



Minutes

Policy Review Committee

- Venue: Committee Room
- Date: 12 September 2013
- Present: Councillors M Jordan (Chair), K Ellis, R Musgrave (Vice Chair) and Mrs A Spetch.
- Apologies for Absence: Councillors R Packham and I Reynolds
- Also Present: Councillors Mrs G Ivey and C Lunn
- Officers Present: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151), Gillian Marshall (Solicitor to the Council), Helen Drye (Lead Officer – Policy & Strategy) and Richard Besley, Democratic Services

7. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor Musgrave declared a non registerable interest in respect of item 4 'Selby District Council Housing Development Strategy'.

8. CHAIR'S ADDRESS

The Chair welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the Affordable Housing SPD and introduced the Solicitor to Council, Gillian Marshall and the Lead Officer, Helen Drye, who would also be working with the Committee on the Renewable Energy Strategy at the October meeting.

9. PR/13/2 - SELBY AFFORDABLE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Lead Officer for Policy and Strategy and Councillor Mrs G Ivey – Executive Lead Member for External Relations and Partnerships presented the report outlining the Council's approach to Affordable Housing with the SPD offering guidance to the policy and looked forward to the Committee's views and comments, with the item due to go back to the Executive shortly.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the item was deferred from the July meeting so that it could take place after the consultation period had closed, so that the Committee could study and discuss all submitted comments.

Questions were raised about the Affordable Housing requirement within the Policy, being set to achieve up to 40% and the Committee were concerned to ensure that this was not a barrier to development.

Both Councillor Mrs G Ivey and the Lead Officer pointed out that seven comments from the consultation questioned the 40% level and they reminded the Committee that the SPD states “up to” 40% with the approved amount open to negotiation during the Planning Application stage if it could be demonstrated that a 40% requirement was not a financially viable proposition.

The Lead Officer identified that developers do consult with Planners and applications are approved that are below 40%.

The Lead Officer also stressed that the 40% figure is evidence based and not just an arbitrary level. The Council will continue to consider and review the evidence and monitor Affordable Housing stock.

The Committee also questioned the impact on small developers and the Lead Officer highlighted that the proposed start level was a 10% contribution for developments of 10 units of accommodation or less.

RESOLVED:

No amendments were agreed.

10. PR/13/5 – Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Executive Director (S151) presented the report that offered an update on the revised medium term Financial Strategy (MTFS) - the aim being to set the framework for the 2014/15 budget round.

The Director confirmed the provisional settlement for 2014/15 assuming an additional 1% cut announced by the Chancellor. Further funding cuts are expected for 2015/16 and the mid case scenario models a 12.26% reduction, although further detail is awaited.

The strategy assumes a 1% rise in Council Tax over the next 2 years although the Government have again offered Council Tax Freeze Grant. The impact of a tax freeze in 2014/15 and 2015/16 would mean £1m less resources for the Council over a 10 year period.

There remains potential growth from the localisation of Business Rates although the risk of appeals means that at this stage it would not be prudent to count on it to support the Revenue Budget.

The Director reported that the Council's Reserve Strategy was robust and it provided crucial financial resilience and capacity in these challenging financial times.

RESOLVED:

To support the Strategy.

The meeting closed at 6.18pm.