

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD
Wednesday 12 October 2022

Present:- Councillor Clark (in the Chair); Councillors T. Collingham, Baker-Rogers, Baum-Dixon, A Carter, Cooksey, Elliott, Pitchley and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Cowen, Tinsley and Wyatt.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

85. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2022 AND 14 SEPTEMBER 2022

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 6 July 2022 and 14 September 2022 be approved as a true record.

86. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Member	Agenda Item	Interest Type	Nature of Interest
Councillor Elliott	Agenda Item 8 Fostering Fees and Allowances 2022.	Disclosable Pecuniary Interest	Rotherham MBC Foster Carer

87. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the press or public.

88. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there were two items containing exempt information.

In relation to Minute 90, Forge Island Delivery Arrangements, the Chair advised that as Members had indicated that they wished to ask questions relating to the exempt item, it was her intention to take questions relating to open information first and then go into private session for the remainder of the discussion.

In relation to Minute 91, Fostering Fees and Allowances 2022, the Chair advised that unless Members indicated otherwise and intended to speak to the exempt information, that the meeting should remain open to the

public and press.

89. PROPOSALS FOR DAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEOPLE WITH HIGH SUPPORT NEEDS

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, the Strategic Director for Adult Social Care, Housing and Public Health and the Head of Service – Provider Services to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health introduced the report, which set out a proposal to introduce a new service model for day opportunities for people with high support needs. The council had committed £2.1 million in capital funding to ensure the best facilities were provided. The proposed provision followed the principles laid out in the learning disability transformation programme which was agreed in 2018.

The report highlighted that those facilities in current use were either reaching the end of lease or were not suitable or fully accessible. It was therefore necessary to look at alternative sites that would future proof service delivery, offered flexible provision and personalised person-centred support.

The Head of Service – Provider Services gave an overview of the 90-day consultation process and supporting communications. The consultation included an online questionnaire, a series of formal public meetings with carers, relatives and people with learning disabilities, drop-in sessions and home visits. Individual letters were sent to those attending current day services and their carers and relatives. Meetings were also held with staff to ensure that they had a clear understanding of the proposed changes in order that conversations could be had with service users or carers. In addition, contact was made with over 50 social enterprises, network organisation or forums across the Borough to outline the proposals and seek feedback.

Of the options outlined in the consultation, Option 1 proposed that the service should operate from one large centrally located purpose-built facility, complimented by community outreach support across the Borough to support access to local communities. Option 2 proposed that the service should operate from two new build bases geographically split across the Borough. A further third option, proposing that there should be community-based service operating on an outreach basis without a building-based presence was discounted as this would not be suitable for service users with complex needs.

The consultation feedback was equally supportive of both Option 1 and 2, with no clear consensus emerging about a preferred service model. However, in assessing the suitability of site options to deliver either model, consideration was given to various factors including location and alignment with cohort mapping; community connections; size of the site, flexibility and availability of outdoor space; accessibility and transport

links. On this basis, a recommendation was made to support Option 1 with Warden Street, Canklow identified as the preferred site option.

The current service facilities would be decommissioned once the new service was ready to open. Each service user would have an assessment at the point of transition to ensure that their needs were being appropriately met.

The Chair opened the discussion to Board Members. Clarification was sought on how the service would change for users under the new model. It was noted that service users would still be able to enjoy those activities currently on offer. However, there was scope to modernise the service to adapt to the needs of future service users, incorporating education, job and volunteering activities and independent living skills. It was outlined that the 'offer' was a blank canvas and would be co-produced on the basis of current and prospective service user feedback. This may include opportunities for social enterprises, horticulture or animal husbandry.

Further details were sought for the process for decommissioning buildings. It was highlighted that facilities would only be decommissioned at the point when users could transition to the new service. No decision had been taken about their future use at this stage, although it was noted that the leased building would return to the NHS. Clarification was sought if the carbon impact of demolition would be assessed on the RMBC owned-building should this take place. Assurance was given that this would be undertaken.

In response to a question about of the accessibility of services by transport and community-based services, it was outlined that the service was accessible to users who could travel independently and was in close walking distance of the Town Centre. Transport was available to enable service users to access services from around the Borough whether centre or community based.

The proposals for the service were welcomed. Clarification was sought about the numbers of responses to the consultation and if this was deemed to be sufficient to inform the proposals and if organisations who represent learning disabled people and carers from Black and Minority Ethnic Communities had been contacted. In determining the proposals and location, it was asked if a social analysis had taken account of other factors such as social deprivation, anti-social behaviour or hate crime. Assurance was given that engagement would take place with local communities once a decision had been made regarding the proposals. It was noted that some of the staff working in the service had relatives who were clients.

The Cabinet Member outlined that the consultation had been robust and had reached the small number of current service users and carers along with prospective users who would be transitioning to adult services in due course. The Head of Service gave assurance that the consultation

followed the “Gunning Principles” and groups/community organisations across the Borough had been contacted.

Details were sought if the infrastructure around existing provision in communities would be maintained (e.g. allotments, social clubs) and if community involvement could be secured for the new service model. The outreach model would support and enhance community-based activities within existing locations and work with the voluntary and community groups in those areas to develop provision.

It was noted that the equality impact assessment did not appear to include specific consideration of sex, race, religion or belief or sexual orientation as protected characteristics. It was asked that engagement on future service design should be inclusive of these factors.

The Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their attendance.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That consideration is given to ensuring that any consultation undertaken on service design is inclusive and takes account of the differing needs of current and prospective service users/ groups across the range of protected characteristics.
3. That further consideration is given to mitigating the potential carbon impact of disposal/demolition of Council assets related to this scheme.

90. FORGE ISLAND FINAL DELIVERY ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment, the Strategic Director for Finance and Customer Services and the Assistant Director of Legal Services.

The Cabinet Member introduced the report and asked that consideration be given to a recommended delivery approach to allow the Forge Island scheme to progress to the construction phase. The approach involved the Council acting as funder for the scheme and contracting with Muse Development Ltd to facilitate delivery. It was noted that the Forge Island development was a key part of the Town Centre Masterplan to act as a catalyst for future public and private investment into the town centre

The matter had been considered by Council on 5 October 2022 and Council had agreed to give Cabinet the option to act as funder of the whole development and approve the necessary increase in the Council's Capital programme to allow for this.

Full details of the analysis and financial modelling of all options had been

presented to the Board in Exempt Appendix 1.

The Chair invited Board Members to ask questions on the items in the open part of the agenda.

Clarification was sought on the parking strategy and the financial viability of proposals. It was noted that any response to this question related to financial modelling as outlined in Exempt Appendix 1 and therefore would not be given at that point.

It was noted that it was anticipated that the main work on the development would commence in November 2022. Details were asked if this was on schedule. Assurance was given that this was on track, with an expected completion date of spring 2024.

As Board Members indicated that they wished to question the details outlined in Exempt Appendix 1, the Chair announced that members of the press and public should be excluded from the meetings and proceedings should take place in closed session.

The following issues were raised during the discussion taken in closed session:

- Assurance that a robust treasury management system was in place;
- That the Town Centre Masterplan remained unchanged;
- Volatility of current financial markets and risk mitigation;
- Income generation and parking;
- Impact of delay on the scheme's viability;
- Value for money.

The Chair reconvened the meeting in open session. A request was made that the refreshed parking strategy be presented to scrutiny for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.

91. FOSTERING FEES AND ALLOWANCES 2022

The Chair welcomed the Cabinet Member for Children and Young People and the Assistant Director of Children's Social Care to the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Children and Young people introduced the report and outlined proposals to improve the care experience for children in Rotherham by ensuring that, wherever possible, they were looked after in a foster family environment. In order to retain and recruit foster carers, Children and Young People's Services sought approval to revise and

increase its offers for foster carers regarding the fees and allowances that they received. The Cabinet Member outlined that foster carers fees and allowances had not been reviewed for some time.

It was noted that at the end of May 2022, Rotherham had 542 children in care. Of these 79% were placed in family-based setting, however more children were placed with foster families via an independent fostering agency (IFA) than with in-house foster carers. It was reported that Rotherham had a shortage of all foster placements but particularly placements for children requiring enhanced care, adolescents and larger sibling groups. This resulted in too many children and young people placed out of the Borough or in residential placements because local capacity was insufficient.

A review was undertaken in May 2022 which included a regional benchmarking exercise and consultation with other local authorities within the Yorkshire region. The benchmarking activity highlighted when compared to an IFA or other local authorities, the RMBC offer was less competitive in relation to payments linked to mileage, third and subsequent placements and enhanced fees when supporting children with more complex needs.

The Assistant Director of Children's Social Care outlined that it was anticipated that by implementing the proposals, it would support the retention and increase the placement capacity of current foster carers. In particular this would support RMBC to grow carers who were willing to care for the Borough's most complex young people. In addition, the improved remuneration and fostering offer would attract and incentivise new foster carers to join the Council's fostering service to provide care for a broader spectrum of children with more complex needs.

A full rationale for the changes to the fees and allowances requested was included in the report, along with details of the financial implications. It was noted that the annual unit cost of an in-house placement was £19.2k compared with £45.6k for an IFA placement. It was therefore imperative that RMBC increased the number of children with in-house foster carers and reduced the numbers in independent fostering arrangements. While the report identified increases in payments and allowances, the overall expectation was an invest-to-save model, with savings achieved as reliance on IFA placements fell.

The Chair opened the discussion to Board Members. The proposals and the additional investment were welcomed. Assurance was sought if the training and support package currently on offer to in-house carers would still be in place. It was confirmed that this was the case. It was noted that some independent foster carers were returning to in-house provision because of the enhancements on offer.

Clarification was sought about levels of confidence that the proposals would deliver the desired outcomes of attracting more in-house foster

carers. In response, it was outlined that the proposals gave a message to existing foster carers that their services were valued and they could be remunerated accordingly as professional foster carers providing full-time care. The offer would expand the provision that the existing foster cohort could deliver, including day care. It was anticipated that the new offer was competitive to attract new foster carer households who may wish to work for a local not-for-profit service for a similar financial package to that on offer from the private sector.

Further details were requested on skills progression and how this would be supported. The intention was to support foster carers to meet the needs of a child based on a 'good match' rather than their skill level being a barrier to fostering a child. An example was given of a level 2 foster carer being supported to develop skills to foster a child with more complex needs if the placement was deemed suitable and in the child's best interest.

Details were sought if consideration had been given to reducing household outgoings alongside the proposals to increase fees and allowance. The Assistant Director outlined that other enhancements may be required to allow Rotherham foster carers to live and work from home. A task and finish group was to be established to look at this in further depth. The Cabinet Member signalled that she was open to different ideas to enhance the offer, including use of the Rothercard scheme should this be appropriate.

It was outlined that in respect of skill levels, each foster carer received an annual assessment. Most foster carers enter at level 1 and progressed to level 2 following an assessment. Level 3 and 4 were awarded based on level of understanding, capacity, commitment to training and evidence of learning and care given. Attendance of foster carers at recruitment events and other training was also encouraged to share learning by experience. Foster carers also attended Fostering Panel which provided assurance that skill levels were assessed appropriately.

Clarification was sought if the proposals would have any impact on the provision of Special Guardianship Orders (SGO). Consideration had been given to ensure that in achieving permanence for a child through a SGO, that remuneration was matched and needs were assessed early to ensure that the support was in place.

It was noted that the competitor analysis (Appendix 2) detailed the offer from other local authorities and independent providers however, clarification was sought on what was different in what was being proposed in Rotherham. In response, it was noted that there was very little detail available on how competitors retained foster carers. Views had been sought from Rotherham carers to ask what made a difference to them. The importance of capturing the foster carers voice and using it to improve the service was reiterated.

Clarification was sought if the proposals would attract more new foster carers or greater numbers of existing carers from the independent sector. It was anticipated that there would be movement from the independent sector. It was noted that this in itself would bring greater efficiencies as the local authority could directly influence foster household and better determine local placements for Rotherham children.

Clarification was sought about the mileage rate proposals and if this would be flat rate payment to be considered as part of earnings or moved to tax-free allowances. A written answer would be given on the points raised.

Further details were sought on the rationale behind the historical lower third child fees. It was noted fostering had developed considerably over recent decades and fostering standards outlined clear expectations about the standard of care, how individuals' needs should be assessed and met and household environments.

Clarification was sought on the communication and marketing strategy. The Assistant Director emphasised that it was important that the message 'speaks' to Rotherham foster carers about the difference their contribution would make to Rotherham children and that they would receive competitive income for their work.

Further details were sought to establish if a review was built into the proposals to ensure that the desired outcomes were delivered. It was outlined that an annual fostering service review would be produced that would cover these issues. It was also explained that Corporate Parenting Panel would maintain oversight of progress and the views of the Looked After Children's Council and foster carers would be sought on impact and outcomes.

In summing up, the Chair commented on the commitment of Rotherham foster carers and asked that the thanks of the Board be put on record.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet be advised that the recommendations be supported.
2. That an annual review of the achievements of Fostering Service is undertaken, including a report on the impact and outcomes of the changes to fostering fees and allowances.

92. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - CULTURAL STRATEGY

The Chair of Improving Lives Select Commission introduced the report which detailed the outcomes of a joint spotlight review of aspects of the Cultural Strategy undertaken by Improving Places and Improving Lives Select Commissions. The work was undertaken out of concern about the impact of isolation resulting from the pandemic and pressures on family income. The purpose of the review was to obtain assurances that the

service was responsive to changing needs of communities and to ensure inclusive access to cultural activities in the Borough and children had safe and fun things to do. Evidence was gathered from the Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion, officers and community members.

Thanks was extended to all who had contributed to the review.

Resolved:

That the briefing be noted and the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration:-

- a) That the range of available activities tailored for young residents of the Borough be prioritised for expansion.
- b) That consideration be given to how best to expand access, especially for young people, to recreational swimming in the Borough, whilst protecting against hazards.
- c) That the service liaise with CYPS to develop a system to help young carers more easily access opportunities for leisure and culture-related respite.
- d) With a view to expanding access, that consideration be given to hosting cultural events at alternating and varied locations and venues throughout the Borough where appropriate.

93. SCRUTINY REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS - MARKETS: ENGAGEMENT AND RECOVERY

In the absence of the Chair and Vice-Chair of Improving Places Select Commission, the Governance Advisor introduced the findings and recommendations of the spotlight review of Markets engagement and recovery.

Evidence was gathered using a site visit in which Members, officers and market industry experts toured the Town Centre Markets areas, followed by an in-person presentation and question and answer session with officers and with expert advisors from National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA) and National Market Traders Federation (NMTF).

The previous overview of markets in Rotherham took place when the building opened in 1971, when the current regulations became active. These guidelines have served well over the decades, but it was agreed that a review of the regulations take place so that they could be updated for current circumstances.

It was noted that the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy and officers were fully briefed on the recommendations and progress was being made on their implementation. The report was to be submitted to Cabinet in order that a formal response was received.

On behalf of the Chair of IPSC, the Governance Advisor extended thanks to all those who participated in the review.

Clarification was sought if local expertise was sought (for example stall holders on the Thursday Bazaar which had revived market use on a day which had previously had low usage). It was outlined that the review recognised the importance of capturing the learning from new initiatives and feedback from existing and prospective stall holders and this was reflected in its recommendations.

A question was posed if there was clarity about the aims of the market strategy and if this would address decline. It was noted that a neighbouring borough had invested in a new market development which was not running at full capacity. A concern was expressed that the town centre market development should be consolidated to ensure that it was viable. In response, the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy stressed the importance of the markets to the local economy and noted that footfall was increasing following the pandemic. She welcomed the review and its findings and any future scrutiny of market developments.

Resolved:

1. That a review of the Council's Rules and Regulations in respect of Markets be added to the IPSC work programme.
2. That face-to-face consultations and clear communication be prioritised in all interactions with vendors and traders.
3. That the service avail the case studies and resources available in the libraries of NABMA and NMTF to inform the strategic refresh of Rotherham markets.
4. That the service re-evaluate the support offer for new vendors, in consultation with the NABMA and NMTF.
5. With a view to retaining traders during redevelopment of the markets building, that consideration be given to mitigating any safety risk to traders as well as risk of traders discontinuing trading.
6. That any re-design of markets spaces give consideration to usability and aesthetics, availing market research to optimise spaces for inclusiveness and accessibility, and to make the offer especially attractive to students and young people.
7. That the Young Traders Scheme be prioritised for further expansion in the longer term.
8. Recognising that the Town Centre markets complex represents a unique and distinct microeconomy with its own accompanying needs and characteristics, that consideration be given to the ongoing management resource required to sustain the markets economy successfully over the long term.

94. WORK PROGRAMME

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

95. WORK IN PROGRESS - SELECT COMMISSIONS

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

Information was shared that Improving Lives Select Commission was working with the Local Government Association to pilot "Effective Scrutiny of Children's Service". The next session was to take place on 25 October 2022.

96. FORWARD PLAN OF KEY DECISIONS - 1 OCTOBER 2022 - 31 DECEMBER 2022

This item was deferred.

97. CALL-IN ISSUES

There were no call-in issues.

98. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

99. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Resolved: - That the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board will be held at 10am on Wednesday 16 November 2022 at Rotherham Town Hall.