

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION  
Tuesday 22 March 2022**

Present:- Councillors Wyatt (Chair), Bennett-Sylvester, T. Collingham, Ellis, Havard, Hughes, Hunter, Jones, Khan, McNeely, Sansome and Tinsley.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atkin, Burnett, C Carter, Cowen and Taylor.

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

**56. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 01 FEBRUARY 2022**

**Resolved:-**

1. That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 1 February 2022 be approved as a true and correct record of the proceedings.

**57. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Hughes declared a personal interest in respect of Agenda Item 8, as a close family member was Chair of the Rotherham Allotments Alliance.

**58. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS**

The Chair advised that there were no members of the public or representatives of media organisations present at the meeting and there were no questions in respect of matters on the agenda.

**59. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

The Chair advised that there were no items of business on the agenda that would require the exclusion of the press or public from the meeting.

**60. HIGHWAYS SERVICE UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report, along with the accompanying presentation, which provided a 12 month progress update on Highway Inspection and Highway Maintenance performance. The report set out performance by the service since the last report to the Commission in February 2021. Members were also provided with a progress update on the following performance areas:

- Highway Condition
- Safety Highway Inspections
- Highway Defect Repairs
- Residents Satisfaction Survey Results

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- Highway Service Performance Indicators
- Customer Complaints and Compliments
- Pothole Numbers
- Highways Liability and Claims Performance
- Highway Code changes 2022

***It was noted that*** the published performance management data for the year from 1 April to 31 December 2021 demonstrated that the target to achieve the national average of 17% by 2024, for the condition of the unclassified network (estate roads) would be achieved two years early. It was explained that this was due to the additional investment that the Council had made in local roads and good asset management. It was also noted that the number of highway inspections carried out on time was 96%, exceeding the target of 95%, which compared to a performance level of 93% in the 2020/21 financial year. It was also recognised that residents' satisfaction survey results for Highway scheme works carried out on site had been consistently high.

Members broadly welcomed the report and presentation in respect of the performance information of the service and recognised the high standard of work and compliments received from the public around the way that the service worked. It was noted that the financial investments made by the Council in previous budgets were delivering tangible results. Some concern was expressed in respect of the footways and whether there were national standards that the Council had to work to. It was confirmed that there not any national standards, but the Council's highway inspectors proactively reviewed the condition of footways across the borough on a twice-yearly basis. Whilst the overwhelming majority of footways in the borough were tarmacked, the foundations were checked for structural integrity and for trip hazards. Members were reminded that the Council spent £1m per annum on the maintenance of footways across the borough. An additional issue was raised in respect of the repair of flagstone footways which had begun to collapse after multiple works by utility companies had undermined the integrity of the footway.

Following on, concerns were expressed in respect of the condition and repair of flagstone footways in certain parts of the borough, which had anecdotally attributed to damage incurred through works by utility companies. In response to these concerns, it was explained that 20% of the borough's footways were flagstones and these had been installed with poor or no foundations, which was creating issues in terms of collapse of particular flagstones. Whilst it was acknowledged that some issues were caused by the failure to repair these adequately by utility companies, a greater issue was the common practice of motor vehicles being parked on such flagstones, which the footway had not been designed for. More broadly on the issue of utility companies or contractors in relation to the highway, it was confirmed that the Council seeks to work with and coordinate activities as much

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as possible to reduce disruption and a patchwork approach to works. It was acknowledged that this could be challenging at time, but the Council was proactive in trying to manage this situation.

Members sought an explanation as to the position of the Council, as the highways authority, in making repairs to unadopted highways. In response, it was confirmed that the Council could not improve any unadopted highway, but the Highways Act 1980 did permit the Council to make repairs to unadopted highways where the safety of the public was deemed to be at risk. The Council preferred to adopt a proactive approach the owners of unadopted highways to manage such situations, however it was important to note that the Council acted in a responsible way to maintain public safety on highways across the borough. It was also noted that the Council could also be the owner of an unadopted highway, for example in relation to a housing site owned by the authority, and communication between different parts of the authority could be improved to highlight issues and get issues resolved sooner to the benefit of residents.

It was highlighted that there had been a significant increase in cost associated with the repair of potholes, rising from £12 to £22.50 and Members wished to understand the reason for this. In response, it was confirmed that the Council had to comply with a Code of Practice in respect of addressing potholes and this meant maintaining a certain level of resource to meet the requirements of the Code. The team responsible for this work was now travelling greater distances between reported potholes, given the overall improved standard of the borough's highways, and this increased time for travelling had increased costs as set out in the report.

Clarification was sought in respect of the number of potholes that were simply filled with a small amount of tarmac and levelled off, as opposed to those that were repaired by the Multihog. It was explained that the Multihog rotated around the areas covered by individual highway inspectors and that it might be helpful going forward to communicate to ward Members when it would be in their area. Further information was provided on the complexities associated with filling potholes and the impact of wintery weather conditions in undermining previous repairs. The key point referred to was the relationship and communication between ward councillors and highways inspectors.

In response to a question concerning the scheduling of gully clearance in relation to flood prone areas, it was explained that there was a schedule for all gullies across the borough and the situation on the ground was monitored to help reduce issues by identifying how well a gully works and the amount of detritus surrounding the gully. Where bad weather was anticipated, staff are sent to check gullies in flood prone areas to make them as clear as possible before heavy rainfall. Furthermore, it was clarified there are challenges in respect of overhanging trees and the impact that this has on gullies.

A request was made for highways inspectors to join estate walkabouts with representatives from Rotherfed. In response, officers confirmed that this was something that used to take place, but reductions in the level of resource had led to the end of participation in estate walkabouts. As resources had not increased, residents were encouraged to continue to approach highways inspectors with known issues from their localities and report problems through that route.

**Resolved:-**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That ward members and neighbourhood teams be provided with Highway Inspector contact details and be notified of changes in personnel as and when they occur.
3. That clarification be provided outside of the meeting on the schedule of rotation for the Multihog so that ward Members can be made aware of when programmes of work will take place in their wards.
4. That the approach of Members nominating re-surfacing work, as part of the neighbourhood working model, be fully endorsed.
5. That, whilst recognising that there is no provision presently, consideration be given to developing an ambition for a similar approach for Members to nominate footways for re-surfacing works.

**61. ACTIVE TRAVEL UPDATE**

Consideration was given to a report which provided an overview and update on progress of the Council's approach to delivery of Active Travel measures. It was reported that the new Rotherham Cycling Strategy was adopted by the Council in January 2022, which would inform development and delivery of active travel schemes in the future. Members also noted the current funding schemes and bids planned for funding for future schemes.

Members welcomed the update and the approval by Cabinet of the Cycling Strategy in January 2022. Enthusiasm was expressed to further look at the potential of former railway lines and mineral lines for use as cycleways in the borough. Officers indicated that they would be happy to investigate any ideas that Members had in mind, although provided a caveat that it may not be straightforward to bring these into use and gave an example where such lines may cross local authority boundaries and the need to engage other authorities may prove more problematic.

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Responding to a question in respect of low traffic neighbourhoods, it was explained that the Council had long encouraged this as part of developments and could be witnessed through the use of cul-de-sacs and shared access roads where possible. It was acknowledged that there were issues in older areas which had not been developed according to low traffic neighbourhood principles but officers were looking at ways in which this might be achieved in a different way.

Members noted that there had not been a significant response in relation to the Cycling Strategy in a number of wards across the borough and sought reassurance as to what could be done to improve this in future. In response, it was acknowledged that there was a lot of work to be done and not just in relation to cycling but to active travel more broadly, including walking. It was recognised that there was a role for ward Members and the neighbourhoods team at the Council to help feed in aspirations from a greater cross section of residents.

### **Resolved:-**

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the external funding specifications be noted.

## **62. ROTHERHAM ALLOTMENTS ALLIANCE REPRESENTATIVE**

Nominations were invited to serve as a representative of the Commission on the Rotherham Allotments Alliance.

### **Resolved:-**

1. That Councillor Hughes be appointed to serve as the representative of the Improving Places Select Commission on the Rotherham Allotments Alliance.

## **63. WORK PROGRAMME**

Consideration was given to the work programme update for the Improving Places Select Commission, which set out the proposed schedule of work for the remainder of the municipal year.

In considering the report, it was noted that the Markets Review would not be completed in time for the next meeting in April 2022. A successful meeting had taken place on 18 March 2022 and further work would be required to challenge practices and procedures governing the operation of markets.

It was suggested that a spotlight review on anti-social behavior issues should be included in the draft programme of work for the 2022-23 municipal year.

**Resolved:-**

1. That the report and schedule of work be noted.
2. That authority be delegated to the Governance Advisor in consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair to make changes to the scheduled of work as appropriate between meetings, reporting any changes back to the next meeting for endorsement.

**64. URGENT BUSINESS**

The Chair advised that there were no urgent items of business requiring the Commission's consideration.

**65. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

**Resolved:-**

1. That the next meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission will take place on 19 April 2022, commencing at 1.30 p.m. in Rotherham Town Hall.