

COMMISSIONERS' PUBLIC MEETING WITH COUNCILLORS
Wednesday, 24th June, 2015

Present:- Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers (in the Chair), along with Commissioner J. Kenny, Commissioner S. Manzie, Commission M. Ney and Commission M. Newsam.

Also in attendance:- The Mayor (Councillor M. Clark), Councillors Ahmed, Alam, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Cowles, Cutts, Elliot, Ellis, J. Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hughes, Hunter, Jepson, Jones, Khan, Lelliott, McNeely, Middleton, Parker, Pickering, Read, Reeder, Rushforth, Sims, Turner, C. Vines, M. Vines, Wallis, Watson, Whelbourn, Whysall, Wyatt and Yasseen.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Godfrey, Pitchley, Roche, Rose and Sansome.

1. WELCOME AND GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers welcomed everyone to this first public meeting and advised this was an opportunity for all the Commissioners to share the progress over the last three months.

The Leaders of the respective political groups would also be afforded the opportunity to verbalise their contributions to the joint Improvement Plan and the Children's Improvement Plan, which were Council documents.

2. COMMISSIONERS - PROGRESS TO DATE

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers invited each of the Commissioners in turn to provide a progress report on their area of work.

- (a) Commissioner Sir Derek Myers referred to his responsibility for the total pattern of intervention and for specific improvements to ensure healthy democratic leadership and accountability. Reference was also made to the facilitation of a series of roadshows, eleven of which had now been completed. Details on future roadshows were set out on the schedule included with the agenda documentation. Work on a new Local Code of Political Conduct was also taking place.
- (b) Commissioner Stella Manzie, Managing Director, reported on progress for her lead areas including the establishment of key management routines and standards, visits and walkabouts to meet staff and the need to work more corporately. Reference was also made to Rotherham's Improvement Plan which had been sent to the Secretaries of State for Communities and Local Government and Education on 26th May, 2015.

Interim operational arrangements were also now in place for an integrated health and social care function including revised governance arrangements for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

- (c) Commissioner Malcolm Newsam, Children's Social Care Commissioner, outlined the areas for which he was responsible which were articulated in his seven key priorities. The steps outlined had begun to correct the worst aspects of what was a failing service and to build the foundations for a successful recovery.
- (d) Commissioner Kenny reported on the progress of the Rotherham Growth Plan, the Housing Growth Plan 2015 – 2020 and the Local Plan.
- (e) Commissioner Ney reported on the increased priority she had given to taxi licensing and the consultation process with regards to the new Taxi Licensing Policy which received over 700 responses, the progress of discussions with the Magistrates Court and the intended review of individual taxi licensing cases. Improved communication with South Yorkshire Police was necessary and the new post of Assistant Director Community Safety would improve the Council's capacity to work with the Police and to co-ordinate activity across the Council.

3. QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers invited questions on the progress reports from the Commissioners.

Points raised in discussion included:-

- (a) Inclusion of previous scrutiny review information about self-harm.
- (b) Scrutiny process for the Multi-Agency Risk Management Panel.
- (c) Proposed management re-structure and arrangements and the impact on lower tier staff.
- (d) Implementation of a new social care I.T. system, improvements going forward.
- (e) New Licensing Policy and proposed revisions and safeguards to Rotherham's citizens.
- (f) Regeneration of the town centres and whether this would include the other outer town centres, which was confirmed by Commissioner Kenny who had spoken to a Ward Councillor in Dinnington.
- (g) Definition of the Local Development Scheme.

- (h) Social care and commitment from partner agencies.

4. PARTY LEADERS - NEXT STEPS

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers invited Group Leaders to provide progress reports on their contributions to improvements within the Council and next steps.

- (a) Councillor Chris Read, Leader of the Council, reported on the many challenges being faced, the top priority being child sexual exploitation, the budget shortfall, organisation of the Council, integrated social care and the economic agenda in building stronger and secure communities and information sharing to bring employment and opportunities into Rotherham. Reference was also made to the borough roadshows which had been well attended.
- (b) Councillor Caven Vines, Leader of the UKIP Group, referred to political management of the Council pre and post intervention, embedding the new management structure, the need for a fairer political balance cross party approach and welcomed opportunities for the parties to work together politically.
- (c) Councillor Middleton, Leader of the Rotherham Independents' Group, explained the rationale for the formation of the group and too welcomed opportunities for the parties to work together politically.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS/ELECTED MEMBERS

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers invited questions on the progress reports from the Commissioners.

Points raised in discussion included:-

- (a) Support of the Local Government Association, Leadership Academy and mentoring scheme.
- (b) Party dominance and the need for sharing information.
- (c) Transparency of meetings through the use of webcasting technology.
- (d) Decision making process and access by Elected Members and the public.
- (e) Governance Review.

6. BUDGET REPORT

Stuart Booth, Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources, gave a short presentation into the Council's finances and the challenges being faced, drawing particular attention to the budget was moving forward and the importance of the development of a Medium Term Financial Strategy.

The presentation drew specific attention to:-

- Estimated three year Financial Challenge 2016/17 - 2018/19.
- The Funding Gap 2015-19.
- The exclusions and caveats of the financial challenge.
- Proposed approach to developing a Medium Term Financial Strategy.
- Overview of the Strategic Budget Planning Process.

Points raised in the discussion included the significance of one-off savings, recurrent demand pressures and budget growth.

The presentation gave some insight into the financial challenges facing the Council and how it would meet these big challenges in the future.

7. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers invited questions from members of the public and responses were provided relating to:-

- (a) The decision making process following intervention.
- (b) Consultations with Ward Members and the need to include Town and Parish Councillors where applicable.
- (c) Standards Committee processes and the need for a review.
- (d) Provision of health care for victims of child sexual exploitation.
- (e) National Crime Agency investigations and the challenges facing Rotherham.
- (f) Appointment of Councillors to key positions.

8. CLOSE

Commissioner Sir Derek Myers thanked everyone for attending today's meeting and provided detail on the dates and times of future meetings:-

Wednesday, 28th October, 2015 at 11.00 a.m. at the Town Hall
Wednesday, 13th January, 2016 at 11.00 a.m. at the Town Hall
Wednesday, 16th March, 2016 at 11.00 a.m. at the Town Hall

The meeting was formally closed at 1.00 p.m.

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers.