

**PLEASE NOTE THE BRIEFING BEFORE THIS MEETING
AT APPROXIMATELY 1.00 P.M.**

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION

**Venue: Town Hall, Moorgate
Street, ROTHERHAM.
S60 2TH**

**Date: Wednesday, 4th September,
2013**

Time: 1.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

1. To determine whether the following items should be considered under the categories suggested in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended March 2006) of the Local Government Act 1972.
2. To determine any item(s) the Chairman is of the opinion should be considered later in the agenda as a matter of urgency.
3. Apologies for absence
4. Declarations of Interest
5. Questions from members of the public and the press
6. Communications
7. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 24th July, 2013 (herewith) (Pages 1 - 5)
8. Highway Maintenance Carriageway Defect Repairs - Multihog (report herewith) (Pages 6 - 15)
9. Vulnerable Tenants Gardening Scheme (Pages 16 - 19)
10. Exclusion of the Press and Public
The following item is likely to be considered in the absence of the press and public as being exempt under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended March 2006 – information relates to finance and business affairs).
11. Supporting the Local Economy (Pages 20 - 32)
12. Date and time of the next meeting:- Wednesday 16th October 2013 at 1.30 pm

**PLEASE NOTE THE BRIEFING BEFORE THIS MEETING
AT APPROXIMATELY 1.00 P.M.**

Improving Places Select Commission: membership: -

Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Dodson, Ellis, Falvey (Chairman), Foden, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Johnston, Pickering, Read, Roche, P. A. Russell, Sims (Vice-Chairman), Swift, Vines, Wallis and Whysall.

Co-opted members: - Mr. P. Copnell, Mr. T. Roche and Mr. B. Walker.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
24th July, 2013

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

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Foden) and from Councillors Gosling and P. A. Russell.

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

All Members and co-opted members of the Improving Places Select Commission, present at this meeting, declared their personal interests in item 11 below (Revision of RMBC's Council Housing Allocations Policy) because they are either (i) Council housing tenants themselves; or (ii) a relative of a Council housing tenant; or (iii) may have a close association with someone who is a Council housing tenant, or an applicant for a tenancy.

8. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

9. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items to report.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 19TH JUNE, 2013

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 19th June, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

11. REVISION OF RMBC'S COUNCIL HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Further to minutes of previous meetings of the Improving Places Select Commission (Minute No. 33(3) of the meeting held on 17th October, 2012 and Minute No. 52 of the meeting held on 27th March, 2013), consideration was given to a report presented by the Sandra Tolley (Housing Options Manager) and Sandra Wardle (Housing Advice Manager) concerning this Council's Housing Allocations Policy, which was last substantially amended in January 2010. The report stated that this Policy needs to be revised again to take into account the new flexibilities and opportunities offered to social housing landlords by the Localism Act 2011, and to make the system as fair as possible. There is also the need to review the Housing Allocations Policy because of the size of the

Housing Register, the likelihood that the Register will increase if no action is taken and to take account of the circumstances of local people and firmly base the Housing Allocations Policy on addressing housing need.

Feedback from Elected Members, about the proposed revisions to the Housing Allocations Policy, will be incorporated into the final version of the Policy, which will be submitted to the Cabinet and to the Council meeting for formal adoption during November, 2013.

The Select Commission noted that the Localism Act 2011 seeks to devolve responsibility back to local authorities, allowing more decisions about housing to be taken locally. In the case of allocating housing, this means local authority landlords are able to apply locally determined criteria to their housing registers and no longer have to operate open registers, with the expectation from central Government that social housing should be offered to those people in housing need.

This Council's Housing Register currently contains more than 25,000 applicants, the vast majority of whom are adequately housed, placed in the General group and do not currently need a Council house, although they may aspire to live in a Council home in the future. The submitted report listed the main problems caused by the current policy.

The report, the presentation and the Select Commission's subsequent debate included the following salient issues:-

: consultation timetable, which began during the Autumn 2012 and leads to the eventual implementation of the revised Housing Allocations Policy, after approval by the Council, during December 2013;

: the impact of the increasing demand for housing, as well as housing provision for people who are in greater need;

: costs of administration of a register containing 25,000 households;

: relevant legislation – Housing Act 1996 (Part VI); Homelessness Act 2002; Localism Act 2011;

: the Council's 'Fair and Flexible Policy' for the allocation of Council housing, to the people most in need;

: statistical details of the Council Housing Register of applicants for tenancies;

: the definition of people who are adequately housed;

: housing allocations policies (and numbers of people on the housing register) of neighbouring and nearby local authorities (a summary of benchmarked data was appended to the report);

- : allocation of housing to people who have served in the Armed Forces;
- : the 'downsizing rules' and the effects of the coalition Government's welfare reforms;
- : the implications for people who are already owner-occupiers and applicants who do not live in the Rotherham Borough area;
- : options for cancelling applications, for example if an applicant refuses the offer of a housing tenancy;
- : discussion about the 'General Waiting List' of applicants for housing; the advertising of vacant properties for letting and the difficulties posed by hard-to-let properties;
- : the policy of some local authorities requiring applicants to live within the same local authority area for a number of years before an application for a Council housing tenancy will be accepted;
- : dealing with the most urgent, emergency cases of housing need;
- : the priority category for young people leaving the care of the local authority;
- : ways of informing the general public about changes to the Housing Allocations Policy;
- : the categorisation of people living in 'tied accommodation', eg: school caretakers;
- : the categorisation of people who are bereaved and people from broken family relationships.

Members were provided with a questionnaire to complete during the meeting, containing optional proposals for the definitions of Housing Need Groups to be included within the future Housing Allocations Policy.

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

(2) That the Improving Places Select Commission expresses the following views with regard to the proposed revisions to this Council's Housing Allocations Policy:-

(a) to change the Housing Register so that applicants are listed in the "Register of Housing Need", but that there shall no longer be a "General Waiting List";

(b) to create three new groups/categories applicable to the Register of Housing Need; and that Housing Officers shall report further on the proposed titles for these three groups/categories;

(c) the Select Commission does not agree with any proposed increase in the percentage of properties to be advertised to applicants; instead the Select Commission suggests that 100% of vacant properties are to be advertised to people in the most urgent need of housing and 50% of properties shall be advertised equally to applicants placed within the other two groups/categories;

(d) after the initial mail-out, there shall be no further annual reviews of the Housing Register, as the resources spent on this costly administration are better deployed on providing advice services to people about the full range of housing options in Rotherham;

(e) all applicants for Council housing tenancies must have lived within the Rotherham Borough area for a minimum period of three years consecutively;

(f) the new housing downsizing rules shall be added to the highest priority group/category of Housing need;

(g) applicants needing to move house for reasons relating to employment in the Rotherham Borough area shall be added to the second priority group/category of Housing need and must have lived in the Rotherham Borough area for a minimum period of three years consecutively;

(h) applicants who are currently bidding, living with family, friends or dependants and who are ready to live independently but cannot afford other housing options, such as private rented or owner occupation, shall be added to the third priority group/category of Housing need;

(i) Housing Officers shall examine the most appropriate way of considering and categorising applicants for housing tenancies from Armed Forces personnel, both in the light of this Council's Armed Forces covenant and in accordance with provisions of the Localism Act 2011;

(j) to make the following changes to policy and procedures in order to manage more effectively the Housing Register and encourage behaviour change:-

(i) once a person has refused two offers, their application shall be cancelled;

(ii) once a person has decided and agreed to have major adaptations work that meet their long-term needs, their re-housing application should be cancelled;

(iii) once an application has been cancelled for any reason, such as re-housing and evictions, the applicant should not be allowed to re-join the Housing Register until after a period of twelve months has elapsed;

(iv) once a homeless applicant refuses a suitable offer of accommodation (Council, Registered Social Landlord or private rented sector) the homeless applicant will be moved down from the second group/category to the third group/category of Housing need; furthermore, on acceptance of a private rented sector offer, their application should be cancelled.

(All Members and co-opted members of the Improving Places Select Commission, present at this meeting, declared their personal interests in the above item because they are either (i) Council housing tenants themselves; or (ii) a relative of a Council housing tenant; or (iii) may have a close association with someone who is a Council housing tenant or an applicant for a tenancy)

12. ITEMS DEFERRED UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING

In view of the time spent upon consideration of item 11 above, the following agenda items were deferred until the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, to be held on Wednesday, 4th September, 2013:-

- : Planning Obligations – updated Section 106 Accounts information
- : Developer contributions for open spaces
- : Community Infrastructure Levy viability and infrastructure study
- : school place planning

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL - REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	Improving Places Select Commission
2. Date:	4 th September 2013
3. Title:	Highway Maintenance Carriageway Defect Repairs - Multihog
4. Directorate:	EDS

5. Summary

Further to the report presented to Improving Places Select Commission on 16th April 2013, this report provides members with information on the provisional results of the trials of the new method of repairing highway defects (potholes) using the maintenance milling machine (Multihog).

6. Recommendations

It is recommended that Members note the contents of the report

7. Proposals and details

An analysis of the highway safety defects repaired shows a steady increase in numbers and cost over the last few years (see table below). As these are only temporary repairs, and not cost effective, it is becoming increasingly important that an alternative method of repair had to be found; the development of the 'first time fix' approach seemed to be the way forward.

Highway safety defects range from a trip hazard on a flagstone to a major road collapse; the vast majority of the safety defects are however potholes in the carriageway. The traditional method of repairing these carriageway safety defects is by removing any loose debris and then filling the defect with 3mm surfacing material. This type of repair is not generally very long lasting with an (average) estimated life expectancy of less than 2 years, but they can also look unsightly and do not provide a smooth surface; some do fail in a relatively short period especially in winter.

The average cost of repairing a pothole using the traditional method is £14, equivalent to about £50/m².

Small patching works used to be carried out using a hand excavation or conveyor milling machines. Due to the change in legislation on hand arm vibration equipment the normal hand method of excavating small patches can no longer be used. We have experimented with using the conveyor milling machines, but they have large width cutting tools (not suitable for small patches) and cannot move from site to site without the assistance of a low loading vehicle; this adds considerably to the costs on each job.

Year	No. Actionable Defects	Cost (rounded to nearest £1,000)	Cost per Defect (rounded to nearest £)
2007/2008	11,638	£240,000	£21
2008/2009	12,062	£243,000	£20
2009/2010	15,624	£250,000	£16
2010/2011	28,229	£418,000	£15
2011/2012	28,347	£427,000	£15
2012/2013	32,530	£456,000	£14
2013/2014(*)	36,000	£504,000	£14

(*) forecast data

The majority of the carriageway safety defects have a response time for repair of 24 hours from the identification of the defect to completion.

In January 2012 we took delivery of a Maintenance Milling Vehicle (MMV) which has various maintenance functions, one of which was a milling attachment. The MMV is compact (about the size of a family car) and can move from site to site independently; the MMV was acquired to carry out normal carriageway patching and support the general works programme. After using this vehicle for a few months it was clear it could be also be used to carry out 'first time fix' for safety defects.

An outline for a new first time fix process was developed for use on the Unclassified, estate roads. A new response target of 48 hours was set for removing the safety defect with the follow-up patch being completed within five (further) working days; this allowed time for programming of the repair.

The detail of the protocol is in Appendix 1, and a trial using this new method was started in December 2012.

The Trial

The Trial started in December 2012, continued in January/February 2013 and restarted in April 2013 following the end of the winter maintenance season. The trial has been continuing since then.

The December trial was undertaken with one Highway Inspector (HI) and in January/February it was undertaken with two HIs. The trial restarted in April, with a rota system in place for HIs, based on the MMV moving to a different Area Assembly each month.

In the initial trial not only was the safety defect repaired, but other non-safety defects that were close by were included; during the later periods the repairs were restricted to only those associated with safety defects.

Outcome of the Trial

The extended targets for removing the safety defect from 24 hours to 48 hours is being met and has, to date, caused no difficulties.

The target for completing the patching repair of five days was more difficult to achieve and caused some planning issues; this was primarily due to the inclusion of other non-safety defects which did increase the amount of patching and, in turn, caused planning and efficiency issues. An extended target of 10 days has subsequently been used and this has improved planning and efficiency. Because the safety defect has been removed, there has been no adverse reaction to the 10 day target.

Using this method through the winter months has not proven practical; the MMV was purchased with a winter pack (front plough and rear salt spreader) and it was always the intention to use this on roads which are difficult for normal Gritters to get to (e.g. Primary Schools, Doctor's Surgeries, vulnerable people's accommodation). With the combination of lower carriageway surface temperatures, rain and using it on winter operations (this is a priority during the winter season) it did reduce its availability through the winter season.

The MMV is also used to support planned highway works and this reduces the machine's availability to carry out first time fix for safety defects.

After the permanent patch repair the safety defects are removed, the ride quality is improved and the issue of defect repairs failing is significantly reduced, however, the carriageway can look a little like a patchwork quilt. The permanent repair is estimated to have a life expectancy in excess of 10 years.

We have established that one MMV fully deployed can remove 3,100 safety defects with 11,300m² of high quality follow up patching at a cost of £385,000; the average cost of this method is therefore £35/m². In practice the MMV can only be used on this type of work for about half of the year because of its commitment to other planned works; this would mean that approximately 1,500 defects can be repaired at a cost of £190,000. This level of expenditure can be contained within the Network Management budget.

Conclusions and Recommendations from the Trial

- The cost of the new method of permanent repair (per m²) is about 30% less than the traditional method of dealing with potholes.
- The method has a life expectancy of about 5 times that of the traditional method.
- The costs of using the spare capacity on the existing MMV can be contained within the existing Network Management budgets, but the costs of deploying additional machine(s) would create an unmanageable budget pressure.
- Undertaking permanent repairs will help slow down the rate of deterioration of the network.
- The new 48 hour target for removing the safety defect has not caused any increase in the number of claims for damage against the Council.
- The follow-on 10 day target for the completion of the permanent repair is achievable and has not caused any adverse comments.
- The permanent repair patch should be restricted to the table top size in most cases. A good example of this is shown in Appendix 2. In this example there are multiple safety defect repairs, an old patch repair and potential safety defects developing. The permanent repair patch removes all of these and has lasted through one winter without any signs of deterioration.
- The MMV shall be used to support Winter Service and other general works.
- The roads where this protocol has been used should be placed on the proposed surface treatment list for consideration in the following year to improve the road quality and appearance.
- The new protocol is included in our Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment.
- That funding opportunities are investigated to support both the traditional safety defect repair method and the addition first fix method.

8. Finance

The costs of operating the existing MMV are being contained within the Network management budget however there is no scope to expand the programme at present. The Government's long-term spending plan has been set out for 2015/16 to 2020/21 and we expect to see an increase in our Maintenance allocation of around 30%. If the DfT formula remains the same we should get approximately an addition £570,000 for Rotherham; this money could then be considered for supporting an expanded MMV programme.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

These are covered by the Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The condition of the roads is a key priority for the coming year as set out in the Corporate Plan

- Improving the environment
 - Safe and well maintained roads

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment

Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance Management, "Well Maintained Highways" published July 2005

12. Contact

Stephen Finley, Principal Engineer, Streetpride Service

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APPENDIX 1

Original PX/P5 Protocol

Within the current Code of Practice there are two responses for dealing with safety defects;

- **Priority A** - Used to deal with defects which form an immediate hazard to the highway user. Action will be instructed by telephone from the site. This may also be used when works are identified as part of a third party claims investigation. Defect to be repaired =< four hours from identification.
- **Priority 1** - See definition in guidance on Safety Inspections. This category is also used to react to customer generated reports of urgent defects. This may also be used when works are identified as part of a third party claims investigation. Defect to be repaired =< 24 hours from identification of defect.

The majority of these defects are identified whilst carrying out cyclic safety inspections. Additional defects are identified when carrying out ad-hoc inspections or from customer reports.

On identification these safety defects are passed on the Highway Delivery Team (HDT) by phone and a back office process is completed later. This method works well and meets the requirement of the national guidance and underpins our third party claims defence.

There are a number of problems with this existing method:

- Due to the number a first fix is not being achieved.
- The standard of repair has been called in to question.
- The number of repeat repairs is rising.
- Safety defects arising at the side of existing repaired defects.
- Inefficient use of Highway Inspector (HI) and HDT resource.

In order to address the above a new method is proposed.

To be able to adapt to a new system of working the response time taken to repair defects must be extended from 24hrs to 48hrs. This will enable more efficient planning of works. The new 48 hour response time has been endorsed by the Council's insurers along with the solicitors and barristers that are used to represent the Council with respect to third party highway claims.

Improvements in the quality of the repairs are also required and the Maintenance Milling Vehicle (MMV) will provide a quick and efficient method of excavating the highway to accept better quality material and repair methods. This will significantly reduce the number of repeat safety repairs at a location.

To reduce the number of safety defects appearing close to an existing safety repair, it is proposed to expand the area immediately adjacent to an identified safety defect to include future potential safety defects.

Identification, Categorising and Risk Assessment

The existing procedure of generating cyclic, ad-hoc and report inspections will not change. If the defect is assessed as a Priority A (4hrs) then this defect will be actioned as previously.

If a Priority 1 (24hrs) defect is identified then a further risk assessment will be carried out on site.

The defect location needs to be considered. Higher risk locations such as; schools, doctors, hospitals, high traffic volumes (vehicle/foot), vulnerable people, Permit Street, etc. will place this defect in the existing Priority 1(24hrs) category.

All other defects will be placed in the new Priority X (48hrs) category, the close surrounding area need to be assessed. The methodology is to include any past temporary repairs and any other defects that could become hazardous in the near future. The completed repair should be of a “table top” size.

Stage 1

The HI marks the PX and the follow-up P5 patch. The PX is rung through to the HDT. The PX and P5 works detail is recorded and an order sent to the HDT.

Stage 2

The HDT use the order to plan the works.

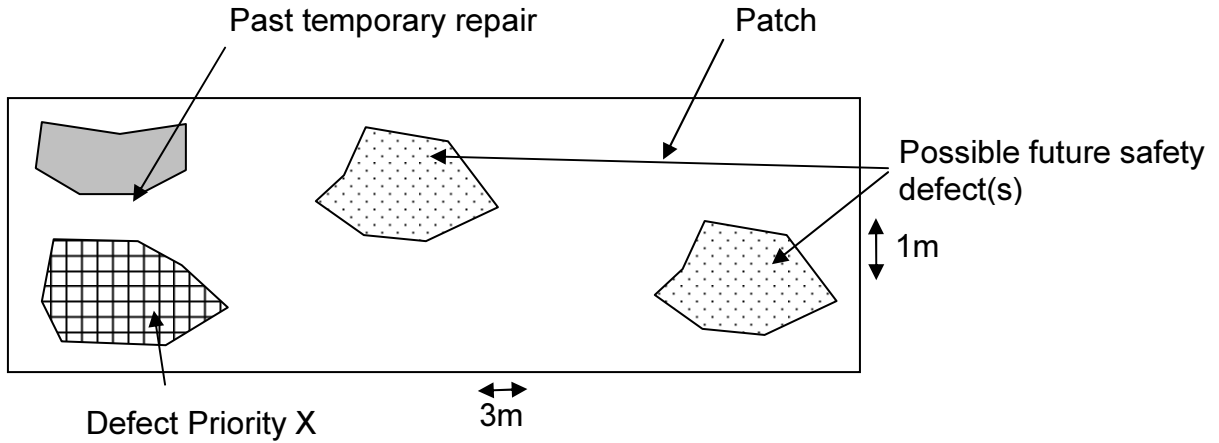
Stage 3

The MMV removes the area identified in the P5 patch, which includes the PX, to a depth not exceeding 30mm. The patch is swept to remove the milled surface material and any other debris. The remaining depth below the base patch layer is filled in to remove the PX safety hazard.

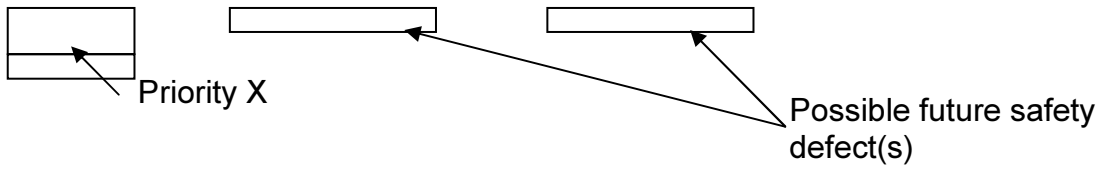
Stage 4

The P5 patch is surfaced.

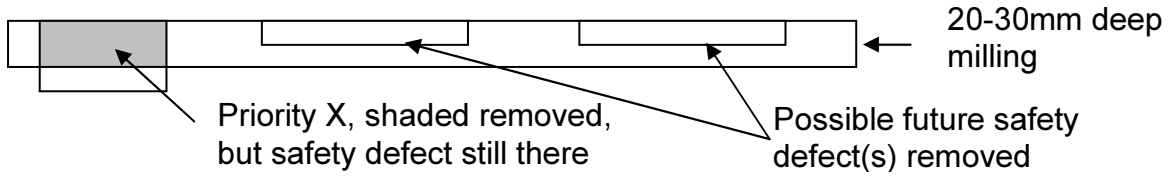
Plan View at Stage 1



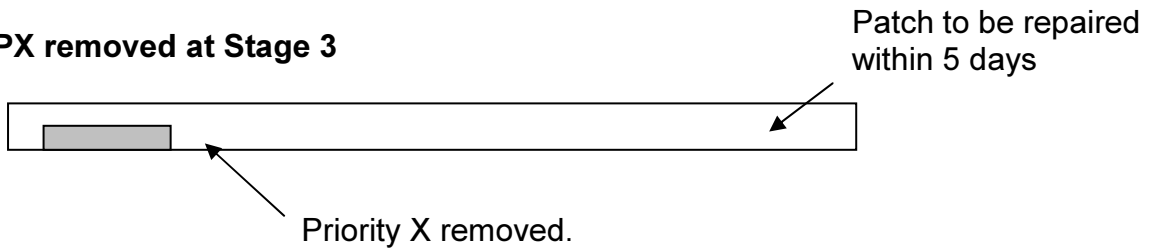
Side view at Stage 1



Side view at Stage 3

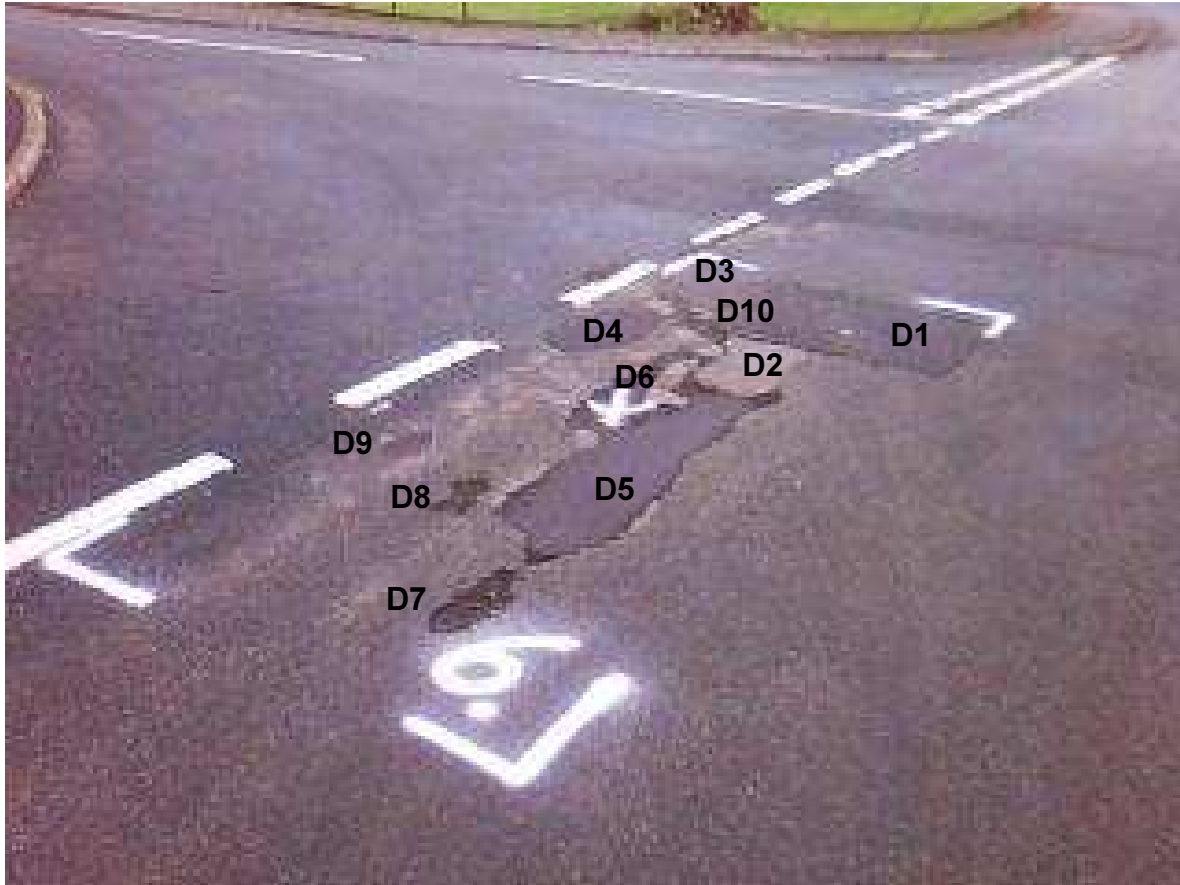


PX removed at Stage 3



APPENDIX 2

Before (December 2012)



D1 is permanent patch carried out by a Statutory Undertaker (gas, water or electric) prior to 2010.

D2, D3, D4 and D5 are previous safety defects repaired in the 12 months prior to the P5 patch costing around £56.

D7, D8, D9 and D10 are potential safety defects, costing around £56.

D6 and area marked with white 6 is the new PX/P5 repair, costing around £140.

After (July 2013)



This shows the P5 patch has not deteriorated during the winter season.

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS
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1.	Meeting:-	Improving Places Select Commission
2.	Date:-	Wednesday 4th September 2013
3.	Title:-	Vulnerable Tenants Gardening Scheme
4.	Directorate:-	NEIGHBOURHOOD AND ADULT SERVICES

5. Summary

Up until 2nd June, Rotherham MBC provided a partial gardening scheme to some vulnerable tenants across the borough. The service, delivered by Morrison FS, was insufficient and impacted on the contractor's core work of delivering estate based caretaking services. The service was transferred to Age UK, to ensure that it could provide an enhanced service to existing customers and have the potential to expand in line with demand.

This report provides detail on the alternative delivery arrangements implemented to alleviate these issues.

6. Recommendations

That Improving Places Overview and Scrutiny Select Commission

- **Note the decision to expand the gardening scheme to enable it to provide an enhanced service to appropriate council housing tenants, and enable caretaking staff to focus on core responsibilities.**

7. Background and Details

Up until 2nd June 2013, Rotherham MBC provided a partial gardening scheme to help Council tenants over 65 and those with disabilities of any age with basic gardening, for example mowing the lawn and trimming hedges. The scheme was only open to people who did not have a relative to help them.

The scheme was at full capacity with 185 tenants receiving a basic gardening service, there were also 18 tenants on the waiting list. Tenants paid £10 - £20 per visit and received 2 – 3 cuts per annum.

Following the transfer of the repairs & maintenance service to external contractors, the gardening scheme has been delivered by Morrison FS. Morrison FS ran the scheme using estate based caretakers rather than employing dedicated gardeners as the scheme was only needed between March and November (the growing season).

Up until March 2013 the caretaking service itself was largely reactive, relying on individual reports of problems as a means of allocating work. As a consequence of this approach there was no routine scheduled maintenance of estate and garage sites by the caretaking service. In this context it was possible to prioritise gardening within the caretakers workloads. However following a review of the caretaking service it was felt that a reactive approach was inadequate as work was only being undertaken if it was identified and reported. As a means of improving the quality of estates, a cyclical planned work programme was introduced borough wide. This approach meant it was difficult to release the 2 caretakers required for the gardening scheme.

As well impacting on cyclical caretaking works, there were also other issues with how the scheme was being delivered;

- Not enough capacity to maintain gardens to desirable standard i.e. grass cutting was relatively ad hoc and resources not sufficient to cut at least every six weeks
- The service was heavily subsidised by RMBC i.e. cost of two caretakers on a seasonal basis (March to November). This introduces equity issues for tenants in effect paying for a caretaking service they did not receive.
- Poor income recovery by Morrison FS who did not have the resource to chase debts from tenants who didn't pay upon completion of works
- No assessment criteria. (in effect it was first come first served system)
- MFS were unable to accept new requests for service due to their limited capacity
- No process for informing when tenancy ended.

As the roll out of the cyclical works programme was due to commence in April 2013 and with the start of the growing season, a review of the gardening scheme was urgently needed.

3 options were initially identified for the continuation of the garden scheme;

1. Continue use of Morrison FS
2. Tender works
3. Investigate options for delivery through a social enterprise/CVF sector organisation

Option 1 wasn't viable as this didn't resolve the current issues with the scheme. Option 2 was considered as this would resolve the current issues with the scheme however there were concerns that a commercial company would be more profit focussed rather than customer focussed and this could potentially be a lengthy process. Option 3 was the preferred option however assistance with start-up costs was anticipated. Whilst there was a cost attached to option 3, building social capital and adding to and developing skills and knowledge in the local community would offset these costs.

Rotherham MBC requirements for a CVF sector organisation to develop a scheme that could take forward the vulnerable tenants gardening service were identified as;

- Needed to be independently set up and ran
- Needed to be able to implement the gardening scheme by Summer 2013
- Needed to charge and become sustainable over a reasonable timescale
- Needed potential to develop over time to offer a service borough wide to those that needed it – not restricted to social tenants

Rotherham MBC approached Voluntary Action Rotherham to see if there was the potential for a CVF sector organisation to develop and take forward a gardening scheme for social tenants which would become sustainable over a reasonable timescale. After undertaking borough wide research of the sector, Voluntary Action Rotherham identified Age UK Rotherham as the most suitable provider as they met the requirements and already had a gardening scheme in place.

Following discussions with Age UK Rotherham in March 2013, they expressed an interest in expanding their operations to carry out this work.

To enable Age UK Rotherham to expand their operation and take over the existing client base on the gardening scheme, pump prime funding was required to support the costs of purchasing/hiring additional equipment and resources.

Age UK Rotherham already offered gardening to clients on a monthly basis (more regularly if required) at £15 per hour. Age UK Rotherham expressed concerns that the frequency of visits (2 – 3 time per year) on Rotherham MBC's scheme allowed gardens to become unkempt before each visit and would become too time consuming to be maintainable within a reasonable cost. It was therefore proposed that existing service users would be encouraged to take up Age UK Rotherham's provision of a monthly visit. Those that wished to stay with 3 visits a year were advised of a higher pricing structure (£20 per hour).

On 21st May 2013, DLT supported the expansion of the Age UK Rotherham gardening scheme to enable it to provide a service to appropriate council housing tenants.

Aware that many gardens on the scheme wouldn't have received a cut in 2013 and would become unmanageable, there was an urgent need to transfer the scheme as soon as possible. Therefore immediately after DLT's decision, Rotherham MBC gave existing clients prior notice of the intention to transfer services to Age UK Rotherham as from 3rd June 2013 and details of the charging system to enable them to opt out if so required. Tenants on the waiting list were also notified of the transfer as Age UK Rotherham had the capacity to accept them onto the scheme.

Age UK Rotherham was issued with a small grant agreement and service specification to ensure monies were spent accordingly and work was undertaken in line with RMBC local offers to customers;

- Contact those on the vulnerable tenants gardening scheme to arrange an appointment at least three days before carrying out works to the garden, provide you with a receipt for your payment and carry out at least 3 visits per year to those registered on the scheme
- Cut your grass, trim hedges that are no higher than two metres and remove all gardening related rubbish on each visit for those on the gardening scheme

Following the transfer of services, one stage 1 complaint was received which related to the change in the charging system (from per visit to per hour). The charging system was justifiably changed to enable the scheme to become sustainable however as this particular tenants garden is approximately 30m long, the revised charging scheme would have a major financial impact. Officers are currently liaising with the tenant and investigating remediation work to alleviate this issue.

Since Age UK Rotherham started the service in June, all tenants have been contacted at least twice to establish relationships and need. 84 people have since signed up to the service and 41 declined. Final letters have been sent to everyone they have been unable to contact to aim to evoke a response. Age UK Rotherham are providing grant monitoring information as a minimum, quarterly, but it was agreed between both parties that for the first 3 months, this is provided monthly.

8. Finance

The costs of enabling Age UK Rotherham to expand their current operation and provide a gardening service to appropriate council housing tenants was £22,727.24

The funding is being used for the following activities:

- To support the cost of short term hire of vehicles and the purchase of short life gardening equipment.
- To support the cost of the short term Coordinator time to cover the initial transfer of clients

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