

BRIEFING	TO:	Improving Places Select Commission
	DATE:	9 June 2020
	LEAD OFFICER:	Katherine Harclerode Governance Advisor 01709 254532
	TITLE:	Initial Work Programme 2020-21 Municipal Year

1. Background

- 1.1** The remit of the Improving Places Select Commission (IPSC) is to undertake scrutiny activity in respect of all matters pertaining to the borough of Rotherham as a place. In broad terms, this remit relates to business and economic development, employment, emergency planning, environment, housing, climate change, leisure, culture and tourism, transport and highways, as well as regulatory services such as trading standards and environmental health. The breadth of functions and services that fall within the Commission's remit is significant. The way in which the Commission discharges its scrutiny activity is a matter for itself, having regard to the provisions of the Constitution and any direction from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board.
- 1.2** Members are required to determine their work programme for the 2020/21 municipal year to give focus and structure to scrutiny activity to ensure that it effectively and efficiently supports and challenges the decision-making processes of the Council, and partner organisations, for the benefit of the people of the borough.
- 1.3** The IPSC may choose to scrutinise a range of issues through a combination of pre-decision scrutiny items, policy development, performance monitoring, information updates and follow up to previous scrutiny work.
- 1.4** The IPSC has six scheduled meetings over the course of 2020/21, representing a maximum of 18 hours of scrutiny per year – assuming 3 hours per meeting. Members will therefore need to be selective in their choice of items for the work programme. The following key principles of effective scrutiny should be considered when the Panel determines its work programme:
- Be selective – There is a need to prioritise so that high priority issues are scrutinised given the limited number of scheduled meetings and time available. Members should consider what can realistically and properly be reviewed at each meeting, taking into account the time needed to scrutinise each item and what the session is intended to achieve.
 - Add value with scrutiny – Items should have the potential to 'add value' to the work of the council and its partners. If it is not clear what the intended outcomes or impact of a review will be then Members should consider if there are issues of a higher priority that could be scrutinised instead.
 - Be ambitious – the IPSC should not shy away from carrying out scrutiny of issues that are of local concern, whether or not they are the primary responsibility of the council. The Local Government Act 2000 gave local authorities the power to do

anything to promote economic, social and environmental well being of local communities. Subsequent Acts have conferred specific powers to scrutinise health services, crime and disorder issues and to hold partner organisations to account.

- Be flexible – Members are reminded that there needs to be a degree of flexibility in their work programme to respond to unforeseen issues/items for consideration/comment during the year and accommodate any developmental or additional work that falls within the remit of this Commission. For example, Members may wish to question officers regarding the declining performance of a service
- Think about the timing – Members should ensure that the scrutiny activity is timely and that, where appropriate, their findings and recommendations inform wider corporate developments or policy development cycles at a time when they can have most impact. Members should seek to avoid duplication of work carried out elsewhere.

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There are a number of ways in which the IPSC can deliver its work programme. Members should consider which of the following options is most appropriate to undertake each of the items they have selected for inclusion in the work programme:

<p>Item on a scheduled meeting agenda/ hold an extra meeting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPSC can agree to add an item to the agenda for a meeting and call Cabinet Members/ Officers/Partners to the meeting to respond to questioning on the matter • A variation of this model could be a one-day spotlight session - scrutiny of issues that, although important, do not merit setting up a 'task-and-finish' group.
<p>Task Group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A small group of Members meet outside of the scheduled meetings to gather information on the subject area, visit other local authorities/sites, and speak to service users, expert witnesses and/or Officers/Partners. The Task Group can then report back to the Commission with their findings to endorse the submission of their recommendations to Cabinet • This is the method usually used to carry out policy reviews
<p>The Panel asks for a report then takes a view on action</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPSC may need more information before taking a view on whether to carry out a full review so asks for a report – either from the service department or from the Governance Unit – to give it more details

	Meeting with service Officer/Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Member (or small group of Members) has a meeting with service officers/ Partners to discuss concerns or raise queries. • If the Member is not satisfied with the outcome or believes that the IPSC needs to have a more in-depth review of the matter they take it back to the IPSC for discussion
<p>1.6</p> <p>1.7</p> <p>1.8</p>	<p>In order to keep agendas to a manageable size, and to focus on items to which the Panel can make a direct contribution, the IPSC may choose to take some “information only” items outside of formal Commission meetings, for example by email.</p> <p>The Programme does need to maintain flexibility to accommodate additional or urgent items that may emerge during the year, and, if items are added, this may necessitate a review and re-prioritisation of the Work Programme. Furthermore, the scheduling of items may require some flexibility to take in to account the constraints on the capacity of officers and services currently responding to the active Covid-19 Crisis.</p> <p>With the postponed Whole Council election now scheduled to be held in May 2021, no meetings will be held in April 2021 during the pre-election period. The work of the Commission is therefore going to need to be completed by the meeting planned to be held in March 2021 before a new Council is elected for the 2021-22 municipal year.</p>	
2. Key Issues		
<p>2.1</p> <p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>2.4</p>	<p>Some areas of recent scrutiny work that the Commission has previously completed may need to be re-examined in view of Covid-19, such as the implementation of changes by Dignity in respect of bereavement services. Other topics must be considered keeping in mind additional complexities that attend the pandemic, such as a cost/benefit analysis of Council buildings whose uses have diminished with the advent of working from home. Furthermore, the coming year is expected to see significant progress made on the Forge Island development and broader town centre public realm and housing improvements. These will continue to be matters of great interest to Members.</p> <p>The work programme from 2019-20 has a number of items remaining which should form the foundation of the 2020-21 work programme. These items are detailed in Appendix 1 to this report.</p> <p>The IPSC is free to determine its work programme as it sees fit. Whilst not yet sourced, good practice in respect of scrutiny work planning would involve seeking a range of suggestions from the public, partner organisations, officers and Members for inclusion in the scrutiny work programme.</p> <p>Whilst formal conversations with Cabinet Members and officers have not yet taken place, Members should be clear about expected outcomes, how realistic expectations are and the impact of their decision on their wider work programme and support time. Members are free to incorporate into their work programme any other issues they think should be subject to scrutiny over the course of the year, with the same considerations in mind.</p>	

3. Key Actions and Timelines

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| 3.1 | Following the discussion at this meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, formal discussions will take place with the relevant Cabinet Members and Link Officers in respect of a revised draft Work Programme for 2020-21. Following these discussions, the work programme will be developed and presented at the next meeting in July 2020 for endorsement. |
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4. Recommendations

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| 4.1 | That the Improving Places Select Commission give consideration to an outline Work Programme, using the draft set out in Appendix 1 as a basis for discussion. |
| 4.2 | That the Chair and Governance Advisor meet with the relevant Cabinet Members and Link Officer for IPSC to receive feedback on proposed areas of work. |
| 4.3 | That a final report proposing the formal work programme for 2020-21 be submitted to the meeting in July 2020 in order for Members to agree a clear set of priorities for the 2020-21 municipal year. |

**Appendix 1 Outline Work Programme
Improving Places Select Commission**

Meeting Date	Agenda Items
9 June 2020	Housing Strategy Progress Update
	Initial Work Programme 2020-21
14 July 2020	Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Prevention Strategy
	Housing Revenue Account Rents and Service
	Housing Maintenance and Repairs
8 September 2020	Clean Air Zone
	Dignity, Ltd. Update
	Town Centre Master Plan Update
20 October 2020	Employment Skills Strategy
	RIDO
8 December 2020	Allotments Self Management
	Update on CCTV Review
2 February 2021	Rotherham MBC Code of Practice for Highway Inspection and Assessment
	Aids and Adaptations Tenant Scrutiny Review
	Council Plan Performance Measures - Exception Reporting
16 March 2021	Culture, Sport and Tourism - satisfaction surveys