



Minutes

Policy Review Committee

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 17 July 2012

Present: Councillor M Jordan (Chair), Councillor Mrs M Davis, Councillor K Ellis, Councillor Mrs E Metcalfe, Councillor I Nutt, Councillor I Reynolds, and Councillor Mrs A Spetch

Apologies for Absence: Councillor R Musgrave and Councillor R Packham

Also Present: Councillor C Metcalfe

Officers Present: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151); Eileen Scothern, Business Manager and Richard Besley, Democratic Services

10. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest at this time.

11. Minutes 12 June 2012

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the of the Policy Review Committee held on 12 June 2012 and they are signed by the Chair.

12. Chair's Address to the Policy Review Committee

The Chair welcomed Councillors and Officers.

The Chair recognised the Community Engagement Forum Plan as a key document and welcomed Councillor Christopher Metcalfe who had returned to update the Committee.

The Chair also acknowledged the Work Programme item on the Renewable Energy Strategy, a topical issue locally and nationally.

13. PR/12/5 – Outcomes from last meeting

The Democratic Services Officer presented the report which summarised the recommendations that the Committee had made to the Executive and the corresponding responses.

The Chair referred the Committee to the decision at its last meeting to establish a Task and Finish Group to look at a Renewable Energy Strategy.

The Chair had worked with Business Manager for Policy, Eileen Scothern, to formulate a draft Terms of Reference together with a costing bid for Officer time and resources. The Chair would discuss the document with the Leader of the Council.

The draft Terms of Reference were considered and accepted by the Committee.

The Chair was asked if there would be scope to look at Energy Saving. However, the Committee was informed that the Group would focus on Power Generation and this was accepted by the Committee.

The Chair and the Business Manager would consider suitable dates for the Task and Finish Group and Officers to meet.

RESOLVED:

- i. To note the summary report.**
- ii. To approve the Draft Terms of Reference for the Renewable Energy Strategy Task and Finish Group**

14. PR/12/6 – Localisation of Council Tax Support from April 2013

The report allowed the Committee to scrutinise the Executive's decision on the Localisation of Council Tax Support.

The Executive Director (s151) outlined the background of the report that was received by the Executive at its meeting on 5 July 2012. The report was prompted by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and measures contained within it to end the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme on 31st March 2013.

Councillor I Reynolds declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this item by the virtue of the fact that he owns a number of properties which would be, from time to time, affected by the proposals set out in the report. He left the meeting during subsequent discussion and voting on that item.

The Director informed the Committee that Councils within North Yorkshire had adopted a co-ordinated approach to changes required by

the legislation. Work had already been undertaken to put changes in place.

As the Regulations of the Act have yet to be published the Executive considered four draft options to address the changes.

The Director confirmed that Option 4 had been recommended by the Executive as the Council's preferred scheme. The Executive also agreed to approve expenditure towards the cost of implementing the scheme from grant awarded by the DCLG.

RESOLVED:

To note the report and endorse the Executive's decisions on E/12/12

Councillor Reynolds returned to the meeting.

15. PR/12/7 – Community Engagement Forums (CEFs) Development Plan

Councillor C Metcalfe, Executive Member, thanked the Committee for the opportunity to return and discuss the development plan that had been circulated to the Committee prior to the meeting.

The Executive Member covered the background of the issue which had arisen following the request from the Committee that the Executive study the workings of the CEFs.

The Executive had tasked Councillor Metcalfe to look at a way forward and, together with the Chief Executive; a Design Group was established with a mix of Councillors, two from the Policy Review Committee and two CEF chairs. The intention was to get a representational mix to cover all areas and political viewpoints.

Councillor Metcalfe thanked those involved and confirmed that development approach sought was to be evolutionary not revolutionary. He accepted the view that CEFs seemed to be driven from the centre and that had not been the original intention. CEFs had always meant to be autonomous.

Success was not just about turnout at CEF meetings. CEFs were just one strand of Community Engagement, the Executive Member felt that there had to be other ways to engage and identified evidence that at times CEFs were tackling local issues. Winter Gritting and Youth issues were examples.

The Design Team had looked at the role of the Partnership Boards that the Executive Member described as the engine room of Community Engagement and the team analysed what an effective partnership Board would look like. Partnership Board meetings would be purposeful and

there would be accountability, either by reporting to Scrutiny or by publishing an Annual Report.

The team looked at CEF Finances with such large sums available it was important that Partnership Boards scrutinise the allocation of funds.

Partnership Boards need a business like approach to meeting management and the Executive Member stressed the importance of the role of the Chair of the Board. He saw Board members taking on projects between meetings and bringing findings back to the Board, like a mini Council or Executive Board.

Councillor Metcalfe accepted that there were issues to resolve especially around geography and CEF boundaries and this would be considered at the next and last meeting of the Design Team.

Councillor Metcalfe informed the Committee that the Communities Selby Director, Rose Norris, had been consulting with the voluntary sector, especially the AVS, regarding their increased involvement.

Councillor Metcalfe saw the CEF role as a strategic overview of areas and that CEFs and Partnership Boards help to deliver the five big things and have a real local role outside of Parish Councils.

Councillor Davis thanked the Design Team and felt that this was a better way forward and that she would welcome the autonomy. Councillor Davis felt there were concerns in getting partners to engage. She felt that there was power with the District Council but questioned whether there be the same level of gravitas in a CEF or Partnership Board.

The Executive Member stressed that it was not the view of the Design Team to be prescriptive on contributions and if the 4:1 ratio could not be achieved it would be up to the individual Partnership Boards to evaluate each bid and their responsibility to use their money well.

He felt that County Councillors on CEFs were a conduit into NYCC and Highway Department and that if issues were not being resolved then County Officers should be demanded to attend to be held to account.

When asked when the plans would be rolled out, the Executive Member reminded the Committee that there was one further meeting of the Design Team to look at boundaries, however the plan could go to CEF chairs and used as an approach forward.

The Chair proposed that the Policy Review Committee are supportive of the new approach to CEFs.

RESOLVED:

To support the plans for the development of Community Engagement Forums

16. Work Programme 2012 - 2013

The Chair referred the Committee to the attached Work Programme.

The Work Programme would be considered with the setting up of the Task and Finish Group on Renewable Energy Strategy to allow that group to report back to Committee.

RESOLVED:

To receive and note the Work Programme.

The meeting closed at 6:30pm