

Minutes

Policy Review Committee

- Venue: Committee Room
- Date: 20 January 2015
- Present: Councillors M Jordan (Chair), Mrs K McSherry (Vice Chair), Mrs M Davis, R Packham, I Nutt and D Mackay (substituting for Mrs E Metcalfe).
- Apologies for Absence: Councillors K Ellis, R Musgrave, Mrs A Spetch and Mrs E Metcalfe (substituted by D Mackay).
- Also Present: Councillor C Lunn (Executive Member)
- Officers Present: Karen Iveson - Executive Director (s151), Ralph Gill – Lead Officer Benefits and Taxation, Richard Besley - Democratic Services Officer and John-David Laux - Democratic Services Officer.

19. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

20. MINUTES

It was clarified that the resolution five for item 17 should be amended to read as follows:

RESOLVED:

- v) That the s106 and CIL Monitoring Officer attend the next Policy Review Committee to provide an update on their work in the role.

RESOLVED:

To receive and approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee held on 16 December 2014 with the above amendment and they be signed by the Chair.

21. CHAIR'S ADDRESS

The Chair welcomed Councillors and Officers to the meeting.

22. PR/14/6 – Welfare Reform – Six Month Update

The Lead Officer, Benefits and Taxation provided an update on Welfare Reform.

The Lead Officer for Benefits & Taxation explained the aspects of Welfare Reform, including Housing Benefit Size Criteria, Discretionary Housing Payments and the Benefit Cap in turn.

The Lead Officer, Benefits and Taxation outlined the details and effect of the welfare reform changes on residents. The Committee were informed that there had been a gradual decline in the number of residents affected and it was expected that there would be further reductions in the number of people affected for the rest of 2014/15. The Lead Officer, Benefits and Taxation cited national trends to explain this decline, such as individuals going into work and lettings policies discouraging residents from taking properties that were larger than necessary.

In response to a query regarding whether any residents in the district had been receiving Discretionary Housing Payments for longer than six months, the Lead Officer, Benefits and Taxation explained that there were some residents who fell into this category. Queries were raised around the introduction of Universal Credit, including if any individuals receiving Universal Credit had moved into the district. The Lead Officer, Benefits and Taxation stated that there were no residents currently; however the Committee were informed that in February York City Council would be rolling out Universal Credit to its residents which may have an impact on Selby. The Committee were informed that Universal Credit was likely to be rolled out between September and December 2015 in Selby. The Committee expressed concerns regarding the effect of the changes in welfare reform on residents in the district.

The Committee agreed that the regular 6 month update on Welfare Reform will continue, to monitor the effect of the future introduction of Universal Credit. It was agreed that the following information should also be included in future updates:

- The number of people who had moved homes due to the welfare reform changes.
- The number of individuals receiving Discretionary Housing Payment for more than six months,
- The number of residents who were subject to the Housing Benefit Size Criteria and who were in arrears.

RESOLVED:

- i) **To note the update.**
- ii) **That there be a further update in six months which also incorporated the information mentioned above.**

23. PR/14/7 - Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2015/16 and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Executive Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor Lunn and the Executive Director (s151), were in attendance to present the Draft Budget and Capital programme for 2015/16 and the Medium Term Financial Plan to 2017/18.

The Executive Director (s151) advised that the Council was trying to encourage feedback from residents as well as receiving views from members, which would inform the final budget proposals from the Executive to full Council in February.

The Committee were informed of the context of the budget - that funding cuts were expected to continue, resources were expected to reduce over time, and a spending review was likely to be carried out by central government after the general election in May.

The Committee discussed the Budget and MTFP including the planned savings and the position of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The Committee raised concern at the potential of the Council losing homes through the Right to Buy scheme. A number of queries were raised around savings, including how these would impact on employees and the risk related to individual savings. The Executive Director (s151) responded that a cautious approach was being adopted.

The Committee was informed that appropriate reserves were held for the risks the Council carried. The Executive Director (s151) explained that funding cuts were still expected for at least the next three years, and more savings were likely to be needed. The Committee noted the budget, and welcomed the provision of £75,000 in the Programme for Growth for a skate park and hoped that this service could be free for users.

RESOLVED:

To note and approve the Draft Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium Term Financial Plan

The meeting closed at 6:10pm