

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
26th July, 2018

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Buckley); Councillors Atkin, Jepson, Khan, McNeely, Reeder, Sansome, J. Turner, Vjestica, Walsh and Wyatt.

Also in attendance : Councillor Hoddinott (Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety) for item 11; and Councillor Allen (Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities) for item 12.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Cutts, Elliot, Fenwick-Green, Jones, Sheppard and Whysall.

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

7. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

8. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

9. COMMUNICATIONS

The following matters were discussed:-

(1) Representatives of the Muslim community of Rotherham were welcomed to the meeting (Minute No. 11 below refers).

(2) Councillor Walsh will represent the Improving Places Select Commission in respect of the audit of performance indicators.

(3) Councillor Sansome (Vice-Chair of the Improving Places Select Commission) will be a member of the Budget working group established by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

(4) Councillor McNeely (a member of the Rotherham Town Centre Marketing Board) reported that the most recent meeting of the Board had considered the effect upon town centre businesses of the temporary relocation of the bus station and the consequent alterations to bus routes. The meeting had been very well attended and the Board's views had been submitted to the South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive.

(5) The Chair reported that the Young Tenants' group (Council housing tenants) had a meeting scheduled for Monday 30th July, 2018, at which they will progress their work with the Council and with Rotherfed and will also be taken upon a tour of the Town Hall.

10. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 7TH JUNE, 2018

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on Thursday, 7th June, 2018, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

11. DIGNITY/ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL CONTRACT UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 103 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 3rd January, 2018, consideration was given to a report of the Superintendent Registrar concerning the monitoring of the performance of the contractual agreement which the Council has with Dignity Funerals Ltd. for the provision of bereavement services for the Rotherham Borough area.

Councillor Hoddinott (Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety) spoke about the requirement for Dignity Funerals Ltd. to provide a comprehensive performance report about the bereavement services for scrutiny by Elected Members of the Council.

The Select Commission welcomed Mr. S. Gant and Mrs. N. Cooke (both of Dignity Funerals Ltd.) who explained the improved relations between Dignity Funerals Ltd. and the Borough Council and the way in which the contractual agreement and performance of service delivery was being monitored. In presenting the Annual Performance Report from Dignity Funerals Ltd. the specific details mentioned were:-

(i) the Company making significant financial investment in capital works and maintenance at the East Herringthorpe Cemetery and Crematorium and the eight other Municipal cemeteries located throughout the Borough area;

(ii) Dignity Funerals Ltd. have improved performance during the past year, although there are some services not yet being offered (eg: woodland burials);

(iii) details of the company's service delivery throughout the country and the use being made of surveys and feedback from the public, clients, funeral directors and other interested parties; the use and effectiveness of surveys was still under review by the Company;

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(iv) the scanning of older burial records, to make such records available by electronic means and thereby preserving the original records (some of which are in a delicate condition and require careful handling under appropriate supervision);

(v) Dignity Funerals Ltd. comply in full with the General Data Protection Regulation requirements;

(vi) staff training within the Company;

(vii) an explanation of the refurbishment work on the Chapel at the East Herringthorpe Cemetery, due to open during September, 2018 (the project include increased capacity to accommodate people attending funerals, the provision of a new Book of remembrance, the installation of the Wesley Media System and refurbished waiting and toilet facilities); (Members were invited to visit the Chapel for a guided tour of the project works);

(viii) the management of vehicular traffic within the East Herringthorpe Cemetery remains a difficult issue to manage.

The following issues were highlighted by Members during discussion and questions/answers:-

: the care being taken with to preserve older burial records; the costs of scanning and the availability of burial records by electronic means in the future;

: operational performance targets and the need to ensure that each funeral service is conducted correctly and is not unduly hurried;

: some maintenance works are retained by the Council (eg: the chapel and the boundary wall at the Masbrough cemetery);

: the forthcoming establishment of a Project Liaison Group, with representation from the Borough Council and from Dignity Funerals Ltd.; one of the functions of the Project Liaison Group will be to meet with representatives of the Borough's communities and faith groups and discuss the specific requirements for burials of the deceased of particular faith groups; availability of minutes of meetings as a means of providing information about current issues under consideration;

: the use of 'mystery shopper' exercise to ensure the maintenance of required standards of service;

: comparing the hours when the bereavement services are open and available to the public with those of neighbouring and similar local authorities; it was noted that the hours are specified within the contractual agreement;

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- : the implications for the delivery of bereavement services of the Court judgement in the case of Adath Yisroel Burial Society v HM Senior Coroner for Inner North London (case heard on 27 and 28 March 2018);
- : grounds maintenance undertaken by Glendale Ltd.; the process for the re-tendering for this contract is due to begin during 2019;
- : the suggestion of an open day for the refurbished Crematorium Chapel;
- : liaison meeting with Funeral Directors; liaison with community groups and “friends of ..” organisations;
- : traffic management difficulties during the period of the refurbishment project of the Chapel at the East Herringthorpe Cemetery;
- : health, welfare and safety and the regular testing of equipment;
- : consideration of investment in modern, fuel-efficient cremators;
- : the availability of burial space capacity around the Rotherham Borough area (eg: churches and Parish Councils); producing forward plans for the possibility of obtaining land to extend cemeteries; the role of the Environment Agency in assessing applications for new cemeteries or for extensions to existing cemeteries;
- : the routine monitoring of contract performance, including all aspects of inspection (eg: Environmental Health); noting that there is now an officer of the Council as the initial, single point of contact in respect of the contractual agreement.

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

(2) That the progress made on establishing the new contract management arrangements be noted.

(3) That the Annual Performance Report from Dignity Funerals Ltd. as now submitted, be received and its contents noted.

(4) That future performance reports shall wherever possible utilise the red-amber-green (RAG) method of reporting on individual performance items.

(5) That the establishment of a Project Liaison Group, to facilitate discussions with the community and with faith groups about bereavement, burial and cremation issues, be supported.

(6) That a further progress report about the performance of the bereavement services contract be submitted to a meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission to be held early in 2019.

12. ROTHERHAM'S CULTURAL STRATEGY - UPDATE ON PROGRESS

Further to Minute No. 75 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 19th July, 2017, consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism providing an update on the progress of the development of a Cultural Strategy for Rotherham.

The report stated that the purpose of the Cultural Strategy was to:-

- Shape Rotherham's vision for culture, leisure and green spaces;
- Strengthen the distinctive identity of the Borough;
- Grow engagement and participation in culture, sport and green spaces, enabling and encouraging more people to get active, get creative and get outdoors;
- Develop shared principles with which to embed quality, excellence and innovation;
- Build consensus about priorities for development and investment;
- Make the best use of existing resources and secure new investment;
- Optimise the impact of culture, sport and green spaces and cross-cutting themes and priorities, such as health and wellbeing, place making and the child-centred Borough.

Councillor Allen (Cabinet Member for Cleaner, Greener Communities) explained the purpose of developing a Cultural Strategy which would be an overarching document for culture, sport and tourism in the Borough area. The Cultural Strategy (currently in draft form) will link to education and to the Council's other strategic documents. The Cultural Partnership Board has been established and meets on four occasions per year (recently at World Café workshop). The development of the Cultural Strategy will be overseen by a working group of officers and will include wide-ranging consultation with the public, with the Council's partner organisations and with other stakeholders. A specific consultation event will take place at the Rotherham Show on the weekend of 8th and 9th September, 2018. Both the Borough Council and the Rotherham Together Partnership will be asked to approve the final version of the Cultural Strategy.

Members of the Select Commission raised the following matters during debate:-

: links to schools and colleges; specific consultation with children and young people (including the Lifestyle Survey and the Youth Cabinet); Members were invited to suggest other groups which could be included in the consultation process;

: the importance of the Embassy for Reimagining Rotherham as a Local Cultural Education Partnership (Members of the Select Commission asked to be provided with additional details of this partnership);

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: discussion of the means of ensuring the effectiveness of the consultation event at the forthcoming Rotherham Show;

: consultation within the electoral wards around the Borough and ensuring the involvement of hard-to-reach groups (an example of the Wingfield Ward neighbourhood newsletter was distributed at the meeting).

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

(2) That the Improving Places Select Commission shall establish a working group of Members to consider in detail the contents of the draft Cultural Strategy for Rotherham.

13. COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT ABOUT CHANGES TO REFUSE AND RECYCLING COLLECTIONS SERVICES

Further to Minute No. 133 of the meeting of the Cabinet and Commissioners held on 16th April, 2018, consideration was given to a report of the Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene, about the implementation of new waste and recycling services across the Rotherham Borough area.

The principal features of the new services were:-

- a subscription-based garden waste collection service (£39 per year), from October, 2018; the service will be provided throughout the year;

- a new black (with pink lid) 180 litre wheeled bin for household waste, from late January 2019; the colour of this bin and lid had been decided after a public poll undertaken by the Rotherham Advertiser that had closed on 25th April, 2018.

- using the existing green 240 litre bin for paper and card and the existing black 240 litre bin for other recycling (glass, metal, plastic) from late January 2019.

The report and presentation highlighted the following issues:-

: details of the kerbside waste and recycling project communications and engagement plan;

: the specific changes to the service were:-

- Introduction of plastic recycling at the kerbside;
- doubling the space residents will have for glass, metal cans, cardboard and paper;
- every household will overall have more space in the bins than currently and recycling will be easier
- with more overall space, the new household waste bin will be reduce in size to 180 litres and will have a pink lid to identify it;

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- subscribers to the garden waste collection service will receive a new 240 litre wheeled bin, coloured brown.

: the specific recycling targets and implications for the Council's budget;

: the timescale in which the changes will occur and the engagement with and communications with the general public and with community groups; attendance at some community events, door-to-door engagement with households in some areas; provision of information at household waste recycling centres;

: provision of general information about the service changes, press releases and use of social media; direct mail to households and use of stickers and tags attached to the existing waste bins;

: promotion of the chargeable garden waste service;

: community engagement at large events such as the Rotherham Show (8 and 9 September 2018).

Members of the Select Commission raised the following issues during discussion:-

: the assorted types of plastic which may and may not be suitable for recycling;

: the cross-contamination of waste and cleanliness of the bins;

: the involvement of community groups, Parish Councils and Area Housing Officers in the dissemination of information about the service changes;

: method of payment for the garden waste service;

: use of communal bins in places where space and road access for the refuse collection vehicles are limited;

: the importance of effective communications and clarity and simplicity of the message delivered to the public about the new services.

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

(2) That a seminar be arranged for all Members of the Council about the changes to the Council's waste and recycling services.

14. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission take place on Thursday, 20th September, 2018 at 1.30 p.m.