

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 7 February 2023**

Present:- Councillor Wyatt (in the Chair); Councillors Aveyard, Bennett-Sylvester, Browne, C Carter, T. Collingham, Cowen, Ellis, Havard, Jones, McNeely, Monk, Reynolds, Taylor and Tinsley, and co-opted members Mrs. K. Bacon and Mrs. M. Jacques.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Castledine-Dack and Khan.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-

<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

49. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2022

The Chair noted that, pursuant to minute no. 42, recommendation 3, the Members Session had been scheduled for 15 February 2023.

Resolved:-

1. That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 December 2023 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

50. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Havard declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 7 as a Sheffield and Rotherham Wildlife Trust participant.

51. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

The Chair confirmed that no questions had been submitted.

52. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Chair advised that there was no reason to exclude members of the press or public from observing discussion of any items on the agenda.

53. FLY TIPPING UPDATE

Consideration was given to an update report in respect of fly-tipping and enforcement activity in Rotherham. The report included an overview of the national and local position in relation to fly-tipping. The report was presented by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment and the Assistant Director Community Safety and Street Scene. The direction of travel was highlighted in reference to the prosecutions, and it was noted that, in Yorkshire and Humber, Rotherham is third highest of fifteen authorities for fixed penalty notices for fly-tipping. The Cabinet Member emphasised focus of the Service on ensuring Rotherham was the

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cleanest borough possible and ensuring that people who fly tip are held to account. The Assistant Director Community Safety and Street Scene highlighted the slight reduction in fly-tipping numbers from last year alongside a two-percent increase nationally. This was felt to be a positive sign that numbers were reducing. Rotherham fly tipping was proactively reported by officers. CCTV enforcement had been expanded to seven days a week. Consultation with Members had been undertaken in the development of the Enviro-Crime Plan, in accordance with a prior recommendation from scrutiny. The Service had also expanded its collaborations with local people to help unblock barriers and drive engagement.

In discussion, Members sought more information regarding the possibility of household waste recycling centres (HWRCs) accepting vans. The response from officers noted limitations associated with the permit type. To remain compliant with the permit for household waste, commercial waste could not be routinely brought to the site. However, following the Cabinet decision in January, the Council was embarking on a new pathway regarding household waste recycling which would give the local authority more control over what could be accepted. Challenges and limits from the sites themselves were also described. It was noted that larger vans take longer to unload, which can create long queues blocking traffic.

Members also sought further information regarding the potential impact of providing each ward with two skips. It was noted that the impact on community waste could be cost effective. Some councillors currently contribute out of their Community Leadership Funds for wards to pay for community skips because of the impact these make.

The response from officers noted that many communities already benefit from skip days, which the service had not found to have an impact on fly-tipping. It was clarified that there was not flexibility to remobilise budget currently in place for enforcement, detection or clearance of fly tips because this would have an impact on cleanliness and safety for borough residents. Officers offered to produce a business case for skip days.

To promote wider compliance with “right thing, right bin,” Members requested that consideration be given to more accessible messaging, such as putting pictures on the bins of the kinds of things that are designated for the bin. The response from officers noted that the Service work hard to communicate “right thing right bin,” but further consideration could be given. It was noted that the calendar and app were now available, with around 15,000 people having downloaded the app.

Clarification was requested regarding the use of fines and recouped costs. The response noted that the service find the fines to be paltry, but where there are court proceedings costs are always requested. The response noted the effectiveness of officers at collecting evidence and prosecuting fly tipping. The fines went to the treasury, and the recouped costs went back to the Council.

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Members emphasised the importance of informing residents regarding “right thing, right bin.” The response from officers affirmed the importance of this and noted that nationally, it had been recognised that this system was complex. One part of the Environment Act 2021 was about recycling, acknowledging the need to standardise, for example, the types of plastics accepted. How this would be backed up by national campaigning would have an impact.

Members pointed out that people entitled to extra bins often do not know about this option. It had observed that this option was not noted in the calendars or literature. The response from officers acknowledged that additional actions could be done to publicise the option of extra bins for those who need them.

Members requested more information around how the Service signposts people to reputable waste carriers. The response from officers noted that the Service actively signpost people to the DEFRA list of licensed waste carriers. The Service caution against seeking a waste carrier via social media. This was because fly tipping was more likely to be connected with social media. Duty of Care was emphasised by the Service.

Members requested further details regarding moneys invested in the service in view of the comparatively small amounts recouped through prosecution and fixed penalty notices. Officers provided a summary of the Council's budget investment in overt and covert deterrents, as well as the cost of clearance and disposal. It was noted that this was an investment in the health and wellbeing of the natural environment and of citizens and the potential risks associated with the impact of not delivering this service would be significant.

Further details were requested regarding whether tips had a consistent approach to operations from site to site, leading to fly-tipping of waste that would not be accepted. The Cabinet Member responded that 99% of people want to dispose of waste in the easiest legal way possible. It was noted that the behaviour of the people who fly tip shows that they will not follow the rules no matter what. Therefore, it was the goal of the service to do more to engage the people who were on the margins and who just need extra help to dispose of waste in a responsible way. The front end of the Service was being brought in-house to be delivered by the Council and its employees directly, with plans to modernise infrastructure of this Service. As part of this, the Service would be considering whether it can accept more types of waste. The key was in the name - household waste. If there was more that could be done with the commercial side, this would be explored. The Strategic Director commented that whilst the delivery of the customer experience was currently contracted out, Members were requested to send any information regarding a negative customer experience to the Service. More compliments than complaints were received regarding customer experience. The key to note was that HWRCs will take the majority of things that were fly tipped.

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Regarding the bin app, Members requested to know more about any extensions planned where resources and materials could be added. The response from officers noted that “right thing, right bin” information was on the app, but the Service were keen to expand the use and usefulness of the app and invited any suggestions of information that would be useful to add to the app.

Regarding the transformation of household waste recycling centres, Members requested to know if there would be a public consultation, and if so, how this would work. The response from officers noted that in partnership with other local authorities in the region, a consultation had been conducted which had resulted in positive feedback regarding the HWRCs. The Service conducts a public consultation to get feedback before embarking on significant changes. At any point in the next three years where there would be significant changes, the public would be consulted.

Members requested to know if there had been any further consideration of plastics schemes. Officers noted that the Environment Act 2021 will have a deposit return scheme.

Members emphasised the need to prioritise prevention, designing out crime, and education as these intersect with nature recovery and climate change. The Cabinet member noted that the “Love Where You Live Coordinator” was a post created as a result of a scrutiny recommendation from this Commission. This officer had been coordinating the litter picking activities in the wards and was to be commended for this work. It was acknowledged that there was more that could be done to celebrate the work of litter picking teams across the borough to thank them for their contributions.

Members emphasised the value of litter picking teams as exemplars of citizen empowerment within communities. For example, litter picking teams often check gullies, which increases community resilience and pride in cascading ways.

Resolved:-

1. That the report be noted.
2. That consideration be given to accepting vans at household waste recycling sites.
3. That the Service prepare a business case for the use and impact of community skips.
4. That consideration be given to using pictures on bins to indicate the right contents.

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5. That clear messaging be supplied to residents regarding the options for extra bins.
6. That the fantastic work by the litter-picking teams be acknowledged.
7. That applied learning from the outcome of the pilot scheme be included in the next update.

54. WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to an updated outline programme of scrutiny work for 2023/24. It was noted that the Environment Bill would be considered at the 9 May 2023 meeting. It was further noted that the Tenant Scrutiny Review on Communications with the associated action plan response would be submitted to the next meeting on 21 March 2023. The outcomes of the review of Selective Licensing would also be submitted to the 21 March 2023 meeting.

Consideration was given to initial scoping of a review of biodiversity planned for spring 2023. Objectives of the review were noted, including the need for clear focus within a far-ranging topic, and the need to add value by supporting the Council to meet its legal duties concerning Biodiversity Net Gain. Timescales associated with steps for the review process were noted, including a further scoping exercise in March followed by agreement of final scope at the 21 March 2023 meeting. Review meetings would be scheduled for April 2023 with outcomes to be submitted to the June 2023 meeting.

1. That the updated schedule of work be noted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Governance Advisor to make changes to the work programme between meetings in consultation with the Chair and Vice-chair, reporting any changes to the next meeting.
3. That the preliminary scoping activities and timescales for the review of biodiversity be noted.

55. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring consideration at the meeting.

56. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:-

1. That the next meeting of Improving Places Select Commission will take place on 21 March, 2023, commencing at 1.30 pm in Rotherham Town Hall.