

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION

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

Date: Wednesday, 15th November,
2017

Time: 1.30 p.m.

A G E N D A

**There will be a pre-briefing for all members of the
Improving Places Select Commission at 11.00 a.m.**

1. To consider whether the press and public should be excluded from the meeting during consideration of any part of the agenda.
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 held on 20th September, 2017 (herewith) (Pages 1 - 14)
8. Review of Neighbourhood Working Update (report herewith) (Pages 15 - 21)
9. Young Tenant Scrutiny Review - Update (report herewith) (Pages 22 - 31)
10. Emergency Planning Task and Finish Group Recommendations (herewith) (Pages 32 - 37)
11. Proposed Rother Valley Country Park Caravan Site (report herewith) (Pages 38 - 73)

12. Date and time of the next meeting:- Wednesday, 3rd January, 2018 at 1.30 p.m.

Improving Places Select Commission: membership: -

Councillors Albiston, Allen, Atkin, Buckley, B. Cutts, Elliot, Jepson, Jones, McNeely, Mallinder (Chairman), Price, Reeder, Sheppard (Vice-Chairman), Taylor, J. Turner, Vjestica, Walsh and Wyatt.

Co-opted members:- Mrs. L. Shears, Mr. P. Cahill and Mr. B. Walker.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 20th September, 2017

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Albiston, Atkin, B. Cutts, Elliot, Jones, McNeely, Reeder, Sheppard, Taylor, Vjestica, Walsh and Wyatt.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Allen, Buckley, Jepson, Price and Julie Turner.

77. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

78. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no members of the public or press present at the meeting.

79. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the area

IPSC are planning a session in relation to housing related topics on 17th January. Members were asked to send their questions to Christine Bradley.

The Chair reported that she had met with Damien Wilson, the Strategic Director for Regeneration and the Environment to discuss the Forward Plan along with a meeting with Councillor Lelliott the Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy.

A meeting is planned in October for the Chair to meet with the Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, Councillor Hoddinott.

In September the Chair will go to the London Borough of Camden to see how the various London Boroughs carry out their scrutiny roles.

On 22nd October the Chair will go on a training course to Coventry to look at how to collect data and how that data can be used for scrutiny purposes.

Members involvement in the Neighbourhood Working Group (NWG)

IPSC has identified this topic as a piece of work to scrutinise. It is a conflict of interest for Members to be on the NWG and then to scrutinise the work it has been involved in when their work is presented to Places. Members are asked to declare an interest at the start of the meeting in November.

Representatives on Outside Bodies

Following on from a report submitted to the Cabinet and Commissioners Decision Making meeting on 26th June 2017 where representatives from this Commission were sought to sit on the board of these organisations:-

Women's Refuge
Groundwork Cresswell
Rush House
Environmental UK

Following further investigation into this matter, it was concluded that at this time no Council representative is required.

District Heating

Councillor Sheppard reported that a meeting is scheduled for October to include Councillor Beck, the Cabinet Member for Housing and Tom Bell – Assistant Director of Housing to set out a new plan for district heating. Councillor Sheppard will report back at the November meeting of this Commission.

80. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 19TH JULY, 2017

That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 19th July, 2017, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

81. SCRUTINY REVIEW: EMERGENCY PLANNING

The Chair formally thanked Councillor Wyatt and members of the Cross Party Task & Finish Group (The Group) for their work in completing the scrutiny review on Emergency Planning.

Councillor Wyatt started his presentation of the report by outlining that some of the ideas brought out in the review have been implemented already, as the Emergency Plan was a living document and it needed to adapt and be fluid enough to meet all eventualities. IPSC will want to monitor the recommendations which were made from a sound basis of information.

One of the reasons why the review was undertaken, were the Commission's concerns over the strength, structure and the effectiveness of the plan in an emergency situation. The Select Commission Group was aware that lives could potentially be at risk in circumstances where the EP would be made operational and it would not be sufficiently robust.

The reasons for The Group undertaking the review were

- The existing EP was out of date, the current version was dated September 2013 Amendment 35;

- High turnover of staff in the Authority at a senior level over a short timescale;
- High number of new Elected Members in the Council; and
- The number of staffing changes in other organisations linked with the EP

The work on the review had taken over 12 months to complete. The Group were reassured to learn about the significant knowledge and skills the Forward Liaison Officers' possess.

Councillor Wyatt expressed his thanks to Members and Officers in Stockton-On-Tees who hosted a visit by The Group to discover how their Joint Service Agreement operates in relation to Emergency Planning.

Rotherham's Emergency Plan is part of a Joint Service Agreement with Sheffield City Council, but this was not the focus of the scrutiny review.

The aim of the review was to

Test the resilience of the Emergency Plan operation including examining the:-

- Internal governance including meetings structure, attendance and terms of reference for all the groups involved.
- Resilience arrangements networked within Directorates.
(The existing group of Directorate representatives was no longer reflective of the current Council structure.)
- Resilience of arrangements with external agencies involved in the EP process

The findings from the review identified

- Circulation of a controlled document
- Lack of joint meetings between Rotherham and Sheffield under the Joint Service Agreement
- Overall management of the EP process due to changes in officers and Members
- Primary operations room was not exclusively used for EP purposes but also as a training facility
- The secondary operations room at Clifton Park provided limited resources
- Requirement to recruit and train more volunteers
- Lack of a corporate exercise for the service
- Lack of information sharing between partner organisations
- The need to provide training to Parish Councillors on the EP
- No dedicated 4x4 wheeled drive vehicle
- Procurement staff, over time has been excluded from the EP process
- When the EP was operational, the Council effectively became an

- emergency service, a fact to be made known to the Council's suppliers of goods and services
- Corporate Risk Manager was employed by the Council and was available to provide a "critical friend" support to the EP Team when rewriting the plan
 - Attention was given to improving community resilience in the time of an emergency
 - Ward Councillors needed to receive training on the EP and to understand their role in the process along with supporting the Cabinet Member
 - The types of risk in the Borough could change – e.g. having the Advanced Manufacturing Park within its boundaries, this could be seen as a target for terrorism
 - All members of the Communications Team were proficient in dealing with all media types along with having access to all documents on a shared drive
 - All the Managers in the Communications Team had received training in the EP process
 - A member of the Communications Team was on call at all times and they worked closely with the Borough Emergency Co-ordinator when the EP was operational
 - The system currently in use in the Borough Emergency Operations Rooms (BEOR) was unsupported and further work needed to be done to establish the access codes for the system
 - Overall the IT systems relating to the EP needed to be examined and ultimately systems needed to be based in the Cloud, therefore eliminating the need for a BEOR
 - The IT systems were not part of the Shared Service Agreement with Sheffield.

The review took account emergency of an incident that happened during the period of the review, e.g. the fire at Kilnhurst.

Councillor McNeely raised concerns over recommendations 7, 11 and 14, all of which related to the Joint Service Agreement with Sheffield, which Sheffield were not complying to. A request for the Leader, Chief Executive and the Local Resilience Forum to strengthen these recommendations as soon as possible.

Discussions took place after a point raised by Councillor Walsh over the identified unsupported IT systems currently in use by the Council and the urgency for this to be dealt with and to put data into the Cloud. Councillor Wyatt supported Councillor Walsh's concerns noting that this work had been done on the IT systems some years ago but also raised the point not just about the resilience of IT systems but of resilience within the community and the work with Parish Councils and the use of community assets. Awareness of financial restraints but more joint working needed to be encouraged between the Borough Council, Parish Councils along with

local people who volunteered for such tasks as snow wardens.

It was noted by the Chair that the pre-meeting also supported this idea.

Damien Wilson the Strategic Director for Regeneration & Environment commented that members of staff from his Directorate had been involved in completing the review. Assurances were given by Damien that what was reported to be an unsupported IT system was in fact an independent system within the Council's framework. Work was underway to bring all IT systems and make them compatible onto the same platform.

The review was a good piece of work and by applying the principles of best practice, some of the recommendations identified by the review had already been implemented.

Councillor Walsh requested that a full scale training exercise based on the Emergency Plan be undertaken as soon as possible and the new version of the Emergency Plan (now known as the Major Incident Plan) be adopted and kept as a controlled document in one place.

Damien Wilson confirmed that it was important to the review the Emergency Plan due to the large number of new Officers in the Strategic Leadership Team along with the number of new Council Members. It was noted that in Damien's view Rotherham experiences a high number of real live operations such as marches, fires and flooding.

The Strategic Leadership Team had not worked together as a team in an emergency situation.

Some joint training work has already started with the Strategic Leadership Team who recently received a presentation on the Major Incident Plan. A point to note that the type of potential emergencies Rotherham was likely to face had changed over the last 10 years and the Council needed to be able to react to these.

Recommendations from the review

Recommendations

1. That the Major Incident Plan is reviewed bi-annually by a group of Members from the IPSC and this work forms part of the work programme for that year, however the document is to be reviewed by officers on a continual basis.
2. Mandatory training is to be provided to all Members about the Major Incident Plan to increase their awareness and involvement in any major incident.
3. Training relating to the Major Incident Plan should be mandatory to ensure all staff who volunteered are confident in the role they play in the management of the incident.

4. An “out of hours” training exercise to take place once all volunteers have been trained. Full training exercises then take place on a regular basis.
5. A targeted approach to recruitment from employees who can be “job matched” to appropriate roles in the operation of the Major Incident Plan.
6. There are sufficient volunteers to staff the EP for at least two shift changes.
7. A protocol to be developed to ensure that the partner organisations in the Major Incident Plan are notified as a matter of course when significant incidents occur in the borough and through the Local Resilience Forum, ways are to be identified and carried out on building relationships between partner organisations involved in the Emergency Plan – in particular to the turnover in staff.
8. A facilitated meeting/away day involving the emergency services and RMBC major incident staff on the ground to promote team working.
9. An on-going programme of training sessions for Parish Council members should be arranged to ensure any new members receive training on the subject.
10. A representative from Procurement to be involved in the Borough Emergency Operations Room to facilitate timely ordering of goods/services and to provide information if the Belwin Fund becomes operational.
11. Through the Shared Service Agreement funding is secured for a Community Resilience Worker.
12. The Corporate Risk Manager is involved in the role of a “critical friend” any amendments of the Major Incident Plan
13. A flow chart to be designed detailing the Major Incident Process and highlighting how and when Members are to be involved in the process.
14. The Chief Executive / Leader of the Council to inform counterparts in Sheffield of their concerns over the lack of meetings in relation to the Joint Service Agreement.
15. The situation relating to the unsupported IT systems is rectified.

Resolved:-

- (1) That the report and recommendations from the review be approved.
- (2) That the report be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board for their consideration.

82. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, introduced this item stating that Asset Management had previously been under the guidance of the Commissioners but was now back in the control of the Council. The information to be presented was all included in the Asset Management Improvement Plan which were the combined results of the independent review undertaken by CIPFA and the recommendations put forward by the Commissioners

Paul Woodcock, Assistant Director Regeneration, Planning and Transport along with Louise Murray, Strategic Asset Manager, gave a presentation on Asset Management to the Commission.

The story so far...

- Corporate Property Unit provided professional advice and managed some assets.
- Holding Directorates managed some assets and their budgets.
- Decisions made could be Directorate/Team focused and not to wider benefit of Council.
- CIPFA Property Health Check recommended adoption of Corporate Landlord and creation of Strategic Asset Management function.

The position now.

- All Council land and property were viewed as strategic assets – service and community need considered alongside property issues.
- An Asset Management Plan was almost complete – Policy, Strategy and Action Plan.
- One Public Estate and partnership working was underway.
- Service Asset Management Plans and Service Level Agreements were in place.

The Improvement Plan.

- 17 over-arching improvement recommendations derived from Health Check.
- Ranging from governance to a restructure to the creation of a comprehensive Asset Management Plan.
- Monitored at Asset Management Board and reported to Cabinet.
- Recent recommendation for return of powers – awaiting final confirmation.

OUTLINE STRUCTURE

The Asset Management Team

Comprises a Policy, a Strategy and an Action Plan and five main policy

objectives:-

1. Enabling delivery of Council's services and priorities.
2. Supporting economic growth, housing growth and town centre regeneration.
3. Maximising opportunities through adoption of One Public Estate.
4. Developing growth income through commercial/non-operational activities.
5. Maximising commissioning opportunities for property projects and services.

TEAM Structure

The Reviews

- Operational Property Review – includes 248 varied operational properties; based on SAMPs, strategy, condition survey outcomes and action plan. Completion date - 31st March 2018.
- Commercial/non-operational Property Review – includes 232 varied assets; based on condition survey outcomes, let ability and investment return. Completion date was 30th September 2017 through this would be extended as condition surveys had only recently commenced following identification of funding.

The Outcomes

- Reviews would enable rationalisation of portfolios leading to release of assets and also savings.
- Contributes to housing and economic growth.
- £2.32m capital receipt in 2016/17; £1.17m so far this year against a £2.0m target.
- Revenue savings of £780,000 (2014/15), £284,000(2015/16) and £664,000(2016/17)
- £612,560 so far this year against a £1.178m target.
- Next year, the target was £594,000.
- Rigorous asset challenge and Directorate co-operation would be key to achieving stretching target.

Other Improvement Points

- Property Maintenance Review and Compliance.
- Review of Soft Facilities Management.
- Facilities Management provision to Academies.
- Review of Internal Fee Recharging.
- Constitution and Scheme of Delegation.
- Performance Management.
- Data Management.
- Directorate Engagement.
- Corporate Profile and communications.
- Staff training.

What are we doing differently

- Increased internal engagement – via AMOG/AMB and with service representatives.
- Strategic working with Directorates to ensure optimum outcomes.
- Closely working with Housing and RiDO to help deliver housing and economic growth.
- Supporting revenue savings and capital receipts targets through rigorous asset review and challenge.
- Improved Member and community engagement.
- Decisions made in line with approved Policy.

The Future

- Increased engagement with Members and all internal/external customers.
- Completion of reviews leading to strategic rationalisation of the estate.
- Implementation of a planned, preventative maintenance plan.
- Identification of sites to facilitate housing and economic growth both owned and acquired.
- Increased partnership working.
- Generation of growth income through investment acquisition.

Damien Wilson noted that the health checks had provided confirmation that the Asset Management Service was fit for purpose and assurances that all the associated risks with the Service had been identified. The Council carried out the management of assets well but had not got the balance of resources correct to provide a comprehensive service. This was confirmed by the return of powers to the Council.

The future of working to the Corporate Landlord model was very important and how officers bought into this idea. The Corporate Landlord message needed to be shared through the Council.

Assets needed to be viewed as what they were and not what they were being used and to also keep potential uses in mind for the asset and the potential yield it could bring. This message needed to be shared and understood across the Council.

Services provided by the Council should not dictate how buildings were used but instead the use should be governed by the landlord/tenant relationship.

The Council's assets were a finite resource. If assets were disposed of then that income could potentially be used to acquire buildings which would generate a rental income stream for the Council at zero cost to the rate payers.

Examples of such projects included:-

TECentre, was acquired with funding from Sheffield City Region and would provide an income stream.

Beighton Link Project which was business units funded using finance from the private sector, JESSICA funding with underwriting by the Council. There was a shared risk associated with this project which reduced over three years when the likelihood was that the units would be occupied providing local people with employment and a rental income received by the Council.

A change in culture was required to fully adopt the corporate landlord model, but this model would encourage Ward Councillors to get more involved in Council-owned buildings in their area.

Councillor Reeder raised the issue over lack of maintenance by the Council on the properties in its ownership. An acknowledgement to this fact was made and that it was not specific to Rotherham Council. This was a short term outlook and one that needed to be redressed. The results of the conditions of the building would be provided on the completion of the condition survey, which would result in an Investment Plan being produced. Buildings would be prioritised firstly from a health & safety perspective to if the building could be transferred to the community.

Councillor McNeely asked for confirmation of when the operational and condition surveys were to be completed and noted that empty properties cost the Council money. The surveys would be completed by the end of March 2018 and information relating to the cost to the Council on empty properties would be provided.

Councillor Atkin asked for confirmation on the "Right to Buy" initiative, but this only related to homes in the Borough and not community buildings. The presentation mentioned Estates and Valuation both of which were technical areas of work and provided assistance in relation to all Council-owned properties and not just Housing.

The point was made about there being more than one Town Centre in the Borough and all of the Town Centres should be considered when work was being considered or that there were employment opportunities coming forward.

Discussions took place around let ability using a property at Fir Close as an example, which was losing £8,500 per year. Hire of the property was charged at £18 per hour but was considered too expensive for small community groups to pay. Councillor Atkin suggested that it would be better to have some income rather than no income from the hire of the building.

Damien outlined what let ability meant with the bottom line of there being a minimum hourly cost necessary for the Council to keep the building

staffed and operational. There was an increased need to look at the full cost of recovery for the use of buildings. Councillor Lelliott stated that the points being put forward as an issue would be discussed at the Asset Management Board.

The Chair offered the suggestion that organisations such as Voluntary Action Rotherham and RotherFed may be able to help support groups who wanted to meet.

A proposal was put forward to holding a seminar for Members on the topic of Let ability to promote a better understanding on the topic.

Damien Wilson stated that a report was to be submitted to Cabinet in October in relation to Swinton Town Centre and the opportunities currently available. There was a need to look at the assets owned by the Council in all of its Town Centres to provide employment opportunities. The Council was now assembling land, buildings and creating a vision for Rotherham. Along with the Masterplan and the Supplementary Planning Document, Rotherham Borough would be of interest to developers who wanted to come to the area.

Councillor Walsh was encouraged by the presentation on Asset Management but noted the action to Review Internal Fee Recharge was amber in the ratings. Corporate Landlords charged fees to service providers and there was a potential to develop an empire. Councillor Walsh suggested monitoring this element. Damien explained the reason behind this action. Historically charges for work had been higher for services in order to meet an inflated income target. This was an attempt to look at charges and therefore make it more competitive in the open market. A response in relation to the internal recharges was awaited from Financial Services.

Councillor Cutts concurred with what had been said about the increased interest in Rotherham. There was a greater responsibility to recognise and utilise our assets.

There were now only three football pitches on Herringthorpe playingfield but the grass on the whole field still needed to be cut. This area was currently in the Masterplan. If all the pitches were not used then less income was received. Under the current budget proposals managing how the Council used its assets was under close scrutiny.

Investors are now looking to Rotherham at what land was available. The Forge Island site would be shortly going to market with the Council undertaking a specification for its potential uses to maximise the potential benefits it could bring to the town. Domine Lane was also being considered in relation to the Forge Island site. The Council was in communication with property owners in the areas surrounding Forge Island to get the best possible outcomes for the area in terms of the Town Centre Masterplan, however, not all property owners were interested in

releasing land.

A planning application has been received by the Council from a private source relating to Westgate for 47 apartments along with a commercial element.

Sheffield Road was part of land assembly and the Council was in discussions with the Royal Mail regarding their site on Westgate/Sheffield Road.

Other smaller businesses owned land in that area which was preventing a land assembly project coming together.

Councillor Reeder asked a question relating to the derelict building on Corporation Street and whether or not business rates were applicable. Business rates were applicable unless there was an exemption on the building. The Council had limited powers in being able to deal with this building as it was in private ownership. A Section 215 Notice had been served and a charge has been put against the property.

Councillor Jones pointed out that the issue of recharging between Services only created an extra cost called "on costs" which in reality employed two people, one to issue the cost and one person to accept and log the payment. Councillor Jones continued that there were buildings within the Borough which were in a bad state of repair. Decisions needed to be made as to the best use of those buildings. If they were to be sold then the money could be used to re-invest in the Council's remaining properties. The standard of the remaining buildings needed to be examined.

Many local groups were looking at Community Asset Transfer as this was an opportunity, with the assistance of funding e.g. Lottery Funding, to refurbish the buildings for use by local groups, with ownership remaining with the Council.

The Council was happy to work with Local Councillors to improve the way Asset Management was undertaken.

Co-opted Member, Lillian Shears, noted that groups needed to look at the running costs of the buildings. High costs could result in groups folding.

A paper was circulated by Lillian Shears in relation to the piece of scrutiny work on repair appointment, communication process and the customer journey by RotherFed.

In answer to Councillor Albiston's question on knowing when a building was fit for purpose, this was agreed on at the Asset Management Board after a survey has been completed.

Discussions took place around encouraging Directorates in the Council to work together strategically. This was the role of the Asset Management Board which was responsible for all the operational buildings in the Council's ownership.

Concerns were raised by Councillor Albiston as to how investment could be made into the poorer communities and the ethos of Asset Management not turn into a postcode lottery. How could the Council invest in the poorer communities? Councillor Albiston added her support to the Community Asset Transfer.

The Council needed to be clearer to the community on what was available. There was concern with regard to the offloading of buildings to community group who then invested time in running a building rather than providing services. The approach of the Council should be to be involved with working with community groups.

Full cost recovery was supported – there were some services that may not warrant charging full costs because it was due to the social benefits the service provided; a balance was required between economic and social benefits.

Through the Asset Management Board the Council had a more strategic overview of the buildings and the quality of them in its ownership. A business plan would need to be prepared for any new potential use of buildings to be approved by the Asset Management Board and ultimately Cabinet.

A process was in place regarding the transfer of community assets to community groups.

Damien Wilson undertook to ascertain the number of buildings had been transferred to community groups under the Community Asset Transfer scheme.

Each Directorate needed a strategic approach to its Service directory need which informed the Corporate Landlord function.

In moving forward, the Strategic Asset Management Plan presented both risks and challenges. Suggestions put forward for savings may not be acted upon due to Elected Members having other views.

Savings targets had been identified against these properties. The final decision about the properties rested with other Directorates within the Council, however, this placed a pressure on savings target.

It was a postcode lottery as location did impact upon property value. Certain areas were more proactive and encouragement was given for the Council to work with the community and voluntary sector to improve the capacity of the residents.

Councillor Jayne Elliot would prefer to see when services/people needed to be relocated that this was completed with fewer moves as possible. Damien Wilson stated that in previous years the services had suffered from lack of investment and lack of management. The new structure included management and ownership by the Director and Cabinet Member.

Paul Woodcock highlighted that over the next two years, significant revenue savings have to be achieved. The current position was that the Council could not afford to run the amount of buildings in its ownership.

There were limited funds available for maintenance of buildings and the results of the condition survey would require significant decisions from the Council.

Other recommendations were in the Asset Management Improvement Plan.

83. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting take place on Wednesday, 15th November at 1.30 p.m. with a pre-meeting at 11.00 a.m.

Council Report

Improving Places Select Commission Meeting - 15th November 2017

Title

Review of Neighbourhood Working Update

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No.

Director Approving Submission of the Report

Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive

Report author(s):

Name and job title: Zafar Saleem (Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager)

Directorate: Adult Care & Housing

Tel and email contact: (01709) 8(22757) and zafar.saleem@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan has a specific improvement theme of "strong, high impact partnerships". This includes "active ward Councillors working within neighbourhoods to build community and citizens capacity". The objective was the introduction of "a new model of citizen engagement and neighbourhood working linked to a review of Area Assemblies". To give effect to this improvement priority the Council decided on 19th May 2017 to endorse a new vision for neighbourhood working:

**"Putting communities at the heart of everything we do by
Councillors working with their communities on what matters to them,
Listening and working together to make a difference and
Supporting people from different backgrounds to get on well together
. . . to help make people healthier, happier, safer and proud"**

To support delivery of the vision the Area Assemblies were replaced with a new ward based model of neighbourhood working with the following characteristics:

- Production of Ward Profiles and Action Plans identifying local issues, priorities and opportunities.
- Dedicated officer support per ward to implement the new model.

- A devolved ward budget.
- Training and support for officers and members on ward planning, new ways of working, and use of social media for community engagement.

The new model was to be phased in over a 12 month period beginning May 2017 with implementation overseen by a working group comprising officers and members chaired by Councillor Yasseen, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services.

Other related matters the group was tasked with addressing was the production of a new Neighbourhood Strategy that will see the ward as the “building block” to enable partners and communities to work together to improve local outcomes, make the best use of resources and local assets, and develop innovative approaches to enable more people to help themselves and each other.

This report provides an update on progress on the first phase (May 2017 to 31st October 2017) of implementation of the new model of neighbourhood working, and identifies the key deliverables for the second phase of implementation (1st November 2017 to 30th April 2018). The target date for finalisation of the review and go live date is 1st May 2018.

Recommendations:

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Note the progress made in the first phase of the review - May 2017 to 31st October 2017.
- Agree to receive a further update report on progress on the second phase of the review 1st November 2017 to 30th April 2018.

List of Appendices Included

None

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet and Commissioners’ Decision Meeting – 10 April 2017 “Review of Neighbourhood Working”.

Report to Annual Council – 19 May 2017 “Review of Neighbourhood Working”.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title (Main report)

Review of Neighbourhood Working Update

1. Recommendations

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Note the progress made in the first phase of the review - May 2017 to 31st October 2017.
- Agree to receive a further update report on progress on the second phase of the review 1st November 2017 to 30th April 2018.

2. Background

2.1 The Council's Corporate Improvement Plan has a specific improvement theme of "strong, high impact partnerships". This includes "active ward Councillors working within neighbourhoods to build community and citizens capacity". The objective was the introduction of "a new model of citizen engagement and neighbourhood working linked to a review of Area Assemblies". To give effect to this improvement priority the Council decided on 19th May 2017 to endorse a new vision for neighbourhood working:

**"Putting communities at the heart of everything we do by
Councillors working with their communities on what matters to them,
Listening and working together to make a difference and
Supporting people from different backgrounds to get on well together
. . . to help make people healthier, happier, safer and proud"**

2.2 To support delivery of the vision the Area Assemblies were replaced with a new ward based model of neighbourhood working with the following characteristics:

- Production of Ward Profiles and Action Plans for all 21 wards identifying local issues, priorities and opportunities.
- The assignment of dedicated officer support at 2.5 days per week per ward to implement the new model.
- An allocated devolved budget for each ward to address and respond to local Ward Plan priorities and support community involvement and development.
- Training and support provided by the Local Government Association on ward planning and new ways of neighbourhood working. This will include "Ward Walks" in each ward and joint officer and member capacity building seminars, and training on using social media to engage with residents.

2.3 The review is a councillor led process and implementation over a 12 month transitional period is being driven by a member group chaired by Councillor

Yasseen, Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services. The group will oversee the transitional arrangements leading to the embedding of the model.

Other related matters the group will address will be the production of a new Neighbourhood Strategy that will see the ward as the “building block” to enable partners and communities to work together to improve local outcomes, make the best use of resources and local assets, and develop innovative approaches to enable more people to help themselves and each other.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 The review sought to address a number of key issues originally raised in the RMBC Corporate “Fresh Start” Improvement Plan (26th May 2015). These were to:
- Determine why working at a neighbourhood level is important
 - Describe the outcomes of improved neighbourhood working
 - Highlight the added value of a neighbourhood approach to locality working
- 3.2 The expected outcomes of the review of neighbourhood working are to:
- Improve local democratic engagement and community leadership by describing the way in which councillors, officers and partners will interact with the local community.
 - Identify the support that could be expected by Elected Members from the Council and its key partners.
 - Clarify the role of the Council and partners in addressing neighbourhood based issues.
 - Determine how other services run by the Council and its partners can be tailored to and benefit from neighbourhood approaches.
 - Highlight the role of the community, voluntary and faith sectors in supporting local based organisations to deliver services in neighbourhoods.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 Phase 1 of the review (May 2017 to 31st October 2017) has been completed with the following key actions delivered.
- 4.2 **Neighbourhood Working Members’ Forum** - The vision for the new way of working could not have been developed without the involvement and direction of councillors. Thus to ensure successful implementation of the new approach an elected member working group has been established to oversee the arrangements leading to the full implementation of the new neighbourhood working model. Councillor Taiba Yasseen, Cabinet Lead Member for

Neighbourhood Working & Cultural Services chairs the group with cross political party membership. The inaugural meeting of the group took place on 31st July 2017 and the group meets monthly and is supported by the Assistant Chief Executive and the Assistant Director Housing & Neighbourhoods.

- 4.3 **Ward Profiles and Ward Plans** - These have now been completed for all 21 wards and reflect local issues, priorities and opportunities. Each profile provides a demographic narrative for the ward, a community assets list, details of groups operating in the ward, a map of the area, key service and elected member contact details, and an action plan to address community concerns.
- 4.4 **Promotion of neighbourhood working** - A social media presence including Twitter (<https://twitter.com/RotherhamWards>) and “blogs” have been created for each ward on the Council’s website to enable promotion of neighbourhood working and to provide details of what is happening in each ward. The Council’s Online Services Team is reviewing content in line with the corporate guidance and a new “landing page” for Neighbourhood Partnerships is being created which will provide a single access point for residents to search for information about their local area. The Council’s Communication Team will also develop a communications plan, guidance templates, and support.
- 4.5 **Ward Walks** – A programme of ward walks has been initiated with support of the Local Government Association (LGA). The aims of the walks are to support elected members in their community leadership role through action learning, and to identify good practice and any support needed that will help elected members champion and act as advocates for their local community. The LGA offer this programme to all authorities and it involves a Peer councillor from another local authority walking a chosen route or routes with ward members to discuss presenting issues and how these can be resolved based on sharing knowledge the Peer can bring based on their extensive experience as a local councillor. Five ward walks have been completed with a further seven scheduled for November and December 2017. The intention is to complete all 21 walks by mid-January 2018 well ahead of the original target completion date of 31st March 2018.
- 4.6 **Staffing arrangements** - To facilitate the transition to the new way of working officer support has been realigned to provide a named officer to support each ward 2.5 days per week. All councillors have been provided with full contact details for the officer supporting their ward. A comprehensive staffing review has also started with a view to establishing a permanent officer structure with new job and role profiles based on best practice learnt from visits to other local authorities.
- 4.7 **Training and Development** – Joint officer and member training is to be provided on using social media for community engagement, production of content for different platforms (e.g. print, web, social media), and strength based approaches to community development.
- 4.8 **Devolved Budget** – Each ward has an allocated budget comprising £10,000 capital, £1,452 revenue and £3,000 Community Leadership Fund (also revenue) to address and respond to local priorities and support community engagement. Wards are able to use these budgets in creative ways and

methods used so far are “Dragon Dens” style community events, “planning for real” activity, and hosting community events with residents to identify priorities and allocate budgets. The exact engagement approach is not prescribed and ward members with the support of officers are able to tailor their approach to meet the specific needs of their community.

- 4.9 **Phase 2 of the review** (1st November 2017 to 30th April 2018) – the second and final phase of the review aims to produce a “Neighbourhood Strategy” to embed the principles and philosophy that underpin neighbourhood working across the council and wider partnership. This will be supported by ongoing communication and promotion of neighbourhood working through the production and implementation of a complementary communication plan. The staffing review will also be completed.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Consultation with councillors and officers has been built into the transitional arrangements with implementation of the new model being overseen by the Elected Members’ Working group. Community consultation will be incorporated into the ward plans during the transitional period.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The initial phase of the review started in May 2017 and concluded in October 2017. The second phase of implementation will run from 1st November 2017 to 30th April 2018 inclusive. The target date for finalisation of the review and go live date is 1st May 2018. The next update report will be tabled at Improving Places Select Commission in March/April 2018. Regular progress reports will also be submitted to the Elected Members’ Working Group which is overseeing the project.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 In 2017/18, the revenue devolved budget available was £30k from the former Special Responsibility Allowance for Area Assembly Chairs from the Community Engagement Budget and £63k Community Leadership Fund. In addition, £10k devolved capital investment has been made available in each ward for spend to be determined by ward priorities, totalling £210k, and this has been added to the approved Capital Programme 2017/2018. This funding is to be utilised from available capital receipts not already allocated.
- 7.2 Future years’ devolved budgets will be considered as part of the 2018/19 budget setting process.

8. Legal Implications

None arising from this report.

9. Human Resources Implications

- 9.1 To facilitate the transition to the new way of working officer support has been realigned to provide support to councillors at a ward level. All councillors have

been provided with the relevant officer details including contact name, email and phone/mobile numbers.

- 9.2 A comprehensive staffing review has started with a view to establishing a permanent staffing structure with new job and role profiles. Elected Members, officers and unions will be consulted as part of the process of creating a new service offer and any changes that follow will be in line with the Council's HR procedures.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The new Vision Statement and Principles for Neighbourhood Working support the Council's Corporate Plan priorities "Every child making the best start in life" and "Every adult secure, responsible and empowered".

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The proposals to enhance and support neighbourhood working should improve The Council's ability to respond to the specific needs of Rotherham's diverse communities. The needs and requirements of the citizens, businesses and communities in each ward are different and the new approach allows the flexibility to respond to these needs by making the ward the building block for community engagement. Additionally the production of Place Plans will enable a targeted response to community concerns and priorities. An Equality Assessment will be completed in line with the Council's Equality & Diversity Strategy upon conclusion of the review.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 The new model and approach is to be integrated into a new "Neighbourhood Strategy" that will direct the wider Council and partnership to putting residents and communities at the heart of everything the Council does. This work also links to the wider multi-agency Locality Working approach, which has been adopted in principle by the Council and its partners. The model is designed to enhance collaborative working at a locality and neighbourhood level, achieving enhanced outcomes for communities and individuals.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The key risk is failure by all Council directorates to fully embrace and embed the new model of Neighbourhood Working. This will be mitigated by ongoing monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation by the Elected Members' Working Group and Strategic Leadership Team, and through the adoption of the wider "Neighbourhood Strategy".

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Zafar Saleem, Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager, Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.

Tom Bell, Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.

Council Report

Improving Places Select Commission Meeting- 15th November 2017

Title

Young Tenants Housing and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No.

Director Approving Submission of the Report

Anne Marie Lubanski, Strategic Director Adult Care and Housing

Report author(s):

Name and job title: Asim Munir (Tenant Involvement Coordinator)

Directorate: Adult Care & Housing

Tel and email contact: (01709) 8(22786) and asim.munir@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

All

Executive Summary

The Council has commissioned Rother Fed to undertake two scrutiny reviews per year to inform service improvement and quality. The RotherFed Tenant Scrutiny Working Group was formed in April 2016 and their first review was to consider the engagement of young tenants in Council housing. This topic was selected as it had been established that younger tenants, aged between 16 and 34, were on the whole more dissatisfied with housing services.

This scrutiny review was agreed by Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) on 5th April 2017 and it was agreed that an action plan be brought back in six months detailing progress against the recommendations. Progress against the recommendations outlined in the action plan is set out at Appendix 1. The action plan has been agreed by the Housing Involvement Panel and the Housing and Neighbourhood Senior Management Team.

Recommendations:

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Agree the Action Plan and note the progress made to date.
- Agree that the Action Plan be brought back in a further six months updating on progress against the recommendations.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – RMBC Housing & Neighbourhood Services Engagement with Rother Fed's Young Tenants Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Background Papers

Appendix 1 – RMBC Housing & Neighbourhood Services Engagement with Rother Fed's Young Tenants Scrutiny Review Action Plan

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Title (Main report)

Young Tenants Housing and Neighbourhood Services Scrutiny Review Action Plan

1. Recommendations

That the Improving Places Select Commission:

- Agree the Action Plan and note the progress made to date.
- Agree that the Action Plan be brought back in a further six months updating on progress against the recommendations.

2. Background

The Council awarded the Tenant Federation Contract to Rother Fed in 2016 following a tendering process. As part of the contract, Rother Fed undertakes two scrutiny reviews per year to inform service improvement and quality across Housing and Neighbourhood Services.

The first review undertaken by the RotherFed Tenant Scrutiny working group focussed on the engagement of younger tenants. This topic was selected as it had been established that younger tenants, aged between 16 and 34, were on the whole more dissatisfied with their landlord's services. The 2016 STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) survey of tenants and residents found that 28% of tenants under 35 were dissatisfied with their landlord listening to their views and acting upon them. This compared to only 18% dissatisfied across other age groups. This report summarises the findings of the investigation including the recommendations made by the panel and the evidence leading to these conclusions being drawn.

The aim of the scrutiny review was to consider how to improve the engagement of young council tenants aged 16 to 35 years old in Rotherham.

The Objectives:

To find out:

- Why younger tenants are not engaging with their landlord.
- How younger tenants would like to be engaged with housing services, if at all.
- Why some younger tenants are dissatisfied with housing services.

To suggest how to:

- Improve the engagement of younger tenants and their satisfaction with housing services.
- Shape the future tenant involvement offer for younger tenants.
- Potentially improve the STAR survey results for satisfaction of young tenants that their landlord:

2.1 This scrutiny review is contributing towards the following Corporate Priorities, Safer Rotherham Partnership and Housing Strategy Priorities:

The Corporate Plan priorities such as:

- A strong community in a clean, safe environment
- Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future

And the Safer Rotherham Partnership priorities such as:

- Building Confident and Cohesive Communities
- Reducing and Managing Anti-social Behaviour (ASB) and Criminal Damage

The Housing Strategy priority:

- Delivering high quality services and support, and peaceful and well managed neighbourhoods

3. Key Issues

The action plan (appendix 1) shows that all the recommendations are in progress with some of them already being achieved. These include young tenants being involved in the development of the pre tenancy workshops. Younger tenants have already started to get involved in reviewing documents such as the Customer Care training package which will be rolled out soon to Housing and Neighbourhood Services.

We are working closely with Rother Fed and Target Housing to develop the Younger Tenants Forum. This will enable us to involve more young tenants so they can actively inform our services to meet their needs.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

Below are the recommendations which are included in the action plan which are currently all on track.

- A. Provide support to RotherFed in the development of a forum for younger tenants.
- B. Provide suitable training for all council staff coming into contact with younger tenants, particularly in the need to show mutual respect and empathy.
- C. Develop a menu of involvement opportunities for younger tenants and share this with both council staff and tenants.
- D. Review all council documents, in particular those produced by housing services, to make them easier to understand for younger tenants. These should be tested out by young volunteers.
- E. Evaluate the new tenant workshops being introduced in April 2017 with younger tenants and make improvements as necessary to the format and content.
- F. Ensure that the tenancy support team approach is working well and increase awareness of this service by making it clear what the benefits of the service are to younger/new tenants.

- G. Make sure that all younger tenants know who their housing officer is and how to contact them, by:
 - a. Including points of contact for relevant teams in the new tenant packs and explaining the services they provide.
 - b. Introducing a system of notifying tenants of any changes to their neighbourhood housing officer, ideally through the newsletter or mail system.
- H. Consider the use of training sessions in schools to raise awareness of the implications of renting your own home, including responsibilities and financial awareness.
- I. Develop the Home Matters newsletter to make it more 'young person' friendly by incorporating a young tenants section or similar.
- J. Improve the council website by making: the website more accessible and attractive to younger people.
- K. The Home Matters magazine is available on the website.
- L. Review the social media used for engaging with tenants, introducing ways of developing tenant consultations and keeping in touch through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.
- M. Develop a 'Tell Us Once' service for new council tenants, whereby they only have to inform one agency of their move. This information should then be shared with Council Tax, Benefits and Housing officers as appropriate.

Fuller details of progress against the Action Plan are set out in Appendix 1.

5. Consultation

The Action Plan has been agreed by the Housing Involvement Panel (Chaired by Rother Fed and includes Rother Fed board members and other council tenants) and the Housing and Neighbourhood Senior Management Team both on 22nd August 2017.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

Delivery against the recommendations in the action plan will be monitored through the Housing Involvement Panel.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

None arising from this progress report.

8. Legal Implications

None arising from this progress report.

9. Human Resources Implications

None arising from this progress report.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

This will complement the delivery of the Housing Strategy that will contribute to the Corporate Plan priority of 'Every child making the best start in life. Children require safe, warm homes to grow up in if they are to learn and fulfil their potential'. Housing cuts across each of the themes identified to ensure Rotherham is a child friendly borough.

This scrutiny review also significantly contributes to the Corporate Plan priority 'Every adult secure, responsible and empowered'.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

This scrutiny review is under one of the key priorities in the Tenant Involvement Strategy is to 'Listen to more disadvantaged' and 'underrepresented' individuals and groups, and act upon their advice/opinions/views'. An Equality Analysis has been carried out on the Tenant Involvement Strategy with Rother Fed.

Tenants being involved will complement the Housing Strategy which will have a positive impact on addressing homelessness, affordable housing targets, economic regeneration, positive landscape and environmental improvements in some of our most deprived neighbourhoods around the town centre, and support young people and older people to live independently and with a choice over their housing options.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

The Housing and Neighbourhoods Senior Management Team will continue to work with Rother Fed towards delivering the recommendations in the action plan. Some of these recommendations will involve cross collaboration across the relevant council services and partners.

13. Risks and Mitigation

The key risk is the failure to engage young tenants and inability to deliver against the recommendations in the action plan. This will be mitigated by ongoing monitoring, scrutiny and evaluation of the recommendations by the Improving Places Select Commission, Housing Involvement Panel and the Housing and Neighbourhoods Senior Management team.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

Zafar Saleem, Neighbourhood Partnerships Manager, Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.

Tom Bell, Assistant Director Housing and Neighbourhood Services, Adult Social Care & Housing.

RMBC Housing & Neighbourhood Services Engagement with Rother Fed's Young Tenants Scrutiny Review Action Plan

RAG rating: Each action should be given a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating according to the following definitions.

Progress/indicator RAG status	
	Work is significantly behind schedule and no progress has been made, and/or Progress has been made but the timescale has not been achieved
	Progress is being made, progress is good and the action is likely to be achieved within timescale. Or the action has been completed but evidence is required to demonstrate achievement
	The action has been completed and there is a record of evidence to support its completion.

Priority ranking	Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
A	Provide support to Rother Fed in the development of a forum for younger tenants.	Steve Ruffle (Rother Fed)/Asim Munir	Working with Rother Fed and Target Housing to develop the Forum	March 2018		Younger Tenants Forum developed.
B	Provide suitable training for all council staff coming into contact with younger tenants, particularly in the need to show mutual respect and empathy.	Sandra Tolley/Lindsey Castle/Claire Tester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials being developed with input from young tenants Complete a pilot training session with Housing & Neighbourhood Services frontline staff before rolling out corporately which will be done in-house 	March 2018		Customer Care Training package developed and rolled out across Housing & Neighbourhoods Staff and corporately.
C	Develop a menu of involvement opportunities for younger tenants and share this with both council staff and tenants.	Asim Munir	To liaise with communications and marketing team to develop a menu of involvement opportunities for tenants which is also suitable for young tenants	March 2018		Menu of involvement opportunities for younger tenants developed and shared with both council staff and tenants.
D	Review all council documents, in particular those produced by housing services, to make them easier to understand for younger tenants. These should be tested out by	ALL	Documents will be quality assured at the Young People's Forum and Housing Involvement Panel to ensure they are reader friendly for younger and generic tenants.	Ongoing		Documents reviewed by young tenants and this is monitored and evaluated.

Priority ranking	Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
	young volunteers.					
E	Evaluate the new tenant workshops being introduced in April 2017 with younger tenants and make improvements as necessary to the format and content.	Sandra Tolley/Paul Elliott	The Pre-tenancy support team commenced operation w/c 24th July 2017. Ongoing review and evaluation of working practices and interface with Housing Options is ongoing and will lead to changes to how the process is operated. An independent member of the management team is reviewing the process and a series of workshops will be held with Housing Options and Pre-tenancy support team in November 2017 to finalise the new business processes.	March 2018		Tenant Workshops developed with input from young tenants to meet their needs.
F	Ensure that the tenancy support team approach is working well and increase awareness of this service by making it clear what the benefits of the service are to younger/new tenants.	Paul Elliott/ Alison Butters	Communications plan has still to be developed, the team is still in forming stage, with two posts still to be recruited in November 2017. Once recruitment is finalised we will commence developing the communications plan with the communications team.	March 2018		Raising awareness of services and more existing and new tenants are accessing the service.
G	Make sure that all younger tenants know who their housing officer is and how to contact them, by: Including points of contact for relevant teams in the new tenant packs and explaining the services they provide. Introducing a system of notifying tenants of any changes to their neighbourhood housing officer, ideally through the newsletter or mail system.	Paul Walsh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior to signing up for a property, every new tenant has an 'It's Your Move' discussion with the Area Housing Officer, who introduces themselves to the prospective tenant. • Every new tenant also receives a 'Welcome Visit' from the Area Housing Officer in the first weeks of their tenancy. • The established communication line for tenants to access service by telephone is via the Housing Golden Number - 01709 336009. Any issues that can be resolved at first point of contact by Corporate Customer Contact will be, but issues which cannot be resolved 	Ongoing		Improved access to Area Housing Team.

Priority ranking	Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
			<p>will be channelled to other Housing staff as appropriate, including Area Housing Officers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Area Housing Officer role is not a generic housing management role and the Housing Service is not structured in this way. The service has never issued Area Housing Officers mobile phone numbers to tenants. Have had previous discussions at Housing Involvement Panel Meeting and Quality Standards Challenge Group about the rationale for not doing so and this has been accepted 			
H	Consider the use of training sessions in schools to raise awareness of the implications of renting your own home, including responsibilities and financial awareness.	Alison Butters	The team is still in forming stage; the post to lead on this activity has still not been recruited too. It is the intention to re-advertise in November 2017. Once recruitment is complete work will commence to consider appropriateness of out-reach work with schools.	March 2018		Number of training sessions taking place in schools. This will be monitored and evaluated.
I	Develop the Home Matters newsletter to make it more 'young person' friendly by incorporating a young tenants section or similar.	Asim Munir/Alka Walton	Spring Edition of Home Matters promoted how young tenants can get involved and featured a young tenant promoting direct debit rent payments. Work is ongoing to ensure future editions are young people friendly.	March 2018		The winter edition 2017 and following editions will have a regular page developed by young tenants themselves.
J	Improve the Council website by making: the website more accessible and attractive to younger people	Lindsey Castle/Asim Munir	<p>Review of the website taking place.</p> <p>Exploring good practice through conferences and good practice visits.</p>	March 2018		New housing app or new web page developed for Housing & Neighbourhood Services to ensure more self-service and interactions.
K	The Home Matters magazine is available on the website	Lindsey Castle/Asim Munir	Now available on the website.	Completed.		Home Matters available on the website.

Priority ranking	Recommendation (in priority order)	Lead Officers	Update	Target Date	RAG status	Outcomes
L	Review the social media used for engaging with tenants, introducing ways of developing tenant consultations and keeping in touch through platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.	Lindsey Castle/Asim Munir	Twitter account has been set up and has 329 followers to date, but has been more effective for engaging professionals and stakeholders. Will be exploring the possibility of using Facebook and other social media tools e.g. web chat as a means of engaging tenants and exploring good practice from other areas via conferences, events and good practice visits.	March 2018		Further online tools developed to enable tenants to access our services online and allow for interaction and engagement online.
M	Develop a 'Tell Us Once' service for new council tenants, whereby they only have to inform one agency of their move. This information should then be shared with Council Tax, Benefits and Housing offices as appropriate.	Robert Savage/ Housing & Neighbourhood Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your Account is a council online facility that enables residents and tenants to manage their council tax and benefits online.² Some of the Housing and Neighbourhood Services teams do operate as part of the Customer Service Centres to enable better coordination of services and information sharing. Pre Tenancy Workshops will enable new tenants to understand how to access relevant services to meet their needs. 	Ongoing		More tenants registering with Your Account and improved access to council services.

BRIEFING PAPER FOR IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMITTEE

1.	Date of meeting:	15th November 2017
2.	Title:	Emergency Planning, Task and Finish Recommendations
3.	Directorate:	Regeneration and Environment

1. Background

1.1. This report has been drafted in order to update the Improving Places Select Committee (IPSC) on its recommendations following the Task and Finish Review, which concluded in August 2017.

1.2 Within this meeting, a number of recommendations were made which can be found overleaf, alongside updates in relation to progress.

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

Recommendation	Update
That the Major Incident Plan is reviewed bi-annually by a group of Members from the IPSC and this work forms part of the work programme for that year, however the document is to be reviewed by officers on a continual basis.	Officers support this activity and await the scheduling of future reviews by this committee
Mandatory training is to be provided to all Members about the Major Incident Plan to increase their awareness and involvement in any major incident.	Member awareness sessions are currently scheduled to take place on 28 November and 5 December 2017; to be repeated annually
Training relating to the Major Incident Plan should be mandatory to ensure all staff who volunteered are confident in the role they play in the management of the incident.	Following agreement of Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) a range of training and familiarisation for Borough Emergency Operations Room volunteers, Heads of Services, Directors and other key responding roles will be undertaken to continue to train key Council responders on the plan.
An “out of hours” training exercise to take place once all volunteers have been trained. Full training exercises then take place on a regular basis.	Recently the Council has been required to activate emergency response arrangements in dealing with a range of incidents and multi-agency exercises, given these arrangements have been actively utilised, and subsequently supportive debrief and feedback gathered, the Major Incident Plan (MIP) has by default undergone part verification and testing of these key sections of the plan. A proposal for full scale exercising is being developed, to be agreed by SLT in due course.
A targeted approach to recruitment from employees who can be “job matched” to appropriate roles in the operation of the Major Incident Plan.	Officers are currently developing a targeted campaign, alongside promotional work to encourage engagement.
There are sufficient volunteers to staff the EP for at least two shift changes.	Work is on-going to raise the level of volunteers through the campaigns and targeted work referenced above.

<p>A protocol to be developed to ensure that the partner organisations in the Major Incident Plan are notified as a matter of course when significant incidents occur in the borough and through the Local Resilience Forum, ways are to be identified and carried out on building relationships between partner organisations involved in the Emergency Plan – in particular to the turnover in staff.</p>	<p>A range of work is underway with LRF partners to address this recommendation through the LRF structures. This includes joint learning and, additional GOLD symposiums alongside considering;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - South Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum (SYLRF) Major Incident Response and Recovery - SYLRF Mutual Aid Activation - SYLRF Recovery Structures and allocation of recovery leads - SYLRF Recovery capability, capacity and sustainability - Business Continuity impacts
<p>A facilitated meeting/away day involving the emergency services and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) major incident staff on the ground to promote team working.</p>	<p>Early discussion as to the potential for other workshop style events, at tactical or operational level are to be explored further by Emergency Planning leads and the LRF training and exercising group. A further meeting is scheduled for the 6th November.</p>
<p>An on-going programme of training sessions for Parish Council members should be arranged to ensure any new members receive training on the subject.</p>	<p>A full training plan is being developed following ratification of the refreshed Major Incident Plan and this recommendation will be incorporated.</p>
<p>A representative from Procurement to be involved in the Borough Emergency Operations Room to facilitate timely ordering of goods/services and to provide information if the Belwin Fund becomes operational.</p>	<p>Following agreement of a revised Business Continuity Policy by SLT in October 2017, these elements will be addressed within directorate continuity plans.</p>
<p>Through the Shared Service Agreement funding is secured for a Community Resilience Worker.</p>	<p>Engagement is currently underway with Sheffield City Council to explore this and any other opportunities within the structure. Current focus is on recruiting to or adjusting vacancies.</p>
<p>The Corporate Risk Manager is involved in the role of a “critical friend” any amendments of the Major Incident Plan</p>	<p>This will be incorporated for future revisions?</p>
<p>A flow chart to be designed detailing the Major Incident Process and highlighting how and when Members are to be involved in the process.</p>	<p>Section 2.5 on page 12 of the Incident plan contains a flow chart detailing contact arrangements, which includes elected members.</p>

<p>The Chief Executive / Leader of the Council to inform counterparts in Sheffield of their concerns over the lack of meetings in relation to the Joint Service Agreement.</p>	<p>The new Head of Service in this area has been tasked with supporting delivery of these aspects and has liaised with Sheffield counter-parts. A meeting of the Joint Committee was held on 25th October 2017 with further meetings schedule in line with the constitution.</p>
<p>The situation relating to the unsupported IT systems is rectified.</p>	<p>A revised Business Continuity approach has been developed and agreed by SLT in October 2017. This will develop an alternative system without the need of an IT system to support it.</p>

CONTINUES OVERLEAF

2. Major Incident Plan Refresh

2.1 As referenced in the updates above, the Major Incident Plan has undergone a refresh, which was considered and agreed by the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) in August 2017 and was subsequently circulated to Cabinet members in October 2017. Key improvements include updated Directorate structures with revised roles and responsibilities, as well as enhanced diagrams for activation and control and coordination arrangements. The plan also benefits from improved signposting, as well as consolidation of information to promote quick access to relevant procedures by the plan user under emergency conditions. This is achieved through improved use of appendices and sign-posting to specific emergency plans. Other improvements include:

- Information such as a glossary of terms, immediate activation procedures and plan administration
- A new decision tree has been developed to assist with decision making processes on full or partial activation of the plan. This has been created in recognition that a majority of emergency responses are to smaller scale emergencies rather than significant major incidents
- Specific information regarding command and control structures for the Council and multi-agency responses
- New information on the Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) and tools such as the National Decision Making Model and standardised situation reporting using the METHANE format have also been included, in line with current guidance and good practice
- Enhanced action cards for specific response roles, to reduce cross referencing throughout the plan
- Provision of scenario specific briefing cards to support responding staff where no specific response plan exists. These cards detail the scenario, potential impacts and the type of responses required
- Signposting to response arrangements for “common consequences“ such as rest centres, evacuation, warning and informing and where to find information
- Improved signposting to specific plans, which should be referred to for some scenarios such as the Generic Off-Site Reservoir Plan and the South Yorkshire Emergency Mortuary Plan

3. Future Training Requirements

3.1. The Plan, now formalised and fully endorsed, will require a period of further training and embedding, a range of training and familiarisation for Borough Emergency Operations Room volunteers, Heads of Services, Directors and other key responding roles will be undertaken to continue to train key Council responders on the plan. Additionally, Member awareness sessions are currently scheduled to take place on 28 November and 5 December 2017; to be repeated annually, as referenced in the table above. This will then be extended to include Parish Councils.

3.2. Once initial training has been completed a Corporate Exercise will be required to test and validate the MIP in its entirety, this is not only best practice, but required

under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. A separate timeline for this will be agreed with the lead Cabinet Member and SLT.

4. Recommendations for IPSC

- 4.1. IPSC note the updates in respect of the recommendations made.
- 4.2. IPSC schedule bi-annual reviews of the Major Incident Plan, in line with the first recommendation.

5. Name and contact details

- 5.1. Sam Barstow, Head of Community Safety, Resilience and Emergency Planning
- 5.2. Claire Hanson, Emergency Planning and Health and Safety Manager

Summary Sheet

Council Report

Improving Places Select Commission, 15th November 2017

Title

Proposed Rother Valley Country Park Caravan Site

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Damien Wilson, Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment Services

Report Author(s)

Phil Gill - Leisure and Green Spaces Manager

Culture, Sport and Tourism

Ext 22430

philip.gill@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Wales directly but wider impact across the borough.

Executive Summary

Extensive work has been undertaken to develop outline proposals for a new caravan site at Rother Valley Country Park and to assess its business potential. Financial projections suggest that such a development could enable the park to generate a significant net revenue stream for the Council, particularly if it were operational by the time that Gullivers opens in 2019. It would also improve greatly the availability of affordable overnight accommodation in Rotherham, and enhance Rotherham's reputation as a welcoming and enjoyable visitor destination. In particular, it would meet Gulliver's requirement for a caravan site within the vicinity of their major new visitor attraction on the adjacent Pithouse West site.

Recommendations

- 1 Improving Places Select Commission note the recommendation made to Council to include the RVCP Caravan Site project within the Council's approved Capital Programme as an invest-to-save initiative.
- 2 Subject to inclusion of the project within the Council's approved Capital Programme, to invite officers in Regeneration and Environment to bring a further report to Improving Places Select Commission when tenders for construction of the facility have been evaluated and the preferred contractor has been selected.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Outline Business Case (exempt)

Appendix 2 Site Layout Plan- Recommended Option

Appendix 3 Summary of Recommendations in Independent Business Case Review

Background Papers

Briefing Note and Executive Summary, 31 July 2017

Rother Valley Country Park - Caravan Site Proposals and Business Case Review, Smith Craven Chartered Accountants, June 2017

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

A report went to Cabinet and Commissioner Decision Making Meeting on the 13th November 2017

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

*An exemption is sought for **Appendix 1**; under paragraph 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested, as this report contains sensitive commercial information with regards to costing for works and commercial agreements which could disadvantage the Council in any negotiations if the information were to be made public.*

It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information, as the parties' commercial interests could be prejudiced by disclosure of commercial information.

Title (Main Report)

Proposed Rother Valley Country Park Caravan Site

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 Improving Places Select Commission note the recommendation made to Council to include the RVCP Caravan Site project within the Council's approved Capital Programme as an invest-to-save initiative.
- 1.2 Subject to inclusion of the project within the Council's approved Capital Programme, to invite officers in Regeneration and Environment to bring a further report to Improving Places Select Commission when tenders for construction of the facility have been evaluated and the preferred contractor has been selected.

2. Background

- 2.1 At the Cabinet/Commissioner Decision Making Meeting of 26th May 2016, Commissioner Kenny approved the sale of the Pithouse West site for development as 'Gulliver's Valley' resort, a major new family attraction for South Yorkshire. At this point it was noted that, by agreement with Gulliver's, officers were developing a business case to look at the potential provision of caravanning and camping facilities on the adjacent Rother Valley Country Park.
- 2.2 Rother Valley Country Park (RVCP) is the largest green space in the Borough, and plays an important role in the provision of affordable outdoor recreation for local people. Such a facility would complement the accommodation offer at Gulliver's and make a substantial contribution to the development of Rotherham as a tourism destination, stimulating the local economy and jobs, and projecting a positive and welcoming image of the Borough to visitors from across the whole of the UK.
- 2.3 The net cost of running Rother Valley Country Park has decreased significantly over recent years. The net budget has reduced from £458,725 to £104,189 over the past 5 years, largely as the result of increased income generation from a number of capital investments. The aim now is to move the park into a cost-neutral or profit-making position to help secure its future when local authority revenue budget support can no longer be relied upon.
- 2.4 As well as contributing to the wider holiday accommodation needs in South Yorkshire, a caravan site has been identified as having the potential to generate substantial profits. Details are given in the attached Outline Business Case that has been prepared in accordance with the Council's capital project procedures. This is included as the exempt Appendix 1.

3. Key Issues

- 3.1 Gulliver's has stated that they require a caravan site to be available within the vicinity of their new visitor attraction at Pithouse West, and have the option of developing one on their own land if the Council fails to build one. This is further evidence of demand for overnight accommodation and enhances the viability of the proposed caravan site.
- 3.2 The Council is well-placed to build and operate a caravan site at the park as it already owns the land. It has made good progress in developing project proposals and financial forecasts. The park is in a good location relative to the motorway network, Sheffield and the Peak District and there is limited alternative provision within the area. The park has proven business systems and expertise that would equip it to operate the site efficiently and effectively.
- 3.3 Critical success factors have been identified for the project as follows:-
- Average annual net income (net of loan repayments) over the first five years of operation to be sufficient to deliver a planned budget saving.
 - Completion and opening before the end of the 2018/19 financial year.
 - Site to achieve AA 5 Pennants standard, in accordance with research findings which suggest a quality offer is more likely to be successful.
 - Facility to be safe, secure, durable and easy to maintain, to ensure high levels of customer satisfaction and to minimise the risk of increasing running costs over time
- 3.4 The role of income generation through key assets such as Rother Valley Country Park is increasingly important in achieving necessary Council-wide savings because it can help to reduce the pressure to implement cuts to services.

4. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 4.1 A wide range of options have been considered, including doing nothing, pursuing alternative invest to save projects, inviting an external body to develop and operate a caravan site at the park under a long lease, developing and operating a caravan site on other Council-owned land elsewhere, and developing and operating a caravan site on land within the park next to Delves Lane. Consequently, the option of developing and operating a caravan site on land at Delves Lane has been identified as being most likely to fulfil the project's identified critical success factors.
- 4.2 Further detailed options have been considered involving different numbers of caravan pitches and toilet and shower blocks, to optimise the visitor experience and likely income. It was found that options with 129 caravan pitches, 34 pitches for tents and either one or two toilet and shower blocks are similar in terms of their expected financial and other benefits. Details of the evaluation of options are provided in Appendix 1.

- 4.3 It is therefore recommended that firms be invited to tender for a site with 129 caravan pitches and 34 pitches, both with and without a second toilet and shower block, so that a final decision can be taken on which is the most economically advantageous option, once actual capital costs are known. A plan showing the proposed site layout for both these options is included as Appendix 2.

The designs and specifications for these two options will not differ greatly from one another, meaning that the production of tender information for both options will not incur significant additional time or cost.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 External consultation has included other caravan sites, the Caravan and Camping Club, prospective customers and a desk-based review of available trade intelligence such as Visit England, IBIS and Mintel. Additionally, an independent review of the business case was commissioned from Smith Craven Chartered Accountants who delivered their report in June 2017.
- 5.2 Internal officer consultation has included colleagues from Planning, Transportation, Asset Management, Highways, Drainage and Licensing.
- 5.3 The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood Working and Cultural Services and Commissioner Kenny have been briefed about the proposal in July 2017, and again during the finalisation of this report in September 2017.

6. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 6.1 The Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism will be accountable for this project and will act as project sponsor. The Leisure and Green Spaces Manager will act as client project manager, and project implementation will be co-ordinated by the Building Design Team in Asset Management.
- 6.2 The anticipated timescale for implementation is as follows
- November 2017: Site surveys completed
 - January 2018: Planning and Building Regulations applications submitted
 - February 2018: Building Regulations application determined
 - March 2018: Planning application determined
 - April 2018: Technical design completed
Tender period commences
 - May 2018: Tenders receipt, evaluation and approval
 - June 2018: Contractor appointment
 - March 2019: Completion and handover
Caravan site opens.

7. Finance and Procurement Implications

- 7.1 Capital expenditure estimates, shown in the exempt Appendix 1, are based on figures provided by a commercial contractor within the YORbuild framework.

It is proposed that this will be an invest-to-save initiative. Interest rates are currently at a historically low level, making this an attractive option.

- 7.2 It is expected that loan repayments and all day-to-day running costs will be paid for entirely from caravan site income once the facility becomes established. For modelling purposes, a 20 year loan period has been assumed, on the basis of the commercial nature of the development. In addition, the Capital Strategy will incorporate a future requirement for lifecycle expenditure to maintain the asset in an excellent condition, in order to ensure that occupancy rates are maintained.
- 7.3 Operating cost estimates are based on trade data and, where appropriate, experience gained from operating similar facilities elsewhere in the park. All such costs, including any additional staff required, will be met entirely from caravan site income. The modelling in the exempt Appendix 1 indicates that the proposed caravan park will generate profits to support the Council's wider revenue budget.
- 7.4 Income forecasts are influenced mainly by proposed rates for pitch hire and projected occupancy levels. Proposed charges for pitch hire and sundries have been benchmarked with similar sites elsewhere and assessed by independent consultants as being reasonable. Occupancy projections take into account published advice by Visit England, and informal discussions with operators of comparable caravan sites elsewhere, including two located within country parks.
- 7.5 Financial return figures have been calculated for a range of shortlisted options identified as being most likely to meet critical success factors for the project. These are shown in Appendix 1.
- 7.6 A range of procurement routes have been evaluated. Consequently, a traditional full design, specification, tender and fixed price contract route is proposed, as this combines quality assurance, value for money, and familiarity of Council officers with this option. This will reduce risk and help to ensure a successful outcome. It is proposed that tenders be invited from firms within the YORbuild framework.

8. Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The necessary legal agreements will be completed in due course by Legal Services.

9. Human Resource Implications

- 9.1 There are no immediate Human Resource implications arising from this report.
- 9.2 Any new staff will be integrated into the existing park staffing structure where adequate management and administration resources are already in place to ensure compliance with Council HR and financial procedures, and to provide the necessary oversight and direction of the business.

10. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 10.1 The project will support the delivery of Rotherham's ambition to be a child-centred borough, by creating family-friendly holiday accommodation. This will also widen access to Gulliver's for children, families and vulnerable adults by providing an affordable accommodation offer. The project will support the continued operation of Rother Valley Country Park, which provides recreational, educational and employment opportunities for children, young people and vulnerable adults.

11. Equalities and Human Rights Implications

- 11.1 The project will comply with all planning and building regulations with regard to meeting disabled access requirements. The project increases the availability of affordable holiday accommodation, supporting access to leisure for those of limited means.

12. Implications for Partners and Other Directorates

- 12.1 There are no direct implications for partners and other directorates.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 A Risk Register has been prepared and is appended to the Outline Business Case (Appendix 1). Principal risks and associated mitigation measures are as listed below.
- 13.2 **Site Conditions:** The proposed development site, like most of Rother Valley Country Park and Pithouse West, is made ground resulting from restoration of open-cast coal workings. This affects its load-bearing properties and also increases the risk of soil contamination.
- 13.3 **Mitigation:** Detailed site investigations have been undertaken to inform the inclusion in costings of allowances for ground stabilisation and other works needed to allow construction to take place.
- 13.4 **Planning Permission** – Physical development cannot start unless planning permission is in place.
- 13.5 **Mitigation:** Discussions were held with Planning officers at an early stage, highlighting the need for various surveys and other evidence to support an application. Much of this work has been completed, and Planning's pre-application service is now being used to identify any outstanding requirements prior to submission of a full planning application. Planning has also advised that, in principle, a touring caravan site would not be seen as an inappropriate development in the proposed green belt location.
- 13.6 **Capital cost:** The profitability of the caravan site would be reduced if the capital cost (and loan repayments) were greater than estimated.

- 13.7 Mitigation: Outline proposals have been issued to a contractor on the YORbuild framework to obtain commercially tested cost estimates. The Council's quantity surveyor believes that, with firmed up designs and a competitive tendering process, the final tender figure is likely to be lower than the estimates provided.
- 13.8 **Programme:** It is important that a caravan site is operational by early 2019 to benefit from the publicity and associated demand arising from the opening of Gullivers in that year. In addition, submitted budget savings proposals assume profits from a site will start making a contribution to the Council's financial position by then.
- 13.9 Mitigation: A large amount of survey and design work has already been completed, helping to reduce the time it will take to prepare a detailed tender pack and planning application. A detailed project programme will be developed and the project team will meet regularly both pre and post tender to review progress against this.
- 13.10 **Income projections:** Income levels will be sensitive to a number of factors including weather, the quality of the facilities and service at the site, competition, general tourism trends, major events in the vicinity and the development of other attractions at the park and Gullivers.
- 13.11 Mitigation: A marketing plan will be developed and implemented to maximise income and to ensure synergy between the caravan site and the wider offer at Rother Valley Country Park and Gullivers. The site is to be built to a good standard providing durable, attractive and easily maintained facilities. This will reduce the risk of customer dissatisfaction and help the site to remain competitive.

14. Accountable Officer(s)

- 14.1 Polly Hamilton - Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism.
- 14.2 Phil Gill - Leisure and Green Spaces Manager.

Approvals obtained from:-

Finance Manager, Regeneration and Environment and Capital: Jon Baggaley
Legal Service Manager: Stuart Fletcher
Head of Procurement: Karen Middlebrook
Human Resources: John Crutchley

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<http://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/ieDocHome.aspx?Categories=>

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted



Additional items

- Grey water disposal and drinking water points to be located throughout the site (within 90m of any unit).
- Roads to be mainly one way, approximately 3m wide allowing for turning circles of users and delivery/emergency vehicles.
- Timber fencing with naturalistic/native planting to site boundaries where feasible.
- Fire points located within 90m of any unit throughout site.

Key

Super Pitches:

- All weather pitching surface, Handstanding 10x10m (Gravel)
- Illuminated electrical hook up bollard
- Booster TV aerial outlet
- Facilities for drinking water
- Ground level flat to accept grey water

Standard Pitches:

- All weather pitching surface, Handstanding 8x8m (Gravel)
- Shared electrical hook up bollard

Tent Pitches:

- Grass pitches, approximately 7.5m
- Most within 25m of shared electrical hook up bollard

Other Key Items:

- Existing Trees/Shubs
- Indicative Structural planting
- Grass
- Vehicular Routes
- Pedestrian paths
- Redirection public footpath
- Existing fencing to be retained
- Proposed fencing
- Proposed Vehicular Gates
- Proposed Pedestrian Gate/Site
- Service point:
 - Facilities for drinking water
 - Grey water disposal
 - Refuse point
 - Recycling point
 - Fire point
- Shared Electric hook up
- Lighting bollard
- Assembly Point
- PA Play Area
- LNA Late Night Arrivals Area
- MWP Motorhome Waste Point
- CEP Chemical Toilet Emptying Point
- R/S Reception and Shop
- TB Toilet Block
- DOG Dog Walk

Pitch numbers

- 36No. (8x8m pitches)
- 93No. (10x10m pitches)
- 34No. (tent pitches)

Refer to Architects drawings for building details.



Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Regeneration & Environment

Strategic Director:
Damian Wilson BA(Hons), MA, MIED

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
Environment & Development Services
Riverside House, Main Street,
Rotherham S60 1AE

Client:

ROTHER VALLEY COUNTRY PARK

Rev.	Description	Date	Initial	Chd.	Drawn	Date	Chd. by

Project: Rother Valley Country Park

Title: **Masterplan**

Dwg. No. L4933_102

Scales (if any) 1:1000

DRAFT

Rev:

APB/CDE

Date: July 2015

Chd. by: CDE/APB

Appendix 3

Meeting:	Improving Places Select Commission
Date:	15 th November 2017
Item No. & Title:	Proposed Rother Valley Country Park Caravan Site
Ward	Wales

Summary of Recommendations in Independent Business Case Review by Smith Craven Chartered Accountants

Recommendation.	Response
1. The Council must confirm that Gulliver's will not be including a caravan site of its own on the purchased land, if this project is to go ahead.	Discussed and agreed with Gullivers prior to final decision.
2. Financial projections should be adjusted to reflect the impact of the timing of Gulliver's opening with respect to occupancy levels and pricing structure.	Current aim is to open by 2019 to co-incide with Gullivers opening. Impact of 5%, 10% and 15% reduction in occupancy has been included in projections.
3. The opening of Gulliver's, the type of accommodation their site will offer and the prices levied for that accommodation, will have a significant effect on the viability of this project. As such, it also needs to be accounted for within the financial forecasts.	Already agreed in principle with Gulliver's to discuss issues such as joint/reciprocal pricing and marketing arrangements.
4. The Council needs to understand with certainty what (if any) involvement will be required from the Environmental Agency? What time frames are realistic if intervention is required? Will specific licences need to be obtained? It is appropriate that these aspects are understood now, to ensure nothing is encountered at a later date that will significantly impact on the costs already accounted for.	Discussed the issue with Environment Agency advisor and they confirm a permit would not be required if we are discharging clean rainwater from roofs, public roads, small parking areas etc. Currently preparing to submit application for local authority caravan site licence. This will not impact on overall delivery timetable.
5. Whilst it appears that much of the	Request submitted to Planning

Recommendation.	Response
<p>investigation work has been carried out and indeed an agreement in principle obtained. The Council should establish how long it will take to obtain planning permission, so that this can be built into overall programming. Any significant delay could have implications on a proposed opening date and the future budgets of RVCP.</p>	<p>to use their formal pre-application service to ensure all timescales and requirements are understood and factored into implementation programme.</p>
<p>6. The timing of the proposed site at RVCP is critical to its success. If it opens to coincide with Gulliver's Theme Park opening, then RVCP would benefit from the marketing activity Gulliver's carries out. This will considerably reduce the initial pre-launch marketing spend necessary to raise awareness that the caravan site exists.</p>	<p>Implementation programme assumes opening by 2019 to coincide with Gullivers opening. Marketing plan will factor in shared communications opportunities.</p>
<p>7. Before any site plan and costings are finalised, further exploration should be undertaken as to the likelihood of any change in legislation in respect of this standard. An increase in the spacing regulations could obviously have a significant impact on the proposed site, as the current business case has been drafted on the basis of a caravan site with a 3 metre spacing between pitches. Any increase would necessitate a reduction in the proposed number of pitches, which would ultimately impact on cost and income projections.</p>	<p>Confirmation received from Licensing department that proposed specification exceeds requirements.</p>
<p>8. Pre-launch marketing of the site will be key, in order to stand any chance of meeting the assumed occupancy rates and therefore serious consideration should be given to marketing/advertising/promotional activity and the associated costs prior to the commencement of trade on the site.</p>	<p>Initial marketing budget has been increased by a factor of 5. Subsequent years' budgets doubled .</p>
<p>9. Whilst the capabilities of the Council running the proposed site can be demonstrated, given that Thrybergh is also a caravan site under the Councils control, lessons should be learnt to ensure the positives are replicated and the negatives eradicated.</p>	<p>RVCP would have competitive advantages compared to TCP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 pennant site offering new and better facilities. • Wide range of activities e.g. cycling, watersports, train, play areas, golf and cable ski. • High profile events • 2 miles from junction 31 of

Recommendation.	Response
	<p>the M1 motorway.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 mins drive from Sheffield Arena, Ponds Forge, Ice Sheffield, Meadowhall and Magna • 24 hour coverage by staff or security. • Larger size of proposed site appeals to many. • Existing estate management capability • Existing management and admin capability <p>Recent improvements at Thrybergh include better site security and amended booking procedures.</p>
<p>10. The Business Case Review should include details of the main people who will run and manage the caravan site. Supporting Curriculum Vitae's and examples of how they will be trained and the budget allocated to this, should be included.</p>	<p>Person specifications will be produced for each of the proposed new job roles. Some current casual staff already have the necessary capabilities, so it is expected that it will be possible to recruit people of the required calibre. Performance would be monitored through existing PDR arrangements, and training provided as required. Costs for this are not expected to have a significant impact on the business case.</p>
<p>11. As it is already in excess of two years since the capital costs were estimated, it would be advisable to confirm with the Architect etc. what variance there is likely to be (if any) at today's cost and what future increases could be if, for example, work commenced on the project in 2019.</p>	<p>Up to date capital cost estimates have been provided in September 2017 by a commercial contractor.</p>
<p>12. Smith Craven would recommend that clarification is sought from the professionals in relation to the percentages that have been applied for preliminary, design cost risk and internal Council costs. This will establish if the figures are realistic or if they should be revised upwards.</p>	<p>Up to date capital cost estimates have been provided in September 2017 by a commercial contractor.</p> <p>Fee estimates have been confirmed by Asset</p>

Recommendation.	Response
	Management.
13. Staff recruitment and pre-launch marketing, promotion and website costs should be included in any updated financial forecasts.	Increased marketing allowance now included (see Rec.8). Recruitment costs factored in to estimates.
14. A detailed forecast should be prepared to substantiate the decision not to proceed with the reduced scheme.	Detailed economic appraisals of three options, including two reduced schemes, have been included in the Outline Business Case. Consequently, it is recommended that tenders be obtained for the full scheme, and the reduced scheme.
15. Review the ratio of super and standard pitches with clear rationale. Revise cost projections and financial forecasts accordingly.	Application of higher rates for super-pitches (see Rec. 16) suggests these will significantly enhance income. However, can be reviewed again as part of any value engineering exercise.
16. The income projections need to split site fees between standard pitches and super pitches of which there are 96 proposed at RVCP. Section 2.4.1 of Appendix 1 suggests that a super pitch will typically levy an additional charge.	Financial projections have now been amended to include higher rates for super pitches.
17. Research into the demand for super pitches should also be obtained as justification for additional cost of super pitch over a standard pitch. (It is interesting to note that from the information supplied in Appendix 1.2.6, only one of the six sites listed (Chatsworth) actually offers the option of a super pitch, which is quoted at a higher rate than a standard pitch.) Research into the demand for the different types of pitches will also enable occupancy levels on the assumptions to be more realistic.	There is limited evidence from other sites due the relatively low number currently offering super-pitches. However, published market analysis states "Camping and caravanning is gradually repositioning itself. Rather than just being the default option for those looking for an affordable way of holidaying, it is starting to be seen as an activity which offers people a high standard and wide choice of accommodation" (Michael Oliver, Senior Leisure and Media Analyst).
18. A revision of the peak and off peak projections is needed. At present, peak is	Financial projections have now been amended to include peak

Recommendation.	Response
quoted as school holidays only. No provision has been made to include weekends outside of school holidays but within the summer months, within RVCP's peak occupancy rates.	rates over summer week-ends.
19. A broader review of site tariffs should be taken, as it would appear that many of the assumptions made by RVCP have been against Caravan Club sites. Care should be taken when benchmarking fees against the Caravan Club alone, as their brand attracts a guaranteed standard of site with consistent facilities and a perception that they can demand a higher price.	2017 benchmarking with 7 other local authority-run sites suggests proposed rates above average, but within range of charges elsewhere. This would reflect high standard of modern facilities at RVCP.
20. The case for an on-site café needs to be reviewed, including a clear indication of the capital costs of providing one. It would also be advisable to provide assumptions that show direct income in line with demand for pitches as evidence that the café will 'pay for itself'.	Architect and QS advise it depends on the scale of works anticipated (ie. a simple coffee machine or fully equipped baristo coffee bar), but suggest there would not be a significant impact on the overall capital cost assuming the building is fit for retro fitting. This can be reviewed as part of any value engineering.
21. A detailed Marketing Plan is required to incorporate activities both pre and post launch. A significant allowance should be made for marketing pre-launch once activity has been carefully researched and planned.	Marketing plan would be prepared if project is to be developed further (i.e. as part of detailed pre-launch business plan), and the budget allowance for marketing has been increased.
22. The occupancy rates / financial forecasts need to be adjusted once the timeframe of opening has been determined.	See response to recommendation 2.
23. The financial forecasts need to provide for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wages costs to bring them in line with the minimum wage legislation and appropriate wage inflation rates for the jobs envisaged. • Marketing costs as per the recommendation in section 3.4 above. • Associated costs for the removal of commercial waste. • Ongoing costs for the septic tank licence if required. 	<p>Amended to include living wage</p> <p>Now included Continuing to develop reliable estimates for commercial waste and septic tank licence.</p>

Recommendation.	Response
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repairs (maintenance and sundries) should be reviewed in the financial forecasts. 	Done.
<p>24. The Designer/Architects' opinion should be sought as to whether they feel that the caravan site proposed, along with the specifications intended and the repairs envisaged, would have an economic life of 40 years and beyond.</p>	Adjusted loan repayment period to 20 years, as agreed by Strategic Director, Regeneration and Environment.
<p>25. Confirmation is needed that the interest rate of 4.6% quoted is still realistic and that the Council's lending policy has not changed, specifically given the fall in the Bank of England's Base Rate during 2016.</p>	Finance advises interest rate is now 4.09% - projections amended accordingly.
<p>26. It is evident that revenue is being lost by virtue of the fact that several facilities which attract visitors to the park are leased out to private companies. RVCP are only therefore able to benefit from the secondary spend that occurs from elsewhere in the park in areas they control outright such as those documented within Appendix ii. A review of all lease arrangement is recommended before they are renewed.</p>	This does not affect business case for caravan site. A timetable for review of lease arrangements is in development.