

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
15th January, 2014

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); The Mayor (Councillor Foden); Councillors Astbury, Dodson, Ellis, Gilding, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Johnston, Read, Roche, P. A. Russell, Sims, Swift, Vines and Wallis; and co-opted member Mr. B. Walker.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andrews, Atkin, Pickering and Whysall and from co-opted member Mrs. P. Copnell.

37. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

38. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

39. COMMUNICATIONS

There were no items to report.

40. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION HELD ON 27TH NOVEMBER 2013

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 27th November, 2013, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

41. PROPOSED RESPONSE TO HM GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION ON PARKING

Consideration was given to a report, presented by the Parking Services Manager, concerning the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation process about the intention to change the law and either prohibit or restrict the use of closed circuit television (CCTV) systems for parking enforcement and also to introduce other changes to parking enforcement law.

The Select Commission noted that the primary function of the CCTV enforcement vehicle owned by this Council is enforcement in areas where there are concerns about road safety and the prevention of traffic congestion. The effective management of vehicle parking in these locations also results in the generation of income. Members noted that the use of the enforcement vehicle had produced positive results, in terms of road safety, in respect of reducing the problem of incorrect/illegal parking at these locations:-

- improving road safety on roads outside schools;
- prevention of parking in bus lay-bys;
- prevention of parking on the 'zig-zag' lines near to pelican crossings;
- preventing private hire vehicles parking in the taxi ranks intended for hackney carriages.

The list of questions from the consultation document, together with this Council's suggested responses, were appended to the submitted report.

The Select Commission's discussion of this item included the following salient points:-

- discounts for prompt payment of parking fines in cases where motorists lose their appeals at a parking tribunal;
- a number of textual amendments were suggested to the responses;
- the parking of heavy vehicles on the footway, which may cause damage to the highway surface structure – and whether the costs of subsequent repair and maintenance could be re-charged to the vehicle drivers;
- the powers of the Police to issue penalty notices to motorists whenever there is parking which causes unsafe and/or dangerous obstruction of the highway;
- the initial procurement of the enforcement vehicle, funded by the South Yorkshire Safer Roads Partnership and the continuing operating costs of the vehicle;
- the recording of film footage of parked vehicles, utilising a system based on the 'Google Earth' maps – for eventual use in the issuing of penalty notices;
- the reviewing of individual cases of illegally parked vehicles, prior to the issuing of penalty notices;
- the Council's methods of reviewing the need for parking restrictions (yellow lines, etc.) by the Traffic and Transportation Section;
- the legislation concerning the prohibition of parking near to road junctions;
- Members referred to specific areas and highways, throughout the Rotherham Borough, to highlight parking problems;
- Parking Services and its customer focus;

- emphasis that parking enforcement is not used for income generation by local authorities, but is correctly used to improve road safety;
- the design of new residential areas, in which there is sometimes limited space only for vehicle parking;
- reviewing the effectiveness of the use of the enforcement vehicle, especially in areas close to schools;
- the possible impact of the coalition Government's intended changes to parking enforcement law.

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

(2) That a further report be submitted to a meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, in twelve months' time, describing the effectiveness of the use of the CCTV parking enforcement vehicle.

42. CUSTOMER AND LIBRARY SERVICES - REVIEW OF CHANGES TO SERVICES

Further to Minute No. 199 of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 24th April, 2013, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Customer and Cultural Services Manager, concerning the changes which have been implemented during the past two years within Customer and Library Services. The submitted report summarised the changes and provided an initial review of the impact of changes to opening hours and the implementation of the joint library and customer service model. The various sections of the report dealt with:-

- service changes and the increasing take-up of on-line services;
- closure of the community library at Kimberworth Park;
- closure of the Service Centres at Swinton and at Dinnington;
- changes to the opening hours in 13 of the 15 libraries across the Borough area;
- reductions in spending and the achievement of budget savings targets;
- implementation of a new mobile library timetable;
- launch of the e-book borrowing service, in response to customer demand;
- details of the joint library and customer service model;
- the impact of the changes upon service delivery;
- a summary of the feedback received from customers;
- making libraries and service centres the 'hub' of their communities and localities (e.g.: Mowbray Gardens).

Reference was made to the following salient issues:-

- the availability and use of the mobile library service – one vehicle visiting villages and towns in the Rotherham Borough area; the other vehicle visiting facilities such as sheltered housing schemes; Members noted that customers visiting Council premises often wish to access a variety of Council services, not only a single one such as a library; Members requested details of the routes of the mobile library vehicles;
- the availability and usage of the payment machine facilities at the service centres; the reliability of these machines;
- the provision of a variety of services for local communities (eg: at Mowbray Gardens – language classes for people for whom English is their second language; education classes);
- the system of lending e-books, which has begun to attract new members to the library service;
- the consultation process prior to the closure of the Kimberworth Park community library and the provision of the mobile library in that location;
- the continuing pressures upon service delivery of the reductions in local authority budgets; in terms of the review of customer services and libraries, Members welcomed the use of a clear rationale and consultation process; the shared use of premises for service delivery was also beneficial to customers;
- the importance of the availability and delivery of services in deprived communities;
- the availability of volunteers to assist with service delivery;
- Members referred to specific issues affecting the individual customer service centres (eg: computer access for customers; dealing with customers at busy times; availability of rooms where customers may discuss issues in private);
- the trends relating to the migration of customers to alternative facilities, as a consequence of the service changes (eg: people who previously used locality services now preferring to visit the Council's Riverside House building);
- publicity and marketing – in relation to the facilities/services on offer and for changes to opening hours;
- the effective use of ICT facilities to improve customer service (eg: the availability of wi-fi services).

Members placed on record their appreciation of the work of the staff of Libraries and Customer Services.

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

(2) That the example of the provision of services from the Mowbray Gardens centre be used as a template for centres throughout the Rotherham Borough area.