

## Minutes

### Policy Review Committee

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Venue:	Committee Room - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Tuesday, 15 October 2019
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors A Lee (Chair), K Arthur (Vice-Chair), M McCartney, M Jordan and R Packham
Officers present:	Stuart Robinson – Head of Business Development and Improvement, Martin Grainger – Head of Planning, June Rothwell – Head of Operational Services, Phil Hiscott – Property Management Team Leader, Rachel Robinson – Principal Planning Enforcement Officer, Vicky Foreman – Democratic Services Officer
Others present:	0
Public:	0
Press:	0

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#### **22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Cattnach, T Grogan and J Shaw-Wright.

#### **23 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

#### **24 MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2019.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee**

**meeting held on 10 September 2019 for signing by the Chair.**

**25 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

There was no Chair's address to the Committee.

**26 DRAFT COUNCIL PLAN 2030 (PR/19/8)**

The Committee received the report of the Council's Head of Business Development and Improvement, which provided an update on the development of the next Council Plan, specifically of the draft council priorities, objectives and headline priority actions for 2020-30. The Committee were asked to consider and comment on the draft plan.

Officers explained that the Council Plan set the overarching policy direction for the Council including the long term vision, priorities and the high level actions to deliver on those priorities. The current plan would run to 2020, so it was timely to review, revisit and refresh the plan so as to ensure current budget discussions were aligned with the revised priorities.

Members noted that the current Corporate Plan set out a vision to "*make Selby district a great place*". This vision was supported by three key priorities, to do business, to enjoy life and to make a difference. These were underpinned by a Council delivering great value which was formally incorporated as the fourth priority at the 2018 update.

The proposals to refresh the plan had been informed by the following:

- progress on delivering the Corporate Plan 2015-20, including the quarterly performance reports;
- a desire to continue good work and plans already in place – an evolutionary approach;
- contextual information on what it is like to live in the Selby district as presented in the "State of the District 2019";
- feedback from others, including external reviews (e.g.: IIP; LGA) and the views of stakeholders (e.g.: staff survey; residents; businesses);
- service plans; and
- the national policy context.

Members indicated that they had found Appendix B of the report useful, and asked a number of questions in relation to the plan on issues including broadband and mobile coverage in some parts of the district, health matters, carbon reduction and the public consultation on the plan.

Officers explained that the County Council were leading on the broadband and mobile infrastructure across the county, but that Selby District Council was working in partnership with them on this issue. Elements of work to be undertaken by the Council's Economic

Development and Planning Teams would also touch on this issue, for example, through the development of the new Local Plan.

The Committee noted that the updated draft of the plan would be considered by the Scrutiny Committee at its meeting at the end of November 2019. Officers explained that the version before the Committee was subject to change, due to the public consultation being undertaken on the document. The Committee wished to make it clear that they endorsed the draft plan as an approach to the formulation of the final plan, subject to changes made due to comments received during the public consultation.

**RESOLVED:**

**The Committee considered and commented on the Draft Council Plan 2030, and agreed that the proposed plan should be endorsed as an approach to the final version, subject to changes arising out of the public consultation.**

**27 PROPOSALS FOR ESTABLISHING A POLICY REVIEW LOW CARBON WORKING GROUP (PR/19/9)**

The Committee received the report of the Council's Head of Business Development and Improvement, which looked to progress Councillor R Musgrave's proposal at Council on 17 September 2019 that the Council establishes a Policy Review Working Group to lead on the development of the Council's approach to the challenges of low carbon.

Officers asked the Committee to discuss and agree terms of reference which would set out options for the scope of the group. The report also provided Members with details of current projects and suggested potential opportunities for further action to address climate change. Members noted that the scope of the group should be focused on what the Council was realistically able to do.

Members suggested that a climate change workshop for parish councils would be useful in the future, and queried whether an earlier carbon neutral target than 2050 should be set by the Council.

Members agreed that all members of the Policy Review Committee should be on the Low Carbon Working Group, and asked Officers to identify potential dates for the first meeting. The Committee also agreed that the first meeting should be used to further develop and scope the aims of the Low Carbon Working Group.

**RESOLVED:**

**i) To agree that the membership of the Low Carbon Working Group be made up of all Members on the Policy Review Committee.**

**ii) To ask Officers to identify and circulate potential**

**dates for the first meeting.**

- iii) That the first meeting be used to continue to develop and scope the aims of the Low Carbon Working Group.**

**28 DRAFT HRA BUSINESS PLAN AND ACTION PLAN 2020-2025 (PR/19/10)**

The Committee received the report of the Head of Operational Services which asked Members to consider and comment on the draft version of the HRA Business Plan and accompanying Action Plan 2020-2025.

Officers explained that the draft HRA and Action Plan had been considered by the Executive on 5 September 2019, and was approved for consultation. The HRA detailed the Council's ambitions over the next five years and beyond as to how it managed and looked to improve the housing stock, ensuring as much as possible that the needs of residents were met.

Members felt that more time and effort needed to be put into maintaining the environment around Council housing (i.e. grass cutting etc.), as this had a tangible effect on how people felt about their local areas or neighbourhood.

Members also emphasised the importance of looking after the Council's housing stock with decent homes standard repairs and refurbishment where needed; Officers explained that there was an eight to ten year backlog of work that was being worked through, and with the new proposed HRA standards would begin to improve. It was hoped that within fifteen years the standard of Council homes would be much better.

The Committee acknowledged that it had been difficult to recruit and retain tradespeople to work on Council properties, as the Council was not able to pay rates that were as competitive as private companies, which added to the backlog of work.

Officers that explained that some tenanted properties were well kept and did not require much remedial work; others were left in a very bad state and needed a great deal of repair and refurbishment. There was also the ongoing issue of some tenants not giving permission to the Council to come into their properties to do regular maintenance, which added to problems in the long term. The Council was only able to enter a property without permission to undertake works that were required for health and safety purposes.

Members noted that improving energy efficiency was being considered, with more effective heating systems and better insulation being explored.

The Committee were informed that some private properties had been purchased by CPO and were currently being refurbished; other options

included the purchase of S106 properties and use of the Homes England grant to be put towards refurbishment.

Members expressed their interest in the Council's affordable housing policy and asked if this could be brought to the committee for consideration, and felt that the Council should be more aggressive in its purchase of housing in order to compete with housing associations. Officers agreed that the policy could be brought back to the committee, but that due to the demands of current work on the Housing Development Programme and the availability of Officer resources, this may not be for around six months.

**RESOLVED:**

- i) The Committee considered and commented on the draft HRA Business Plan and Action Plan 2020-2025.**
- ii) The Committee welcomed the increased expenditure in the HRA Business Plan to address the large backlog of repairs to properties and the aim of bringing all Council properties up to a high standard.**
- iii) The Committee accepted that the living conditions of the Council's tenants were rightly the priority, but stressed the need to improve the external environment in Council owned areas. The maintenance of Council owned areas was being considered by a Task and Finish Group established by full Council.**
- iv) The Committee recommended that the views expressed in their debate on the HRA be forwarded to the Task and Finish Group, and given due consideration during its work.**

**29 EMPTY HOMES PERFORMANCE MONITORING (PR/19/11)**

The Committee received the report of the Housing and Environmental Health Service Manager, which asked the Committee to consider and comment on the report and its contents.

Officers explained that the North Yorkshire Empty Property Strategy and local Selby District Action Plan was agreed and adopted in January 2018. The North Yorkshire Empty Property Strategy aimed to reduce the number of long term empty homes through a coordinated approach and the local Action Plan sets out how the Council will target empty homes across the district, and how owners would be encouraged and supported to bring Empty Homes back into use.

Members noted that the new Empty Homes Officer had been very

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effective since being appointed and progress was being made across the district in bringing empty homes back into use.

Members queried how long the Empty Homes Strategy had been in place and the work being done to prevent properties becoming long term empty (i.e. over two years). Officers informed Members that the strategy and been in place since 2017, and that the empty property figures flexed on a month by month basis. Officers agreed to send the latest term empty property figures to the Committee after the meeting.

The Committee acknowledged that the present annual target of the number of empty homes to be brought back into use was 20. It was explained that empty properties were likely to be an ongoing problem, but that there were ways to deal with them, such as Compulsory Purchase Orders. This process could prove to be lengthy but Officers were of the opinion that tackling empty homes was of value in the long term.

Members noted that there were a number of long term empty properties in Tadcaster, which was affecting the area's viability for regeneration; however, Officers confirmed that there were ongoing negotiations with land and property owners in the town in an attempt to tackle this.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. The Committee considered and commented on the report.**
- ii. To ask Officers to send the latest long term empty property figures to the Committee after the meeting.**

**30 PLANNING ENFORCEMENT AND THE PLANNING ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW (PR/19/12)**

The Committee received the report of the Council's Planning Development Officer, which asked Members to consider the report which set out a six month update following the introduction of the Planning Enforcement Management Plan in February 2019.

Officers explained that the Planning Enforcement Management Plan (PEMP) had been agreed at Leadership Team and reported to Policy Review Committee in February 2019, and introduced to the service thereafter. Having an agreed PEMP was recommended as best practice in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), to set out the tests and drivers for the service within the regulatory framework, and establish outcomes based on government guidance on Planning Enforcement action. It identified the performance timescales and prioritisation of investigations to give clarity for Members and residents and to enable the effective management of resources.

Members noted that in addition to the PEMP the implementation of the workflow data system Enterprise was planned to capture and measure performance in the Enforcement Team. The database would enable

reporting of performance against key indicators aligned with the priorities and timescales set out in the PEMP. Alongside the PEMP further resource had been allocated to Planning Enforcement in July 2019 running to October 2019 to address the high number of backlog (400+) cases, in addition to a running number of more recent cases of approximately 200. The PEMP and additional resource was intended to reduce workload and better manage workflow, improve public and Member perception and reduce formal complaints.

Officers acknowledged that there were further improvements to be made, but that there had been substantial improvements in the service. An enforcement sub-group of Planning Committee would be established in the coming weeks to assist with the monitoring and performance of the service. Members were also pleased to note that a bid for funding worth £50k had also been successful, which would be put towards tackling enforcement issues in the green belt.

The Committee felt that in general the enforcement service at the Council had improved, and agreed that the benefits of having the plan were shown in the results. Some Members explained that Councillors needed to be mindful of the difficult regime in which Enforcement Officers had to work.

Members expressed the importance of ensuring that the levels of staff and resources were maintained in order for the improvements within the service to continue.

The Committee agreed that some further Member information and training on planning enforcement would be useful, and that all Members should be encouraged to read the PEMP.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To note the report.**
- ii. To ask Officers to arrange further information and Member training on planning enforcement.**
- iii. That all Members should be encouraged to read the Planning Enforcement Management Plan.**

**31 WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20**

The Committee considered the 2019-20 work programme as set out in the agenda. Members discussed on the aims and interests of the Committee, and proposed the following changes to the work programme for 2019-20:

- To request further information from the relevant Officer on the licensing items scheduled for the January 2020 meeting, i.e. how long it would take to consider each.

- That the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy be considered at the December 2019 meeting, to tie in with consideration of North Yorkshire Home Choice.
- Members asked that the Affordable Housing Policy be added to the work programme, and that the Democratic Services Officer speak to colleagues from Housing as the previously discussed timescale of six months before it could be considered seemed too long.
- Members requested that when Officers brought reports about revising or changing existing policies to the Committee that the reports highlighted clearly what changes were proposed, in order to streamline the process for Members.
- The Committee also agreed that the Chair of the Committee should review and agree items that were added to the work programme.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the work programme for 2019-20 and agree that the amendments as set out above be made by Officers.**

The meeting closed at 6.55 pm.