

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
1st July, 2015

Present:- Councillor Beck (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Buckley, Cutts, Gosling, Jepson, McNeely, Pickering, Reeder, Rosling, C. Vines, Wallis, Whelbourn and Whysall.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Godfrey, Smith and Wyatt.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

3. COMMUNICATIONS

(1) Pre-Meeting Briefings for the Select Commissions

It was agreed that this Select Commission shall have briefings immediately prior to each scheduled meeting, enabling Members to prepare questions for each agenda item.

(2) Select Commissions' Task and Finish Groups

The Select Commission agreed to the inclusion of Councillor Cowles in some of the Commission's Task and Finish Groups, especially the ones to be established in respect of the Cleaner, Greener agenda.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 25TH FEBRUARY, 2015

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 25th February, 2015, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

(2) That, with regard to Minute No. 49(2)(c), of the previous meeting, it was noted that a report about the Council's response to the severe Winter weather conditions during late December 2014 and early January 2015 will be submitted to the Commissioners and to Elected Members during September, 2015.

5. THE CLEANER - GREENER AGENDA

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Director of Streetpride, outlining details of a range of issues which will have an impact on the 'Cleaner, Greener' agenda. It was noted that this agenda is

a priority subject area for the Improving Places Select Commission, as identified by the Government-appointed Commissioners to this Council. The specific issues identified within the report were:-

- Waste Management (including household waste recycling centres and 'bring' sites; waste collection; recycling rates);
- Leisure and Community Services (including grounds maintenance; street cleansing; fly-tipping and enforcement);
- Network Management (parking services, especially parking in and around the Rotherham town centre);
- Rotherham town centre (the impact of the night-time economy).

Members discussed the following salient matters:-

: waste collection including charging arrangements for elements of the service being considered as part of the 2015/16 budget process;

: waste collection arrangements must be by way of separate collection, where separate collection is Technically, Environmentally and Economically Practicable – this is known as the TEEP assessment (per the Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 and in subsequent years);

: collection of recycled material (eg: clothing; shoes) by charitable organisations and whether such organisations should be charged a fee for the siting of their collection bins;

: grass cutting, including green open spaces in Council-owned housing areas (eg: sheltered bungalow schemes) funded from the Housing Revenue Account; positive comments received about the use of wild flowers in some highway verges and central refuges; the practice of cutting only sections of highway verge, adjacent to the carriageway, rather than the whole verge;

: the increasing incidence of fly-tipping, both in the Rotherham Borough area and nationwide; enforcement practices, including the use of (covert) closed circuit television systems and recording; possible devolution of enforcement powers either to Parish and Town Councils or to community and voluntary groups;

: a question about the possible use of private sector contractors of fly-tipping enforcement duties; the 'zero-tolerance' approach of some private contractors (this matter will be discussed further by the Members' Task and Finish group);

: the clearance of weeds, which occurs twice per year and includes the grubbing-out of silt and detritus from the highway (in which the weeds grow);

: the Council does not accept vehicle tyres for disposal (such facilities are available from the private sector); vehicle tyres are classed as notifiable waste and should have consignment notes as evidence of their correct disposal (with an auditable trail; it was noted that this matter is enforced by the Environment Agency rather than local authorities;

: street cleansing and litter enforcement in areas which already have closed circuit television systems (CCTV) in place (eg: Town Hall frontage, Moorgate Street); it was noted that the quality of CCTV recorded footage in these areas is not always good enough for enforcement purposes;

: the Government-appointed Commissioners to the Council have proposed changes to the organisational structure which will include the management of the Council's enforcement arrangements;

: the 'responsible retailer' scheme, encouraging the clearing up of litter from outside retail premises (eg: the Tidy Britain Group campaign and the 'tidy business' and 'tidy school' awards schemes).

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

(2) That the Improving Places Select Commission shall establish the following Task and Finish Groups, comprising the Councillors and co-opted members listed below, in order to undertake appropriate scrutiny of this Council's Service delivery in respect of Cleaner, Greener agenda:-

(a) Waste Management (Councillor Godfrey (Chair) with Councillors Reeder, Wallis and Wyatt and co-opted member Mr. P. Cahill);

(b) Leisure and Community Services (Councillor Atkin (Chair) with Councillors Buckley, Cutts, Jepson, Smith, C. Vines and Whysall and co-opted members Mrs. L. Shears and Mr. B. Walker – with Councillor Cowles also co-opted);

(c) Network Management, which shall include issues relating to the Rotherham town centre (Councillor Rosling (Chair), with Councillors McNeely, Pickering and Whelbourn and co-opted member Mr. B. Walker).

(3) That, with regard to the establishment of the Task and Finish Groups listed at (2) above, Councillors and co-opted members are invited to inform the Scrutiny Officer of their preference of Groups (one or more preferences are permitted).

6. GROUND MAINTENANCE AND STREET CLEANSING SERVICES - SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 32 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 15th October, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Director of Streetpride, concerning progress with the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of this Council's Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services. A copy of the updated action plan was included with the submitted report.

Members were informed that, since the last update report, there have been two significant actions which have helped to improve the quality of service provision. The Grounds Maintenance Service received two years' funding (2014/15 and 2015/16) from Housing Services (Housing Revenue Account) to enable additional works to be undertaken on older people's complexes. This factor has led to a significant increase in the number of positive comments from residents and a reduced number of complaints and/or requests for service (eg: reduced by 65% in the period to May 2015). Discussions continue in respect of the continuation of this funding. Also, the Street Cleansing Service received an increase of £200,000 to its revenue budget for 2015/16. That Service is in the process of recruiting additional staff, vehicles and equipment and the associated additional work (weed killing, litter picking and litter bin emptying) will commence as soon as those resources are in place. Both services will continue to review operations in order to identify improvements and efficiencies and to contribute to the forthcoming savings targets which are necessary to enable the Council to operate within its budget during the next three years.

The Select Commission's discussion highlighted the following issues:-

: ensuring that the recommendations of the previous scrutiny review of grounds maintenance are being correctly implemented (eg: grass cutting in areas where highway safety is a significant concern);

: possible disposal/sale by the Council of certain open spaces which are considered to be of limited amenity value; Members requested details of such sites;

: recruitment of specific personnel to the Street Cleansing Service; funding for weed killing;

: the enforcement of vehicle parking on highway verges, a matter which is the responsibility of the South Yorkshire Police; it was noted that enforcement action usually occurs whenever there is a significant obstruction of the highway; the Council does not have statutory powers to prohibit parking on verges throughout the whole of the Rotherham Borough area.

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

(2) That the progress with the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of this Council's Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services, as now reported, be noted.

7. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 60 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 23rd April, 2014 and Minute No. 46 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 17th October, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Housing Options Manager, concerning progress with the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. A copy of the updated action plan was included with the submitted report.

Members noted that the recommendations of the scrutiny review have been incorporated within the Council's Homelessness Strategy. It was agreed that the Improving Places Select Commission should have the opportunity to comment upon the updated Homelessness Strategy and associated action plan prior to its eventual approval by the Government-appointed Commissioners and the Council.

Resolved:- That the report be received and the progress being made with the actions arising from the recommendations of the scrutiny review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy be noted.

8. SUPPORTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY - SCRUTINY REVIEW - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 23 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 16th September, 2014 and Minute No. 34 of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board held on 19th September, 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Economic Development Manager, concerning progress with the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of Support for the Local Economy. A copy of the updated action plan was included with the submitted report.

The Select Commission's discussion of this item included the following salient matters:-

: the Economic Growth Plan and the Local Plan will both be reported to the Council meeting scheduled to take place on Wednesday, 16h September, 2015;

: the possible establishment of Task and Finish groups to consider the details of the delivery of the interventions and priorities from the Economic Growth Plan;

: acknowledgement that the Rotherham Borough area has been very successful at accessing money through the Regional Growth Fund;

: review recommendation 2, targets and outcomes for the Economic Growth Plan – ensuring that local people are accessing employment and training (Members requested statistical details of access to apprenticeships);

: review recommendation 8 (maximising access to the Regional Growth Fund) – the need also to access funding from European sources (in the context of more recent changes to the EU funding programme);

: effectiveness of the Growth Hub (eg: the case involving the local KP Nuts factory);

: the role and effectiveness of the Rotherham Investment and Development Office (RiDO);

: review recommendation 9 – the proposed establishment of a multi-disciplinary task force in order to generate investment and economic growth in the Rotherham Borough area;

: review recommendation 11 – the Council's capital investment strategy is currently in the process of development;

: Growth Plan – the desirability of business education being part of the curriculum for both primary and secondary schools;

: the Education and Skills agenda of the Growth Plan (eg: the specific regional role of the Leader of the Council) and continuing discussions about the possible development of a Higher Education campus in Rotherham; Members noted the availability of appropriate buildings within the Dearne and Manvers area;

: the need for continuing scrutiny of this Council's involvement in the Sheffield City Region.

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

(2) That the progress made to date and proposed for the forthcoming year, in respect of the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of Support for the Local Economy, as now reported, be noted.

9. REPRESENTATION ON PANELS, SUB-GROUPS ETC 2015 - 2016

Resolved:- That the following appointments of representatives from the Improving Places Select Commission to the groups and outside bodies listed below, be approved for the 2015/2016 Municipal Year:-

Health, Welfare and Safety Panel - Councillor McNeely (substitute Councillor Buckley);

Rotherham Local Plan Members' Steering Group - Councillor Beck (substitute Councillor Whelbourn);

Environmental Protection (Yorkshire and Humberside Division) – Councillors Atkin, Beck and Wallis;

RUSH House Management Committee - Councillor McNeely.