

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

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Buckley, Jepson, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Sansome, Sheppard, Taylor, Tweed and Wyatt and Co-optee Wendy Birch, RotherFed.

Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety, was also in attendance at the invitation of the Chair.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Cutts, Elliot, Reeder and Whysall and Mary Jacques, RotherFed.

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

35. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at the meeting.

36. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

37. 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.

38. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 24TH OCTOBER, 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 24th October, 2019.

In respect of Minute No. 29 - Minutes of the previous meeting held on 19th September 2019, information requested by Councillor Tweed regarding the Time for Action Initiative had been provided.

In respect of Minute No. 32 – Impact of Traffic from Waleswood Developments, this was covered in the agenda item on the work programme.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24th October 2019 be approved as a correct record.

Further to Minute No. 23 from the meeting held on 19th September 2019 - Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy, clarification had been sought on whether statistics quoted in the strategy related to people with learning

disabilities or more broadly to include people with learning difficulties. The statistic referred to the proportion of working age adults with learning disabilities in paid employment and as such was one of the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework measures. Health Select Commission scrutinised this suite of measures annually and any relevant information would be shared with Improving Places.

39. COMMUNICATIONS

Wendy Birch provided a brief overview of the next tenant scrutiny review to be undertaken by RotherFed, which would focus on Aids and Adaptations. Housing Officers had delivered a presentation on the management and delivery of the service. Funding arrangements were clarified, as RMBC funds aids and adaptations in Council housing and those in private homes are funded through a government grant. Officers took away further questions for a response to be provided at the next meeting in January.

Issues for consideration in the review included:

- Publicity
- Capacity and resources
- Service Standards Policy, which had been under review
- Process
- Waiting times

Initial feedback regarding publicity had shown that Rotherham was in line with other local authorities and one suggestion would be to have leaflets to enable people to self-refer.

Members were also informed about RotherFed's Digital Champions scheme whereby volunteers and a part-time worker go into community groups and libraries to show people how to get on line and to use on-line services so that they are able to contact and feed in to the Council. Further information about the scheme would be shared with Members.

40. DIGNITY - EVALUATION OF EXTENDED HOURS PILOT

Following scrutiny of the Annual Report from Dignity at the meeting of Improving Places on 6th June 2019, Members discussed a progress update on the performance measures that had been rated as red or amber. As requested, officers also provided detailed feedback on the pilot Out of Hours Burial Service which was trialled between April and September 2019 by the Council and Dignity to enable short notice burials after 3pm in Rotherham. The pilot aimed to make a reasonable adjustment to the bereavement service to address concerns raised by the Muslim community and to improve the offer to other service users who wished to have a burial up until 6.30pm at East Herringthorpe cemetery.

In terms of the performance measures, progress had continued with only two measures/targets still rated as red and of the five measures rated as amber, three had progressed. Plans to address the issues in the remaining two measures were in place but no definite timescales. Regarding provision of environmentally friendly burial options, a consultation exercise would be required to assess likely take up. This would be scheduled into the action plan for 2020, although the current focus was on expansion of cemeteries, where additional burial space was most required. In relation to secure storage for registers and records, Dignity had allocated funding for a safe and identified a supplier, with delivery dates pending.

Repair work had commenced to the wall at Maltby Cemetery and to Haugh Road Cemetery Gates on 6th December 2019 and was due to be completed in 45 days, with contingency built in for bad weather.

The extended hours pilot was largely successful, particularly in relation to better delivery of the Council's commitment to the Public Sector Equality Duty. 21 burials had taken place, mainly within the earlier additional timeslots. Registrars had completed the requisite short notice forms and all funerals had gone as planned and as hoped. 77% of respondents considered the pilot made a reasonable adjustment to meet community, religious and cultural needs and 71% viewed it as having a positive impact on community relations. Further research was deemed necessary on a number of issues - likely speed and volume of growth in demand in future; fees charged for burials between 5pm and 6:30pm; and how to manage the impact of the registration process on staff delivering the service.

The findings would be given further consideration by the internal working group at its next meeting in January 2020, followed by a meeting with Dignity in February before any final decision was made on future out of hours provision. An initial equality screening for the pilot had been included with the report and a full equality analysis would be completed before April 2020.

Clarification was sought by Members regarding out of hours fees as there seemed to be contradictory information and anecdotal reports varied regarding the fee. The out of hours fee (£428) had always been in place for bank holidays and weekends as Dignity were charged a fee by the contractor for grounds maintenance and had to pay security and their own staff. The fee had not changed but with the pilot it had become more apparent as it applied from 5-6:30pm. It was observed that Sheffield did not charge an out of hours fee. Fees would be looked at as part of the benchmarking work taking place and with regard to the renewal of the grounds maintenance contract. They needed to be proportionate and not discriminatory.

A question was raised as to whether there was a way of trying to facilitate information sharing more directly between the hospital, Coroner, Registrars and Dignity rather than through the bereaved family. It was

confirmed new processes were being introduced from April 2020 between the hospital and Registrars, who were working with the Medical Examiner on out of hours provision and thus the link with the hospital would come naturally. Officers were working on a process guide as certain things on a death certificate did have a longer process and this would help people in this very difficult period. Members requested feedback from the meeting with the Medical Examiner.

Other issues explored were:

- Availability of data on take up of the pilot from people outside Rotherham centre
 - Funeral services may have been held locally followed by cremation at East Herringthorpe cemetery. Such data had not been requested but might potentially be obtained from Funeral Directors.
- Budget for light fittings
 - This was the Council's responsibility and money was in the budget for the following year.
- Progress in addressing the issue with waterlogging on one site
 - Hard core had been put down and attempts to redirect the water but this had not fully resolved the problem. A topographical survey was planned to try and find a solution.
- Lengths of graves and pathways between graves
 - Graves were always seven feet long but sometimes issues arose due to placement of kerb sets by the stonemasons. There was awareness of this as an issue and dialogue would take place with all stakeholders.
- Possibility of allowing the use of wooden kerb sets in the future as at present they did not comply with the cemetery regulations.

Officers agreed that a site visit to East Herringthorpe to see the planned expansion site for burials could be accommodated.

The Cabinet Member and officers were thanked for their attendance and the information provided.

Resolved:

- 1) That the information provided be noted.
- 2) That the decision regarding the future of the pilot and implications of the decision be reported back to Improving Places.

- 3) That arrangements be made for a Member visit to East Herringthorpe Cemetery.

41. WORK PROGRAMME - UPDATE

The Governance Advisor delivered a short presentation recapping scrutiny work undertaken to date in 2019-20 by Improving Places Select Commission and what would be coming up early in 2020. An indication of what Members had already identified to come forward in 2020-21 was also presented.

Year to Date

- Dignity Bereavement Services - annual report and performance/pilot and KPI progress
- Thriving Neighbourhoods - delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model
- Enforcement Contract - Kingdom/Doncaster MBC
- Home to School Transport - implementation of new policy
- Rotherham Employment and Skills Strategy
- Council Plan Performance Measures Workshop - focus exception reporting Priorities 3 and 4
- Area Housing Panels Review Workshop
- Allotments Self-Management – Update
- Initial impact of Traffic from Waleswood Caravan Park

Coming up in early 2020

- Major Incident Plan
- Impact of CCTV Project
- Progress – Vehicle Immobilisation
- Implementation of Public Spaces Protection Order - Fitzwilliam Road area

To go forward into 2020-21

- Employment and Skills Strategy
- Allotments Self-Management – Update
- Impact of Waleswood Developments
- Learning from Modern Methods of Construction Pilot (referred from OSMB)
- Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Prevention Strategy
- Housing – possibly repairs/maintenance
- Recycling/Environment
- Performance

Further suggestions proposed were community assets; repairs on garage sites; and business continuity in regard of Rotherham Town Centre Masterplan. Additionally a request was made for a breakdown of how income from council rents was spent.

Resolved: To note the information provided.

42. OUTCOMES FROM WORKSHOP ON COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Improving Places held a workshop following its formal meeting on 19th September 2019 to discuss measures in the Council Plan under Priority 3 *A strong community in a clean, safe environment* and Priority 4 *Extending opportunity, prosperity and planning for the future*. Comparing performance in Quarter 1 with that for Quarter 4 of the previous year identified a small number of measures that met agreed criteria for exception reporting. These measures were scrutinised at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 2nd October 2019 with the findings reported back to the Select Commission.

The measures in question were:

- Missed bins per 100,000 collections
- Proportion of a) licensed vehicles and b) drivers found to be compliant with licensing requirements
- Number of new homes delivered during the year via direct Council intervention
- Number of customer contacts by service area for a) official complaints

A number of queries had emerged in relation to other measures in the Council Plan at the workshop and responses to these additional questions had been included in the briefing paper to provide a full response.

Discussion at the meeting ensued on the best time to undertake satisfaction surveys in local parks to ensure it was local people's views that were captured. Differing views were expressed as to whether this should coincide with large events taking place in parks or be on normal non-event days. It was acknowledged that events like Rotherham Show also provided opportunities for public engagement or consultation on specific issues. RotherFed drew attention to consultation they undertake.

Officers confirmed that they were looking to introduce consistent mechanisms for customer surveys across the full Culture, Sport and Tourism service. The service would review the processes across all sites, not just parks, and return with a proposal regarding future methodology that would have the requisite degree of independence and provide value for money. Regular opportunities for feedback were important so that issues could be dealt with speedily and appropriately.

Resolved:

- 1) To note the outcomes of scrutiny at the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the exception report.
- 2) To note the responses to the questions raised at the workshop session.
- 3) To continue to scrutinise performance on relevant Council Plan measures under Priorities 3 and 4, with a focus on exception reporting.

43. OUTCOMES FROM WORKSHOP ON AREA HOUSING PANELS REVIEW

On 24 October a sub-group of Members of the Improving Places Select Commission undertook a focused workshop session to consider emerging proposals for Area Housing Panels from 2020-21.

A briefing paper provided an overview of the following issues:

- Focus of the review and response to the consultation
- Future tenant engagement geography and offer
- Ward pilots
- Future budget arrangements
- Budget roll forward proposal
- Budget and project governance

After exploring a number of issues in depth, the Chair thanked the Cabinet Member and officers and concluded that Members were assured by the emerging proposals to disestablish the existing Area Housing Panels at the end of the 2019-20 financial year and replace these with 25 Ward Housing Hubs. The Housing Hubs would have an annual base budget of £4,000 per ward, with the remainder of the annual budget provision being allocated to wards, based upon the percentage of Council homes within each ward.

The recommendations from the workshop were:

- That the review process undertaken and consultation feedback received to date be noted.
- That the emerging proposals for Ward Housing Hubs and the work to be undertaken to test this approach be noted.
- That the emerging recommendations with regard to Ward Housing Hubs, future budget setting and management and project governance be noted by OSMB as part of its pre-decision scrutiny of the new proposals.

Resolved: To note the recommendations that resulted from the workshop as set out in section 4 of the paper.

44. URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgency.

45. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:

The next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission will take place on 6th February 2020, commencing at 1.30pm in Rotherham Town Hall.