

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Council – 02 March 2022

Report Title

Overview and Scrutiny Update – Improving Places Select Commission

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Jo Brown, Assistant Chief Executive

Report Author(s)

Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor
katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The purpose of Overview and Scrutiny Updates to Council is to highlight and summarise recent work carried out by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board (OSMB) and the Select Commissions - Health (HSC), Improving Lives (ILSC) and Improving Places (IPSC). This report in particular focuses on the recent scrutiny work of Improving Places Select Commission and includes a broad work programme for 2021-22, based on the Council Plan 2017-2020 and the Year Ahead Plan 2020-21. Non-executive Members have evaluated several plans and strategies within the remit of this Commission, as well as monitored the impact of services on customer outcomes and experience.

Where relevant for this period, the update will include details of:-

- Progress monitoring of strategies and plans following past scrutiny
- Recommendations made by the committees
- Outcomes resulting from scrutiny
- Reviews - underway or due to commence
- Sub-group/Task and Finish Group activity
- Member visits
- Public involvement in scrutiny
- Key future items
- Other activity undertaken by the Scrutiny Members

Recommendations

1. That the report be received and noted.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Improving Places Select Commission Work Programme

Background Papers

Constitution of the Council, Appendix 9 – Responsibility for Functions, Section 5 –
Terms of Reference for Committees, Boards and Panels

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

Yes

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Overview and Scrutiny Update – Improving Places Select Commission

1. Background

- 1.1 The remit of Improving Places Select Commission is to carry out in-depth overview and scrutiny reviews as directed by OSMB, including scrutiny of:-
- community cohesion and social inclusion and the Council's specific initiatives to promote these
 - tourism, culture and leisure services and strategies
 - borough wide housing and neighbourhood strategies
 - economic development and regeneration strategies
 - the environment and sustainable development
 - devolved neighbourhood working

- 1.2 The primary Council Performance Priorities (Council Plan 2017-20) associated with the remit of Improving Places Select Commission are:-

Priority 2: Every adult, secure, responsible and empowered.

Priority 3: A strong community in a clean, safe environment

Outcome A: Communities are strong, and people feel safe

Outcome B: Streets, public realm, and green spaces are clean and well-maintained

Priority 4: Extending opportunity, prosperity, and planning for the future

Outcome A: Businesses Supported to Grow and opportunities expanded across the Borough

Outcome B: People Live in High-Quality Accommodation which meets their need, whether in the social rented, private rented, or home ownership sector

Priority 5: A modern, efficient Council

- 1.3 It is noteworthy that Priorities 3 and 4 also contribute to Priority 2: "Every adult secure, responsible and empowered." Furthermore, Scrutiny Select Commissions of the Council contribute to Priority 5: "A Modern, Efficient Council" in supporting the governance function of scrutiny and strengthening the Council's effectiveness by listening and responding to the voice of Rotherham residents.

2. Key Areas of Scrutiny 2021-22

- 2.1 The Commission scrutinised Borough-wide Housing in June 2021 with discussion of an external Tenant Scrutiny Review by Rotherfed in respect of Housing Aids and Adaptations, which was accompanied by the Council's full action plan in response. The discussion yielded the central recommendation that revisions to the policy around Aids and Adaptations should ensure that residents in greatest need are prioritised by the service. This forthcoming

policy review is due to be scrutinised at IPSC in Summer 2022. This recommendation promotes Outcome B of Performance Priority 4: “People live in high-quality accommodation which meets their need.” Further, the recommendation contributes to Performance Priority 2: “Every adult secure, responsible and empowered.”

- 2.2 The Commission continued its scrutiny of Borough-wide Housing in July 2021 with a focus on the Rough Sleeper Strategy, which had been scrutinised in 2020 as part of a broader overview of the full Homelessness Strategy. The discussion identified the area of greatest challenge for the service as sustainability in terms of cost and retention of skilled staff. An update seeking assurances around the sustainability of the service is expected in September 2022. This work also helps achieve Outcome B under Performance Priority 4 as well as Priority 2.
- 2.3 September 2021 brought a further Borough-wide Housing topic to scrutiny: Housing Energy Efficiency. This topic intersects wellbeing and environmental priorities including Performance Priorities 2 and 4. Recommendations included the development of a clear action to identify residents who are experiencing fuel poverty and assist them in accessing support and to understand better the picture of fuel poverty in the Borough across social rented and private sector accommodation. A further recommendation sought to incentivise the handful of homes presently remaining on coal power to transition. A toolkit of available resources, schemes and grants supporting energy efficient upgrades and retrofits was also requested for Members to share widely and encourage Borough residents to apply. Since this meeting, further work has been undertaken by the service and by Cabinet to alleviate fuel poverty and uphold high standards of housing energy efficiency across the Borough, details of which will be included in the progress update in respect of these recommendations which returns for monitoring in September 2022.
- 2.4 Flooding Alleviation returned to IPSC for monitoring in September 2021. Noteworthy in this update was that flood defence projects in six key locations are being undertaken concurrently. The rationale for this concurrent approach is to ensure fairness in preventing any area of the Borough being left behind if other areas were prioritised. Members identified the development of a pilot communications initiative and progress with construction of canal barriers as areas of interest for monitoring in the upcoming report expected in October 2022. This item contributes to Outcome A under Performance Priority 3: “Communities are strong, and people feel safe.”
- 2.5 Monitoring of Bereavement Services was conducted in September 2021 with the receipt of the Dignity, Ltd., Annual Report. The Commission monitored the response to previous recommendations and, toward delivery of a more inclusive service responsive to the needs of the community, recommended the expansion of engagement with professionals, including clergy and providers. To support further achievement of Outcome B under Performance Priority 3, future monitoring of Bereavement Services in 2022-23 will focus on maintenance planning.

- 2.6 The Thriving Neighbourhoods - Annual Report 2020-21 was received in November 2021, garnering recommendations in respect of streamlined information flow around Ward Housing Hubs and benchmarking good practice with local and statistical neighbours. The next update is expected in late 2022. Outcome A: Priority 3 and Outcome A: Priority 4.
- 2.7 An update on Library Strategy and Action Plan was also received at Improving Places Select Commission on 2 November 2021. Following discussion, Customer Services identified ways to better communicate the range of specialised services available at which locations so that Members can direct residents to the closest location. This action strengthened several Performance Priorities 2, 3 and 5.
- 2.8 A progress update in respect of a suite of Town Centre regeneration and housing development projects was received on 14 December 2021. Recommendations sought to highlight and link up sites of local interest and cultural significance in the Town Centre and throughout the Borough, accessibly accommodate visitors from outside the Borough, creatively and persistently look for way to achieve green priorities and clean energy solutions in the Town Centre in the long term, and strengthen relationships with partners and organisations in the Town Centre to cooperatively drive and sustain high standards of quality. A forthcoming update in respect of these recommendations is expected in late 2022 to early 2023. This work promotes Performance Priorities 3 and 4.
- 2.9 Upon receiving an update in respect of Allotments Self-Management on 14 December 2021, the Commission agreed a recommendation in support of inclusion, that the Rotherham Allotments Association might consider how best to reach prospective renters in more languages. Further, the IPSC will seek to nominate one of its members to represent the Council on the Board of Directors of the Rotherham Allotments Association at its next meeting on 22 March 2022. This work promotes Performance Priorities 3 and 4.
- 2.10 An Update in respect of Fly-Tipping was provided at the 2 February meeting of Improving Places Select Commission, generating several recommendations for future evolution of the service. The Commission lauded the fantastic work and major contributions by volunteers, estate caretakers and litter-picking teams whose efforts had resulted in good reports on active response, and further ways be sought whereby these groups can be further recognised and engaged. The service was asked to give additional consideration to further ways to engage residents toward cultivating local pride and a culture where eliminating litter and fly-tipping is everyone's responsibility. Upcoming scrutiny work on fly-tipping in 2022-23 will involve Members reviewing the development of the 12-month communications plan and feeding into the developing Enviro-Crime Strategy. This work supports Performance Priority 3.
- 2.11 The Environment Bill 2021 was considered at 2 February 2021, and the accompanying impacts on Rotherham's waste management services. Members recommended that the service explore ways to promote and incentivise upstream preventative approaches to waste with a view to reducing excess non-biodegradable packaging. Future scrutiny work in this

area will be determined based on the needs of the service during the imminent rolling national implementation timeline from 2023-27. The Commission also resolved to make arrangements to take part in a visit to the Manvers Treatment Facility, which has been scheduled for late March 2022. This work promotes Performance Priority 3.

Reviews

- 2.12 *Building Use* – the 2021-22 municipal year began with a response from Cabinet to a Review of Building Use which had been undertaken by Improving Places Select Commission in response to a request from Overview and Scrutiny Management Board. The review focussed on the use of the Council’s Operational buildings which were not designated for specific service delivery. Cabinet accepted all of the recommendations, which were designed to guide the Council’s eventual transition from the pandemic. Recommendations included guidance around principles of use, consultations that must be in place around any changes in building use, communications around future changes, and future use of video-conferencing technologies. This review contributed to Priority 5: A Modern and Efficient Council, which includes Outcome D: “Effective Members, workforce, and organisational culture.” Building Use will be reviewed again as part of the work programme for 2022-23.
- 2.13 *External Funding* – A spotlight review was undertaken on 12 November 2021 to scrutinise external funding sources that were available to the Council for regeneration and transformation projects. This review promoted Performance Priorities 3 and 4. Overview and Scrutiny Management Board agreed that the following recommendations be submitted to Cabinet for consideration and response:-
- a) That the ambition of the service in submitting bids be commended.
 - b) That the feedback from the government regarding the Dinnington and Wath bids for Levelling Up Funds be circulated when available.
 - c) That the Governance Advisor liaise with the Regeneration Strategy team to coordinate upcoming scrutiny work on markets with a view to feeding into future bids involving markets.
 - d) That efforts to ensure Rotherham receives its fair portion of gainshare or “single pot” funds from the Mayoral Combined Authority be noted.
- 2.14 *Cultural Strategy* – A spotlight review was undertaken on 2 February 2022, in cooperation with Improving Lives Select Commission to scrutinise the delivery of the Cultural Strategy, focussing on how having more, different things to do related to culture, sport, and tourism in the Borough will benefit Rotherham residents. Recommendations from this review are forthcoming to be agreed on 22 March 2022. Strengthening the delivery of the Cultural Strategy improves the Council’s performance on Priorities 2, 3 and 4.

- 2.15 *Markets* – A forthcoming review of Rotherham’s Markets has been scheduled for 18 March 2022, to focus on recovery after the pandemic, sustainability, possible expansion opportunities, carbon footprint, future-proofing and engagement with the next generation of entrepreneurs. This review includes a Member visit to the Town Centre Market. Recommendations from this review will be agreed on 19 April 2022. This work intersects Performance Priorities 2 and 4.

Key Future Items

- 2.16 The new Council Plan 2022-2025 has now been adopted and this will inform the work of the Improving Places Selection Commission moving forward. In March and April 2022 Improving Places Select Commission will scrutinise the following items:-

- CCTV Use – focusing on use of covert and overt CCTV to deter and/or capture evidence of fly-tipping.
- Progress with Tree Management Strategy – focusing on achievement during the planting cycle
- Progress on the Antisocial Behaviour Strategy
- Potential Summer Spotlight on Housing Repairs and Maintenance – subject to completion of the external review.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Members are encouraged to note the report and continue to participate in the development of scrutiny work programmes for 2022-23. As an information report, there are no alternative options or proposals to consider.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 Whilst this report is submitted to fulfil the constitutional requirement to share updates on scrutiny activity, it is submitted for information and therefore no consultation has been undertaken directly on this report. The work programme of the Council’s scrutiny bodies is developed by Members in consultation with officers, partners and stakeholders.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 There is no decision for the Council to make beyond noting the information detailed within this report.
- 5.2 The Head of Democratic Services is accountable for the effectiveness of the scrutiny function as the Statutory Scrutiny Officer, but the Cabinet are also accountable for the implementation of any agreed recommendations arising from scrutiny activity.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial or procurement implications directly associated with this report. In the event that there are implications arising directly from scrutiny activity or recommendations on specific subjects these will be reported to the Cabinet and Council when considering the proposed and agreed response of the Cabinet to those recommendations.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications directly associated with this report. In considering this report, the Council is meeting the requirement set out in the Council's Procedure Rules to consider a regular update in respect of the outcomes of the scrutiny function.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resources implications directly arising from this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 There are no implications for children and young people and vulnerable adults arising from this report.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Whilst there are no equalities or human rights implications directly arising from this report, it should be noted that scrutiny activity focuses on the equalities duty on the Council and its partners in considering proposals or service impacts that reported to Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and the Select Commissions.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change directly arising from this report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 There are no implications for partners directly arising from this report.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 There are no risks associated with this report.

Accountable Officer(s)

Emma Hill, Head of Democratic Services and Statutory Scrutiny Officer

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	22/02/22

Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	22/02/22
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	22/02/22
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	n/a	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Procurement (if appropriate)	n/a	Click here to enter a date.

*Report Author: Katherine Harclerode, Governance Advisor
katherine.harclerode@rotherham.gov.uk*

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).