

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
19th June, 2013

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor John Foden), Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Ellis, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Johnston, Pickering, Read, Roche, P. A. Russell, Sims, Swift, Vines, Wallis and Whysall.

Together with:- Mrs. P. Copnell

Apologies for absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Dodson, Gilding, Godfrey, Jepson and Mr. T. Roche.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 16 APRIL 2013

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 16th April, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

It was also noted that with regards to Minute No. 61(3) (Highways Maintenance) the proposed schedule of use of the "Multihog" milling machine had been circulated to all Elected Members.

3. REPRESENTATION ON OTHER BODIES 2013/14

Resolved:- (1) That the following appointments of representatives from the Improving Places Select Commission to the groups and outside bodies listed below, be approved:-

Rotherham Bond Guarantee Scheme
Councillor Sims.

RUSH House Management Committee
Councillor Ellis.

Social Concerns Committee Churches Together
Councillor Sims.

Environmental Protection – Yorkshire and Humberside Division
Councillors Andrews, Atkin, Beaumont and Roche.

Yorkshire and Humberside Pollution and Advisory Council
Councillors Ellis and Wallis.

Women's Refuge
Councillor Sims.

Groundwork, Cresswell, Ashfield and Mansfield
Councillor Swift, as a Director of the company, and Councillor Falvey as substitute.

Health, Welfare and Safety Panel: -
Councillor Swift with substitute Councillor P. A. Russell.

Local Plan Members' Steering Group
Councillor Falvey, Chair of the Improving Places Select Commission.

Recycling Group
Councillors Atkin and Falvey.

(2) That further information be sought on whether some of these groups still meet.

4. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY SCRUTINY REVIEW

Further to Minute No. 74 of the meeting of the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods held on 22nd April, 2013, consideration was given to a report presented by Sandra Tolley, Housing Options Manager, and Jill Jones, Homelessness Manager, which set out in detail how Rotherham's first Homelessness Strategy (2003-2008) had been produced as part of the implementation of the Homelessness Act, 2002. Members noted that this Strategy was refreshed in 2008 and had a stronger emphasis on homelessness prevention and partnership working and that the Homelessness Strategy was due to end in 2013.

The report confirmed that, during 2012, this Council's Homeless Service had began a consultation process to complete a thorough review of the Homelessness Strategy. The review also considered how effective the Strategy had been and whether further changes might be needed to ensure homelessness prevention was prioritised.

As part of the Homelessness Strategy review process, it had been recommended that the Improving Places Select Committee carry out a Scrutiny Review on the Homelessness Strategy. The report included the suggested outline scope of this proposed scrutiny review and was supplemented by the following presentation:-

- Housing Act 1996 Part VII – Homelessness Legislation.
- Homelessness Act, 2002.
- Homelessness Strategy.
- Track Record – Homelessness Acceptances.
- Track Record – Prevention of Homeless.
- Current Prevention Strategies.

- Reviewing the Strategy – The Work Done So Far.
- Sample of Questions asked at the Workshop.
- The Future of the Homelessness Strategy from 2014 onwards.
- The Homelessness Strategy Scrutiny Review.
- Implementation Timetable.

A discussion and a question and answer session ensued and the following issues were raised and subsequently clarified:-

- Trends in homelessness and the economy and whether it would be best to keep under review any three or five year strategy.
- Use of sheltered housing provision as crashpads.
- Review of community facilities.
- Promotion of the private rented sector and whether landlords would be directed to take greater responsibility.
- Housing for local people and the self registration for landlords.
- Allocation of crashpads and the process of liaising with the local Housing Champion.
- Allocations in line with the Local Lettings Policy and the checking of information.
- No proposal to redesignate residential bedrooms not currently in use.
- Under recovered rent arrears and their assessment on future allocations, which was subject to review.
- Homelessness acceptances and prevention of homeless figures which on paper looks as though Rotherham does not have a great problem.
- The duty on the Council to rehouse and whether early intervention or flagging up accounts that suddenly become a problem would ease the problem, especially for private sector housing.
- Mechanisms in place to flag up concerns.
- Management of difficult tenants and the impact of their housing allocation on other tenants.
- Number of temporary accommodation units throughout the Borough and their current locations for use by the homeless and also those in crisis.
- Review of the Allocations Policy – to be presented to the July meeting.

In taking forward the suggestion of the Scrutiny Review nominations were sought.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That a Scrutiny Review of the Homelessness Strategy take place and include Councillors Falvey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Read and Swift and Ms. P.Copnell.

(3) That once the Select Commission has completed the scrutiny review, a report be submitted to the Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods detailing a proposed revised Homelessness Strategy for the period 2013 to 2018.

5. SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

Consideration was given to a report presented by Deborah Fellowes, Scrutiny Manager, which updated Members of both the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and all of the Select Commissions on the outcomes from the "development session" on the scrutiny work programme, held during the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board meeting on 24th May, 2013, and on the proposals for allocation of that work programme to each of the Select Commissions in 2013/14.

The Select Commission was advised that the work programme had been revised since it was previously circulated and identified the differences by way of the presentation. It was suggested that the proceeds of crime money also be included.

With regards to linking the local economy to local procurement it was agreed that the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should receive an initial paper on this and then pass it to the relevant Select Commission. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board would also be overseeing the review of the Members' structure.

It was also acknowledged that whilst some gardens of Council houses were maintained, this was not consistent across the Borough, hence the need for some further work.

The Select Commission was advised that the process of Cabinet Members attending the relevant meetings when Scrutiny Reviews were presented would be addressed.

Resolved:- (1) That the report be received and its contents noted.

(2) That revised work programme, with the inclusion of the proceeds of crime money, be approved.

6. DATE, TIME AND VENUE FOR THE NEXT MEETING

Resolved:- That the next meeting of this Select Commission take place on Wednesday, 24th July, 2013, at 10.30 a.m.

(2) That a briefing be arranged thirty minutes prior to every meeting.