

COMMISSIONERS' PUBLIC MEETING WITH COUNCILLORS
Wednesday, 28th October, 2015

Present:- Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers (in the Chair, along with Commissioner Julie Kenny, Commissioner Stella Manzie, Commissioner Mary Ney and Commissioner Malcolm Newsam.

Also in attendance:- Councillors Alam, Astbury, Atkin, Beaumont, Beck, Buckley, Burton, Cowles, Cutts, Ellis, Hamilton, Hoddinott, Hughes, Jepson, Mallinder, McNeely, Parker, Pickering, Price, Read, Reeder, Reynolds, Roche, Rose, Rushforth, Russell, John Turner, M. Vines, Wallis, Whelbourn, Whysall and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ahmed, Jones, Middleton, Robinson, C. Vines and Watson.

1. WELCOME

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers welcomed everyone and re-stated from the first public meeting that its purpose was to allow the Commissioners to place in the public domain the progress of their work and receive the questions and / or comments of Elected Members and members of the public.

Commissioner Myers also welcomed officials from the Department of Communities and Local Government, who were in attendance to observe the meeting.

The meeting also allowed the three political party leaders to provide updates on their party's progress.

2. COMMISSIONERS - PROGRESS SINCE THE LAST MEETING IN JUNE, 2015

- (a) Commissioner Newsam reported on recent appointments of key personnel in support of his priorities on social care improvements and tackling child sexual exploitation. There was a permanent senior management team within Children and Young People Services and a full complement of heads of service should be in post by Christmas. The CSE needs analysis work was continuing with Salford University as was joint activity with the National Crime Agency on the investigation of non-recent allegations of CSE. Other work highlighted included joint commissioning with health and police partners, and Looked after Children's Services including residential homes.
- (b) Commissioner Ney reported on implementation of the new Licensing Policy with CCTV cameras being installed in all taxis in the New Year. An audit of current taxi drivers against the set standards revealed 40% of 1200 had previous motoring or criminal convictions,

whilst 6% of drivers were assessed as in serious breach of the new standards. To date, 20 licences had been revoked. Premises licensing work was continuing with South Yorkshire Police, and the Safer Rotherham Partnership had launched a three-year Community Safety Strategy. Further letters had been written to the Home Secretary following recent demonstrations in the town.

- (c) Commissioner Manzie reported progress on: building the partnership between Adult Social Care and Health; latest on the Corporate Improvement Plan; preparing the budget; the Devolution Deal for South Yorkshire; using the Rotherham Show for further consultation about the borough; recent arson attack in Swinton; improvement of the completion rate for Personal Development Plans across the Council, and supporting improvement to the democratic scrutiny process. Work was continuing with the Health and Wellbeing, Children and Adult Safeguarding Boards.
- (d) Commissioner Kenny reported on: progress of the new Rotherham Together partnership; development of the Business Growth Plan; the Higher Education Business Plan and the Sheffield City Region Devolution Deal. Subject to planning permission, 333 acres of Pithouse West is being sold to Gulliver's World and a successful Korean business programme could lead to the winning of business staying in the borough through South Korean government support.
- (e) Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers highlighted the budget position and the current financial issues facing the Council with a bid for additional funds being sought from Central Government. Reporting progress to Department for Communities and Local Government was continuing with a request for further flexibilities to aid the Council. Shortlisting for the role of Chief Executive had taken place and a new senior management team should be in situ by Spring 2016.

3. QUESTIONS FROM ELECTED MEMBERS

The following areas were raised:-

- (a) Lack of Ofsted consistency of outcomes.
- (b) The long-term plan for the site in Swinton following the arson attack with the potential for joined-up working with other agencies.
- (c) The urgent need for a child psychologist within the Virtual School and associated funding options.
- (d) Ofsted outcomes in relation to Rotherham's Children's Residential Homes and their performance.

- (e) Mechanisms in place to ensure that the new jobs created in the Borough went to local people from Rotherham's most deprived communities.
- (f) Sharing of any future devolution deal and whether funding allocations would be based on need.
- (g) How can members best support hard to reach groups and individuals, especially around the recent marches and demonstrations?
- (h) Potential cost duplications across the new management structure.
- (i) The possibility of financial support from Central Government to alleviate Rotherham's long-term problems.
- (j) Current senior management appointments whilst frontline staff jobs were being cut. Effect on communities.
- (k) Attracting and retaining social workers.
- (l) Other Councils' responses to child sexual exploitation.
- (m) Lack of stability within senior officer level and the loss of historical organisational knowledge.
- (n) Staff opinion survey outcomes.

4. PARTY LEADERS - REPORT ON PROGRESS

Group Leaders provided progress reports on their contributions to improvements within the Council and next steps.

- (a) Councillor Read, Leader of the Labour Group and Council, reported on: the Devolution Deal; development of the Rotherham Together Partnership; training and development of elected members; the consultation roadshows including feedback from those he spoke with, and the new Vision for Rotherham which he announced and read out.
- (b) Councillor Cowles read a statement from Councillor Vines, Leader of the UKIP minority party, referring to the DCLG inspection led by Louise Casey. UKIP welcomed the subsequent Government intervention and the party had risen to the challenge. UKIP felt lack of challenge to the Council's Scrutiny process was a factor in its failure. UKIP's alternative budget had been rejected and felt that the Labour group would not work with the minority parties.
- (c) Councillor Parker, Leader of the Rotherham Independents' Group, spoke of Scrutiny not being fit for purpose, and he did not like the

nature of information being provided to the opposition parties, giving the example of reading about the residential homes in the Rotherham Advertiser before being contacted by the Labour Group.

5. QUESTIONS FROM COMMISSIONERS/ ELECTED MEMBERS

The following areas were raised:-

- (a) A concern raised with the Leader but yet to receive a response
- (b) Recognition of the hard work of elected members on the Health Select Commission, noting good cross-party co-operation.
- (c) Invitations to attend any scrutiny meetings, which were open to the public.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Only one member of the public chose to ask questions and points raised included:-

- (a) Preferred methods of responses to questions.
- (b) Advisory Cabinet Member allowances and whether it would affect Commissioners' payment.
- (c) Observation that Commissioners had not brought any additional money into the borough which offset their allowances.
- (d) Senior management team structure growing and mirroring past structures.
- (e) Local representation and taxation. Commissioners and the previous Secretary of State had not been elected by him to spend local Council Tax money.
- (f) When are Commissioners leaving.

Lead Commissioner Sir Derek Myers responded.

7. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Wednesday, 13th January, 2016, 11.00 a.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.