

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
Wednesday, 27th March, 2013

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Ellis, Foden, Gilding, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Read, P. A. Russell, Sims, Swift and Wallis.

Together with:- Mr. Brian Walker and Councillor Richard S. Russell

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Whysall, Dodson and Havenhand.

49. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

50. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

51. COMMUNICATIONS

None were received.

52. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 20TH FEBRUARY, 2013

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 20th February, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

Further to Minute No. 47(1) (Work Programme), Members asked why the Allocations Policy had not been submitted. It was explained that although the policy had been seen by the Cabinet Member it needed to be approved by Cabinet before it could come to Scrutiny. This was further clarified with an explanation that an instruction had been issued to officers that, reports submitted as part of the decision making process, had to be considered by the relevant Cabinet Member or Cabinet before consideration by a Select Commission. Accordingly, the Allocations Policy was to be submitted to Cabinet.

Members of the Select Commission expressed their concern with regard to the apparent change in the decision making process. It could lead to any new Policies being "called in" to enable Members to consider their implications and therefore delaying their implementation. It was explained that this was not a change in process.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board was aware of the position.

(2) That the Improving Places Select Commission's concern be noted at the apparent change in the decision making process and request that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board investigate and report back to the Commission.

53. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Further to Minute No. 14 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 25th July, 2012, consideration was given to a report presented by Councillor Read, Review Group Chair, concerning the scrutiny review of grounds maintenance and street cleansing services. A copy of the full scrutiny review report was provided for Elected Members.

The agreed objectives of the review were to:-

- i) analyse the impact of budget cuts to the service;
- ii) ensure that risk and impact assessments have been fully considered and are in place for the future;
- iii) develop practical suggestions for improvement of the service within budget;
- iv) consider invest to save options.

There were 3 main themes that had emerged from the findings of the review:-

1. Flexibility of resources
2. Local feedback and support
3. Information sharing

Resolved:- (1) That the findings and recommendations, as amended, set out in the report be endorsed.

(2) That the report be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Cabinet.

(3) That the Cabinet response to the Scrutiny Review recommendations be fed back to this Select Commission.

54. IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION - WORK PROGRAMME 2013/2014

Deborah Fellowes, Scrutiny Manager, reported on the discussions that had taken place at a recent meeting between Select Commission Chairs, the Cabinet and the Strategic Leadership Team, focussing on the forthcoming work programme.

A number of strategic priorities had been agreed:-

- Welfare Reform in particular benefits capping and potential impact on child poverty
- Implications of the Spare Room Supplement – Housing Allocations Policy – wider implications on the Housing Revenue Account/Maintenance Programme

It was also proposed:-

- Local Plan in terms of the Sites and Allocations Policy
- Community Right to Buy
- Standard of housing repairs – comparison between the 2 contractors

Members were asked to contact the Scrutiny Manager with any other suggested topics.

Resolved:- That the details of the Select Commission's work programme be noted.

55. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That a further meeting be held at the Town Hall, Rotherham on Tuesday, 16th April, 2013, commencing at 1.30 p.m.