

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
14th March, 2018

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Albiston, Allen, Buckley, B. Cutts, Elliot, Jepson, Jones, McNeely, Price, Reeder, Sheppard, Steele, Taylor, Julie Turner, Vjestica, Walsh and Wyatt and also Mrs. L. Shears, Co-opted Member.

Also in attendance was Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Councillors Hoddinott and Lelliott, Cabinet Members, for Minute Nos. 117, 118 and 119.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Atkin.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

112. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report

113. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

114. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair was pleased to welcome Paul Whitehouse, BBC Local Democracy Reporter, and also Councillor Steele, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board to the meeting.

The Commission were also encouraged to attend the development session on Strengths for Asset Based Approaches to Community Development taking place on Tuesday, 20th March, 2018 in the John Smith Room commencing at 2.00 p.m. till 4.00 p.m. and repeated at 4.30 p.m. to 6.30 p.m.

115. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 7th February, 2018, be approved as a correct record.

Reference was made to Minute No. 109 (Governance and Performance - Repairs and Investment Contract) and whether there had been any further consideration to a member of the Improving Places Select Commission being involved in the retendering/commissioning process of contracts.

This would be followed up and ascertained.

With regards to Minute No. 110 (Temporary Relocation of the Bus Interchange) information requested was to be shared.

116. REVISED "ROTHERHAM MBC CODE OF PRACTICE FOR HIGHWAY INSPECTION AND ASSESSMENT"

The Chair introduced Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, who presented the report proposing a revised "Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment", including policies for both Highway Safety Inspection and Skidding Resistance.

The revised "Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment" took account of recommendations within a report commissioned by the Department for Transport named "Well-managed Highway Infrastructure" (A Code of Practice). This new code will replace "Well-maintained Highways", "Management of Highway Structures" and "Well-lit Highways" in October 2018.

The new code significantly changed from the reliance on specific guidance and recommendations to a risk-based approach to highway asset management. The purpose of a risk based approach for highway safety inspections was to determine the scale of the risk presented by a highway defect in order to prioritise the appropriate category of response.

The introduction of a risk-based approach to highway inspection moved away from a highway inspection system based on specific defect intervention/repair levels and replaced it with a system that required risk assessment to determine the need for repair works. Therefore, the proposed "Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment" had been developed taking into account the change in national guidance.

Councillor Hoddinott invited Colin Knight and Andrew Rowley to give a presentation on the Revised Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment.

The presentation drew attention to:-

- Rotherham MBC Road Network.
- Guidance and the programme of highway maintenance.
- The existing Code of practice for highway inspection and assessment.
- National Guidance - 'Well-maintained Highways 2005.
- The New National Guidance - 'Well-managed Highways Infrastructure'.
- Highway Inspection Policy and its Objectives.
- Developing a Revised Code for Rotherham.
- Determining Frequency of Inspections for Carriageways and Footways.

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- Minimum Investigatory Levels.
- Defect Identification and Evaluation - Risk Based Approach.
- Highway Defect Risk Matrix.
- Response Times/Repair Types.
- Defect Categories.
- Skidding Resistance Policy.
- Guidance and Training for Officers.

A question and answer session ensued and the following were raised and clarified:-

- If there was any methodology with regards the location and benefits of trees and with the management of the root action close to highways and footways.

Whilst the primary objective was to keep the tree safe as it grew within the community it was important to liaise with the Tree Section to maintain the safe passage on highways and footways. The Cabinet Member was briefed on the trees in the Borough and additional funding to address condition of the footpaths had been secured. Work to look at tree lined routes within Rotherham would take place in the longer term.

The Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety confirmed there were no plans for tree removal. Each area was different and concerns and risks would be assessed and mitigated as and when they arose.

- The Highways Section was commended for the work it undertook across the Borough and the work it did on the pavements in the town and districts. Page 13 of the report referred to implications for other partners and it was asked if there were any collaborative partnership work with the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive where bus routes were changed on to routes that were less suited to vehicles resulting in damage to kerbs that required replacing.

All bus routes were determined by the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive and operators and, as long as there was no damage to highway, Rotherham was supportive of the usage. If there was a problem liaison would take place and this would involve the Ward Member.

- Had there been any consideration of fitting electronic survey devices to waste collection vehicles which could then download data to a central database.

Electronic surveys undertaken were different to those that could be undertaken by a waste refuse vehicle. However, pathways were also being considered and being looked into further.

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- Were there any plans to look into in-house resurfacing teams to be reactive to potholes and increase general resurfacing of complete roads.

Additional highway works were all carried out by the Council's own Highway Teams. The Teams had been invested into through the development of the apprenticeship programme which included a mixture of college attendance and onsite practical experience. From those that had completed the course the Council had successfully appointed to positions and wherever possible utilised within the Highways Team.

- Had there been any assessment of impact or cost implications through changes within the Policy.

This was to be monitored. There was no huge change from the existing code of practice based on rigid guidance. There was some discretion to carry out repairs with no fundamental change in the numbers.

- Evaluation of highway safety and consideration of demographics and population in certain areas and whether it was cost effective to wait until a pothole worsened and it got bigger.

Defects in the highway were assessed against investigatory level depth in line with specifications, intervention levels and sizes. A large section of potholes were inspected post-repair to gauge the lifespan of the pothole. This work was undertaken by the Highway Supervisor and in 95% of all cases the repair was still successful. Work did take place to identify works areas that were starting to develop before they turned into potholes.

Whilst consideration was given to defects within certain populated areas, there was no consideration of an individual's circumstances.

- Training programme timeframes for Highway Inspectors.

Training timescales were currently being arranged with the provider for all Highway Inspectors to be trained in line with recognised standards before the implementation in October, 2018.

- How would it be known if the Code had been implemented effectively, when would the implementation be reviewed and were there any major implications to changes to working practices.

Performance management information data was to be collected and analysed on a quarterly basis, which not only included potholes, but insurance claims. The Code of Practice would also be updated every year in accordance with the Council's insurers and solicitors.

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In terms of the capacity of the Highway Inspectors, this comprehensive role was designed as a single point of contact related to highways within Wards and from a customer perspective. This would be monitored and discussed on a monthly basis for any workload changes, but no major changes were envisaged.

- Page 17 detailed how the Code applied to adopted highways, but what justification was there, if any, on any unadopted roads.

Work on unadopted highways was limited as responsibility lay with who owned the highway frontage. The Council was happy to provide support, advice and guidance where applicable and would work with Ward Members to keep areas safe. The Council was under no legal obligation to resurface an unadopted road.

- Page 29 referred to street lighting routine inspections and clarification was sought if there were any legal timeframes.

This would have to be deferred to the Street Lighting Engineers.

- Page 30 related to highway drainage and road gullies and clarification was sought on those gullies that were persistently blocked.

There was an inspection regime for maintenance of the 45,300 gullies across the Borough. Over 90% of the gullies were kept free and working correctly. There may be occasions when a gully was blocked, but the system was designed for this to be bypassed and for surface water to travel to the next one. The team were happy to respond to concerns or requests. The team did struggle to inspect every gully as occasionally they were blocked by a vehicle.

- Page 32 detailed a grid of action for verge maintenance and advice was sought on verge overgrowth obstructions and the requirement for road signs to be visible to road users.

Any obstruction of road signs would be inspected and vegetation removed where necessary.

- Page 88 referred to the performance management framework and measures, their publication and would this be scrutinised.

Performance management and the sliding scale for the condition of the highway network was monitored quarterly. More operational type measures relating to potholes, vegetation etc. were published on the Council website along with customer satisfaction surveys. On the completion of schemes affected residents were written to and notified accordingly.

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- Page 71 detailed when other road safety measures or additional routine maintenance had been identified were relevant departments advised of the performance of other departments and would there be an obligation to respond to those inspections.

Performance management data for highways was published. It was not known how other Departments published their own data.

- Page 19 (3.1) referenced unclassified routes and residential state roads when the biggest problem was when rural roads were populated by HGVS. Was this reported and could any statistics be broken down into Ward areas for any particular issues.

On unclassified routes, as long as vehicles were not damaging the highway nor were there any weight restrictions, then HGVs had a right to use the highway.

Whilst data was not broken down into specific Wards, the team would be happy to sit down and extract some reports that may be relevant.

- Street signage and the legal requirement for illuminated signs.

There was some legislation related to illumination and clarification would be sought from the Street Lighting Engineer.

- How do we ensure adopted footways and highways owned by Housing were also inspected and made safe and subject to the same rigid inspections under this Code.

Services were responsible for their own area to ensure footways etc. were safe and in good condition and the responsibility of asset owners.

- Was there any consideration to upgrading the laser based scanner system to do more surveying to a higher standard for less money.

The scanner was only available for certain mechanical vehicles. This service was bought in collectively across the region as a joint consortium to minimise cost.

- Once information was recorded was it analysed to determine the effectiveness of repair techniques.

There were inspectors in-house looking at defect material and data. The use of historical information was used to build highway schemes, frequency numbers and condition data.

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- Page 20 referred to highway structures being inspected every 2 years and in principle between 6-12 years and questioned whether this should say months.

Clarification would be sought from the Structures Team.

- Page 66 related to highway authorities of South Yorkshire and any roads that crossed over boundaries and whether there was any cost savings from any collaborative work, especially around level crossings.

All Local Authorities consulted with their neighbours, but due to costs involved may not always join up with their work.

In terms of level crossings only the approaches were the responsibility of Highways. The crossing itself was the responsibility of Network Rail.

The Chair thanked Councillor Hoddinott, Colin Knight and Andrew Rowley for their very informative presentation and suggested that any further questions be forwarded on.

Resolved:- (1) That the revised “Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment” (Appendix A) to ensure that the highway is safely maintained, thereby safeguarding users of Rotherham’s highways be supported.

(2) That performance management data published on the website be shared with the Improving Place Select Commission Members.

(3) That feedback be provided on the areas requiring further clarification.

(4) That a further update be provided in due course and for this to incorporate resident satisfactory survey data, identification of any savings and if there were any reduction in accidents.

117. **STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN AND PROPERTY REVIEWS**

The Chair introduced Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy who introduced this presentation. This involved the Strategic Asset Management Plan which formed part of the Council’s health check.

Paul Smith and Louise Murray from Asset Management gave a PowerPoint presentation which drew specific attention to:-

- Background information.
- Strategic Asset Management Plan.
- Policy and Strategy.

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- Objectives.
- Action Plan and Delivery.
- Operational Property Review.
- Non-Operational Property Review.
- Surplus Properties.
- Community Buildings Review.
- Other Reviews.
- Next Steps.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Would Ward Members be involved in the report for more specific information for the Community Buildings Review which would be submitted to the Asset Management Board.

Ward Members would be consulted. Only 12 buildings were affected so did not involve each of the Borough's Wards.

- Was there any criteria to retain buildings of benefit to the Borough for non-operational properties.

There was some criteria, but this depended upon the benefit to the community and the use and demand for those properties. Consultation would take place with Ward Members and all interested parties on the use of those properties going forward.

- In the objectives it referred to supporting economic growth and the town centre regeneration. Would this include outlying town centres as well. The building asset list circulated to Ward Members was also out-of-date.

Comments on the building asset list were welcomed and this would be updated with a more comprehensive representation in due course.

In terms of town centres, consideration was being given to Swinton and Wath and others going forward.

- Objective 4 related to developing growth income for non-commercial activities and a smart action plan. Could clarification be provided on quantitative measures, figures, direction of travel, financial targets and delivery outcomes.

From a savings point of view there was to be £1 million this year and next year combined. The planned reviews would assist, make better use of facilities and development of working practices was key.

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There were some income targets with growth in academy income. The trading income was looking at a larger planned investment strategy in developing other property. For example the site in Manvers next to the business incubation centre may be developed on a commercial basis and invested in by the Council to provide much needed jobs and provide income. A report on this commercial approach was to be submitted to the Asset Management Board.

- Did it cost anything to be members of CIPFA and were officers able to provide a challenge to service areas on how to use buildings more effectively and deliver a better service, are they able to do this through this strategy.

The Council did have CIPFA membership. Challenges to service areas were primarily to do with building usage and not delivery of the services within it. WorkSmart initiatives would be reinvigorated to help reduce the building catalogue.

- Anston Library is a building that appeared to be in Council ownership, but was in fact owned by the Parish Council. Consideration needed to be given to land and property and any asset transfers to other interested bodies, including Parish Councils, before disposing of land.

This Asset Management Review formed part of the process and Parish Councils would be added to the stakeholder list before decisions were made to dispose or declare buildings surplus.

Clarification was provided on the differences between the Community Asset Register and the Community Right to Bid for Community Asset Transfers.

- Was there any obligation under the One Public Estate to consult others when properties were to be disposed of to ensure agreement.

The One Public Estate included all Councils in the Sheffield City Region, the Fire Authority and NHS. This was run by the Joint Asset Board chaired by the Chief Executive and it was this Board that decided on the delivery of the funding. There was no clawback feature.

- If there were surplus properties in a Ward and community benefit could be proven was there any reinvestment into that area from the proceeds of any disposal.

Proceeds from asset disposal could not be ring-fenced and was included within the capital fund. The capital fund target was £2 million within the MTFs; some of which went back into the revenue budget.

- The Wingfield Community Buildings Review had identified 23 accessible buildings and questions were asked how the asset lists were compiled.

The list was compiled from information held by the Terrier Section. Hopefully Ward Members would assist as they were the ones that really knew their areas. This would assist in compilation of more accurate lists.

Resolved:- (1) That Councillor Lelliott, Paul Smith and Louise Murray be thanked for their informative presentation.

(2) That any material be forwarded onto the Parish Councils to maintain information flow.

118. ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE MASTERPLAN

The Chair introduced Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy who introduced this presentation which formed an overview of the Town Centre Masterplan and following the consultation the process of moving forward.

Officers from RiDO gave a PowerPoint presentation which drew specific attention to:-

- Masterplan Overview and the Approach.
- Shaping Strategy.
- Masterplan Recap.
- Forge Island.
- Riverside Residential.
- Indoor and Outdoor Covered Markets and the view from Drummond Street.
- Guest and Chrimes.
- Bus Interchange and Multi-Storey Car Park.
- Streets and Spaces for Improvement.
- Results of the Consultation.
- Town Centre Transformation – Achievements and Progress.
- Forge Island Development Timetable and Flood Defences.
- Markets Investments.
- Public Realm.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and clarified:-

- Welcomed investment into the town centre and the need for quality developments with the impacted businesses given adequate notice.

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Careful consideration would be given to developments to ensure future problems did not occur. Some businesses were affected and any relocation would be supported to the benefit of the town centre.

- The need for good quality well designed buildings in the town centre to replace those lost.

This would be controlled by the development agreement and written into the agreement to control quality and design. The end product had to be high quality and attractive from a user point of view and include linking through to Forge Island and the Minster Gardens.

- The shaping strategy referred to quality drinking. It was hoped the right balance of establishments could be easily managed and for this to be family orientated to prevent the risk of anti-social behaviour.

The phraseology could have been better. The plan was for more leisure and food outlets. This was very much a quality family destination not a set of bars. The competition stage 1 tenders had been sent out inviting a number of developers to come to stage 2 and the elements would be a mix of competitive features and not just one developer or design.

- Shopping was not always the answer. Were there any plans to reduce the shops around town to avoid sprawling gaps.

The town centre was too large and drawn out with Tesco at the one end of the high street. This would form part of the Local Plan to look to shrink the town centre from Wellgate and reclassify as part of the Local Plan adoption.

- If Rotherham was to become a Child Centred Borough how was this reflected in the master plan.

Young people had been included as part of the consultation and generally liked the ideas, especially for the cinema. The Interchange had been highlighted as an area of concern and this had been taken on board as part of the redevelopment.

- Delivery of the photo montages, especially for the market, would set Rotherham on the map, but was there concern about competition from developers from areas like Sheffield.

Sheffield was a city and had high quality public realm, some of which was the best in the country. Every effort would be made to get the right level of quality and design for Rotherham. Cost had to be taken on board for initial capital and maintenance. Rotherham was different and there were plenty of developers looking for opportunities.

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Whilst every effort would be made to seek a building depicted by the photo montage for the markets, it had to be DDA compliant and it had been agreed that the Guardian Centre would be demolished and the whole area opened up.

- Planning permission had been granted for residential development with some retail for Westgate Chambers which was objected to by 1915 Bar due to its close proximity.

It was a fantastic opportunity for the redevelopment of Westgate Chambers with 62 residential units. Adequate soundproofing would be required given the proximity of the public house.

- Was there any inclusion of other town centres throughout the Borough including in this masterplan.

Invitations had gone out to the market for the redevelopment of Swinton and it was not certain about other outlying town centre areas. However, officers were happy to look at other project areas.

Other town centre development could be added to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's work plan and prioritised in due course.

- Rotherham had to compete with big developments like Meadowhall who were a private concern and had to offer something completely different to other areas. Could areas of historic interest be incorporated such as the Guest and Chrimes site as part of the redevelopment.

The Council had successfully acquired Forge Island, the Magistrates Courthouse and the bridge and officers were working hard to get the best offer for Rotherham off the ground. Leases had also been secured for the cinema. The consultation feedback had also highlighted the need for a different landscape to places like Meadowhall and were to focus on keeping the masterplan local for local people who were excited about the future.

- There was a need for a clear communication strategy to advise the public on which buildings would be demolished, about the relocation of the Interchange and evidence of the landscape moving forward. The advertising hoardings would tell Rotherham's story.

The advertising hoardings were being designed following a visit to Barnsley and to learn how best to be proactive in getting the message out across the Borough. A task and finish group had also been set up regarding the town centre communication strategy.

The Town Centre Marketing Sub-Group had produced some information. This would be circulated by email to Members.

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- Could the 2019 public realm proposals be shared in due course.

Public realm 2019 was being considered as part of the task and finish group public realm. These issues were important and would be shared at the earliest opportunity.

Resolved:- (1) That Councillor Lelliott and the officers from RiDO be thanked for their informative presentation.

(2) That information relating to the communication plan be circulated by email to Members.

(3) That feedback from the consultation process be incorporated into designs as much as possible

(4) That consideration be given to developing plans for other town centres across the Borough and for this to be included within the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board's work plan in due course.

119. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission take place on Wednesday, 18th April, 2018 at 1.30 p.m.