

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION

Thursday, 7th June, 2018

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Elliot, Fenwick-Green, Jepson, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Reeder, Sansome, Sheppard, Julie Turner, Vjestica, Walsh and Whysall.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Buckley) and Councillors B. Cutts and Wyatt.

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

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

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

2. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

3. COMMUNICATIONS

The Chair welcomed Ella Webster, Joe Fothergill, Sophie Emery, Young Tenants, and Sue from Target Housing to the meeting, along with new Members and introduced the new Vice-Chair, Councillor Sansome. Councillor Sheppard, former Vice-Chair, was thanked for his services to the Commission.

The Chair also wished to report that the meeting of Improving Places scheduled for 31st January, 2019 would be moving to the 14th February, 2019 at the same time.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL, 2018

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 18th April, 2018, be approved as a correct record.

Reference was made to Minute No. 124 and the resolution and an update provided on:-

- (3) The commissioning and processing of reports was for operational staff only and Member involvement was not required.
- (4) A letter had been distributed to Asset Management regarding the need to consult with Ward Members on proposals for community buildings.

- (5) A response had been provided for Councillor Cutts' with regard to his query about the temporary bus interchange.
- (6) Councillor McNeely was now a member of the Town Centre Marketing Sub-Group.

With regards to Minute No. 125(2) (Homelessness in Rotherham) it was confirmed that there were two guest bedrooms located in Shaftsbury House, only one of which was used on a regular basis. In terms of the number of properties in the private rented sector in Rotherham it was noted that as a result of the last survey undertaken in late 2015/early 2016 there were 14,562. This number was expected to rise in the next housing survey which would be undertaken in late 2018/early 2019. This information would be shared with the Improving Places Select Commission once this had been finalised.

5. YOUNG TENANTS HOUSING SCRUTINY REVIEW ACTION PLAN - PROGRESS UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 89 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 15th November, 2017, consideration was given to the latest update introduced by Asim Munir, Tenant Involvement Co-ordinator, detailing progress against the recommendations. The latest progress update against the recommendations was set out in detail in the Action Plan at Appendix 1.

This report identified how the engagement with younger tenants had improved and how some of the young tenants were in attendance today to provide evidence of the work undertaken as part of meeting the recommendations.

It was noted that all of the recommendations were on track with some key achievements identified:-

- Development of the Younger Tenants Forum.
- Young tenants having input into key policies such as the Housing Strategy and HRA Business Plan.
- Areas of work such as the pre-tenancy workshops and customer care training.

The Action Plan showed that all the recommendations were in progress with many already being achieved and the progress against the actions demonstrated that the Council were involving young tenants in key areas of work such as informing the customer care training with staff, pre tenancy workshops and Welfare Reform.

The Chair was pleased to welcome Ella Webster, Joe Fothergill, Sophie Emery, Young Tenants, and Sue from Target Housing, and for them to share their experiences with the Commission.

Ella Webster expressed her initial reservations and lack of understanding around young tenants and housing, but welcomed the progress made to date, how her own involvement had boosted her confidence, the greater awareness and support for young tenants and the value.

The Commission noted that Ella had been shortlisted for the Young Tenant of the Year Award and was a great ambassador for young tenants and actually featured on the front cover of the previous edition of Home Matters.

Joe Fothergill and Sophie Emery also shared their own experiences having only joined the Young Tenants Forum recently, the progress to date and what they would like to see more involvement with in the future. This included more youth clubs, information and awareness raising via social media and for the voices of young tenants to be heard, even if this was a plea for support.

It was proposed that information should be regularly shared about the dates/times that meetings were taking place where young tenants could become involved and what support mechanisms there were for young tenants. Even sharing information for basic maintenance would have a positive effect on some tenants who lacked confidence to seek out help or assistances.

Sue from Target Housing outlined her own role and her own involvement to removing barriers with young housing tenants and signposting them to relevant services.

Mrs. Shears from Rotherfed congratulated the young people for their courage and the positive impact they were making which had resulted in en-suite bathrooms being provided for shared accommodation and the recycling initiative using cans.

The Council was also working with the young tenants to inform the menu of options of tenant involvement and the digital inclusion agenda.

The Select Commission welcomed the positive input and invited Members to ask any questions or comments:-

- The young tenants support should be encouraged and consideration given to a young person on the Rotherfed Board.
- Any recommendations within the Action Plan thought to be slipping should be reported back to this Select Commission.
- Consideration on whether a young tenant should become a Co-opted Member with a standing invitation to attend the Improving Places meetings.

- Numbers of young people involved in the Young Tenants' Forum and its publication of the work.
- Proportion of younger tenants to tenants overall which was confirmed as 17.5% of primary tenants were under 35 (3,512 out of 20,125).
- Involvement in customer care training packages and the progress made to date and for this to continue and include conferences in the future.
- How young tenants were supported to have an equal partner involvement.
- Any concerns could immediately be shared with Rotherfed.

The Chair thanked the young tenants for being part of the meeting and advised that should any concerns arise in the future these should be fed back to the Improving Places Select Commission.

Moving forward the Commission asked further if there was any other supportive mechanisms that the young tenants would benefit from.

Discussion ensued on the promotion and publicising of involvement to date, whether or not some consideration could be given to some kind of decorating/gardening scheme, furniture or small item donation scheme, or tool loaning service for those young people who had no support or finance to set up a tenancy from scratch. This would provide a positive message to young tenants and not put up any barriers.

It was suggested that a sub-group be arranged involving members of the Young Tenants Forum to look at furniture or tool donation schemes and to share information on other avenues in this area, including transportation options, criteria for the Rother Card and the free cycle network.

The young tenants also pointed out that there was little information available about the democratic process or the role of the Town Hall and Members. These were areas of support which were not identified or signposted.

Asim Munir pointed out to the Commission that most young tenants faced many challenges especially around Welfare Reform and as part of the action plan monitoring involvement with the tenancy support team was included. This would ensure that a proactive approach was being taken with a new tenancy with personal budgeting to avoid some of the pitfalls that some tenants have experienced.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress made to date against the Action Plan be noted.

(2) That a further update report be submitted to the Improving Places Select Commission in November, 2018.

(3) That consideration be given to the inclusion of a young tenant on the Rotherfed Board.

(4) That a sub-group of this Commission be arranged with the representatives of the Young Tenants to explore various options around furniture and tool donation schemes.

(5) That further information be shared with Elected Members on the role of the Young Tenants Forum.

6. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission take place on Thursday, 26th July, 2018 at 1.30 p.m.