

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
6th June, 2019

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Birch, Buckley, B. Cutts, Jepson, Jones, Khan, Reeder, Sansome, Sheppard, Taylor and Tweed and Ms. W. Birch (Co-opted Member).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkin, McNeely, Rushforth, Whysall and Wyatt.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member for Waste, Roads and Community Safety.

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

1. MRS. LILIAN SHEARS

The Chair reported the sudden death of Mrs. Lilian Shears.

The Select Commission stood for a minute's silence as a mark of respect.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at the meeting.

3. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

4. COMMUNICATIONS

New/Old Select Commission Members

The Chair welcomed Councillors Rushforth, Taylor and Tweed to the Select Commission.

The Chair thanked Councillors Vjestica and Walsh for their contributions to the work of the Select Commission during the 2018/19 Municipal Year.

Review Meeting

A review meeting had taken place on 26th April and discussed the following items:-

Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2

This built on the previous improvement plan and had 4 main aims:-

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 06/06/19

- Accurately recorded, easy to use and free from obstructions
- A ROW network that retained the character of the countryside
- Promoted health and enjoyment
- Prioritising works to get the best out of Rotherham's network

Recommendation – That the Head of Highway Services for Community and Street Scene look at providing information, at Ward level, in relation to Public Rights of Way to Members.

Clean Air Zone – Improving Air Quality in Rotherham

This showed the consultation process for how the Council would meet the mandate from Government to undertake a feasibility study to reduce nitrogen dioxide in the shortest possible time.

Recommendation – That officers meet with relevant Members to discuss any potential impact on their Wards in light of the proposed changes listed as part of the Clean Air Zone to improve the air quality in Rotherham.

5. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 18TH APRIL 2019**

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 18th April, 2019.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on Thursday, 18th April, 2019, be approved as a correct record.

6. **AGREEMENT BETWEEN DIGNITY FUNERALS LTD AND ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL - UPDATE**

Polly Hamilton, Assistant Director, Culture, Sport and Tourism, presented an update on the progress made against the recommendations of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 14th February, 2019.

Also in attendance were:-

Louise Sennitt, Superintendent Registrar/Contract Manager, RMBC
Steve Gant, Dignity
Nicola Cook, Dignity
Sam Fletcher, Rotherham Manager, Dignity.

There had been significant progress made over the last year. Regular monitoring and dialogue took place between the Council and Dignity as well as a number of systems and processes by which to check with the wider community and those with protected characteristics.

The report set out the progress made against the Select Commission's recommendations of 14th February, 2019.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION- 06/06/19

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Provision of environmentally friendly burial options – work was taking place to consider different options in terms of suitable land. There was one environmentally friendly burial site not too far from Rotherham owned by another company; Dignity had one environmentally friendly burial section in one of their cemeteries. It was something that was definitely gaining a lot of interest but Dignity's current experience was that there was not a great deal of uptake

It was noted that Councillor Hoddinott had been looking into good practice in other local authorities. There were some other authorities who Rotherham could perhaps learn from and potential site visits that could be undertaken in the future

Before any decision was made, the Council would follow its consultation policy and process to establish if there was the demand for such facility from the general public. Initial engagement had been made with Ward Members with regard to potential sites who had raised the issue of communication and consultation

- Although the main driveway at Ridgeway was in good order, a number of the side roads were showing signs of potholes. Dignity undertook to ensure the Grounds Maintenance Team carried out checks
- Cemetery testing was a priority throughout all the cemeteries. Dignity was currently progressing an inhouse system to make that more effective which would be rolled out as and when
- Clarification that Psalters Lane Cemetery was listed as “Masbrough”
- The secure storage for registers and records had been a big project for Dignity to find suitable storage methods as well as the legislation having changed since the original contract. A third and final quote was awaited for comparison purposes but it was hoped by the end of the year to have the safes installed to store all of the records. Scanning would also be explored to provide extra security. Initially consideration had been given to scanning and then removal of the documents to an offsite facility, however, there was a lot of interest from members of the public in seeing the physical registers and felt it would be unreasonable to move them off site
- Appreciation by the Muslim community for listening to them and the provision of extended hours to facilitate Muslim burials

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 06/06/19

- Issue of some of the Muslim graves being waterlogged – when preparing the new section for Muslim graves, the Grounds Maintenance Team had found a pipe which had flooded the area. Despite best efforts the problem had not been solved as yet and water was continuing to be pumped out so they could be used. Ongoing investigations were taking place to ascertain the source of the water
- After hours burials charge – this was an agenda item for the next Project Liaison Group. Dignity was charged a fee which was then passed onto the client. There was constant discussion regarding the fee and it was hoped a resolution would be reached that suited all parties
- Future land for Muslim burial sites – Dignity had maps showing their burial land and able to forecast where provision could be extended. This information would be provided to the Select Commission

The Chair thanked Dignity and relevant officers for their work on this matter.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be noted.

(2) That once extended hours for burials pilot was completed, the outcome be submitted to the Select Commission.

7. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING:-

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Thursday, 25th July, 2019, commencing at 1.30 p.m.