

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 25th November, 2015

Present:- Councillor Beck (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Buckley, Cutts, Gosling, Jepson, McNeely, Pickering, Reeder, Rosling and Whelbourn, together with co-opted members Mrs. L. Shears and Mr. B. Walker.

Also in attendance:- Advisory Cabinet Member Councillor Sims.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Godfrey, C. Vines, Whysall and Wyatt.

25. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

26. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

27. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items to report.

28. BUDGET PROPOSALS AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY - WASTE, ROADS AND ENFORCEMENT

Further to Minutes Nos. 112 and 113 of Commissioner Manzie's Meeting held on 15th October, 2015, consideration was given to a report presented by the Scrutiny Officer, concerning the budget savings proposal for the Advisory Cabinet portfolio for the Waste, Roads and Enforcement. Included with the report were:-

Appendix A – the savings proposals for this portfolio, amounting to £1.289 millions over the three years of the Medium Term Financial Strategy from 2016/17 to 2018/19; and

Appendix B – the report, about the savings proposals, which has been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.

The report and appendices referred to specific savings proposals in respect of:-

Waste Treatment
Waste Collection
Winter Maintenance

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

: the cost benefits which could be achieved by the extraction of carpets and mattresses from the general waste and disposing of them via the Sub-Regional Waste Plant;

: Members suggested that the issue of recycling (previously within the purview of the Recycling Group) should be considered by the Waste Management Task and Finish Group of this Select Commission;

: waste collection and rationalisation of the staffing structure, which will facilitate the achievement of savings;

: Vehicle Fleet Renewal – changing the type of vehicle used to support the kerbside collection of dry recyclables;

: use of an alternate week collection of domestic refuse during the Christmas and New Year holiday period – the Commissioners have agreed this proposal, with the facility for the collection of a reasonable amount of additional refuse placed at the side of wheeled bins; the household waste recycling centres will also be opened on an additional number of days (but not on Bank Holidays); the arrangements will include some collections on Saturdays (and on one Sunday) and no household should have an interval of more than fifteen days between collections of the ‘black bin’; there will also be a collection of dry recyclables during the Christmas and New Year holiday period;

: although there is no collection of plastic materials for recycling at the kerbside; the waste disposal contract does enable plastic materials to be extracted from the general waste stream and sent for recycling;

: reducing the number of vehicles required to grit/salt the highway; rationalisation of routes to minimise vehicle travelling distances when no gritting/salting occurs; there will be no reduction in the amount and length of highway being gritted;

: reliability of the vehicles used for the gritting and salting of highways; there is a ratio of one spare vehicle for five operational vehicles.

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

(2) That the revenue budget savings proposals, as now detailed in the submitted report, be accepted and referred for further consideration by the Commissioners and by the Council.

29. HEALTH REVIEW ON WASTE

The Director of Streetpride reported that the Council’s waste collection and waste disposal services had been included in the recent health checks of a number of key Council services (some others being Housing, Planning and Development, Leisure, Culture and Sport, Transportation

and Highways). The health checks had been undertaken by a peer group of local government officers from other local authorities, during the period 20th to 22nd October, 2015.

The outcome of the Health Check were several positive issues, others that were negative and also some challenges facing these services. Some initial feedback has been received, although the final written report of this health check is still awaited.

(i) Positive issues

The Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham waste PFI project is regarded, nationally, as an exemplar, 'milestone' project; the health check has suggested that this joint working partnership (inter-authority agreement) could be extended to incorporate more waste disposal contracts and further work on this issue will be undertaken in the future.

(ii) Negative Issues

Refuse Collection – during the Summer 2015, a number of household bins had not been emptied on the scheduled day; refuse collection vehicles had questionable reliability; there issues concerning the recruitment and retention of light goods vehicle-trained drivers (some drivers are employed on a seasonal basis for seven months, usually for the green waste collection vehicles). A collection round missed on one day would have consequent effects on subsequent days' collections. There is concern that some staff may lack a 'citizen focus'. Refuse collection is a public-facing service and its quality often impacts upon the reputation of a local authority. Sickness absence may impact upon the deployment of refuse collection crews. The work is physical and demanding, although sickness absence rates had been higher than expected during the Summer 2015.

(iii) Challenges

: Commercial and trade waste - the opportunity exists to develop this service and to generate more income; work should take place in partnership with the Barnsley and Doncaster local authorities in order to expand the nature of this service;

: Service Management stability, in view of the personnel changes currently taking place;

: the current uncertainty in terms of the Council's budget position and the shape of the waste collection and waste disposal services in the future;

: the proposed re-organisation, by the Government-appointed Commissioners to the Council, in order to align the waste collection and waste disposal services with other street-based services, so as to facilitate better service resilience;

: the proposed development of a service improvement plan, so that the service may achieve the highest standard possible.

During discussion, Members of the Select Commission raised a number of issues relating to this health check:-

- the consistency of the scheduled household refuse collection days;
- changes to the configuration of the refuse collection rounds and the replacement of refuse collection vehicles;
- the bank of employees (and use of employees via employment agencies); the green waste vehicle drivers (employed on a seasonal contract) are likely to be retained;
- Commercial and Trade Waste Collection – currently, there is no marketing of the Council's own service; this matter will be discussed with representatives of both the Barnsley and Doncaster Councils;
- Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2011, which enables local authorities to challenge businesses about the quality of their waste disposal arrangements;
- internal partnerships within the Borough Council - the link between refuse collection services, street cleansing and Winter maintenance could be improved;
- Enforcement - undertaking a wider range of duties and adopting a holistic approach;
- Sickness absence monitoring and assessing the fitness levels of refuse collection operatives; the emphasis on training and safe working practices; the use of physiotherapy and occupational health services.

Resolved:- (1) That the information, now discussed, concerning the recent health check of this Council's waste collection and waste disposal services be noted.

(2) That the official report of the recent health check of this Council's waste collection and waste disposal services, when available, shall be referred to the Waste Management Task and Finish Group of this Select Commission for initial consideration.

(3) That, further to resolution (2) above, consideration be given to the development and implementation of an action plan arising from the health check of this Council's waste collection and waste disposal services and a report on this matter be submitted to a future meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission.

30. ROTHERHAM TOWN CENTRE - CAR PARKING

Further to Minute No. 16 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 2nd September, 2015, consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor J. Rosling (Chair of the Task and Finish Group) and by the Scrutiny Officer, concerning the preliminary findings of the investigation undertaken by this Select Commission's Task and Finish Group into car parking within the Rotherham town centre. The report of the investigation referred to:-

- : the Rotherham town centre economy (business, commercial and retail);
- : the availability of both on-street and off-street, short-stay and long-stay car parking within the Rotherham town centre; and whether there is a sufficient amount of short-stay car parking space available;
- : car parking tariffs and the issue of whether parking should be available free of charge at certain times;
- : the proposed development, by the Council, of a car parking policy;
- : the Council's existing car parking enforcement policy;
- : 'Blue Badge' parking areas for vehicles used by people with a disability and the action taken to prevent the fraudulent use of such parking areas;
- : Rotherham town centre shopper survey (2012);
- : the Council's regular dialogue with Rotherham town centre businesses and traders;
- : the Council's Transportation Policy which encourages the use of alternative forms of transport to the motor car;
- : the refreshed and developing Rotherham town centre master plan (Arup consultancy);
- : whether there should be a review of the pedestrianised areas within the Rotherham town centre;
- : the report of this preliminary investigation contained recommendations for consideration by the Improving Places Select Commission;
- : the Commissioners to the Council are also investigating issues concerning the Rotherham town centre.

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

- criticism of the previous use of some of the town centre's car park sites

for new building development;

- the car parking master plan will be aligned with the Rotherham town centre development master plan;

- the card payment system, introduced for the Wellgate multi-storey car park, has been well-received by users of the car park; a similar system could possibly be introduced at other car parks;

- the need to ensure that the recommendations of the report of this Task and Finish Group are progressed, initially by reporting to the Commissioners;

- the increasing residential use of buildings within the Rotherham town centre and the limited space available for residents' own car parking; the option of 'car free' housing (ie: no car space available) in appropriate locations; where appropriate, concessionary permits may be provided, enabling residents to use the Council's own car parks, in exceptional cases.

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

(2) That the report recommendations of this preliminary investigation by the Task and Finish Group, as now submitted, be referred for consideration by the Commissioners and by the Council.

(3) That the draft Rotherham town centre master plan be submitted to the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission to be held on Wednesday, 20th January, 2015 for consideration.

31. TASK AND FINISH GROUPS - UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 16 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 2nd September, 2015, discussion took place on the progress of each of the Task and Finish Groups which had been established to consider the detail of the Council's 'Cleaner – Greener' agenda. The reports of each Group were:-

(a) Group 1 - Waste Management (Chair – Councillor Godfrey)

The Group is undertaking an examination of the operation of household waste recycling centres, involving a visit to Selby District Council which charges householders for the use of the waste recycling centres. A visit had also been made to Nottingham City Council to assess the arrangements for the collection of commercial and trade waste. Discussions continue with the British Heart Foundation which has arrangements with some local authorities (eg: Elmbridge District Council) for the kerbside collection of bulky items, textiles and small electrical goods. There will also be a visit to the Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Joint Venture waste disposal site at Wath-Manvers during

December 2015.

(b) Group 2 - Leisure and Community Services (Chair – Councillor Atkin)

The work of this Task and Finish Group has been held in abeyance until the other groups have reported. A meeting is scheduled to take place on Tuesday, 1st December, 2015, for discussion of the problem of littering and the responsibility of shops and retail outlets to prevent littering.

Resolved:- That the information be noted and the reports of these Task and Finish Groups be considered at future meetings of the Improving Places Select Commission.

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 14TH OCTOBER, 2015

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 14th October, 2015, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.