

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
19th September, 2019**

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Elliot, Jones, Khan, Reeder, Rushforth, Sansome, Sheppard, Taylor and Tweed and co-optees Wendy Birch and Mary Jacques from RotherFed.

Councillor Lelliott, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy, was also in attendance at the invitation of the Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkin, B. Cutts, Jepson, McNeely and Whysall.

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

18. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25TH JULY, 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 25th July, 2019.

Further to Minute No. 13 (Thriving Neighbourhoods - Update), guidance in relation to spending devolved budgets during the pre-election publicity period would follow in due course.

Regarding Minute No. 14 (Evaluation of the Time for Action Initiative), the additional information requested would be followed up.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 25th July, 2019 be approved as a correct record.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

20. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

21. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the press or members of the public from the meeting.

22. COMMUNICATIONS

Worksmart

A briefing paper had previously been circulated, as requested by Members. No comments were made or further information requested.

RotherFed

Two meetings would be held at Springwell Gardens on 14th October and 18th November commencing at 10:30am to consider housing adaptations. Members of Improving Places were welcome to attend and the dates would be e-mailed round.

Flooding Alleviation Work

The Chair confirmed that a detailed update would be provided at the meeting in December. Cllr Sheppard was thanked for leading on this issue on behalf of the Select Commission.

23. ROTHERHAM EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS STRATEGY - UPDATE

Councillor Denise Lelliott, Cabinet Member for Jobs and the Local Economy introduced the update on the development, approval and delivery of the Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy 2019-25. The Strategy had been approved by the Rotherham Together Partnership (RTP) in April 2019 and endorsed by Cabinet in June 2019. Implementation had begun, overseen by the Employment and Skills sub-group of the Business Growth Board, although delivery of the required activities involved a much wider range of partners. A mid-point review would be undertaken and the plan would be monitored on a six-monthly basis, with the results reported to the Rotherham Together Partnership Board and the Council.

Simeon Leach, Economic Strategy and Partnerships Manager, Simon Moss, Assistant Director Planning, Regeneration & Transport and Ian Goodall, Chair of the Employment and Skills sub-group of the Business Growth Board were present to provide more detail for Members.

The strategy had four strategic outcomes:-

- 1) Motivated Young People have opportunities to access the guidance, learning and development they need to further their chosen career path.
- 2) Employment provides opportunities for in-work health, well-being, skills progression and a decent level of pay.
- 3) Those excluded from the labour market are able to overcome barriers to training and employment.
- 4) Businesses are actively engaged in delivering training opportunities and recognise the benefits of investing in their workforce.

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Members were updated with regard to progress on mapping and identifying existing employment and skills provision within the borough; development of a more detailed delivery plan; schools' involvement with the Business Growth Board; and the launch of Skills Bank 2 and Skills Support for the Workforce to provide funding for businesses to train and upskill their existing workforce. It was a question of linking up the entire activity taking place, establishing the baseline and filling the gaps. Progress had been slightly slower than envisaged but the onus was on doing it right.

When the draft strategy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) during pre-decision scrutiny a number of issues had been raised by Members and the report set out a response to each of these issues. The Equality Analysis had been updated and although a more detailed action plan was being developed this was likely to be in Quarter 1 of 2020.

The following issues were raised and discussed:-

- What was meant by “a decent level of pay” as referred to in the outcomes?
 - The Living Wage would probably be the baseline, but this would be looked at and there was a need also to consider links with the Social Value Policy currently under development.
- Barriers to employment or training such as lack of photographic identification or access to bank accounts was an issue for people of all ages not only young people.
 - This had been recognised and the Local Integration Board, who looked at specific aspects that impacted on people securing training/employment opportunities, were aware of this and working to address it. Feedback would be provided.
- The strategy referred to 3.7% of people with learning difficulties in paid employment. Clarification was sought as to whether this meant people with learning disabilities rather than learning difficulties as the two were not the same and the more people who were included within this 3.7% the greater the concern.
 - Statistics had been drawn from the report produced by Sheffield Hallam University and would be double-checked.
- Given this low percentage, the strategy lacked detail about plans to work with this group of people. Was discussion happening with employers and colleges regarding skills development for people with learning disabilities to equip them for employment even if they would not be obtaining high level academic qualifications?
 - The Cabinet Member emphasised that this was a partnership plan that needed effective action plans for each category, with

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implementation and delivery overseen by the Business Growth Board and RTP.

- More work on action planning and looking at statistics would follow. Outcome 3 would address exclusion and barriers and therefore this would probably be progressed by the Local Integration Board. It had been recognised but at that moment nothing specific was in place as the plan was high level and more drilling down to produce detailed plans would follow. A further progress report could be presented.

- Was the external funding referred to only available for the public sector or for public and private sectors working together? Was funding policy joined up between both sectors with the Business Growth Board aware of successful private sector bids? How much of the funding was available for Rotherham?
 - Most was for large scale projects, including across South Yorkshire or the Sheffield City Region (SCR) and information was not to hand about Rotherham's share of the 23.57m. The Growth Company (private sector) had obtained £10m to support people both in and out of work. Other funding streams were available and it was important to avoid duplication but knowing what was needed locally helped to draw down funding. Private sector businesses could apply for funding, for training or capital, and if done through the SCR this tied them to delivery of defined outputs around jobs and to show impacts. Specific conditions had to be met and productivity was a key performance indicator.
- Was there a list of businesses who had signed up to the strategy?
 - Companies on the Business Growth Board had inputted to the strategy but local businesses had not signed up to anything specific. There was a select group of businesses and work would progress through the creation of programmes.
- Did more need to be done to reach out to businesses to get greater numbers involved?
 - The more the better but some may not wish to engage and many businesses also had their own strategies. For small businesses in particular issues such as time/costs were a factor. A call had gone out for more businesses to join the sub-group and others might choose to engage via the Chamber, which was also closely involved.
 - Certain elements of the strategy were too high level for some businesses to get involved with but the work to link with schools involved numerous businesses in the projects. Skills Bank and Skills for Workforce were in place and promoted to businesses but initiatives needed to be pitched at the right level and in the right places.

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- Were there reservations with regard to how Brexit and a potential no-deal might impact on the strategy?
 - For businesses there might be reservations but the strategy was about people and skills in Rotherham, regardless of being in or out of the European Union.
- The action plan refers to encounters with employers and needs to build on the good work of Rotherham Youth Cabinet (RYC) and to take account of what the young people said.
 - Their views had been taken on board and an update would be provided for RYC by the end of the year on how the strategy was addressing their recommendations on work experience. It would also be an opportunity to hear from the young people to see if they felt things had changed. Good work was taking place with schools.
 - Private businesses fully supported the concept of work experience as they viewed lack of work-readiness in young people as a concern. Since the Children's Commissioner's Takeover Challenge there seemed to have been little follow up in terms of outcomes. Schools were still reluctant but had a different agenda based around examination results and voiced concern about time away from classes, so it would not be a quick solution.
 - Results from a survey of schools regarding work experience ranged from minimal to fantastic but schools were becoming keener to engage and it was positive to have representatives on the sub-group and that wider link to headteachers.
 - Legislation around the Gatsby benchmarks acted as a driver, as did the inclusion of the Careers Education Strategy in Ofsted. However the term "meaningful encounters with employers" was fuzzy and could be interpreted in various ways.
 - Some individual schools had work experience strategies but no overall structured approach was in place such as the former Trident scheme, but possibly within the next two years this would develop. Better engagement with teachers should help to get the messages across about the positive benefits of work experience such as raising aspirations and changed behaviours towards learning.
- It was clarified that LEAF was the Local Employers Advisory Forum, comprising Mears, Fortem, Rotherham MBC and the Department of Work and Pensions. Young people and jobseekers attended their annual careers fair where employers came with actual job vacancies.
- Get Up To Speed (GUTS) events for young people focused on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Manufacturing) industries and attracted a range of employers each year. Both events contributed to delivery of the strategy.
- Attendance at the last Local Employers Advisory Forum (LEAF) and Get Up To Speed (GUTS) events from Rotherham Schools compared with previous years.

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- At GUTS take up had been poor in recent years, in part due to the lack of funding for teachers and transport and some degree of unwillingness to take young people out of school. Sponsorship had been obtained for some buses last time and attendance from Rotherham schools had been growing. The evaluation report from this year's event would be forwarded to the Select Commission. Funding had now been identified for young people for transport to both events so that removed one barrier. The LEAF event would be on 12 November 2019 and there had been a good level of sign up to date. An evaluation report could again follow and Members were welcome to attend.

- Support for carers to have quality employment or to return to work, such as by encouraging more flexible working, especially with carers having defined rights.
 - The group would be looking at this as another specific cohort.
- Plans for targeted work with women in light of some of the statistics in the strategy.
 - It was still early days since the strategy had been adopted but work was starting to pick up to look at the underpinning strategies and policies and would also cascade down from the SCR. It should be across the board, including for people in work who need upskilling and to remove barriers. Adult Community Learning was also a factor and RNN were out engaging in communities and having success in attracting learners. The next step would be learners moving into more formal learning and training.
- The Cabinet Member re-iterated that this was a partnership plan not a Council plan necessitating a wide partnership approach, but was confident about delivering the plan and desired outcomes.
- Following the concern raised previously by OSMB about the accessibility of the strategy document, attention was drawn to the predominant use of dark colours which would make it difficult for many people to read.

It was suggested that a future update should involve members from the RTP and potentially also to have a report back from Sheffield City Region.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance.

Resolved:-

- 1) That Improving Places Select Commission note the update report.
- 2) That the comments from Improving Places on the final Strategy and its implementation to date be fed back to RiDO and the Employment and Skills sub-group.

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- 3) That the outcome of the mapping exercise of present employment and skills provision be provided for Improving Places.
- 4) That the final detailed action plan be shared with the Select Commission in 2020.
- 5) That a future update on implementation of the Employment and Skills Strategy be scheduled for 2020.

24. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

25. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission take place on Thursday, 24th October, 2019, commencing at 1.30 p.m.