

Background to the Budget and Financial Strategy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is split into five directorates, each made up of number of services and teams. The five directorates are:
- Adult Care, Housing and Public Health;
 - Children and Young People's Service
 - Regeneration and Environment
 - Finance and Customer Services
 - Assistant Chief Executive

This appendix summarises the activity being undertaken in each Directorate in the current year and the planned activity that will be undertaken in 2024/25 as part of the proposed budget.

2. Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

2.1 Adult Care

- 2.1.1 Adult Care is responsible for the provision of adult social care support and services for Care Act eligible groups of adults in the borough, including older people and adults with mental ill-health problems, people with a learning disability and autism and physical and/or sensory impairments. The Directorate also supports people with housing and support requirements through housing related support and vulnerable adults experiencing multiple disadvantages as well as domestic abuse. The Directorate has been and continues to be at the forefront of the Councils response to safeguarding adults, supporting hospital discharges and maximising independence of residents with care and support needs. The Directorate also has a key role in supporting the wider health and care system and externally commissioned providers such as care homes, home care, supported living and voluntary sector partners including micro-enterprises to deliver critical services to customers.

- 2.1.2 Adult Care has statutory responsibility under the Care Act 2014 for managing and delivering:

- Information, advice and guidance
- Advocacy
- Prevention and recovery
- Safeguarding
- Assessment and support planning
- Care, at home and in residential settings, including managing provider failure
- As well as statutory responsibility under the Mental Health Act for the 24 hour provision of the Approved Mental Health Professional
- Regulated services

- 2.1.3 In addition to the pressures and new demand created by the legacy impacts of Covid-19, and more recently the cost of living crisis, the Directorate continues to face a number of significant challenges as a result of changes in population demographics. There is a sustained budget pressure as a result of an aging population; a rising population of working age adults with long term health and care support needs; increasing acuity, multiple disadvantage and complexity of need for those residents who need support; and increased cost pressures for externally commissioned adult care providers driven by the current financial climate. The associated costs and increased risk faced by externally commissioned providers as a result of cost of living pressures has highlighted the need for the Directorate to respond with an aligned budget strategy to support sustainable fee increases.
- 2.1.4 The focus for 2024/25 is to continue to address the need to reduce demand, working with health and social care partners in the borough, alongside significant changes to the way care services are delivered to make care more personalised, responsive and cost effective.
- 2.1.5 Quality of care will continue to be developed and improved through further integration between health and care partners in the borough. Partnership working across the health and care system in the borough, which has strong, collaborative foundations. With the introduction of the Health and Care Act 2022 and implementation of the South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and Care Partnership, the Council will continue to have a key role in supporting this transition to a wider system integration and respond proactively to reforms of the NHS, to ensure place priorities, population health management and tackling health inequalities remain at the heart of the local offer. These areas will form the cornerstones for the new regulation regime which Adult Social Care will now be subjected to from 2024 by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).
- 2.1.6 Supporting people to live well at home, for as long as possible, remains a key focus, with home first principles at the core of the delivery model. This approach improves quality of life for residents, while reducing cost. This will be achieved through continued investment in preventative care and increased use of emerging technology, to reduce acute and long-term interventions; access to appropriate, coordinated support including more effective support to carers; and personalised care delivered by skilled care workers and through new technology.
- 2.1.7 Despite the legacy impacts of Covid-19, the Adult Care Directorate remains committed to delivering long-standing transformation programmes. This includes a commitment to build and deliver a new day opportunities service for people with a learning disability, autism and high support needs, as well as accommodation support closer to home. Support for adults with high support needs will be transformed to enable people to access both high quality primary care and a broader range of care pathways, and stronger connections to family and community support. Similarly, with health partners,

the Council will continue with the remodelling of mental health services, with a greater focus on early intervention, improved accessibility, and more responsive, personalised service.

- 2.1.8 The priorities, as outlined, can only be achieved if there is a high quality, motivated social care workforce in place. Further refinement of the operating model will take place, applying the learning from the initial period of operation to refine the approach and engender continuous improvement. This whole system change in the way services and resources are organised will assist Adult Care to manage and deliver the services it provides. This continues to be assisted by a comprehensive workforce development plan and robust practice frameworks, which builds skills and confidence in assessments and delivery of cost-effective strength-based outcomes.
- 2.1.9 Supporting the internal and external workforce will continue to be a key focus in the coming year with processes in place to support staff and to ensure that staff working remotely as well as those in front facing delivery roles have access to the resources, equipment and managerial support they need to discharge their duties effectively and safely.
- 2.1.10 Recruitment and retention of workers in the Adult Care Sector is presenting significant challenges for the borough, broadly in line with the national position. Actions to address this have been put in place during 2023/24 and will continue during 2024/25. This includes further workforce profiling, introduction of career progression pathways including new job roles and promotion of the care sector as a career.
- 2.1.11 These priorities are designed to deliver a long term, sustainable reduction in demand pressures facing the directorate, ensure compliance with regulation standards and ensure delivery of services within the allocated budget.

2.2 **Public Health**

- 2.2.1 Public Health is an integral element of the borough's health and social care system, maintaining a focus on prevention, physical and mental wellbeing and tackling health inequalities. Working closely with commissioning colleagues the team is responsible for the commissioning of statutory public health services, including: sexual health services; drug and alcohol treatment and recovery; 0-19 Public Health nursing; NHS Health Checks and Rotherham Healthwave, which comprises weight management and stop smoking services.
- 2.2.2 Alongside commissioning services, Public Health lead on the development of the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment which underpins the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the work of the Health and Wellbeing Board. The team plays a pivotal role in providing intelligence, evidence-based advice, advocacy and challenge to ensure that the health of residents is safeguarded and to enable all partners to meet their duties in tackling health inequalities within the borough. The Team provide specialist public health advice across the domains of Health Protection, Health Improvement

and Healthcare Public Health for the Rotherham system and provide strategic leadership to maximise Public Health outcomes within the borough. This includes leadership of the Rotherham Place Prevention and Health Inequalities Group, Rotherham's Combatting Drugs Partnership, the Moving Rotherham Partnership, the Rotherham Tobacco Control Alliance, the Rotherham Food Network, the Suicide Prevention Strategic Group and the Sexual Health Partnership. Through these forums and other roles public health advice is provided to the NHS, other Council Directorates, schools, workplaces and social care providers to support health improvement across the borough.

- 2.2.3 Life expectancy at birth in Rotherham for males is 1.9 years below the England average and for females is 2.1 years below the England average, which is indicative of a range of health inequalities in the borough. This is further demonstrated by a difference in life expectancy of over nine years for males and over ten years for females between the borough's most and least deprived communities. The borough has higher smoking prevalence at 14% in adults, and lower levels of physical activity in adults at 64.4%, compared to the national average (12.7% and 67.3% respectively) which also correspond with local patterns of deprivation. These along with the associated health gap contribute to lower levels of economic productivity in the borough demonstrating the strong links between prosperity and health.

2.3 **Housing Services**

- 2.3.1 Housing Services hold overall landlord responsibility for the management and maintenance of the borough's 20,000 council homes. They provide information, advice and guidance on the housing options available to residents and oversee any adaptation to homes required by residents, e.g. for accessibility/health reasons. Housing Services are also responsible for delivering the programme of new, affordable, high quality Council homes in the borough. In addition, the service works with housing associations and housing developers to deliver a range of new homes to meet the Borough's housing needs and delivery targets.
- 2.3.2 The service will continue to ensure that a robust, sustainable Housing Revenue Account 30-year Business Plan is in place. The effective delivery of this plan will ensure that the borough's 20,000 council homes are maintained effectively, meet the decent homes standard and continue to develop an ambitious programme of new homes in the Borough to meet future demands and replace those lost through the right to buy scheme. This will be achieved by building on council owned sites and acquiring new homes from private developers through Section 106 agreements.
- 2.3.3 The General Fund budget will continue to be used to address homelessness and deliver aids and adaptations to homes.
- 2.3.4 Efficiencies will continue to be delivered by sustaining tenancies and supporting tenants in financial difficulties, high performance on void turnaround times; rent recovery and leasehold income collection. Alongside

this, savings continue to be made in the repairs and maintenance service via the new contract that started in April 2020. These measures will both increase income and deliver efficiencies, with no detrimental impact on residents in the borough.

- 2.3.5 The homelessness service has seen demand increased significantly due to Covid-19, however successful grant funding applications have enabled a new rough sleeper team to be established and further resources deployed to meet local housing needs.

3 Children and Young People's Services

- 3.1 The Directorate for Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) is responsible for early help and family engagement, the youth justice service, social care services, education and inclusion. It has a statutory responsibility for the safeguarding of children and young people and is supported by a dedicated performance, quality, commissioning and business support team.
- 3.2 Nationally, children's social care services are operating in a challenging budget and demand context. There has been an unprecedented surge in demand for children's social care support in recent years - a trend that shows no signs of abating and continues to see a rise in children in care across the region.
- 3.3 Against the national trend, Rotherham's improvements have positively impacted on reducing the number of Children in Care (CiC) CP and CIN. The reduced demand has been supported through ongoing improvements to Early Help, the stability and improved practice of the CSC workforce, Family Group Conferencing, Family Network meetings, a comprehensive suite of evidence based programmes and the partnership working via the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub and community-based teams. There continues to be a significant increase in the number of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC), with a higher percentage expected to be accepted via the Governments National Transfer Scheme. This has resulted in the highest UASC numbers recorded, from 8 UASC as at the end of November 2021 to the current figure of 42 as at the end of December 2023.
- 3.4 Rotherham continues to receive Family Hubs and Start for Life funding. This funding has added value to existing provision with programmes such as Solihull being introduced in the Borough. Additional collaboration and co-location across the public, community and voluntary sector in Rotherham has been enabled and is now providing swifter access to services for children and families.
- 3.5 The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities continues to invest in the Supporting Families Programme via a payment by results scheme, which includes the implementation of a revised outcomes framework to help families combat problems such as financial insecurity, unemployment, risk of homelessness and educational inequality. However, despite delivering in excess of the required family engagement targets, the

period of engagement under the new framework is limited when aligning the closure timeframe to partnership data to evidence no regression which places a significant financial pressure on LA's for the remainder of the programme. In 2024/2025, the programme is moving to the Department for Education.

- 3.6 In 2024/25 the Directorate priorities are to continue to sustain improvements across Children's Services, through ongoing development and implementation of the early help and social care pathway; to continue building in-borough capacity for Children in Care through the ongoing Residential Care Home programme and Foster Care offer; additional provision for children with learning difficulties and disabilities; and to continue to further develop interventions and services designed to better support children and families earlier.
- 3.7 The new education and inclusion skills service operating model is now embedded which incorporates key strategic education forums including Schools Forums, School Leaders Forums and the Rotherham Education Strategic Partnership. School facing services will be reviewed to ensure that they are efficient and effective, whilst continuing to improve educational outcomes, particularly at Key Stage 4 and for children with Special Education Needs and Disabilities SEND.
- 3.8 Following on from the SEND inspection in 2021, additional investment was provided to support demand management, ensure timeliness in assessing for and developing good quality EHCPs and additional resource to support the promotion and upkeep of the Local Offer. In terms of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Information Advice and Support Services (SENDIASS) additional funding continues from the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to support service delivery.
- 3.9 Work continues to manage the High Needs Budget within the constraints of the Safety Valve Agreement, which remains on track to deliver a balanced position at March 2026. Alongside this, investment in SEND Sufficiency continues to enhance SEND education provision and support transformation across the borough. This includes continued focused investments, creating additional SEND places in Rotherham which enhance education outcomes for this cohort.
- 3.10 Actions to deliver the second phase of the Early Help & Social Care (EH & SC) pathway savings are complete with transformation plans now focusing on the Front Door. The implementation is linked to a reduction of overall caseloads (CIN/CP/LAC) with CiC numbers reducing from a high of 654 in August 2018 to 503 at the end of December 2023. This number incorporates the UASC of which there were 42. The financial forecast projects a continued reduction in 2024/25.
- 3.11 Early Years Expansion: Between April 2024 and September 2025 the DfE are introducing, in a phased approach, 30 hours free childcare for every child over the age of 9 months with working parents. This change will significantly

increase the work of the local authority in supporting the sector to expand and managing and administering the funding payments to childcare / early education providers (approx. £30m annually).

- 3.12 Wraparound Childcare Programme: The government is investing £289 million over 2 years to support the expansion of wraparound childcare for primary school-aged pupils, to enable all parents who need it, to be able to access childcare in their local area from 8am-6pm. The programme is designed to fund the initial setup or expansion of wraparound provision with the aim of being self-sustaining from the end of the planned programme. Capacity funding will be provided for local authorities to use to build their internal capacity to deliver. Programme funding of £2,375,244 will be available locally to deliver programme objectives, including to distribute to providers to set up new provision or expand existing provision. Capital funding of £538,652 will be available to distribute to childcare providers to support both the early years expansion and wraparound provision.
- 3.13 The continued downward trajectory in the number of LAC is linked to the impact of the Demand and Market Management Strategies.

4 Regeneration and Environment

- 4.1 The Regeneration and Environment Directorate's focus is to develop and promote Rotherham as a good place to live, work and visit; with emphasis on delivering against the Council Plan priorities and the Year Ahead commitments. The Directorate has been successful in continuing to secure significant external funding, linked to the priorities and building on the Council's own investments. A key part of the work for 2024/25 and into future years is to deliver these projects and programmes as well as delivering services for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 4.2 The Directorate has a broad portfolio of responsibilities including:
- Community safety
 - Environmental protection
 - Licensing
 - Schools' catering and cleaning
 - Waste collection, management and disposal
 - Street cleaning and grounds maintenance
 - Parks, countryside and green spaces
 - Leisure, sport and physical activity
 - Tourism and events
 - Heritage, museums and archives
 - Libraries and neighbourhood Hubs
 - Planning and Building Control
 - Regeneration and Economic Development
 - Transport and highways
 - Asset Management and Property
 - Emergency Planning, Business Continuity
 - Council-wide Health and Safety

- Passenger Transport and Fleet Services
 - Climate Change
- 4.3 The Directorate's budget is focussed on the delivery of frontline services to ensure the borough's neighbourhoods are clean, safe and inclusive, to create an environment where people want to live, work and play. In addition, the Directorate has a significant Capital budget consisting of Council funding and funding from external sources.
- 4.4 The adopted Town Centre Masterplan is being implemented, with a number of streetscene (Public Realm) improvements completed including Bridgegate, College Street and Frederick Street. Housing developments are either completed or reaching final completion (both public and private led schemes). The towns landscape is continuing to change, with the Forge Island Leisure Development with Arc Cinema, Travelodge and a portfolio of restaurants and cafés now well advanced in the construction phase. The new Pedestrian Footbridge was installed during the year. Work has started on the redevelopment of the Markets and a new Central Library.
- 4.5 The former Wilko unit was purchased and demolished and 3-7 Corporate Street buildings have also been purchased by the Council ready for demolition and subsequent development.
- 4.6 2023/24 saw the completion of the Ickles Lock flood alleviation scheme, which is a key addition alongside the new Canal Barrier
- 4.7 2023 saw the completion and opening of the new £5.4m Manvers Business Centre providing 20 workshops, 16 offices and 2 labs. The Swinton regeneration scheme started on site with new homes being built, the Civic Hall redevelopment completed and the new library is due to start on site in 2024. Rotherham, as part of the South Yorkshire MCA, were part of the Country's first Investment Zone which will see an additional £160m investment into the region from April 2024.
- 4.8 Projects have progressed as part of the £31.6m that was secured from the Towns Fund to carry out ambitious regeneration projects across the town centre, Parkgate/Eastwood and Templeborough. Just under £20m has been secured for Dinnington and Wath Town Centres, which is in addition to the £39.41m already secured via the two Levelling Up Fund (LUF) programmes. The LUF programmes are aimed at further bolstering the town centre regeneration programme as well as developing the leisure economy and skills. These include investments which have started on site at Wentworth Woodhouse, Magna Science Centre, Maltby Academy and Gulliver's Valley resort.
- 4.9 The in-house Highways Service has made huge progress in improving the roads via the "£24 million to 2024" roads programme, which will complete delivery this financial year. Work has progressed on a number of Transport schemes (especially cycle and bus) with progress on projects at Sheffield Road, Wellgate/Broom Rd, Wath/Mavers and the Maltby Bus Corridor. The

Towns and Villages Fund has seen a number of projects completed during the year and each Ward has a project that is either completed, on-site or in the design stage. The end of October 2023 saw a new contract for the Council's HWRC's which includes a move towards an in-house operation from year 3 as well as new investment at each site.

- 4.9 The Council's cultural and leisure sites and venues continue to be popular with residents and visitors alike. The Council was successful in delivering the annual Rotherham Show over two days in September, reaching 88,918 people. Events such as Uplift skate and arts festival, Yorkshire Day celebrations and the Christmas Lights Switch-On brought over 26,000 more visitors to Rotherham town centre. In April, the Museums Arts and Heritage Service joined the national portfolio of Arts Council England. Libraries welcomed increasing numbers of new customers to courses, clubs and classes, including at the new Thurcroft Library which opened its doors in November. The Council has worked with Grimm and Co. to help secure external funding towards a town centre location, providing a new cultural, learning and visitor destination which is due to open in February 2024. 2023 saw the first season of welcoming visitors to restored Keppel's Column and full funding has been secured for Waterloo Kiln with an expected start on site in April 2024.

5 Corporate Support Services

- 5.1 Two directorates make up the Council's corporate services - Finance & Customer Services and Assistant Chief Executives. Their role is to support the delivery of front-line Council services by promoting the most effective use of resources whilst ensuring services are compliant with council regulation and national legislation. These services provide leadership, influence, advice and a cross-cutting perspective to enable the Council to operate effectively. They are responsible for providing effective support and advice to all Council services to help ensure they function efficiently; and to support elected members in making informed and lawful decisions.

6. Finance and Customer Services

- 6.1 The Directorate provides services in the following four areas:
1. Financial Services
 - i. Finance, Accounting, Insurance
 - ii. Local Taxation, Housing Benefit, Income Collection and Financial Assessments for care services
 - iii. Procurement
 2. Legal Services
 - i. Legal
 - ii. Elections
 - iii. Registration and Bereavement
 3. Customer, Information and Digital Services

- i. ICT
- ii. Customer Services
- iii. Information Management

4. Internal Audit

- 6.2 The Directorate is committed to providing outstanding, high quality professional support services that are valued by its customers, both internal and external. The directorate has a key role in ensuring effective governance arrangements are in place across the Council and encompasses a number of key statutory roles (Chief Finance Officer [S151 Officer], Monitoring Officer [MO] and Senior Information Reporting Officer [SIRO]).
- 6.3 The work of the Directorate was critical to supporting the Council in service continuity during the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring remote access to Council systems for staff and elected members. This technology continues to enable efficient and flexible working across council services.
- 6.4 The changes that were implemented during the pandemic have been embedded where they continue to be beneficial and this includes the faster payment arrangements that were put in place for local businesses, ensuring their cash flows continue to be supported during the current difficult economic times. This will remain in place to support businesses whilst the volatility in the economy remains.
- 6.5 Following on from the many online processes developed in recent years, improving Customer access to services continues to be a priority. The face to face customer service model and booking system is now embedded, supporting those customers who aren't able to access digital solutions. The temporary investment that was made in customer services telephone staffing has enabled a significant reduction in call wait times and is now proposed to be continued within this budget to ensure an ongoing improved position as further digital solutions are developed and implemented across Council services. A key focus for the year ahead remains to improve telephone wait times along with delivering increased online access to services and an improved customer experience from using those services in this way.
- 6.6 The Revenues and Benefits service have once again maintained strong performance despite the challenges facing many Rotherham residents whose household finances have been stretched and this supports the Council's budget overall given the significant inflationary impact on budgets. The delivery of Council funded support schemes and the careful and strategic use of various Government Grants over the last few years has enabled funding to be earmarked for over 14,000 households to once again receive additional Local Council Tax Support as the proposed budget continues this, providing much needed financial support to those households on the lowest incomes.

7 Assistant Chief Executive's Directorate

7.1 The Directorate has six distinct areas of responsibility:

- Human Resources
- Organisational Development & Change
- Neighbourhoods
- Communications & Marketing
- Democratic Services
- Policy, Performance and Intelligence

7.2 The Directorate has continued to provide support to services across Council directorates, including facilitating the delivery and monitoring of Council priorities as set out in the Year Ahead Plan, as well as the development of the priorities set out in the Council Plan.

7.3 During 2023/24, the directorate has continued to play a pivotal role in the Council. Key deliverables include:

- Providing a reliable source of information to the public and the workforce in different formats, including regular neighbourhood e-bulletins.
- Taking forward the implementation of key strategic documents including the Council Plan and Year Ahead Delivery Plan, Equalities, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, Social Value Policy, Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and Rotherham Together Partnership Plan.
- Supporting the delivery of the Council Plan's priorities through an internal, cross-council delivery programme and taking a lead role on a number of cross-cutting workstreams.
- Sustaining high quality data reporting on a daily and weekly basis, providing essential information to inform decision making throughout the pandemic.
- Continuation of effective and accountable democratic decision making.
- Supporting members to act as community leaders so they can initiate and fund activity to support local vulnerable people and deliver ward priorities.
- Implementation of the Workforce Plan that aims to position the Council as an 'employer of choice', improving our attraction, retention and engagement methods and focuses on an engaged, diverse and skilled workforce.

7.4 The directorate has also continued to deliver its core provisions including internal and external communications and HR support functions. Work has continued as part of the now refreshed Thriving Neighbourhoods strategy to support our communities and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS), including developing ward plans. The Directorate has also continued to facilitate partnership working and development of key policy areas including

social value, asylum and resettlement, crisis support, climate change and equalities. The Council have expressed a desire to apply for 'Gold' Status for the Employee Recognition Scheme which sets out the Council's commitment to support the Armed Forces Community and their families. A revised policy will be considered by Staffing Committee in February 2024. The directorate will lead on the council wide approach to ensuring that gold can be achieved when the application process opens in early 2024.

7.5 The directorate has also worked closely with all directorates to monitor and deliver the new Council Plan for 2022-25, including delivery of the Council's priorities. This has included developing a new Year Ahead Delivery Plan to support these objectives, detailing the key milestones to be achieved for 2024/25.

7.6 In the coming 12 months, the directorate aims to continue to provide excellent support services across the Council. Key areas of focus will be to:

- Maintain high quality communication and information to residents, partners and the workforce.
- Provide oversight and quality assurance on progress against the Council Plan priorities through effective reporting and monitoring of the Year Ahead Delivery Plan.
- Secure further commitments through our social value policy and work with partners to maximise the impact of our collective spending power.
- Continue to progress on the Council's journey to 'excellent' against the Equalities Framework for Local Government by embedding equalities, diversity and inclusion commitments into Council activity.
- Continue to deliver the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy by supporting Members in their Community Leadership role and building on our neighbourhood working model to develop a clearer and shared understanding of integrated locality working across the public sector.
- Champion and promote the council's strengths-based approach when working with communities, including the delivery of a staff learning and development programme.
- Enhance partnership working to achieve better outcomes across the borough through the ongoing delivery of the Rotherham Together Plan.
- Continue to implement and monitor the delivery of the recommendations in the Local Government Association Corporate Peer Challenge team's report into the Council, which was undertaken in 2023.
- Continue to develop and support the workforce, enhancing skills and knowledge across the organisation.
- Develop a Member Induction Programme to support all Members following the All-Out Elections in May 2024 and ongoing support via a supplementary Member Development Programme to ensure and support effective leadership.
- Continue to support Members in delivering the expectations of the electorate's community priorities, ensuring the robust and efficient

management of Council business and maintaining an open and transparent scrutiny function.

- Develop a strengthened approach to our development and use of business intelligence to build a clearer picture of the borough and its residents as well as informing decision-making and improving services for customers.
- Implementing our new workforce plan to ensure that we attract, recruit and retain talented individuals into key roles becoming an employer of choice, and also strengthen our engagement and development of our existing workforce.

7.7 In the coming 12 months, the Directorate will continue to challenge itself and review its practices and develop and modernise its service offer. Continuous improvement will be founded on the principles of best value and sustainable change.