

VOLUNTARY SECTOR PARTNERSHIP

MINUTES OF MEETING Thursday 21 March 2024

PRESENT: Councillor S. Smith (Chair); Councillors Beswick, Sheerin, T. Smith and D. Williams, Naomi Burke (Healthwatch Rochdale), Kathryn Carr (Bowlee Community Organisation), Kath Hoyle (Townships and Engagements Officer, RBC), Nadhia Khan (Executive Director of Customer and Community, RBH), Sarah Lagueard (Co-Production & Engagement Officer, RBC), Julie Lander (HMR Circle), Jackie McCann (Healing Humanity), Khadija Tily (Kashmir Youth Project), Emma Salloway (Neighbourhood Cohesion & Community Centres Engagement Officer, RBC), Ghulam Shahzad (Rochdale Environmental Action Group), Adam Sutcliffe (Head of Planning and Improvement, Public Health RBC), Kathy Thomas (Rochdale Connections Trust), Valery White (Townships & Communities Manager, RBC) and Mark Wynn (HMR Circle)

OFFICERS: K. Davies (Corporate Services)

19 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair welcomed those present and attendees introduced themselves.

Councillor Dylan Williams gave a brief overview on the meeting venue and provided details of the recent refurbishment at Jumbo Community Centre.

The Chair also sent well wishes to Helen Chicot (Reform and Prevention Lead, Public Health) on behalf of the Voluntary Sector Partnership and congratulated the Public Health team on their recent win of the Diversity in Public Sector Working award.

20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Emsley, Gartside and Jackson and Maddy Hubbard (Action Together).

21 MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Voluntary Sector Partnership meeting held on 25 January 2024 be approved as a correct record.

22 ROCHDALE BOROUGHWIDE HOUSING

The Partnership received a presentation from the Executive Director of Customer and Community, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH), which detailed the current leadership structure of the organisation, its recovery plan and voluntary undertaking with the Regulator of Social Housing, and its plans for 2024.

The RBH Recovery Plan focused on five themes: Governance, Home, Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Rebuilding Trust and Lessons Learnt. The Executive Director of Customer and Community reported that 78% of the

recovery plan had now been completed, for example through regular drop in sessions being arranged for customers (Rebuilding Trust), and through a range of recommendations that had been followed through (Lessons Learnt) such as the establishment of a damp and mould taskforce.

It was reported that 25% of RBH homes currently had evidence of damp and mould. Additional funding had been secured by RBH to treat damp and mould issues in residential properties over the next few months. RBH would assess each home accordingly, ensuring that properties had appropriate ventilation to prevent further issues and addressing the root cause of damp and mould when repairs were completed.

Plans for 2024 also included the approval of a new Corporate Plan and Values, working efficiently with partners to deliver outcomes, engaging regularly with customers to understand their priorities, and delivering improvements to customer service such as through the Customer First programme.

Concerns were raised by Members in relation to social housing. It was reported by the RBH representative that there were currently 59 families categorised as homeless within the Rochdale borough. There was increased demand for three or four bedroom and adapted homes, however it was noted that the demand far outweighed the number of local houses that were available. Residents and families would therefore be placed on a waiting list. As an alternative to building new homes, there was potential to enlarge existing RBH homes by adding extensions.

Members sought an update on the regeneration plans for College Bank. The RBH representative informed that an update event for residents was last held in September 2023 and advised that a clear plan was in place to confirm the future of the homes at College Bank. If approved, the plan would avoid the demolition of any of the blocks and proposed the refurbishment of all seven blocks over a period of five years. A further event would be organised for residents once RBH had additional information to share.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be noted;
2. That the Public Health Development Manager be invited to a future meeting of Voluntary Sector Partnership to discuss the Hardship Fund and Anti-Poverty Strategy.

23 CORPORATE COMMISSIONING STRATEGY

The Partnership received a presentation of the Head of Planning and Improvement (Public Health) that detailed the proposed Rochdale Borough Council Corporate Commissioning Strategy 2024 – 2029 and welcomed feedback from Members.

Members were informed that the aim of the strategy was to recognise the role and impact that the Council had on shaping local businesses, people and communities due to the scale, reach and volume of its spend.

The strategy set out the Council's vision for commissioning which included the principles around how resources were spent, the approach taken when commissioning, and the outcomes that the Council aimed to achieve.

The four principles of the strategy were outlined and included spending locally where possible, maximising social value, improving lives and using influence for greater impact.

It was noted that the strategy would be delivered through seven commitments, including:

1. Ensuring consistent commissioning practice;
2. Embedding co-production;
3. Valuing Voluntary, Community, Faith and Social Enterprise sector (VCFSE);
4. Reviewing processes;
5. Improved contract management and supplier relationships;
6. Enhancing social value and;
7. Clear leadership.

Structured around the set of principles and commitments outlined, the strategy encompassed all Council services and would enable the authority to better support key strategic drivers within its approach to commissioning to improve outcomes.

Members queried how equality and diversity would be incorporated into the strategy. The Public Health Development Manager confirmed that a Sustainability Assessment must take place before the strategy was signed off for approval. The assessment included an Equality Impact Assessment which would contribute to reducing inequalities and would help to identify potential barriers for the Council to come up with ways to reduce or overcome those barriers.

Members also highlighted the importance of utilising local services to greater effect to drive the local economy.

Resolved:

1. That the presentation be noted;
2. That Public Health be invited to attend a future meeting of Voluntary Sector Partnership to present on Social Value Framework.