



Minutes

Policy Review Committee

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 1 November 2011

Present: Councillor M Jordan (Chair), Councillor Mrs E Metcalfe, Councillor R Musgrave, Councillor I Nutt, Councillor R Packham, Councillor I Reynolds and Councillor R Sweeting

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Davis and Councillor Spetch

Also Present: Councillor Mrs G Ivey

Officers Present: Martin Connor, Chief Executive; Glenn Shelley, Democratic Services Manager; Karen Iveson, Executive Director; Eileen Scothern, Business Manager; Jessica Morris, Policy Officer and Richard Besley, Democratic Services

14. Minutes 26 July 2011

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee held on 26 July 2011 and they are signed by the Chair.

15. Minutes 9 August 2011

Councillor Packham asked that the Committee receive feedback on how points raised at Policy Review were received and dealt with by the Executive.

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee held on 9 August 2011 and they are signed by the Chair.

16. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

17. Chair's Address to the Policy Review Committee

The Chair welcomed Councillors and Officers.

The Chair referred councillors to a previous meeting and the scrutiny of 'Choice Based lettings' he welcomed comments made by councillors with regard to social housing supporting local needs. This would again be touched upon in the Affordable Housing item and he looked forward to a healthy debate on this subject.

18. Report PR/11/6 – Boundary Commission Proposal to create a Selby and Castleford Parliamentary Constituency, Work Programme Item

The Chair informed the Committee of the invitation from the Council to scrutinise the proposals from the Boundary Commission for England (BCE) to redraw the Parliamentary Constituencies affecting the electorate of Selby District Council and thanked the Chief Executive for attending to present the report.

The Chief Executive explained that the consultation timelines meant that the matter could not be discussed by full Council. At its meeting on 13th September 2011, Council had asked Policy Review to consider the proposals and submit a recommendation to the Executive for approval.

The Chief Executive outlined that the proposals split the district between three new Parliamentary seats;

- A redrawn York Outer
- A new Selby and Castleford seat
- A new Wakefield East and Pontefract seat

As a result of a change in legislation there is a requirement to reduce the number of Parliamentary seats which required a re-division of elector numbers across constituencies. There was a specific number or "quota" that had to be met. The BCE stated that the existing seats in North Yorkshire were within the parameters; however a reallocation was required to make an imbalance in West Yorkshire reach acceptable numbers.

As an objection had been raised by Councillor Packham relating to the notes circulated by the Chair of the Committee, Councillor Jordan, prior to the meeting, the Committee decided to consider the advantages and disadvantages of the proposal as a starting point for any response.

The following disadvantages of the proposals were raised:

- A major argument must be the proposal for three MPs to represent the small district of Selby creating uncertainty for our electorate as to the identity of their MP.
- Local district wide charities affiliate themselves toward an MP for support or as a patron, difficulties would arise working with three.
- Tadcaster would still be part of Selby District but come under a York MP. This would also apply to the outer Tadcaster communities on the fringe of the A64.
- The BCE's concentration on numbers at the expense of local connections to areas.
- A number of councillors had canvassed opinion and the public view is that there are no connection between the people of Selby and Castleford.
- The division of Selby could result in loss of identity for the Council and could ultimately lead to the end of Selby District Council.
- Councillors also discuss the view in Wakefield based press asserting that Castleford was part of "5 towns" and would have no identity with a rural community like Selby.
- On election management the existing seat borrows 9,000 voters from Harrogate Council and that causes administrative issues with the "borrowing" of voter information from Harrogate to manage Polling Stations for the electorate in Ainsty. Under the new proposals there would be considerable work with the transfer of elector information both ways between Selby and Wakefield and the passing of elector information to City of York.

The Chief Executive urged caution on putting emphasis on local ties and pointed out that 30% of the people of Selby district leave the area to work in York, Leeds and Wakefield.

Residents in the north of the district have strong travel ties to York for work, shopping and healthcare. In the south and south west it is to Pontefract and Wakefield for the same.

Councillor Packham reminded the Committee that North Yorkshire is a relatively new authority and that prior to Local Government reorganisation in the 1970's Selby and areas west of the Ouse were in the West Riding and areas were not as they are now.

He also stressed that Leeds is an electoral area divided into multi Parliamentary seats and the division for the electorate does not create any problems there.

The Committee felt that a report should be received by the Executive laying out the advantages and disadvantages and that the recommendation from Policy Review should be that the BCE leave North Yorkshire alone and that they re-look at West Yorkshire to resolve the issues with electorate quota. A potential solution would be to join West Yorkshire with South Yorkshire.

Councillor Sweeting felt that the view of the Committee was that the changes were unwarranted and that we should retain the Selby and Ainsty seat.

The Chair put the suggestion of the Chief Executive forward to the Committee and the matter was agreed with Councillor Packham opposed.

RESOLVED:

To submit a paper to the Executive laying out the advantages and disadvantages and recommend that the BCE leave North Yorkshire alone and that they re-look at West Yorkshire to resolve the issues with electorate quota.

19. Report PR/11/7 – Financial Strategy, Work Programme Item

The report was presented by the Executive Director, Karen Iveson, who referred Councillors to the papers on the Medium Term Financial Strategy received by the Executive on 6 October 2011.

The Executive Director recognised that the Council was facing a number of financial challenges given the cuts to public sector funding and the turmoil in the economy. This was at a time when the Government were conducting a review into local government funding and collection of business rates. The Executive Director stressed the importance of planning ahead and, although circumstances may improve, the Council needed to consider the worst.

With regard to the Government's freeze on Council Tax and the relevant grant award, the decision on future years was still to be made and the grant offer was received after preparation of the strategy.

On the reported inflation rate and the danger of inflation rising further, the Executive Director noted that inflation was expected to fall after December but there was scope in the strategy to cover fluctuation. At this point discussion on further financial matters moved in to Private Business and it was decided to defer further discussion to a Part 2 item.

The Executive Director confirmed that the Executive would discuss budget setting at the meeting on 1 December which would then be received by this Committee scrutiny at the 24 January 2012 meeting.

RESOLVED:

To receive and note the report.

20. Report PR/11/8 – Affordable Housing, Work Programme Item

Executive Member, Gillian Ivey, in presenting the report introduced Eileen Scothern (Business Manager) and Jessica Morris (Policy Officer) invited to offer background and respond to questions the Committee may consider.

The draft Affordable Housing Supplementary Planning Document (AHSPD) had been introduced as a consultation paper early this year with a report being received by the Executive in September 2011.

The Chair had asked in advance for an indication of Affordable Housing need across the district, this was identified as:

Selby	110
Sherburn in Elmet	43
Tadcaster	16

Councillor Packham was concerned that any action proposed may be countermanded by the Core Strategy which may make significant changes as in the case of the Site Allocation DPD (SADPD).

Councillor Packham urged that local connection be a prime consideration and that, in the first instance, need be identified for local people and that the plan should look at mechanisms to enforce this. Officers agreed and confirmed this was a strong stance of the Council's work with Housing and Communities Agency (HCA) and NYCC.

Councillors questioned the requirement level as they felt some authorities may be adjusting levels with a view that local economy will improve if they are building houses.

In terms of viability and achieving the adopted 40% level Councillor Packham also felt that individual areas need looking at carefully and it was important the SADPD reflect the AHSPD.

Councillor Musgrave was concerned that with a high Affordable Housing level, developers may not wish to work in the district and it was important to send a signal out that Selby is open for business.

At this point, 6:30pm, Councillor Mrs Metcalfe and Councillor Sweeting left the meeting.

Officers were asked to confirm at what level of build does Affordable Housing commence and it was confirmed that 10 properties was the minimum.

The Chair thanked Officers for their time and asked the Committee to support the report with an emphasis on local connection.

RESOLVED:

To receive and note the AHSPD and to recommend to the Executive that AHSPD should focus strongly on local connections and that it should also be realistically affordable.

21. Policy Review Committee Work Programme

The Chair informed the Committee that prior to their next planned meeting on 24 January there would be the need to arrange a further special meeting of Policy Review. Councillor Jordan detailed how the adjournment of Core Strategy has necessitated the need for additional Executive and Policy Review meetings.

Councillors were concerned at the need for a day time meeting with many needing to make absence from work arrangements. The Chief Executive appreciated the problem and explained the difficult and unique circumstances to allow the Executive to send a lead to full Council in December.

RESOLVED:

To hold a special meeting of Policy Review on 24 November.

22. Private Session

Resolved:

In accordance with Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as there is likely to be disclosure of exempt information.

23. Report PR/11/7 – Financial Strategy, Work Programme Item

Discussion on Planning Fees continued and were noted by the Committee

RESOLVED:

To receive and endorse the report.

The meeting closed at 7:10pm