

Minutes

Policy Review Committee

Venue:	Microsoft Teams - Remote
Date:	Tuesday, 16 March 2021
Time:	5.00 pm
Members present remotely via Teams:	Councillors A Lee (Chair), T Grogan (Vice-Chair), M Jordan, K Arthur, J Chilvers, R Packham Executive Lead Member for Finance and Resources - Councillor C Lunn
Officers present remotely via Teams:	Karen Iveson – Chief Finance Officer, Dave Caulfield – Director of Economic Regeneration and Place, Suzan Harrington – Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning, Drew Fussey – Operational Service Manager, Tammy Fox – Revenues and Benefits Manager, Keith Cadman – Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement, Michelle Dinsdale – Senior Policy and Performance Officer, Dave Herbert – Enforcement Officer, Victoria Foreman – Democratic Services Officer

26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M McCartney and J Shaw-Wright.

Councillor K Franks was in attendance as a substitute for Councillor J Shaw-Wright.

27 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

Councillor A Lee declared an interest in agenda item 7 – Payment of Covid-19 Business Grants, as a business he owned had received a grant, but did not leave the meeting during consideration thereof as it was a presentation item.

28 MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 12 January 2021.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee meeting held on 12 January 2021 for signing by the Chair.

29 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE

There was no Chair's address to the Committee.

30 UPDATE FROM THE LOW CARBON WORKING GROUP (STANDING ITEM)

The Committee received a verbal update from the Senior Policy and Performance Officer, who explained that the Low Carbon Project Officer had been appointed and would start in the role in April. There had been a great deal of interest in the role and applications by a number of high-quality candidates.

Members noted that there had been discussions between Officers and APSE around the Scope 3 emissions work. It had been agreed that APSE would calculate these Scope 3 emissions for the Council, which would include leisure, waste and the street scene contracts that were currently delivered by AMEY; it was hoped that this new data would be available for reporting back to Members by mid-May 2021.

The Committee were informed that the Executive had considered the draft Low Carbon Working Group Action Plan and had requested some further information. The report would be considered again at their meeting on 1 April 2021.

Members were reminded about the presentation from the White Rose Forest Partnership at the meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group in January 2021. The Working Group had proposed a tree planting target of 50% in low-risk areas. A report would be considered by the Executive on 1 April 2021 to note the Working Group's aspirations.

Lastly, Officers mentioned the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission who were an independent advisory body set up to guide and support climate action across the region. It had received sign-off from all the Council Leaders in the region and would be launched on 17 March 2021. The Lead Director was Professor Andy Gouldson of Leeds University; Prof. Gouldson had offered to undertake a piece of work on the district's carbon emissions, which Members agreed was an excellent opportunity.

The Committee were advised that the main funding for the commission had come from the University of Leeds, but there had also been commitments from Leaders across the region to work collaboratively to

address climate change issues.

Members confirmed that they would like Prof. Gouldson to attend a future meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group to give a presentation, and asked Officers to arrange a meeting of the Working Group in April 2021 for this purpose.

RESOLVED:

- 1. To ask Officers to arrange a meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group in April 2021 following the Executive's consideration of the Group's Action Plan; and**
- 2. To ask Officers to invite Prof. Andy Gouldson to the above meeting to give a presentation to Members on the work of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission.**

31 FLYTIPPING - ENFORCEMENT

The Committee received the report of the Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement which asked Members to note its content.

Officers explained that fly tipping was national problem in many communities, and whilst the Council had a responsibility to remove waste from public land it also had enforcement powers to take a proportionate response where evidence of the perpetrator was found.

Members noted that the Council had approved the introduction of a system of fixed penalty notices (FPN's) at a meeting of the Executive on 5 December 2019. The introduction of the system had involved an extensive communications campaign during January to March 2020 with full implementation commencing in April 2020, although some FPN's were issued from January to end of March 2020. The level of fine was set at the maximum of £400 with a 25% reduction for early payment. Prior to the introduction, the Council was limited to issuing warning letters, littering FPN's with a maximum penalty of £50 or legal action via the court system.

Officers also stated that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) had published their Fly Tipping Statistics for England, 2019/20 on 24 February 2021. This document provided national context of fly tipping statistics and enforcement by Local Authorities and was appended to the report.

Members expressed their disappointment at the levels of fly tipping in the district, despite the community litter picks that the Council could provide kit for (which were currently halted due to Covid-19) and its monitoring of fly tipping hot spots. Officers explained that the FPNs covered both littering and dog fouling.

The Committee asked for clarification on some of the figures set out in the report and expressed further concerns about the low levels of prosecution for fly tipping and associated offences. Some Members felt very strongly that those caught fly tipping or littering should be taken to court, as FPNs did not make an example of those caught for such offences.

Members queried why CCTV cameras that were set up to monitor areas for fly tipping were not more covert; Officers explained that the Council had to put up signs to notify the public that there were cameras, and that the issues experienced with fly tipping were identifiable across the region. Some areas such as the sides of high-speed roads were particularly bad. It was suggested that more cameras should be purchased for a wider area to be monitored, and that the approach of other local authorities be examined for comparison.

The Committee asked Officers to provide some additional information as to how much litter picking was being done outside of built-up areas, in particular on high-speed roads, and that it be shared with Members, as numerous complaints were received about it from the public. Some Members felt that more resources may have to be allocated in order to tackle the problem to an appropriate level.

Officers explained that some companies, such as McDonalds, undertook community litter picks and provided extra bins in order to cater for their rubbish. The Committee agreed that this should be encouraged throughout the area.

The Chair acknowledged that Members had expressed a general dissatisfaction with the tackling of litter and fly tipping in the district; it was a constant cross-party issue and as such it was suggested that the Committee should investigate the matter in more detail. Officers were asked to come back with more information around what additional resources may be needed, how to improve performance, what engagement with local businesses there was, the general education of the population in the district about fly tipping and littering and the provision of cameras.

Officers confirmed that they would take away the issues that Members had raised and gather further data and information, and report back to the Committee in approximately three months.

RESOLVED:

To ask Officers to report back to the Committee in approximately three months (in the 2021-22 municipal year) with more detail on fly tipping and littering in the district, in particular:

- **clarification of figures set out in the report;**
- **how much litter picking was being done outside of built up areas, i.e. high speed roads;**

- if additional resources were needed, and if so, the quantity thereof;
- engagement with local businesses;
- general education of the population; and
- the provision of cameras.

32 PAYMENT OF COVID-19 BUSINESS GRANTS - PRESENTATION

Officers had circulated a presentation to Members ahead of the meeting which gave an overview of the payment of Covid-19 business grants by the Council. In summary, more than £30m had been distributed to businesses in the form of grants and business rates relief; £1.8m related to discretionary schemes, £77k had been returned to the government and in total approximately 4,600 claims had been supported.

Members acknowledged the amount of effort and time that had been put into the payment of grants by staff, who had been administering the scheme in addition to their everyday roles; it was agreed that Selby's performance had been exemplary.

Officers explained that whilst funding had been received from central government to support the Council's administration of the scheme, the final costs to the Council, including a backlog of work, were still to be covered. Planned improvements in the Revenue and Benefits Team had not been achieved and were deferred in order for staff to focus on the distribution of grants.

The Executive Lead Member for Finance and Resources was in attendance at the meeting and emphasised the importance of the work undertaken by Officers over the past twelve months. The Committee were pleased to note that Members would be kept informed when what was expected to be the final round of funding was administered in April 2021.

Questions were asked regarding the return of funds to central government and whether there was still an active discretionary grant fund. Officers explained that there was to be a new amount of funding to last through until March 2022.

Members agreed that it was very important that the most was obtained from the grants from the government, as numerous businesses in the area were still struggling. It was essential that the grants policy the Council used was not too restrictive, so that as many people and businesses as possible could be helped.

Officers acknowledged the suggestions that the Committee had made and made the point that there was an element of future predictions to also be considered, particularly around the potential for another wave of infections in autumn and winter 2021. It was imperative that the funding from the government lasted long enough if there was another wave of the

virus; sustainability was key, and as a result, some of the funding may need to be held back.

The Committee asked Officers what was being done to contact those businesses who perhaps did not understand how to apply for the grants or believed themselves to be ineligible. Officers explained that a great deal of effort had gone into communications relating to these issues, using contacts in the local press, the Economic Development Team, Licensing, and the local business community. Members were pleased to note that those who had received grants previously would not be made to reapply; funds would be sent to them automatically. Officers were also encouraged to keep up with the communication to ensure that the maximum number of businesses continued to be aware of the grants available to them.

Members commended Officers on how they had dealt with the administration and distribution of business grants and thanked them for their continued hard work.

It was agreed by the Committee that a written report on the same topic, as detailed on the work programme for the next meeting in April 2021, was not required and should be deferred in lieu of an update later in the year.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update on the payment of Covid-19 business grants and agreed that an update on the matter should be brought back to the Committee by Officers later in 2021.

33 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the 2020-21 work programme and the expected reports for the next meeting on 6 April 2021. Members asked Officers to check the status of the Car Parking Policy/Strategy report; if this report was not ready for the April meeting, the other items listed for the same date could be deferred.

The Committee also asked Officers to check when the Council's Licensing Policy would be considered by the Committee.

RESOLVED:

To note the work programme and ask Officers to check on the status of the Car Parking Policy/Strategy and the Licensing Policy and which meetings these items would be considered at.

The meeting closed at 6.15 pm.