



# **Policy Review Committee**

**Annual Report  
2020-21**

## **Introduction by Councillor Andrew Lee - Chair of the Policy Review Committee**



I am pleased to present the Policy Review Committee with the Annual Report for 2020-21.

The Policy Review Committee only met 5 times in 2020-21 due to the coronavirus pandemic, an event which has changed the way the Council works in many ways. Despite having held fewer meetings, the Committee still considered a range of different issues, including (amongst others) the allocation of housing, the Council's finances and budgets, Universal Credit, the Local Plan, affordable housing, fly-tipping, Covid-19 business grants, and the low carbon agenda.

The Low Carbon Working Group, set up to closely examine the low carbon agenda of the Council, has continued to meet throughout the year. The examination of low carbon in the district continues to feel very timely due to ongoing concerns about global temperatures rising and environmental destruction. The group has met on numerous occasions and has produced an action plan which is to be considered by the Executive very soon. The group has reported back regularly to the Policy Review Committee throughout 2020-21.

I would like to thank all members of the Policy Review Committee for their support and continued hard work. Many people have contributed to the success of Policy Review, including officers, external partner organisations and my thanks goes out to all of them.

I look forward to the continuing progress of Policy Review and the Low Carbon Working Group in 2021-22.

Cllr A Lee

## Policy Review Committee Annual Report 2020-21

The Policy Review Committee membership comprised the following Members during the 2020-21 municipal year:

<b>Conservative</b>	<b>Labour</b>	<b>Selby Independents and Yorkshire Party Group</b>
Andrew Lee (Chair)	Jennifer Shaw-Wright	Mary McCartney
Tim Grogan (Vice Chair)	Robert Packham	
Karl Arthur		
Judith Chilvers		
Mike Jordan		
<b>Substitutes</b>	<b>Substitutes</b>	<b>Substitutes</b>
Mark Topping	Keith Franks	John McCartney
Neil Reader	Stephanie Duckett	

The Committee met 5 times during the 2020-21 year, which is fewer times than usual due to the coronavirus pandemic.

### The Role of the Policy Review Committee

The Policy Review Committee is one of the Council's three Overview and Scrutiny committees. It is responsible for contributing to the development of Council policy, reviewing and making recommendations regarding existing Council policy and considering and commenting upon the implications on Selby District of the policies of partner organisations and other agencies delivering public services in the District.

### 2020-21 Work Programme

During 2020-21 the Policy Review Committee reviewed and commented upon several topics, including:

Standing Update from Low Carbon Working Group (every meeting)	Flytipping
MTFS and revised Budget	Payment of Covid-19 Business Grants
Annual Report of the Committee 2019-20	Annual Report of the Committee 2020-21
Allocation of Housing	Car Parking Policy/Strategy
Universal Credit Update	Financial Budget 2021-22
Preferred Options Report from Local Plan Programme Board	Empty Homes
Affordable Housing Strategy	Work Programme 2020-21 and Draft for 2021-22

Date of Meeting	Topic	Discussion/Resolution
8 September 2020	Work Programme 2020-21	Members noted the work programme for the rest of 2020-21.
	Medium Term Financial Strategy and Revised Budget	<p>The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer, which asked Members to consider the content of the report and make any comments on the proposed revised Budget for 2020-21, and updated Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), prior to consideration by Council later in September 2020.</p> <p>Members raised queries and concerns about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- the savings requirement which identified an estimated rise to between £2.4m and £2.9m over the next 3 years;</li> <li>- what effect the government's plans to introduce unitary authorities would have on the budget;</li> <li>- Council employees in respect of the furlough system operated by the Government;</li> <li>- whose decision it was not to furlough any of the Council's personnel;</li> <li>- the impact of the pay award which included one extra annual leave day;</li> <li>- the proposal to divert the New Homes Bonus from reserves to help mitigate the impacts of Covid;</li> <li>- the proposed £5 increase in Council Tax for 2021-22 and whether this amount had been agreed.</li> </ul> <p>There were mixed views about increasing Council Tax particularly when savings were needed but local communities had been hit by the pandemic and were struggling financially.</p>

		<b>The Committee noted the revised Budget for 2020-21 and the update to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) covering both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA).</b>
	Annual Report of the Policy Review Committee 2019-20	<p>The Committee received a report from the Democratic Services Officer which asked them to agree the annual report for 2019-20. Members felt that it was a very comprehensive report and complimented the Committee on their work on the Taxi Licensing Policy. The Chair thanked the Committee for their support and continued hard work.</p> <p><b>The Committee agreed the Annual Report of the Policy Review Committee for 2019-20, submitted by the Chair of the Committee.</b></p>
<b>20 October 2020</b>	Work Programme 2020-21	The Committee considered the Policy Review work programme for 2020-21 and asked that the following items be added; the consultation report for the preferred options from the Local Plan Programme Board; and the draft Affordable Housing Strategy.
	The Allocation of Housing – Update Presentation	<p>The Committee received a presentation and report from the Housing Service Manager which updated them on the allocation of housing in the district.</p> <p>Members were pleased to note that a new Affordable Housing Development Strategy was currently being developed and would be brought to Policy Review Committee for consultation in due course.</p> <p>The Committee asked several questions regarding housing around variations to S106 Agreements and comments on planning applications from the Housing Team, the advertising of rural area restrictions, the future of the Home Choice scheme once York City Council had left and the acquisition of empty homes. Officers confirmed that seven empty homes had been acquired by the Council so far, and that there was a list of around 20 to 30 properties that were long</p>

		<p>term empty which the Council had identified.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the report and presentation of the Housing Service Manager and asked that an update report on empty homes in the district be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.</b></p>
	Low Carbon Working Group Update <b>(Standing Item)</b>	<p>The Committee received the report of the Senior Policy and Performance Officer which asked Members to endorse the Draft Low Carbon Action Plan.</p> <p>Members discussed the report and agreed that the work of the group had been collaborative and cross party, and that it should continue following consideration by the Executive in December.</p> <p>The potential for tree planting at Burn Airfield was queried and joint working with the LEP (Local Enterprise Partnership) for the development of a low carbon economy. The Deputy Leader was in attendance and confirmed that he would speak on the matter at the Executive meeting in December. Officers confirmed that the 418t carbon footprint of the Council did not include outsourced services.</p> <p>The Chair of the Committee asked about low carbon interventions and expressed concern that by increasing use of green technology the Council would be unwittingly generating carbon elsewhere.</p> <p>Officers explained that the calculation of the Council's carbon footprint did not include emissions from manufacturing the interventions because this would fall under Scope 3, which was outside of the scope of this piece of work. APSE could be asked to look at Scope 3 emissions as a separate commission, but it was difficult to obtain the raw data for this as it was heavily reliant on third party information being submitted, i.e., by organisations delivering outsourced services and contractors, and could take some time.</p>

		<p>The approach that APSE had taken in producing the report was a standard methodology that had been used across the country in other local authority areas. Scope 3 data was problematic, mainly due to the amount of time it would take to collect. The elements included in Scopes 1 and 2 would have a positive effect. Some local authorities had tried to trace their carbon footprint for everything, but it had proved problematic in places.</p> <p>Concerns around gathering further data were noted; the general consensus from the Committee was that the action plan as set out should be submitted to the Executive and the work be taken forward, without the need for the additional data.</p> <p><b>The Policy Review Committee endorsed the Draft Low Carbon Action Plan for submission to the Executive at their meeting in December 2020.</b></p>
<b>12 January 2021</b>	Work Programme 2020-21	<p>The Committee considered the Policy Review work programme for 2020-21 and made a number of suggestions and amendments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- That following a recent decision by the Licensing Committee, the Licensing Policy be brought back to the Policy Review Committee for further consideration by the next meeting in March.</li> <li>- Regarding the provision of business grants during the Covid-19 outbreak to ask Officers to give an overview to Committee about the scheme, when grants were being paid out, to how many businesses, how many fraudulent or erroneous applications there had been etc. Members agreed it would also be useful for the Committee to understand the Council's policies and protocols in relation to business grants as it was a live issue.</li> <li>- Members asked if a summary of public consultation comments on the</li> </ul>

		<p>Council's 2021-2022 Budget and the Local Plan could be brought to Committee to give them a more complete picture of the process and residents' thoughts on both matters once the consultations had closed. It was also suggested that a summary of comments on the Local Plan should be sent to all Councillors.</p>
	Universal Credit Update	<p>The Committee received the report of the Revenues and Benefits Manager which asked Members to consider the content of the report, note any changes, and make any comments on Universal Credit.</p> <p>Members asked several questions in relation to the report on matters such as the future of the hardship fund, incidences of homelessness relating to the number of people on Universal Credit and council tax support.</p> <p>The Committee agreed that they should still receive regular updates on Universal Credit, but that just headline figures would suffice as opposed to longer written reports; these next set of figures were requested for around six months' time. Officers confirmed that this would be possible as the Council received a quarterly report from the Department for Work and Pensions, which could feed into the figures to be presented to Members.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the report and requested that headline figures relating to the management of Universal Credit at the Council be presented to the Committee in six months' time.</b></p>
	Preferred Options Report from Local Plan Programme Board	<p>The Committee received the report of the Planning Policy Manager which asked Members to consider and endorse the Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation Document.</p> <p>Some Members expressed concerns relating to the consultation, in that there were members of the public that did not have access to the internet and as a</p>

		<p>result would not be able to respond if they could not attend in-person events. Officers acknowledged that this may be the case for some residents but explained that a great deal was being done to ensure that people could still engage with the consultation and submit their views for consideration. It was also essential that the development of the Local Plan continued to give clarity and certainty to planning and development arrangements in the district.</p> <p>The Committee suggested that further communications work be undertaken on the consultation to ensure that as many residents as possible were aware that it was going ahead. Members agreed that maintaining control of strategic planning in the district was very important in order to prevent inappropriate development.</p> <p>Officers were thanked for the work they had done on the Local Plan so far; Members emphasised the importance of encouraging responses to the consultation in their local communities.</p> <p><b>The Committee endorsed the Preferred Options Local Plan Consultation Document.</b></p>
	Draft Development Strategy for Affordable Housing	<p>The Committee received the report of the Housing Service Manager which introduced the new Draft Development Strategy for Affordable Housing and asked Members to consider and submit their comments on it.</p> <p>The Committee expressed the view that the Council should be pursuing new housing stock alongside housing associations. Officers confirmed that they would be able to look into this approach in more detail, but that some types of units were harder to bring forward than others. The Council needed to ensure that there was sufficient flexibility and opportunities that could be identified as they arose; the build costs for local authorities were often high, but that it was possible to find a solution to the delivery of housing with the right resources.</p>

		<p>The Committee agreed that as a local authority, the Council was best placed to know what development the area needed and where, but that developers needed to offer affordable housing and it should be pursued accordingly.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader and Lead Executive Member for Place Shaping who was also in attendance at the meeting explained that it was costly for the Council to build housing compared to buying it. In the last year 120 affordable homes had been built in the district, but they had all been procured by housing associations. Members were informed that there was approximately £8m in reserves with which the Council could buy or build homes, and he was determined to see more done in this regard.</p> <p>Officers explained the process for Right to Buy buybacks, and acknowledged that in some circumstances it was viable, but not always.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the report and requested that the matter be brought before them again in the future when further work had been undertaken on the policy.</b></p>
	Empty Homes	<p>The Committee received the report of the Housing Service Manager which asked Members to consider the content and submit comments on the Empty Property Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>Officers explained that the North Yorkshire Empty Property Strategy and local Selby District Action Plan was agreed and adopted in January 2018. The strategy aimed to reduce the number of long-term empty homes through a co-ordinated approach and the local action plan set out how the Council would target empty homes across the district, and encourage, support and enforce owners to bring empty homes back into use.</p>

		<p>Members noted that the report provided an update on the progress of the implementation of the strategy and the action plan.</p> <p><b>The Committee noted the report.</b></p>
	Low Carbon Working Group Update ( <b>Standing Item</b> )	<p>The Committee received updates from the Director of Economic Regeneration and Place and Senior Policy and Performance Officer on the Executive's consideration of the Low Carbon Working Group report.</p> <p>The Deputy Leader and Lead Executive Member for Place Shaping was in attendance at the meeting and asked that representatives from the Working Group accompany him to talk to the Executive about the report.</p> <p>Also in attendance at the meeting was Guy Thompson from the White Rose Forest Partnership (WRFP), who gave an overview of the organisation's work. The Council was well placed to develop a strategic partnership with WRFP that could bring numerous benefits to the district.</p> <p>The Committee asked if it was possible to begin tree planting in the district quickly; Mr Thompson explained that sites needed to be identified and analysed first, landowners communicated with, and the design and funding of the scheme supported.</p> <p>Members were pleased to note that the WRFP also had a 'landscapes for water' project which looked at the effects of tree planting on areas prone to flooding.</p> <p>The Committee asked that the WRF attend the next meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group in order for further discussions on tree planting to take place; Officers emphasised the importance of the work being evidence based and linked to the Council's new Local Plan.</p>

		<b>The Committee noted the update on the work of the Low Carbon Working Group and requested that a representative from the White Rose Forest Partnership attend the next meeting of the Working Group.</b>
	Financial Budget 2021-22	<p>The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked the Committee to provide comments on the Draft Revenue Budget, Capital Programme and Medium-Term Financial Plan 2021-2022. Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor L Lunn, Lead Executive Member for Finance and Resources.</p> <p>Members were pleased to note that the proposal was to freeze council tax for the 2021-22 year, as many people were under a great deal of financial pressure due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was suggested by some Members that rents should also have been frozen.</p> <p>The Committee asked questions relating to the improvement of industrial units, grants, loans, savings and rents. Officers confirmed that numerous Council resources would be directed towards tackling Covid-19 in the coming year, and that the majority of proposed savings would be pushed back. Members were reminded that with regards to housing rents, this was a ringfenced account and as such these monies would go directly back into the service to invest in the planned improvements to tenants' homes.</p> <p><b>The Policy Review Committee endorsed the Executive's draft budget proposals for 2021-22 including the proposed freeze in Council Tax.</b></p>
<b>16 March 2021</b>	Low Carbon Working Group Update ( <b>Standing Item</b> )	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 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,

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>The Committee asked 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 to invite Prof. Andy Gouldson to the meeting</b></p>
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		<p><b>to give a presentation to Members on the work of the Yorkshire and Humber Climate Commission.</b></p>
	Fly Tipping	<p>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.</p> <p>Members expressed their disappointment at the levels of fly tipping in the district, 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.</p> <p>Members queried why CCTV cameras that were set up to monitor areas for fly tipping were not more covert; 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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>

		<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p><b>Officers were asked 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:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- clarification of figures set out in the report;</li> <li>- how much litter picking was being done outside of built up areas, i.e. high speed roads;</li> <li>- if additional resources were needed, and if so, the quantity thereof;</li> <li>- engagement with local businesses;</li> <li>- general education of the population; and</li> <li>- the provision of cameras.</li> </ul>
	<p>Payment of COVID-19 Business Grants – Presentation</p>	<p>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. 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.</p> <p>The Executive Lead Member for Finance and Resources was in attendance at the meeting and emphasised the importance of the work undertaken by Officers</p>

	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Members commended Officers on how they had dealt with the administration and distribution of business grants and thanked them for their continued hard work.</p> <p>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.</p>
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		<b>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.</b>
	Work Programme 2020-21	<p>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.</p> <p>The Committee also asked Officers to check when the Council's Licensing Policy would be considered by the Committee.</p>
<b>12 April 2021</b>	Work Programme Planning for 2021-22	To be completed after the meeting.
	Annual Report of the Policy Review Committee 2020-21	As above.
	Housing Repairs Presentation	As above.
	Low Carbon Working Group Update <b>(Standing Item)</b>	As above.
	Car Parking Update	As above.