the Council – refreshed in July 2022
 - Meet with each other, council services and partners on a regular basis
 - Link into Elected Members, key council services to address local issues
 - Develop their response to potential future flood incidents
 - Hold events and celebrations
 - Access learning and development opportunities
- 2.30 At a North, Central and South Locality Area level senior managers from Neighbourhoods, Housing, Environmental Enforcement / CPU, Early Help, Streetscene and SY Police meet on a regular basis to exchange information and discuss area wide delivery of services in response to ward plan priorities and issues raised by CAPs or other neighbourhood partnerships. They are also in a position to assist with translating borough-wide strategies into local action.
- 2.31 Joint Tasking Groups are also in operation in the North, Central & South Locality Areas. These are responsible for tackling specific crime, community safety & ASB related cases that require a multi-agency response. They generally involve the same set of Senior Managers as in 2.30.
- 2.32 Since the introduction of the Council's Neighbourhood Working model the Neighbourhoods Team have had limited involvement in town centre related issues, focusing primarily on the surrounding neighbourhoods. In March 2022

Council agreed that a new Town Centre Community Co-ordinator post will be established and would sit within the Neighbourhoods Team. The post holder will lead on a placemaking approach that will harness and build on local community assets as well as bringing all the key stakeholders together to achieve common goals and ensure the town centre becomes an exciting place to live and work. The new post-holder will commence in October 2022.

Embedding Neighbourhood Working across the Council

- 2.33 The importance of Neighbourhood or Place-based working to the Council has recently been emphasised by the inclusion of the 'Every Neighbourhood Thriving' theme within the Council Plan.
- 2.34 The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy was approved by Cabinet in 2018. It is now opportune to refresh the Strategy so it can take into account the ambitions within the new Council Plan (2022-25) and acknowledge that our neighbourhood working model can no longer be considered as a new approach, as it is now well embedded. The revised Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy is due to be presented at Cabinet in November 2022.
- 2.35 Big Hearts Big Changes is the Council's internal programme of activity that supports the delivery of the Council's priorities. Thriving Neighbourhoods is one of the five themes and includes activity and projects around –
- Place Based Working – delivery of ward plans and embedding the priorities within service plans and strategies
 - Strengths-Based Approaches – recognising and building on the skills, resources, knowledge, experience and heritage within our communities rather than focusing on the deficits. This will be embedded through an officer and member development programme
 - Volunteering & Community Action – both how the Council supports volunteers across its services and how the Council supports staff to volunteer out in communities.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 The report presented is for information.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The report presented is for information

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The report presented is for information

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications, other than those relating to the Neighbourhoods core management budget and the Members' ward budgets

7. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

7.1 There are no direct legal implications

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct staffing implications other than the recruitment and deployment of Neighbourhoods staff.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The outcomes within the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy support the delivery of the Council Plan themes 'Every Child Able to Fulfil Their Potential' and 'People Are Safe, Healthy and Live Well'.

9.2 The ward priorities published in July 2022 illustrate where ward members are targeting resources towards Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults. This includes new or additional activities, improved facilities or improved access to services. A number of Wards have priorities which will try to mitigate against the 'Cost of Living' crisis and continue to assist communities with Covid recovery.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The neighbourhood working model enables the Council to respond to the specific needs of Rotherham's increasingly diverse communities. Engagement with residents takes into account the strengths, assets and needs of different communities of interest, which differ in each neighbourhood and ward. Neighbourhood working allows the flexibility to respond to these needs.

10.2 The ward priorities and ward budget statements published on the website illustrate how Ward Members have targeted activity and resources toward communities with protected characteristics. The imminent introduction of ward Communication & Engagement Plans along with case studies and stories on ward webpages, e-bulletins and the Ward Members' reports to Council will assist measuring the impact going forward.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 A number of ward priorities and plans have specific references to issues such as active travel, air quality and climate change that would positively contribute to tackling this agenda within these wards. The development of projects and awareness raising through e-bulletins and other engagement methods will encourage resident participation.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Multi-agency working is referred to in paragraphs 2.26 – 2.32 of this report. This illustrates the importance of partners (from the public, voluntary and private sector) and Parish Councils in the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy. The ward priorities and plans are informed by the experience and intelligence from these partners, which encourages the establishment of shared priorities and goals.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Risks relating to the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy are captured in the Assistant Chief Executive Directorate Risk Register.

13.2 Risk - failure to enhance community cohesion throughout the borough
Mitigation -

- Ensure there are opportunities for people from different backgrounds to interact
- Community Action Partnerships and other ward-based partnerships/networks in place (which involve local VCS sector) to ensure early identification of community issues and a local co-ordinated response
- Ward e-bulletins and social media platforms being utilised to promote cohesion
- Safer and Stronger Communities is a priority within the Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) Plan 2022-25. Key objective areas include early intervention and preventative work on problem solving in local neighbourhoods, tackling hate crime and joint Police/Council community tension monitoring.

13.3 Risk - Lack of development or support for Elected Members preventing them maximising their role as community leaders

Mitigation -

- Ward priorities / plans informed by local data, information and intelligence
- Regular Ward Member Briefings, Community Action Partnerships and neighbourhood partnership meetings
- Advice and guidance provided around investment of ward budgets and other resources
- Members provided with a list of key contacts for services, etc. within their wards
- E-Casework system supports members to log casework direct with specific Directorates. Providing an audit trail, ability to monitor, review and follow up directly with officers where necessary to resolution
- Successful induction programme 2021/22
- Annual development plan in place informed by Member Democratic Panel
- Member Development sessions are delivered at varying times to encourage attendance
- Going forward Member Development sessions will be via Hybrid delivery
- Member survey has taken place and feedback being responded to / actioned

13.4 Risk - Capacity of council services and partners to respond to local priorities and issues

Mitigation –

- Ward plans in place capturing projects, initiatives and any enhanced service delivery
- Ward priorities taken into account in service plans and cabinet reports
- Front line council services have aligned staff to new wards and locality areas
- Local partnerships / networks exploring innovative ways to tackle local priorities, empower local communities and promote self-help to ease pressure on public sector services.
- Working with South Yorkshire Police to align boundaries which are currently not coterminous with ward and locality boundaries, affecting Wickersley North and Bramley & Ravenfield wards in particular.
- Working with SY Police, Housing and CPU to align Crime & ASB data to wards is ongoing.

13.5 Risk - Parish Councils not actively involved in neighbourhood working

Mitigation -

- Parish Council Liaison role within the Neighbourhoods Team ensuring regular communication and engagement
- Joint Working Agreement refreshed and reviewed annually
- Joint Working Group and Network events established and meeting regularly
- Parish Councils invited to be involved in Community Action Partnerships and other local networks / projects
- Development sessions and seminars put on for Parish Councils

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Martin Hughes, Head of Neighbourhoods
Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Assistant Chief Executive	Jo Brown	23/08/22
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22/08/22
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	N/A	N/A
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)	N/A	N/A

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