



Minutes

Policy Review Committee

- Venue: Committee Room
- Date: 16 April 2013
- Present: Councillor M Jordan (Chair), Councillor K Ellis, Councillor I Nutt, Councillor R Musgrave Councillor I Reynolds, and Councillor Mrs A Spetch
- Apologies for Absence: Councillor R Packham
- Also Present: Councillor Mrs G Ivey
- Officers Present: Helen Drye, Lead Officer – Policy, Tim Grogan, Senior Enforcement Officer, Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151); Julia Jennison – Policy Officer, Andy McMillan – Policy Officer and Palbinder Mann, Democratic Services

41. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

42. Minutes

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee held on 15 January 2013.

43. Chair's Address

The Chair informed the Committee that he was now holding regular meetings with the Deputy Leader of the Council to ensure that the Committee were covering items which were on the Executive's work programme.

44. PR/12/18 – Outcomes from Last Meeting

RESOLVED:

To note the outcomes of decisions from Policy Review Committee 15 January 2013

45. PR/12/19 – Countryside Management and Green Space Strategy

Andy McMillan, Policy Officer, presented the report and explained that this was a follow up report following consideration of the Countryside and Green Spaces Strategy by the Committee at its meeting on 16 October 2012. The Policy Officer explained that the Committee had requested that Parish Councils be consulted for fact checking and this had now been completed.

It was now explained that the Countryside and Green Spaces Strategy could now be consulted upon.

RESOLVED:

To note the significant actions to date, and that a period of 6-weeks consultation now be undertaken on the Countryside and Green Spaces Strategy.

46. PR/12/20 – Gambling Policy

Tim Grogan, Senior Enforcement Officer presented the report which outlined the Gambling Policy for consideration by the Committee. The Senior Enforcement Officer explained that there were 9 betting establishments in the district to which the Policy applied to.

RESOLVED:

To recommend that the Executive approve the Gambling Policy.

47. PR/12/21 – Choice Based Lettings

Councillor Mrs G Ivey, Deputy Leader of the Council and Julia Jennison, Policy Officer presented the report which outlined a review of the North Yorkshire Home Choice policy and allowed the Committee to feed into the North Yorkshire wide consultation.

The Committee were informed of the proposed policy changes which included a household income level/equity cap of £50,000 and that

homeowners would no longer be eligible to register for housing unless they could demonstrate a proven need.

The following comments and discussion took place:

- Concern was raised at the number of applications for housing from people living outside the district. The Policy Officer explained that whilst the scheme operated across North Yorkshire and allowed for cross boundary allocations, there had been concern around this issue. It was explained that the current proposed policy changes allowed that, an applicant would have to demonstrate that they had a connection to North Yorkshire to register. In addition, in settlements of under 3000 households, it was proposed that the district may opt to advertise a property for a local parish connection in the first instance, widening to the North Yorkshire Partnership area if this was unsuccessful.
- It was queried whether Councillors should be informed of a Council tenant moving into their area; this related to concern around behaviour of new tenants. The Policy Officer explained that there would be an issue of confidentiality associated with this. It was explained that all new tenancies were subject to an initial one year introductory tenancy so that these types of issues could be addressed early.
- In response to a query concerning the supplying of information to the public, the Policy Officer confirmed that there would be an updated summary sheet available. In addition, it was also explained that the appeals procedure would not change.
- Concern was raised at the words 'bedroom tax' being included in the report as this was not a formal phrase to describe the welfare changes.
- It was explained that the level of income/equity cap at £50,000 was still up for discussion and this may be amended.
- The Policy Officer outlined the proposed timetable for the policy. The Committee were informed that the consultation would finish on 3 May, with the HomeChoice Project Board meeting on 9 May to reach agreement on a final draft policy acceptable to all partners. The report would then be before the Executive Briefing on 16 May followed by the June Executive meeting. The policy would then go to Full Council in June and following this would go to the North Yorkshire Strategic Housing Board

The Committee were also informed that additional comments could be submitted for the consultation via the Council's website.

RESOLVED:

- i) To recommend a press release be issued in the Selby Times and the Selby Post about the consultation if it has not already been done so.**
- ii) To recommend that all three bandings be retained.**
- iii) A further press released be issued through the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership when the policy is implemented.**
- iv) The Committee give their support to the policy.**

48. PR/12/22 - Empty Homes Policy

Helen Drye, Lead Officer, Policy presented the report which outlined the Empty Homes Strategy 2013-2016. The Lead Officer, Policy explained that the policy allowed for an opportunity to look at the scale of empty homes in the district and bring them back into use.

The Committee were informed that there were currently 1,178 empty homes in the district that had been empty for longer than six months and of these 211 had been empty for longer than two years. The Lead Officer, Policy explained that the report contained a number of opportunities outlining how the properties could be brought back into use.

The following comments and discussion took place:

- It was queried whether there would be a similar scheme to previously in respect of utilising accommodation in flats above shops. The Lead Officer, Policy stated that the previous scheme had varying levels of success and given the current economic climate, this area could be one to look at.
- In response to a query concerning Council Tax relief for empty properties, the Lead Officer explained that it was the responsibility of the property owner to apply for Council Tax relief and it was currently awarded at 100% relief for the first month the property was empty with 20% relief for the next five months. The Committee were informed that if the property was still empty after six months, no further relief was offered.
- A request was made that the sentence in the second paragraph on page 144 of the report should refer to 'spaces above shops' rather than 'flats above shops'.
- The Committee were of the opinion that empty homes should be monitored on a six monthly basis rather than annually. A request

was also made that the strategy should be on the agendas for all of the Community Engagement Forums.

- It was stated that there should be an additional performance indicator concerning Environmental Health to assess the number of dilapidated properties along with the number of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) and Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs).
- The Committee were informed that three areas had been identified, Tadcaster, Selby and Barlby with the most empty properties. A request was made that with regard to the data provided on the number of properties, this should be made available in percentage format.
- The Committee acknowledged that the Council could be eligible for a new homes bonus for any properties brought back into use.
- A request was made that the Council should consider increasing Council Tax to 150% for properties which had been empty for over two years.

RESOLVED:

- i) To recommend that the Empty Homes Strategy be on the agendas for all the Community Engagement Forums.**
- ii) To recommend that the amount of empty homes in the district be monitored on a six monthly basis rather than annually.**
- iii) To recommend that there should be an additional performance indicator concerning Environmental Health to assess the number of dilapidated properties along with the number of Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMOs) and Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs).**
- v) To recommend that the Council consider that Council Tax for properties empty for more than two years should be increased to 150%.**

49. PR/12/23 - Policy Review Committee Annual Report

The Chair outlined the Policy Review Committee Annual Report. A request was made that actions should be included after each section for future annual reports to outline what the Committee concluded and recommended.

RESOLVED:

- i) To note the Annual Report submitted by the Chair of the Policy Review Committee.**

50. PR/12/24 – Work Programme 2013/14

The Chair outlined the Policy Review Committee Work Programme 2013/14.

RESOLVED:

- i) To agree the Policy Review Committee Work Programme for 2013/14.**

The meeting closed at 6.52pm.