

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
25th July, 2019**

Present:- Councillor Mallinder (in the Chair); Councillors Atkin, Elliot, Jepson, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Reeder, Rushforth, Sansome, Taylor, Julie Turner, Tweed, Whysall and Wyatt together with Mrs. W. Birch (Co-opted Member).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Cutts and Sheppard.

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

8. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6TH JUNE, 2019

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting held on 6th June, 2019.

Resolved:- That the minutes of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on Thursday, 6th June, 2019, be approved as a correct record.

9. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sansome made a Personal Declaration of Interest on Minute No. 13 – Thriving Neighbourhoods Update Report – as he was a Member of the Neighbourhood Working Members Forum.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

A member of the public asked if they could be provided with an update with regard to the changing of the zebra crossing on Victoria Street, Kilnhurst, to a pelican crossing.

On behalf of the community she wished to thank the Ward Members for Swinton and Silverwood for their help in this matter.

The Democratic Services Manager reported that it was his understanding that a decision was due to be made by the relevant Strategic Director shortly. Discussions had taken place with the group who had submitted the petition calling for the change. Once the decision had been made the lead petitioner would be informed accordingly.

It was urged that the work be completed by the end of the summer so that it was in place for when the schools returned in September.

11. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no agenda items requiring the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

12. COMMUNICATIONS

There was none to report.

13. THRIVING NEIGHBOURHOODS - UPDATE REPORT

Further to Minute No. 20 of 20th September, 2018, Councillor Watson, Deputy Leader, and Shokat Lal, Assistant Chief Executive, presented a summary of the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood working model.

The Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy (2019-2025) had been approved by Cabinet in November, 2018 (Minute No. 55 refers) and an implementation plan developed which was constantly reviewed and refreshed on a monthly basis. The implementation plan identified the following drivers:-

- Engage and develop the workforce
- Councillors as Community Leaders
- Communication and engagement
- Asset Based Community Development
- Integrated Place Based Working
- Role of Parish Councils

There had been significant progress on implementing the Strategy since November 2018. The report submitted highlighted the work that had taken place under the above drivers.

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – it was noted that any Ward base budget not spent by the end of the financial year would be returned to the main HRA budget. Was there some mechanism where, if a Ward Panel had been particularly busy and had projects on the shelf ready to go, that they could bid for funding before it went back into the central pot?

This was still under discussion and would be a political decision. The logic of the current policy was that all neighbourhood budgets would run for the term of office and when the Wards changed, if not spent, it was returned to the central pot.

- A Tenant may live in a Parish and pay a Parish precept. Was there a possibility of the Parish precept being used with the Ward base budget and the tenant feeling that they were paying twice?

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION- 25/07/19

Parish Councils were responsible for their own budget and had their own priorities which may coincide with those of the Borough Council. It was hoped that conversations would take place to allow smarter spending in the future and avoid duplication.

- What were the short term objectives and long term prospects for the Community Sport and Health apprenticeship?

The Apprenticeship Levy, in terms of funding, had very clear guidelines in terms of what apprenticeships you could have and how the training programme and funding was used to support apprentices.

These were apprenticeship placements very much linked to Public Health, sport and sporting activities that were fairly new and unique focussing on a particular area.

They were quite wide in their reach around looking at health-based activities, the whole focus of Public Health and community development and how you connected communities around particular areas of health activities. It was felt that they presented a wide scope of what roles the individuals could go into once they had completed their apprenticeships.

It was anticipated recruitment would take place in September. There was a proper infrastructure around the training and support for these particular roles and it was hoped they would have a number of career opportunities. The roles would not just focus on neighbourhood working or communicating development but also work actively with residents, dealing with some of the Council Plan indicators etc. across the Borough and working with partners.

They were quite unique in terms of what they offered and may in the future but there was confidence there would be roles for them.

- At the moment projects were supported on a majority vote; what would happen if there was a conflict when some of the Wards were reduced to 2 Members? Was there conflict resolution.

The guidance provided in April made it clear that the guidance was up until the 2020 elections. It was the intention to refresh the guidance early next year taking into account boundary revisions and how a dispute was to be resolved should one arise.

Dispute resolution would be a challenge for the Neighbourhood Working Forum.

- How would the campaign/Thriving Neighbourhood Strategy be promoted to different groups especially ethnic minorities and religious institutions?

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 25/07/19

The Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) contract had been changed 18 months ago and included them embracing enhanced neighbourhood working and looking at capacity building. The contract was reviewed annually with VAR held to account on what work was taking place.

Work was underway looking at other authorities as to what they did around customer segmentation and the breaking down of Ward intelligence. It would help Ward Councillors to understand what was happening in their Ward and what resources they needed as well as identifying hard to reach groups.

With regard to communications, it was about knowing your residents and the different ways and channels to engage.

- Talked about staff and the Members working together but there were some issues that staff dealt with on a daily basis. Would it be an idea to report any serious issues to Members?

Yes that should happen. There were 21 Wards and every one would have a slightly different way of working.

- Multi-Agency Groups (MAGS) – if not working where was this going? What was happening with them.

There were different experiences in different Wards. The recently announced extra Police resources were to be deployed into the neighbourhoods. Each area would have more warranted Police Officers.

- The hardest thing to spend was Capital and more flexibility was required. It was easy to spend Revenue but Capital was a lot harder because of the rules.

Unfortunately there were strict accounting rules and it was not possible.

- Can we consider whether Members could give Ward update presentations to full Council rather than read from a script?
- Provision of public water fountains.

If a request for provision was submitted it would be costed.

- Did Purdah apply to Area Housing Panels and if so they needed to be made aware of it with regard to spend.

If the final decision on HRA money fell to an Elected Member then it would fall foul of Purdah.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION- 25/07/19

The guidance was very clear. Councillors had been advised that they had to have allocated/committed their Ward budgets by 31st January 2020 and all budgets have to be spent by 31st March, 2020. Purdah would not commence until the beginning of the new financial year so should not affect the spending of the budgets.

- Last year there was an update on Ward statistics – would that be re-issued/updated?
- Spending approvals – could Members have a quarterly update?

The figures came from the Finance Department and only counted when the funding had been spent. The individual Ward's figures would always be more current because it would know what had been committed.

- Was the Strategy being delivered and was it working?

Yes it was.

- Asset Management – the report stated that a building was advertised for a month and 2 months to complete. Was that a tight timeline?

It was 2 months to complete a business case. Whilst it may not be long enough, there was an asset deteriorating while it was taking place.

Resolved:- (1) That the progress of the delivery of the Thriving Neighbourhoods Strategy and the Neighbourhood Working model be noted.

(2) That the Select Commission be supplied with the guidance with regard to Purdah and the spending of the devolved budgets.

14. EVALUATION OF THE TIME FOR ACTION INITIATIVE

Councillor Hoddinott, Cabinet Member, together with Tom Smith, Assistant Director, Community Safety and Street Scene, and Lewis Coates, Regulation and Enforcement Manager, presented an update in relation to the 'Time for Action' initiative which provided for a mechanism to deliver enhanced enforcement around enviro-crime particularly littering offences and parking offences.

The report set out Service delivery performance together with a number of challenges that were currently being addressed.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 25/07/19

Contract management arrangements were different for the delivery of enviro-crime and parking enforcement. For littering and dog fouling the contract was wholly managed by Doncaster Borough Council; for parking enforcement additional resources were provided through the contract, however, the processing of Parking Penalty Charge Notices and payments was managed within Rotherham Council's existing provisions.

The report set out updates relating to:-

- Delivery targets/Service Level Agreement
- Improving Places Select Commission recommendations
- Staffing
- Reporting
- Performance
- Cancelled fines, representations and complaints
- Prosecutions
- Parking enforcement

Discussion ensued with the following issues raised/clarified:-

- The money arising from a fine was split between Rotherham and Doncaster – if Doncaster was collecting a £80 fine and Rotherham only getting £7 that meant Doncaster was getting a larger cut of the profits?

The fine paid for the resource on the ground that issued the fine plus the cost of Doncaster to administer the control. The vast majority of the fine did go to those who actually issued it because that was where the cost was. Doncaster was not making a big profit out of the contract but was something mutually benefitting both authorities.

- Litter and dog fouling patrol locations – why was there such a disproportionate amount of patrols v fines in January as opposed to May? Who decided where the patrols would take place?

Councillors could submit requests from residents in terms of where the patrols should be. The column on the Appendix was the ratio of patrols v the number of fines issued.

One of the main objectives of the initiative was to get patrols into areas and have a visible presence. Work was taking place with the contractor regarding the spread of patrols.

- Could Members be informed of when there would be patrols in their area?

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION- 25/07/19

Communications data and intelligence was one of the recommendations that was not up and running as yet. There was the ability to get data out for the reports but there was still work to be done on the systems to get it on a continuous basis.

There was a new supervisor in place now who would drive that information.

- There was a big issue with parked vehicles at night in certain areas of the Borough. The optimum time to catch them would be at the weekend.

Parking enforcement was carried out 7 days a week.

- Were there any figures on outlying visits from officers?

Appendix 1 of the report set out the fines of patrols. It was still an area for development. Patrols had visited everywhere from a Ward perspective but there was agreement in the arrangement that there was more working out of the town centre than was currently reflected in the figures. Work was taking place with the contractor to increase that.

- When cases do not get paid they were taken into the Single Justice Court. Unfortunately these Courts had standard amounts for victim surcharge. Was there any data on what had been charged on how many Rotherham residents who probably could not pay?

The Single Justice System was brought in to deal with large number of cases. Feedback would suggest that the Court system were struggling with the number of cases given the cuts that had been introduced.

The Service had the full listing of each individual case and the cost to that individual. There was a standard fee, however, some were increased depending upon circumstances. Nothing had been received so far from the Citizens Advice Bureau stating that someone was facing hardship due to the fine.

- How would you treat vulnerable individuals who were repeatedly offending?

It was clearly set out within the arrangement that all staff issuing tickets were trained in Safeguarding and vulnerabilities. Where a vulnerable individual came to light after the fine was issued it was taken into account and the fine cancelled.

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 25/07/19

One measure for the Council was the complaint figures which were compared to previous years; 2 complaints had been upheld in the first year of operation which reflected the slightly more measured approach being taken by the operator.

- Was there a bonus scheme for individuals for the issuing of fines?

It was difficult to comment upon the terms and conditions of staff employed by Kingdom, however, the Council would not encourage a contractor to have a bonus scheme in place.

- How simple would you say the appeals system was? Was it simple enough for people to approach and was it a quick process to turn round and if not could you look at it again and make it simple?

There was a quick appeal process.

Members of the public could submit a complaint into the Council. It could be via a telephone call from the individual/family member/friend and would then be passed onto the staff at Doncaster who would review that particular fine. When looking at the representations that had been made and the scrutiny that Doncaster had conducted into the fines, the number that had been overturned indicated that they were scrutinising them correctly.

- How did the contract managed by Doncaster MCB for littering and dog fouling link with the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) and if so how did the public differentiate between them?

The contract did not enforce Rotherham's Public Space Protection Order; that was separate. The PSPO was currently enforced by the Police and Council Officers. It possibly could in the future but currently was not.

- The Select Commission had made some recommendations but nowhere did it state which you had agreed to be implemented and which were not and if not why not.

All the recommendations had been agreed and taken forward; the submitted report was the progress made against them. Not all the recommendations were completed particularly around Communications and talking to Councillors which was still progressing.

- How did the general public know who it was they were being fined by?

Any officer issuing someone with a Fixed Penalty Notice had to identify themselves and who they represented so the person receiving the fine would clearly know who it was issuing the fine. It was quite difficult for people to differentiate who it was (Kingdom or RMBC) but

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION- 25/07/19

it was about visibility of people undertaking enforcement work. It was part of the Service Level Agreement that there was not too much differentiation because it was about public seeing someone undertaking enforcement.

- What was a patrol?

One officer that went to Anston and Dinnington would count as one patrol; if two officers went it would be two patrols. Each individual Officer's patrol would be counted against each individual area that that Officer visited.

- Who set the target for littering and why was it so high?

It had been drawn from the pilot. It would continue to be reviewed.

- Why was the loss of a patrol vehicle allowed to go on for so long?

This was an issue of the contractor and the resources available; it had taken sometime to source a new vehicle and had taken officer patrols out of the districts.

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

(2) That the levels of performance be noted and the importance of enhanced enforcement and visibility agreed.

(3) That a further update be submitted in 6 months.

15. HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT UPDATE

In accordance with Minute No. 27 of the meeting held on 1st November, 2018, the following update was presented on the Home to School Transport Policy:-

- The annual Transport Review process, to be undertaken at the same time as Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP) reviews to assess the suitability of existing transport, and the ability to partake in Independent Travel Training, was now in place
- The targeted uptake was to have 44 young people on Personal Travel Budgets (PTBs) by April 2019 and 69 on PTBs by September 2019. To date 56 young people were enrolled for PTBs. The targeted uptake was, therefore, on track for delivery and a significant increase from the 30 young people reported to the Select Commission in November 2018
- 'Train the trainer' had been delivered for Independent Travel Training providing the Council and partner schools with the ability to deliver training to young people

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - 25/07/19

- A meeting had taken place with SYPTTE to identify possible ways to increase the visibility of travellers with disabilities and the awareness amongst bus drivers
- Whilst the Service appreciated that, on occasion, appeals may overturn decisions made within the Policy, the need for young people to apply each year was enshrined within the Policy. However, the appeals process had been reviewed and guidance would be issued to the Team that, at the point of application if the circumstances had not changed year on year, the Transport Manager or Head of Service could grant the pass on the basis of exceptional circumstances without recourse to the appeal process. Should any change in circumstances occur, a full reassessment would take place in accordance with the Policy

Demand for the Service continued to rise in line with national rises in EHCPs for young people. The current assessment was that demand for the Service would increase by approximately 12% between January 2019 and January 2022 with 96 additional pupils in receipt of transport over that period.

Resolved:- That the update be noted.

16. URGENT BUSINESS

There was no urgent business to report.

17. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held on Thursday, 19th September, 2019, commencing at 1.30 p.m.