



Meeting: **POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**
Date: **15 JULY 2014**
Time: **5.00PM**
Venue: **COMMITTEE ROOM**
To: **Councillors Mrs M Davis, K Ellis, M Jordan (Chair), Mrs K McSherry (Vice Chair), Mrs E Metcalfe, R Musgrave, I Nutt, R Packham, Mrs A Spetch.**

Agenda

1. Apologies for absence

2. Disclosures of Interest

A copy of the Register of Interest for each Selby District Councillor is available for inspection at www.selby.gov.uk.

Councillors should declare to the meeting any disclosable pecuniary interest in any item of business on this agenda which is not already entered in their Register of Interests.

Councillors should leave the meeting and take no part in the consideration, discussion or vote on any matter in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest.

Councillors should also declare any other interests. Having made the declaration, provided the other interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest, the Councillor may stay in the meeting, speak and vote on that item of business.

If in doubt, Councillors are advised to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer.

3. Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Review Committee held on 15 April 2014.

Pages 3 to 4 attached

4. Chair's Address to the Policy Review Committee

5. Timing of Meetings

6. PR/14/1 – State of the Area Address

To consider the report from the Democratic Services Officer, pages 5 to 10 attached.

7. PR/14/2 – Welfare Reform (incl. Housing Rents)

To receive the report of the Lead Officer, Community Support, pages 11 to 17 attached

8. Work Programme 2014/15

Pages 18 to 19 attached

Jonathan Lund
Deputy Chief Executive

Next meetings
16 September 2014
22 October 2014 (provisional)
18 November 2014 (provisional)
16 December 2014 (provisional)
20 January 2015
17 March 2015 (provisional)
14 April 2015

Enquiries relating to this agenda, please contact Richard Besley on:
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Policy Review Committee

Venue: Committee Room

Date: 15 April 2014

Present: Councillors M Jordan (Chair), Mrs K McSherry (Vice Chair), Mrs M Davis, K Ellis, D Mackay (for Mrs E Metcalfe), I Nutt, R Packham and Mrs A Spetch.

Apologies for Absence: Mrs E Metcalfe (substitute D Mackay) and R Musgrave

Officers Present: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151); Simon Parkinson, Lead Officer Community Support and Richard Besley, Democratic Services Officer

31. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

32. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee held on 15 January 2014 and they are signed by the Chair.

33. CHAIR'S ADDRESS

The Chair welcomed Committee members and Officers and asked the Committee to consider items for the Work Programme and to forward suggestions to him or the Democratic Services Officer.

34. PR/13/19 – Housing Rents and Misc. Charges 2014/15

The Executive Director presented the report that had asked the Committee to consider the report, E/13/53, that appeared before the Executive on 6 February – specifically recommendation ii) relating to the impact of welfare reform on existing tenants wishing or needing to downsize, of re-letting vacant properties at target rents, and whether recommendations are required for an appropriate policy in such circumstances.

The Director reminded the Committee that Policy Review was already considering Welfare Reform and suggested that this issue be considered alongside that work and that a more detailed report be brought to the July meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED:

To register the Committee's concern at the level of rent increase agreed and to defer the report on welfare reform until the next meeting of the Committee.

35. Welfare Reform Update

The Lead Officer for Community Support provided an update from the meeting of the Task & Finish (T&F) Group set up to consider the matter. Officers had been asked to look at actions on Welfare Reform at other Councils and to bring their findings to the next meeting of the T&F Group, due to be held early in May.

The T&F group will return with a report to the July meeting.

36. PR/13/20 – Annual Report 2013/14

The Chair presented the Annual Report to the Committee for approval.

The Committee requested feedback on two items discussed by the Committee that had been referred to the Executive in January. Officers agreed to look into the outcome of the decisions on Planning and Renewable Energy.

RESOLVED:

To note the Policy Review Committee Annual Report for 2013/14.

37. WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Chair asked the Committee to email any comments they had on next year's work programme to himself or the Democratic Services Officer.

The meeting closed at 5.35pm.

Report Reference Number: PR/14/1

Agenda Item No: 6

To: Policy Review Committee
Date: 15 July 2014
Author: Richard Besley, Democratic Services Officer
Lead Officer: Karen Iveson, Executive Director (S151)

Title: State of the Area Address 2014

Summary: The Leader of the Council's State of the Area Address was presented to Council on 24 June 2014 and it will now be presented to the Policy Review Committee on 15 July 2014.

Recommendations:

The Policy Review Committee is asked to consider the State of Area Address and provide any comments.

Reasons for recommendation

The Committee is asked to ensure that the State of the Address will help to enable progress in the district and efficiently identifies the Council's priorities for the coming year.

1. Introduction and background

The Leader of the Council presented his State of the Area Address to Council on 24 June 2014 and he will be in attendance to present the Address to the Policy Review Committee on 15 July 2014.

2. The Report

The state of the Area Address is attached at Appendix A.

3. Legal/Financial Controls and other Policy matters

3.1 Legal Issues

N/A

3.2 Financial Issues

N/A

4. Conclusion

The Committee is asked to ensure that the State of the Address will help to enable progress in the district and efficiently identifies the Council's priorities for the coming year.

5. Background Documents

N/A

6. Appendices

Appendix A – State of the Area Address 2014

Contact Officer:

Richard Besley
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State of the Area Address 2014

Let me start this year's State of the Area Address where ended it last year. I made a number commitments about what we would achieve during 2013 and 2014.

I said they were ambitious, I said we were an ambitious Council and I said I had every confidence that we would succeed. So have we?

I said we would appoint a new Chief Executive and move forward with purpose on greater shared working with North Yorkshire County Council to deliver savings and enhance and improve services. **And we have.**

Mary started with us in October last year and has shown a remarkable capacity to combine her two roles at Selby and at North Yorkshire for the benefit of both. Our Better Together programme of collaboration and shared services with North Yorkshire is well underway. We now share a common telecoms system, we have agreed to share the software to help us deal with customers more quickly and more accurately and we are, together, developing a new website to make it easier for residents to get the information and help they want and need. They are significant foundations for the future. We are planning to play host to the Registrars of Births Marriages and Deaths here at the Civic Centre and we are collaborating on a wide range of other projects to build stronger communities, make the most efficient use of our assets and improve how each Council delivers to the communities we serve.

I said we would launch the Housing Trust, build our first new affordable homes and develop a detailed delivery plan to make full use of the new freedoms and additional funding that will be available to us. **And we have.**

The Housing Trust was established in May last year and this year it achieved charitable status. It has a strong board of trustees with a wide range of skills and experience and it is now working to deliver brand new homes at St Joseph Street and Kirkgate in Tadcaster and at Landing Lane in Riccall. The delivery plan includes proposals for developing new homes in Eggborough, Byram and Sherburn. In addition to achieving Charitable Status the Trust is seeking to become a Registered Provider with the Homes and Communities Agency.

I said we would adopt a detailed delivery plan and start to implement the Empty Homes Strategy to bring blighted empty properties back into use. **And we have.**

The new strategy was adopted by the Council on 1st April and our Community Officers are already working with a number of empty property owners to help them to bring their properties back into use. We have set aside funding and will use this money to launch an Empty Homes Loan scheme very soon which will help owners carry out essential repairs in return for providing affordable housing accommodation.

I said we would identify and acquire strategic sites that will help the Council deliver its five big things and its programme for growth. **And we have**

Appendix A

At Council in April we took the astute decision to offer to purchase the Burn Airfield site. There were strong views on this issue but I remain convinced that purchasing Burn represents a real opportunity for this Council which has to plan on a strategic level for growth to meet the future needs of this District, whether those needs are for employment or housing or anything else identified as part of our planning processes. Our purchase would retain a large site located close to the principal town in public ownership. Although this Council can, and does, work with willing landowners such as at Olympia Park and has powers to acquire sites if needed, our ownership of this site gives us the ability to act quickly and put the needs and aspirations of the District and its residents ahead of the aspirations of any private owners.

We also bought land at Bondgate in Selby to open up access to the Council's landholdings in that part of town, an important acquisition for the future.

And there are other strategic sites where the actions of this Council have been crucial to progress. At the Proving Ground at Sherburn planning permission was granted in November 2013 and at Olympia Park, subject to finalising a Section 106 agreement, planning was granted in January this year.

Both sites are of regional significance. Olympia Park features in the strategic economic plans of Leeds City Region LEP and both Olympia Park and the Proving Ground are included in the strategic economic plan of the East Riding, York and North Yorkshire LEP. Applications for just over £17m and almost £3m of development finance have been prepared and submitted and Olympia Park has also been allocated £4.8 million of development finance from the Leeds City Region Growing Places Fund which will finance the construction of a link road to open up the employment part of the site.

I said we would obtain Planning Permission, secure the Sport England funding, appoint a contractor and start to build a new Leisure Centre at Scott Road. **And we have**

Planning permission was granted in July 2013, Sport England funding was secured in September 2013 and the first £1m of grant was received last month. Our main contractor, Wates, was appointed in November 2013 and work started on site in December last year. The sort video showing before the start of tonight's meeting shows the progress that has been made. We'll be opening the doors on the new Selby Leisure Centre early next year, as promised.

But not just that. Since 2012 we have redirected the money that we would have paid WLCT for running the swimming pool into new community sports initiatives – “pitch up and play” football in Selby, Tadcaster and Sherburn, “Move it and Loose it” health and weight loss programmes in Eggborough, Ricall, Tadcaster, Sherburn and Selby, “Active Healthy Children” projects in 25 of the districts 46 primary schools – and we'll get to the rest this year, more sports coaches trained, more sports volunteers recruited, a new website and database with over 300 qualified coaches resgistered. And the success is there to be seen. The recent Sport England Active People Survey has shown that since 2012 the number of adults paticipating in sport has risen from 23% to 30% and in the same period the percentage of people taking part in at least 30 minutes of sport each week has risen from 31% to 40%.

Appendix A

I said we would implement practical and cost effective measures to improve the roundabouts and gateways on major routes into and around the District and its major settlements. **And we have**

Earlier this month planning permission was granted for sculptures celebrating the heritage of the town to be erected on two roundabouts on the A63 approaches to Selby – at Brayton and at the Wishing Well. Work will commence in the summer with the makeovers being complete in the autumn.

A managing agent has also been engaged to sell sponsorship on all of the district's roundabouts; this will pay for an enhanced maintenance regime which will make all of the roundabouts look more appealing. It will also provide an opportunity for local businesses to raise their profile.

Following a positive public consultation and a great deal of community interest, we hope to extend the heritage makeovers to other parts of the district in the next programme for growth including the site adjacent to the Toll Bridge in Selby.

In conclusion I said that

- Despite more years of trying than any of us cares to remember
- Despite three judicial reviews
- Despite desperate final attempts to stop us with appeals and further reviews

We would finally make our much delayed improvements to the Central Area Car Park at Tadcaster, having fully recovered our legal costs from Sam Smiths Old Brewery in Tadcaster. **AND WE HAVE!**

Over the next year I want us to build on the success we have achieved to make Selby a great place..

A great place to do business...

A renewed focus on customers will be at the heart of how we move forward and working more closely with key partners and business to help deliver good growth and prosperity for Selby. Plans for next year also include taking forward our more outward focused approach and engaging with local business, public, private and the voluntary and community sector to help communities to become more resilient and to boost our local economy.

We have now laid the initial ground work with communities, partners and businesses in the district to look at how we can work better together. The District Summit held earlier this year showed just what we can achieve. We brought together together key leaders in the private and public sector to commit to working better together and to reinforce that we are well and truly open for business. The Council will build on its unique role to act as a key facilitator in the district to help bring others together for mutual benefit.

A great place to live...

This time next year the new leisure centre will be up, open and running. A bigger pool, plus a new learner pool, a larger gym, new fitness studios, a multi purpose sports hall and a completely refurbished all weather pitch. The Selby Leisure Centre will be a great new venue for the whole district to visit, use and enjoy.

And a great place to make a difference...

Selby's CEFs make a great contribution to building stronger communities. The recent workshop in Tadcaster showed how each CEF has developed and built on its strengths and what great things each can learn from the others. But we can do more.

Working with our County Council colleagues we need to help our residents get greater access to information and services digitally, help build the capacity of individuals and groups to get involved in their areas and make a difference. Cuts to public services means that Council's will be able to do less in the future but it doesn't mean that less can be achieved.

And a great place deserves a great Council...

A Council that is not afraid to tackle major change with a very modern way of working. With plans to strengthen our commissioning model with Access Selby and our other service providers to ensure we are achieving continued value for money, quality services and a Council with a renewed commitment and ambition to work together with others to tackle key challenges and build a stronger district for the future.

Mark Crane,
Leader of Council;

To: Policy Review Committee
Date: 15th July 2014
Author: Simon Parkinson
Lead Officer: Simon Parkinson

Title: Welfare Reform - Six Month Update

Summary: This report provides a 6 month review detailing the effect of the Welfare Reform changes in Selby district and offers feedback on the work of the Policy Review Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group.

It also covers the implications for existing tenants wishing or needing to downsize and of re-letting vacant properties at target rents, and recommends that due to the small numbers involved and the support currently available there is no requirement to amend policy to cover such circumstances.

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Committee;

- (i) Note the update information contained within the review element of the report (including the progress made on Task & Finish Group work)**
- (ii) Endorse the proposal that there is no requirement to amend current policies in relation to implications relating to existing tenants wishing or needing to downsize.**

Reason for recommendation

Officers brought an update on welfare reform issues to the Policy Review meeting in December 2013 and a further update was requested for July 2014. Councillors also established a Task and Finish Group to work with officers on welfare reform issues and requested that this group report back to the July meeting on progress made.

The implications for existing tenants wishing or needing to downsize, and of re-letting vacant properties at target rents have been reviewed and officers recommend that there is no requirement to amend policies as the number of

tenants affected is low and there are already suitable mechanisms in place to support those affected.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 The Welfare Reform change that has had greatest impact on social tenants is the Housing Benefit Size Criteria/Spare Room Subsidy which came into force on 1st April 2013. As with previous updates, this report will initially provide an update on the current position in respect of the Spare Room Subsidy.

2. The Report

2.1 Housing Benefit Size Criteria/Spare Room Subsidy

2.1.1 This change applies to working-age people living in social housing. It means that Housing Benefit is no longer paid towards bedrooms that tenants are deemed not to need. Any social tenant assessed as having more bedrooms in their accommodation than they need is now considered to be under-occupying that property.

2.1.2 The legislation states that one bedroom is permitted for:

- Every adult couple (married or unmarried)
- Any other adult aged 16 or over
- Any two children of the same sex aged under 16
- Any two children aged under 10
- Any other child (other than a foster child or child whose main home is elsewhere)
- A carer (or team of carers) who do not live with at the property but provide a member of the household with overnight care

Any tenant assessed as under-occupying will receive a percentage reduction to their Housing Benefit entitlement. The percentage reduction will depend on how many rooms the tenant is under-occupying by:

14% if someone is considered to have one extra bedroom.

25% if someone is considered to have two or more extra bedrooms.

2.1.3 The number of people affected by the Spare Room Subsidy continues to fall;

Tenure	% reduction	Number affected June 2014	Average Reduction	Highest Reduction	Lowest Reduction	Number affected June 2013
Council	25%	59	£23.38	£28.32	£18.03	(63)
	14%	249	£12.12	£15.13	£5.35	(301)
HA	25%	11	£24.88	£29.54	£20.95	(19)
	14%	145	£13.45	£21.00	£0.37	(185)

The reason for these reductions is likely to be connected to households moving house or to a change of circumstances within the household.

2.1.4 The North Yorkshire Home Choice Allocations Policy has been amended to support the welfare reform changes. The policy now allows councils to prioritise applicants who are under occupying and allows a degree of discretion and flexibility when considering arrears that are as a result of the spare room subsidy. The policy also only allows properties with the correct number of bedrooms to be offered to households, thus ensuring that we are not placing people in potentially vulnerable financial situations.

2.1.5 The number of new tenancies has increased over the last 2 years. In 2013/14 we issued 279 new tenancies compared to 235 in 2012/13.

There remains a significant demand for smaller properties.

At the end of 2013/2014 there were 919 active 'Home Choice' housing applications. Of these 288 were under 60 and only eligible for a 1 bed property.

In May 2014 we let 41 properties across the full range of property type: 8 bungalows, 2 bedsits, 14 flats, 6 two-bed houses and 9 three- bed houses.

There are currently 10 general needs 'small' VOID properties across the district; 4 of these are one-bed flats (1 in Womersley/3 in Selby) and 6 are two-bed houses (1 in Sherburn/5 in Selby).

There is the discretion to offer some one bedroom bungalow accommodation to over 55's in instances where there is a clearly defined support need.

2.1.6 We continue to work closely with tenants and other internal departments and external bodies to provide support and guidance to those experiencing financial difficulties. This work, together with the use of our various financial support tools, is helping to reduce the number of tenants in rent arrears. There were 629 tenants in arrears at 31st March 2014 compared to 679 in arrears on the same date 2013.

2.1.7 We take every opportunity to engage with tenants to ensure they are receiving all the support and guidance that is currently available to them. Community Officers continue to work pro-actively with tenants in arrears. Since January, they have been visiting all tenants with low arrears to ensure that the correct support and intervention is available for each case. We are also currently looking to provide an additional dedicated tenancy support resource to provide more focused advice and support in individual cases.

2.1.8 Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) is available to people who find themselves in financial hardship due to the welfare reform changes. Additional funding continues to be available in 2014/15 to support the extra demand that has resulted from these changes.

DHP should not be regarded as a long term solution and should only be used to support individuals while they look to move house or stabilise their financial position.

We continue to promote DHP to those in most need of support. The current figures for DHP take-up are as follows;

Tenancy	May 2013	May 2014
Council	51	70
HA	22	22
Private	2	8

2.2 Welfare Reform Task and Finish Group

2.2.1 The Task and Finish Group is made up of the following people;
 Councillor Mike Jordan (Chair)
 Councillor Melanie Davies
 Councillor Eileen Metcalfe
 Simon Parkinson (Lead Officer – Community Support)
 Helen McNeil (Lead Officer – Enforcement & Debt Control)
 Ralph Gill (Lead Officer – Benefits & Taxation)

2.2.2 The group identified the main area of focus to be the additional support that Access Selby could offer those tenants affected by the welfare reform changes. Officers have worked on a number of initiatives to deliver enhanced support and advice to those tenants in most need.

Specifically:

- We are working with the Selby District Advice & Information Network, which is providing support to our staff working in this area by;
 - Offering tailored expert welfare benefit training for our front line staff.

- Utilising the network's welfare benefits consultancy line to help develop their skills and experience in this area.
- We are putting together an 'Invest to Save' bid to create a specialist Floating Support Officer role which will;
- Identify and assess individuals support needs and
 - Create individual support plans with customers to cover financial wellbeing, enjoying and achieving, being health, staying safe and making a positive contribution.
 - Help to reduce both the number of tenants in rent arrears and the number of eviction actions taken by the council.

This bid will be worked up and is expected to be presented to Access Selby Board in September 2014.

2.3 Down-sizing and Target Rents

2.3.1 At their meeting on 6th February, the Executive requested that Policy Review Committee consider the implications for existing tenants wishing or needing to downsize, of re-letting vacant properties at target rents, and whether recommendations are required for an appropriate policy in such circumstances.

2.3.2 Under the Government's rent restructuring policy, formula data was provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to ensure similar rents for similar properties in similar areas, are calculated over a transitional period. When convergence is achieved Housing Associations and Local Authorities will use the same formula for setting rent levels, which will ensure that tenants pay similar rents for similar properties regardless of whether the landlord is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) or a Local Authority.

2.3.3 2014/15 will be the thirteenth year of the transitional period during which actual rents are moving towards formula (target) rent levels under the rent-restructuring scheme. The transitional period for convergence looks set to end and from 2015/16 the model for rent calculation is set to change to increases of Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1% (this increase applies to both formula and actual increases). This change is intended to put rent on a more stable footing: CPI has being less susceptible to sudden changes that the current Retail Price Index model has seen in recent years.

2.3.4 The Government plans to commit to this policy for ten years – until 2024/25, which is intended to give long term certainty and stability on rents.

2.3.5 Where a property is not at formula rent by 2014/15, the Government expect that from April 2015 vacant properties are re-let at the formula level. Under this system there is a view that in some cases a tenant

wishing or needing to down size may find themselves paying an increased rent figure for the smaller property, thereby disincentivising the tenants need or desire to move.

- 2.3.6 Officers have used relocation patterns and rent profiling to assess the likely numbers of new tenancies that would be affected by the increased rent issue. From this work we can predict that there likely to be only a small number of such cases.
- 2.3.7 It is also important to understand the amount of support and advice given to tenants as they move between properties. All tenants are clearly aware of the rental cost of their new property and are supported in making judgements as to whether they can afford the difference between their current and new rent.
- 2.3.8 Those most vulnerable tenants are likely to be in receipt of Housing Benefit and this would increase to cover the cost of any downsizing rental increase.
- 2.3.9 It therefore seems appropriate to allow personal choice and existing support to guide the movement of tenants wishing or needing to downsize.

3. Legal/Financial Controls and other Policy matters

3.1 Legal Issues

- 3.1.1 The provision of financial support to individuals falls within the councils legal responsibilities and will be subject to relevant terms and conditions.

3.2 Financial Issues

- 3.1 We continue to monitor the effect on welfare reform changes on the relevant income and expenditure budgets.
- 3.2 All support incentives are delivered in line with current budget provision.

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 A total of 464 (568 in June 2013) social tenants are currently affected by the Spare Room Subsidy (308 Council/156 Housing Association).
- 4.2 The Council offers a range of support services to help those affected. This includes one to one support and advice as well as access to a range of financial assistance tools.

- 4.3 The Council continues to monitor the effect of the Spare Room Subsidy to identify trends, to ensure the effective use of existing resource and to identify areas where further additional support may be required.
- 4.4 There is no evidence of any negative impact in the district from the Benefit Cap.
- 4.5 A very small number of tenants are likely to be affected by the issue where someone wishing or needing to down size may find themselves paying an increased rent figure for the smaller property. Due to the support already available it does not seem necessary to amend current policies to provide any additional support.

5. **Background Documents**

There are no background documents associated with this report.

Contact Officer: Simon Parkinson
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Policy Review Committee Work Programme 2014/15

Date of Meeting	Topic	Action Required
15 July 2014	Time of Meetings	To agree a start time for meetings for 2014/15
	Work Programme	To agree the Committee's Work Programme for 2014/15
	<u>Budget and Policy Framework</u> The State of Area Address	To consider the Leader's State of the Area Address.
	<u>Committee Requested Item</u> Welfare Reform	To consider the findings of the Task & Finish Group
16 September 2014	<u>Budget and Policy Framework</u> Financial Strategy	To consider the Executive's proposals for the Council's long term (10 year), resource and spending framework in which the budget strategy and three year financial plan will be developed.
20 January 2015	<u>Budget and Policy Framework</u> Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan	To consider the Executive's proposals for revenue budgets and the capital programme for 2015/2016.
	Work Programme 2015/16	To consider the Committee's Work Programme for 2015/16

14 April 2015	Approve Policy Review Annual Report & Work Programme 2015/16	To consider the Committee's Annual Report
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