

IMPROVING PLACES SELECT COMMISSION
23rd April, 2014

Present:- Councillor Falvey (in the Chair); Councillors Andrews, Atkin, Ellis, Godfrey, Gosling, N. Hamilton, Jepson, Johnston, Pickering, Read, Sims, Swift, Vines, Wallis and Whysall; together with co-opted member Ms. P. Copnell.

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor (Councillor Foden) and from Councillors Astbury, Dodson and P. A. Russell; and from co-opted member Mr. B. Walker.

56. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made at this meeting.

57. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

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

58. COMMUNICATIONS

The Select Commission considered the following items:-

(1) The Chair thanked Members for their contributions to the work of this Select Commission during the 2013/2014 Municipal Year.

(2) Scrutiny review – dampness and condensation in Council housing properties : it was agreed that the review group shall comprise Councillors Andrews, Sims and Vines.

(3) Co-opted Member – it was agreed that Mr. Pat Cahill shall replace Mr. Terry Roche as one of the Rotherfed representatives co-opted to the Improving Places Select Commission; Members thanked Mr. Roche for his contributions to the work of the Select Commission.

59. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26TH MARCH. 2014

Resolved:- That the minutes of the previous meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission, held on 26th March, 2014, be approved as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

60. HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY - SCRUTINY REVIEW

Further to Minute No. 4 of the meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission held on 19th June, 2013, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Scrutiny Manager, containing the draft report of the review group established to undertake a scrutiny review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy. The report listed the various issues

raised during this review. The review report contains ten recommendations in response to these issues. Members noted that recommendation three is to be amended to state "that the proposed newsletter shall actively promote the benefits of private sector rented properties contributing to the reduction in the level of homelessness". Discussion took place on minor textual amendments to several other recommendations. One additional recommendation will be included in the report, relating to local authority investment in property assets which may assist in reducing the need to accommodate tenants in other local authority areas, with resultant cost savings.

Discussion also took place on the comparative cost of the local authority building new residential properties and the cost of refurbishing older properties.

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

(2) That the findings and recommendations of the scrutiny review of the Council's Homelessness Strategy be endorsed and the various minor textual amendments, as now discussed, be made to the review report.

(3) That the report of this scrutiny review be forwarded to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and to the Cabinet for further consideration.

(4) That the Cabinet's response to the recommendations of this scrutiny review be reported to a future meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission.

61. PROPOSALS FOR MITIGATING THE RISK OF PERSONAL INJURY CLAIMS ON HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT FUNDED FOOTPATHS

Further to Minute No. 45 of the meeting of the Deputy Leader and Advisers held on 17th February 2014, consideration was given to a report, presented by the Business and Commercial Programme Manager, providing an overview of this Council's approach to the management of Housing Revenue Account-funded footpaths. The report stated that the aim of this approach is to:-

: ensure compliance with revised accounting guidance for infrastructure assets to be adopted in 2015/16, as per Chartered Institute for Public Finance and Accountancy guidance;

: mitigate the costs arising from personal injury insurance claims on footpaths (outside curtilage of the property), funded by the Housing Revenue Account, because this issue is highlighted as an area of high risk by the Council's Insurance Section; and

: meet the corporate priority for maintenance of the highways infrastructure.

Local authorities are assessing the current value of their highways infrastructure, using the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) 2010 Code of Practice on Transport Infrastructure Assets. The purpose of this Code is to support an asset management plan based approach to the provision of financial information about local authority infrastructure assets.

A summary of claims received as a result of slips, trips and falls on Housing Revenue Account funded footpaths was included in the report. The need to continue to invest in reducing the costs of accidents via improved management systems, work environment and training is recognised and, consequently, the Council will implement a series of actions throughout 2014/15 to mitigate this risk.

The report listed three options being considered to mitigate costs arising from Personal Injury claims on Housing Revenue Account funded footpaths and achieve compliance with the CIPFA guidelines for Infrastructure assets, currently planned to be adopted in the 2015/16 financial year.

Option 1 (the preferred option) – comprehensive review of footpaths funded by the Housing Revenue Account and management system adopted;

Option 2 – pro-active assessment by Housing Champions;

Option 3 – reactive maintenance.

Members of the Improving Places Select Commission discussed the following salient issues:-

: the history of insurance claims, made against the Council, relating to slips, trips and falls and whether there was an identifiable trend of several claims affecting specific footpaths in particular locations;

: the estimated costs of the proposed maintenance inspection regime of footpaths and whether savings could be made;

: the estimated costs of the repair and maintenance of footpaths and whether the suggested budget is sufficient;

: whether, in the longer term, savings will be achieved in the cost of insurance premiums relating to the Housing Revenue Account funded footpaths;

: the process of identification of the footpath assets as being those funded from the Housing Revenue Account;

: the possibility of a similar exercise being undertaken to identify

responsibility for the green spaces situated in residential areas.

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

(2) That a progress report about the maintenance of Housing Revenue Account funded footpaths, including details of the incidence and cost of insurance claims, be submitted to a meeting of the Improving Places Select Commission in twelve months' time.