

**IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
27th November, 2013**

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Foden); Councillors Andrews, Astbury, Atkin, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Johnston, Pickering, Read, Sims, Swift, Vines and Whysall; together with Councillor R. S. Russell (Cabinet Member for Waste and Emergency Planning).

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Dodson, Ellis, Roche and P. A. Russell and from co-opted members Mrs. P. Copnell and Mr. B. Walker.

30. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

31. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

32. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items to report.

33. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 16TH OCTOBER, 2013

Resolved:- (1) That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 16th October, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

(2) That, with regard to item 25 (Planning Obligations, Section 106 Agreements, Updated Accounts Information), a further report be submitted to the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, to be held on 26th March, 2014, detailing the financial transactions of the corporate Section 106 account.

34. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY VIABILITY AND INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY

Further to Minute No. 12 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 24th July, 2013, consideration was given to a presentation from the Senior Planner concerning the Rotherham Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Viability and Infrastructure Study.

The presentation included the following salient issues:-

- : definition and application of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL);
- : legislative changes and the CIL being the replacement for Section 106 agreements;

- : implementation of legislative changes with effect from April 2015;
- : the requirement to avoid 'double dipping', so that developers must not be charged both for the CIL and for the terms of a Section 106 agreement affecting a single new development;
- : plans showing the CIL charging zones within the Rotherham Borough area;
- : projections of revenue from the CIL, for the duration of the Rotherham Local Plan to 2028;
- : the effect of the CIL upon neighbourhood plans and parishes;
- : details of the CIL (Amendment) Regulations 2013;
- : consultation about the Borough Council's infrastructure priorities during 2014 and also on the draft charging schedule;
- : the various comments received during the initial consultation (Autumn 2013) about the draft charging schedule;
- : the infrastructure delivery mechanism.

After the presentation, Members raised the following issues and questions:-

- : the implications for existing developments which have already received planning permission (eg: the Waverley development); it was noted that the CIL would not be applied to any such development;
- : charging zones and the possibility of sub-divisions within these zones; further sub-division would need to reflect availability or viability evidence – at present neither circumstance exists;
- : review of the CIL charging and delivery mechanism; there would have to be public consultation and examination prior to any changes being approved;
- : the likelihood that the revenue from the CIL will not be sufficient to fund all of the Borough's infrastructure priorities; the public consultation process, taking place during 2014, will include details of the proposed infrastructure priorities; other funding sources will be required, in addition to the CIL;
- : a request for differential charges for greenfield sites and for brownfield sites can be investigated, but would need to rely on the availability of supporting viability evidence;
- : a request that the CIL for large developments (such as Bassingthorpe Farm) be increased;
- : concern that schemes known to be coming forward are demonstrating viability and could warrant higher CIL rates (eg: in the eastern area of Rotherham).

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

(2) That a further progress report about the Rotherham Community Infrastructure Levy be submitted to a future meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission during February or March 2014.

35. HOUSING REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE UPDATE

Further to Minute No. 41 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 28th November, 2012, consideration was given to a report presented by the Contract and Service Development Manager, describing the progress of the repairs and maintenance service provided for this Council's Housing Stock during the last twelve months. The report stated that the service is provided by the Willmott Dixon Partnership and by Morrison Facility Services. During the past year, the Mears company has taken over ownership of Morrison Facility Services.

Members noted that, subject to there being continuing satisfactory performance, the contracts with both companies will be extended until 31st March, 2017. Any possible extensions of the contract, in the future, will be subject to review. Contained within the report were details of:-

- : shared financial savings and value for money
- : customer volunteer inspections and mystery shopper exercises
- : key performance indicators and performance management
- : learning from complaints
- : responsive repairs
- : void properties (the 'turn-around time' of these properties for re-letting)
- : gas and cyclical works
- : gas responsive repairs
- : planned and capital works
- : aids and adaptations
- : quality assurance (ie: assessment of the quality of work undertaken)
- : the contractors' corporate and social responsibility.

The Select Commission's discussion of this issue included the following salient issues:-

- : void properties being repaired and available for re-letting within 28 days;
- : ensuring that repairs are completed in a timely manner;
- : servicing of gas boilers as part of a planned programme of maintenance (including: (i) the replacement of older boilers for which spare parts are no longer available; (ii) repairs to condensing boilers affected by freezing temperatures; (iii) provision of instructions to tenants about the operation of boilers and (iv) annual gas servicing and certification);
- : ensuring effective communication with housing tenants, when carrying out repairs to their properties;
- : issues concerning planned maintenance and responsive repairs – specifying the trade(s) required for each repair;
- : the 'decent homes' initiative and its emphasis upon the internal refurbishment of properties, rather than external repairs;
- : the use of temporary repairs, in advance of a planned maintenance scheme in a housing area;

- : health and safety issues;
- : selection of contractors for specific projects, such as re-roofing schemes.

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

(2) That a further report about the progress of the housing repairs and maintenance service be submitted to a future meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, during the Spring 2014 and such report include details of issues concerning the repair of void properties prior to their being available for re-letting.

**36. GROUND MAINTENANCE REVIEW: MONITORING
REPORT/UPDATE**

Further to Minute No. 53 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 27th March, 2013, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Director of Streetpride, concerning progress with the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of this Council's Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services. A copy of the updated action plan was included with the submitted report.

The report stated that the main areas of progress are:-

- : the adaptation of machinery and equipment (e.g.: the introduction of different mowing machines and street cleansing vehicles);
- : changes to operative working hours (e.g.: trialling of more flexible working hours);
- : changes to methods of operation (e.g.: introduction of wild flower schemes, areas of relaxed maintenance, and alternative approaches to scheduled work);
- : the identification of additional resources to provide a greater number of grass cuts on certain housing sites (nb: the sustainability of this action is uncertain due to budget constraints); and
- : the identification of a budget partially to support employee absences due to leave (nb: this budget will be introduced in 2014/15).

Members noted the following continuing challenges faced by these services:-

- : the capacity to adapt to the impact of weather conditions (e.g.: during times of severe weather, or of fast vegetation growth);
- : the impact of cost increases (e.g.: of fuel and equipment); and
- : the impact of worsening attitudes to littering, fly tipping, etc.

The Select Commission's discussion of this issue included the following salient issues:-

- : the use of urban gardening (eg: planting of vegetables) as an alternative to shrub-bed areas – community groups and organisations

such as 'Rotherham in Root' are invited to suggested suitable, safe areas for this initiative; an early example exists at the 'walled garden' in Clifton Park, Rotherham;

- : the efficient and effective use of limited resources – (i) the trial scheme of street cleansing undertaken in the Clifton area of Rotherham and (ii) the trial of alternative methods of street cleansing undertaken throughout the Borough area, both during 2013; the outcomes of these trials are currently being evaluated;
- : involving volunteers in the community in street cleansing and litter-picking schemes (eg: at Wath upon Dearne);
- : completion of street cleansing schedules after temporary delays, for example, due to the breakdown of machinery; it was acknowledged that these schedules and priorities were sometimes altered for specific reasons;
- : the current review of the method of removing detritus from the highway (a report is soon to be considered by the Cabinet Member and Advisers for Waste and Emergency Planning);
- : the forthcoming replacement of the street cleansing machinery for use within the Rotherham town centre and in some outlying areas of the Borough; the new machines to be purchased will be capable of being transported to different areas;
- : the arrangements for the collection of green waste, from households, at intervals of four weeks during the Winter months;
- : the impact of budget reductions on service delivery (eg: affecting the removal of weeds from the highway);
- : improvements made to the appearance of certain areas of highway within the Borough (eg: the roundabout at the entrance to Retail World at Parkgate);
- : the comparative expense of replacing soft ground areas (which require regular and frequent maintenance) with low-maintenance, decorative asphalt;
- : grass retardant spraying – and ensuring that the products used are effective, but are not harmful to the environment; the need to adhere to regulations issued by the Environment Agency;
- : the identification of Council-owned sites which may be declared surplus to requirements and eventually offered for sale;
- : the promotion of the grounds maintenance services to schools;

- : the use of 'Billy-Goat' machines for street cleansing around the Borough area, although because of noise issues, not in the Rotherham town centre;
- : engaging with the community and supporting community groups in the organisation of volunteer street cleansing and litter-picking (eg: via the Area Assemblies (there are good practices in the Greasbrough/Rockingham area) and with funding from the Councillors' Community Leadership Fund); the role of the volunteer Streetpride champions;
- : Councillors and Council employees being 'ears and eyes' in the community and reporting issues which require attention from the Streetpride service;
- : this Council spends a relatively low amount, per head of population, on street cleansing and grounds maintenance services, in comparison to Rotherham's statistical neighbour local authorities.

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

(2) That a further progress report be submitted to this Select Commission, in twelve months' time, on the progress of the implementation of the action plan arising from the scrutiny review of this Council's Grounds Maintenance and Street Cleansing services.