

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
4th September, 2013

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Foden); Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Dodson, Ellis, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Read, Roche, P. A. Russell, Vines, Wallis and Whysall; together with co-opted members Mrs. P. Copnell and Mr. B. Walker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Johnston, Pickering, Sims and Swift.

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

14. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

15. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items to report.

16. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 24TH JULY, 2013

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 24th July, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of the following additional wording to minute No. 11 (Revision of RMBC's Council Housing Allocations Policy):-

“Members discussed the implications of the proposed mandatory requirement for all new tenants of Council housing to sign a direct debit or standing order form to pay their rent.”

17. HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE CARRIAGEWAY DEFECT REPAIRS - MULTIHOG

Further to Minute No. 61 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 16th April, 2013, consideration was given to a report presented by the Principal Engineer (Streetpride) describing the provisional outcome of the trials of the new method of repairing highway defects (potholes) using the maintenance milling machine (Multihog).

The Select Commission's discussion of this issue included the following salient issues:-

: highway repairs carried out by statutory undertakers;

- : the code of practice for highway repairs has been amended to reflect the new way of working (to the satisfaction of lawyers and insurers);
- : extension of the target for completion of the patching repair of highways – from five days to ten days;
- : the target of dealing with highway safety defects within 48 hours;
- : the costs of highway repairs, comparing the use of the milling machine with previous methods of maintenance; certain larger-scale repairs were unsuitable for the milling machine;
- : the use of different materials for different types of highway repairs (ranging from small potholes to much larger areas of highway);
- : the trial method of highway repairs was suspended during the worst of the Winter weather; instead, the milling machine was able to be used for Winter maintenance and snow clearing;
- : the future availability of the 'Multihog' milling machines for hire;
- : the use of the milling machine in all Wards of the Borough during the trial period and the notification provided for Elected Members;
- : the Council's robust method of highways inspection, enabling the repudiation of insurance claims;
- : the arrangements for the temporary storage of materials removed from the highway, after the use of the milling machine, which are later delivered to a recycling company;
- : the prioritisation of specific highways for repair, within the annual maintenance programme; the use of highway condition surveys (by machine) and inspectors walking the highway and carrying out visual inspections; the surface treatment of highways.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission explaining (i) the prioritisation of specific highways for repair, within the annual maintenance programme; (ii) the detail of the various methods of highway surface repairs, ranging from safety defects and small patching works to surface dressing and large-scale highway repairs.

18. VULNERABLE TENANTS GARDENING SCHEME

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services concerning the Council's provision of a

partial gardening scheme to some vulnerable tenants throughout the Borough area (ie: tenants who have a disability and tenants aged 65 years and over and none of whom have relatives to help them with gardening). The gardening service, previously delivered by Morrison Facility Services, was insufficient and impacted on the contractor's core work of delivering estate-based caretaking services. On Monday 3rd June 2013, the service transferred to Age UK (Rotherham), enabling the provision of an enhanced gardening service to existing customers and ensuring the service has the potential to expand in line with demand. In turn, Morrison Facility Services are able to focus on the core caretaking services.

The report and Members' subsequent discussion of this matter included the following salient issues:-

: a basic gardening service was provided (eg: mowing the lawn and trimming hedges);

: before the transfer to Age UK (Rotherham), the scheme was at full capacity with 185 tenants receiving the service (two or three cuts per year) and there were eighteen tenants on the waiting list; tenants were charged between £10 and £20 per visit;

: Age UK (Rotherham) was issued with a small grant agreement and service specification, to ensure that monies were spent accordingly and that the gardening work was undertaken in line with this Council's local offers to customers;

: the report outlined the costs of the scheme, the method of charging tenants for the work and the take-up of the gardening scheme by tenants after the transfer to Age UK (Rotherham);

: arrangements for gardening and grounds maintenance in aged persons' sheltered accommodation schemes (Members noted that the responsibility for keeping gardens tidy remains with the tenant);

: the overall capacity of Age UK (Rotherham) to expand the gardening scheme to assist vulnerable tenants and to tenants of private sector housing landlords;

: Age UK (Rotherham) utilises its own workforce for the gardening work;

: the extent to which the existence of the gardening service is promoted to tenants effectively.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the transfer of the gardening scheme to Age UK (Rotherham), the expansion of the scheme and the provision of an enhanced service to appropriate Council housing tenants, which have enabled caretaking staff

to focus on core responsibilities, be noted.

19. **EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved:- That, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 as amended (information relating to the financial/business affairs of any person (including the Council)).

20. **SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY**

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Senior Category Manager, Procurement outlining the work currently being undertaken by the Borough Council in support of the local economy. The Select Commission noted that this activity continues to be a Council priority.

At the Supporting the Local Economy Clinic, held on 9th September, 2010 and attended by Councillors Wyatt, McNeely and Whelbourn, the Borough Council's representatives and colleagues from the Local Strategic Partnership agreed to define "local" as being the Sheffield City Region, in order to accord with the Local Enterprise Partnership's proposals.

Reference was made to the YORbuild employment and YORfuture scheme, concerning the provision of apprenticeships (Minute No. 71 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 3rd October, 2012, refers).

The Select Commission's discussion of this matter included the following salient issues:-

: advice provided by the Council to local suppliers (for example, instruction on how to submit tenders electronically);

: the Rotherham 'Master Vendor' scheme, dealing with the allocation of agency staff;

: the Council policy of issuing longer term contracts (up to three years), thus providing more financial security to local providers;

: the use of efficient methods of invoicing and payment of invoices (eg: e-invoicing and procurement cards), in order to improve the cash flow of local businesses; the Council is a member of the Government's Prompt Payment Scheme;

: the use of Fairtrade goods;

: compliance with United Kingdom and European Union legislative requirements concerning procurement, including the provisions of the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012;

: the procurement bench-marking of local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That the Council's work undertaken in supporting the local economy and the outcomes achieved to date be noted.

(3) That a scrutiny review be undertaken of the Council's arrangements for the procurement of goods and services from the local economy and the review group shall comprise the Chairman of the Improving Places Select Commission and Councillors Atkin, Jepson and Wallis, together with Councillor Beck of the Self Regulation Select Commission.