

Minutes

Policy Review Committee

Venue:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Tuesday, 20 July 2021
Time:	5.00 pm
Members present remotely via Teams:	Councillors C Pearson (Chair), M Topping (Vice-Chair), M Jordan, K Arthur, J Chilvers, R Packham and J Shaw-Wright
Officers present:	Dave Caulfield, Director of Economic Regeneration and Place, Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer, June Rothwell, Head of Operational Services, Caroline Skelly, Planning Policy Manager, Keith Cadman, Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement, Drew Fussey, Operational Service Manager, Catherine Hickford, Low Carbon Officer, Sharon Cousins, Licensing Manager, Victoria Foreman, Democratic Services Manager

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor M McCartney.

2 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

3 MINUTES

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

RESOLVED:

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

4 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting and expressed his aim that the Committee would look at a number of the Council's policies throughout the 2021-22 year.

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

The Committee received a verbal update from the Low Carbon Project Officer following the last meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group held on 6 July 2021:

Scope 3 Emissions

- The Council's Scope 1 and 2 emissions had already been calculated by APSE and were used to inform the initial work to develop a Low Carbon Action Plan. Members were keen to understand the wider Scope 3 emissions and APSE had been commissioned to do this further work.
- Scope 3 data had been sent to APSE for them to calculate this portion of the carbon footprint. This included data on leisure and waste contracts, business mileage, water use, and predicted energy use of built assets; from this Officers could fully understand the Council's carbon budget and develop a strategy to zero carbon emissions by 2030.
- The next step would be to develop a methodology using the LGA carbon emissions accounting toolkit for monitoring, recording and reporting Scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions data annually, to track progress. Using the toolkit would allow a comparison with other local authorities. There was a need to understand how to implement this, and how to adopt into each service area.

Tree Planting

- An Officer led Tree Planting Working Group had been developed to progress projects with the White Rose Forest (WRF) and develop a project plan. Next steps would include a meeting with the WRF to develop a stakeholder engagement plan in line with their resources, planning meeting to be held in August 2021.
- The Town and Parish Councils and Ward Member survey had been sent out to gauge interest and knowledge of tree planting and identify any planting opportunities. 26 responses had been received so far, including identification of existing tree planting projects, local stakeholder groups who were interested in being involved with tree planting and potential green spaces that could benefit from additional trees.
- The Tree Council Tree Warden Scheme was a potential opportunity

for community groups in the area to take on this role.

Draft Low Carbon Action Plan

- The plan had been updated and discussed with the Lead Executive Member but had not been taken to the July Executive for consideration.
- The Lead Executive Member had suggested that Officers prepare a strategy to go to the Executive, followed by the action plan at a later date, in order to allow time to review the resource allocation for the action plan and focus on what was achievable. It was suggested that the Executive Member attend the next Low Carbon Working Group meeting to outline his thoughts and agree the next steps to progress the work.
- Other next steps would be to include the results of the APSE Scope 3 study within the strategy, to understand the scale of the problem and formulate a roadmap to zero carbon by 2030, using the Scope 3 results and the recommendations from APSE.
- Following this, a 'quick win' list of actions and projects that were achievable in the given time frame could be developed to deliver the carbon reductions we the Council was aspiring to, including taking into account the likely timescales for local government reorganisation in York and North Yorkshire, which meant Selby district Council in its current form was unlikely to exist beyond March 2023.
- The next Low Carbon Working Group meeting would be on 23 August 2021; it had been requested that the APSE report was completed prior to this date so Officers could feed back on Scope 3 emissions and update the strategy. The intention of Officers was for the strategy and some early win commitments to be presented to Executive in September 2021.

Members asked several questions of Officers relating to the realistic aims of the Working Group, how targets could be achieved, the size and length of time for the projects proposed over the next two years and the relationship of the projects to the imminent decision on local government reorganisation (LGR) in North Yorkshire. The Committee acknowledged the possibilities of projects that would produce 'quick wins', but also emphasised the importance of starting to plan longer-term projects as soon as possible.

Officers explained that identification of the main issues and longer-term goals would be presented to the Executive in September 2021 to set out a strategy which would recognise what had to be done by 2030, as well as shorter projects that would deliver results more quickly. Members were pleased that a questionnaire on tree planting had been sent out to Councillors and Parish/Town Councils. The results of the survey would

identify opportunities for tree planting and could potentially tie in with the White Rose Forest Partnership's work, a strategy for which was to be launched in the autumn. The Committee were keen to express the importance of not missing the 2021 tree planting season.

Members were pleased that an overall baseline was being identified and emphasised the need to front-load some of the actions, particularly short-term ones. The Council should attempt to achieve as much as possible over the next few years to leave a strong legacy after LGR.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the update and emphasised the importance of both long- and short-term low carbon projects being taken forward promptly.

6 MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (PR/21/1)

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer which asked Members to provide comments on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

Then Committee noted that the report presented an update to the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), covering both the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account (HRA) prior to consideration by Council on 22 July 2021. It considered the budget pressures and issues facing the Council over the next 3 years and beyond, in light of the on-going financial impacts of Covid-19 and local government re-organisation in North Yorkshire.

Members acknowledged that 2020/21 was a year of major uncertainty as the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded and the Government's plans for potential re-organisation in North Yorkshire were announced. The Government's proposals for a reviewed Local Government funding system were delayed, and once again 2021/22 was a one-year settlement. Against this backdrop of uncertainty, the key drivers for the financial strategy remained unchanged, although the level of risk had undoubtedly increased. The strategy identified a range of emerging issues, including the government's waste strategy. The MTFS also set out the Council's reserves strategy which sought to set aside sums to cover known commitments and financial risk as well as earmarking resources to support delivery of the "Council Plan".

The Committee noted that, based on the assumptions within the mid-case MTFS, the savings requirement was estimated to rise to £2.8m within the next 3 years, although this was heavily dependent upon future local government finance settlements. The worst case showed the gap rising to nearly £4m over the next 3 years. Given on-going Covid and local government re-organisation (LGR), capacity was focussed on direct delivery of services and projects, and it was proposed that savings were

deferred a further year to 2024/25 with reserves being used to bridge the gap in the meantime. It was also proposed that £11.9m be held in the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve for this purpose, with £8m available for alternative use.

Members were also informed that a modest level of savings was assumed over the next 3 years, but in the longer-term income generation would be key, with charging for green waste and alternative use for the Summit to be brought forward for consideration in due course. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) also presented the opportunity for further service transformation and efficiency. As part of this refresh the General Fund and HRA capital programmes had been reviewed to ensure they were deliverable and some reprioritisations are proposed, including withdrawal of the General Fund housing development programme and extension of the HRA to ensure maximisation of s106 spend.

Officers explained that the Programme for Growth had also been reviewed, with the allocation of funds to carbon reduction work reduced to cover those elements that could be delivered within the next 2 years, with £950k available for alternative use. Additionally, a further £8m was proposed for release from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve to the Programme for Growth from 2021/22. Several proposals for these funds were put forward for consideration, including an additional allocation to the Selby Station Gateway Project (subject of a separate report).

The Committee understood that despite the uncertainty, the MTFS reaffirmed the Council's commitment to the people of Selby District to support the district to be a great place to live, to enjoy life and to grow, delivered by a Council whose focus was to continue to achieve the best value for money for residents. The MTFS aimed to provide financial sustainability, resilience and capacity for the Council in pursuing its objectives, ensuring its commitments were delivered and enabling a smooth transition to any new authority.

An extract from the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 8 July 2021 had been circulated to the Committee.

Members asked numerous questions of Officers and the Lead Executive Member for Finance and Resources was in attendance. The queries covered a few matters within the MTFS, including the Selby Station Gateway Project, the Council's low carbon goals, including the potential projects and the need for a steer from the Executive on these, the use of savings and reserves, risks such as the possible loss of funds from Drax Power due to LGR, the future of the Summit Sports Centre and economic assumptions regarding interest rates and inflation.

Regarding the Selby Station Gateway, Officers explained that substantial grant funding had been received through the government's Transforming Cities Programme, which had to be spent by March 2023, but that further funding would be required as some elements of the project would not be

ready for delivery by then due to matters such as land acquisition.

The Lead Executive Member recognised the need for the Council to look more at carbon neutrality and how it had to be prioritised; however, the balancing of the budget and appropriate use of funds were also vital. Members noted that should the decision on LGR be for a single unitary authority across the whole county, the low carbon group already established by North Yorkshire County Council would take forward the information collected by Selby District Council's Low Carbon Working Group.

The Committee accepted that decisions on the future of the Summit Sports Centre were difficult to take until it had finished being used as a vaccine centre for the pandemic, and that any changes in interest rates would have an effect on the MTFS, but a modest cap had been included on investment interest in order to mitigate this, no new borrowing was proposed and current external debt rates had been fixed for their term.

Overall, the Committee were content to recommend the MTFS to the Council for approval.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee recommended the Medium Term Financial Strategy to full Council for approval.

7 PROPOSED TAXI LICENSING CONSULTATION ON STATUTORY TAXI AND PRIVATE HIRE VEHICLE STANDARDS (PR/21/2)

The Committee received the report of the Licensing Manager which asked Members to provide comments on the Proposed Taxi Licensing Consultation on Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards, in order to ensure that the views of the Policy Review Committee were considered as part of the eight-week consultation taking place between 12 July 2021 and 6 September 2021.

The Committee were informed that the Secretary of State for Transport (DfT) had issued new Statutory Taxi and Private Hire Vehicle Standards to Licensing Authorities, aimed at safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. The Statutory Standards set out a range of robust measures to protect taxi and private hire vehicle passengers, particularly those most vulnerable.

Members noted that government and licensing authorities had to work together to ensure that, above all else, the taxi and private hire services were safe for public use. In areas where there were existing and comprehensive licensing policies, the DfT had made it clear that it expected these policies to be reviewed in light of the statutory guidance, and for licensing authorities to implement the necessary changes.

Some Members wondered if the change to six-month DBS checks were

appropriate. The Committee felt it would be more appropriate for Members to individually respond to the consultation, and as such, that the consultation before them should go forward as it stood.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the proposed taxi licensing consultation on statutory taxi and private hire vehicle standards and agreed that Members should respond to the consultation on an individual basis.

8 CAR PARKING UPDATE (VERBAL UPDATE)

The Committee received a verbal update on car parking, as requested at a previous meeting.

Members were pleased to note that new tariff schemes, signage and machines had been implemented, and the work on large EV charging units had been completed. Officers would supply information to Members at a later date as to the number of people using the £1 tariff. There had been a drop in car park revenue due to the pandemic, which it was hoped would recover following the lifting of restrictions on 19 July 2021.

Officers would shortly be looking at the provision of a new long stay car park in Selby, and the refurbishment of the car park at Back Micklegate.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the update.

9 UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE (SHORT UPDATE)

The Committee received the short update on Universal Credit in Selby District.

The Committee noted that Universal Credit had a significant impact on the residents of the district and the national rise in numbers could also be seen in Selby. In October 2020 there were 4,131 recipients of Universal Credit in the Selby Jobcentre Plus area, the latest figures available in April 2021 show 5,626 claimants in receipt of Universal Credit.

Members acknowledged that the Council Tax Support claim numbers had steadied; in October 2020 the caseload was 4,705 claims and July 2021 the caseload was 4,677 claims. As part of the measures to help with the economic impacts of COVID-19 the Council received a hardship fund to provide an additional £150.00 rebate on the Council Tax charge for those of working age in receipt of Council Tax Support. In 2020/21 this was used to help 2,300 claimants with £373,000 of the funding used. The remaining funding of £100,000 would continue to be used for individual exceptional hardship cases in 2021/22.

The Committee expressed their concerns as to the rise in the number of people claiming Universal Credit, as well as the government's additional

payment for Universal Credit claimants coming to an end. Ring-fenced grants for homelessness were received from the government, but rent debt had also been accruing which, with the courts reopening, could lead to some evictions.

Members asked that the issue of homelessness was brought to a future meeting of the Committee, as well as the criteria for the use of any money left from the government's grant; Officers explained that just before the pandemic the Council's new Homelessness Strategy had been agreed, and as a result this could also be explored.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee:

- 1. noted the update on Universal Credit;**
- 2. agreed that a report on homelessness should be added to the Committee's work programme for the September 2021 meeting; and**
- 3. that an explanatory report on the criteria for and the proposed uses of the remainder of the government's Covid-19 grant be presented to them in the next few months.**

10 FLYTIPPING AND LITTERING (PR/21/3)

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

The Committee were informed that the report was in two parts to clearly separate information and findings relating to fly tipping from those relating to littering in the Selby District. The Committee had raised a number of opinions regarding perceived increases in littering and associated reducing standards of cleansing, whilst also raising concerns about perceived increases in fly tipping. Officers were requested to review each issue and report back with findings.

Members expressed their frustration at how the problem of flytipping did not seem to be abating. Fixed penalty notices (FPNs) had been issued, which had generated £11k in fines; the Committee noted that local authorities often preferred FPNs due to the way in which the courts generally dealt with flytipping, as well as some offences being difficult to prosecute due to lack of evidence.

Officers explained that education and engagement with the public to prevent offences was crucial, and compared to other local authorities, Selby was issuing more FPNs than most. There was little evidence that the increase in flytipping was due to charges for the collection of bulky household waste, a report on which was scheduled for the next meeting

of the Committee in September.

In relation to littering, Members acknowledged that the evidence suggested that Selby's standards were relatively high, which could be why when there was litter, it was more noticeable and reported by the public. A campaign against littering on high-speed roads was being planned by asking people to report the registrations of cars who littered, so that FPNs could be issued.

Members went on to ask Officers several questions relating to mechanical versus hand litter picking, identification of areas that needed more focus and inspections and how quickly reported mess was cleared up.

The Committee requested a further information report from Officers at a future meeting on the frequency, methods and locations of litter picking in the district.

RESOLVED

The Policy Review Committee noted the update and requested an information report on the frequency, methods and locations of litter picking in the district.

11 FEEDBACK ON THE LOCAL PLAN PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION (PR/21/4)

The Committee received the report of the Planning Policy Manager which provided Members with an update on the responses to the Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation.

The Committee noted that consultation on the Preferred Options Local Plan had taken place between 29 January and 12 March 2021 and had been adapted to take account Covid-19 restrictions. Two public meetings were held on 11 and 16 February 2021. The purpose of these sessions was to provide information about the Local Plan, including the proposed preferred sites. These sessions also provided members of the public with a chance to ask question; the questions and answers had been published on the Council's website.

Officers explained that in addition to the public meetings, virtual meetings were also undertaken for Parish Councils on numerous dates.

Members were pleased to note that the consultation was advertised in the Selby Times, on the Council's website and through the Council's social media streams. Leaflets were also distributed providing details of the Local Plan and where to find further information on the Preferred Options consultation.

The Committee understood that whilst copies of the consultation document and supporting material were not made available at deposit points due to Covid-19 restrictions, all the information was provided online. Furthermore, hard copies of the documents were provided to any

members of the public that requested them. A dedicated Local Plan phonenumber was set up with an Officer available within office hours to answer any queries.

Members acknowledged that consultation on the plan was widely advertised through social media and press releases, which led to a total of 17,040 views on web pages during the consultation period. In the first week of the consultation there were 4,578 views, which made it the Council's most visited website page by a significant amount. The Local Plan animation was viewed 994 times via Twitter, with 7,908 impressions (how many times it had been seen). Over 1200 responses were received from individuals in response to the Preferred Options consultation, which comprised 4719 comments.

Members thanked Officers for the tremendous work they had done on the Local Plan and noted the summary of responses as set out in the report.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the update on the responses to the Preferred Options consultation.

12 WORK PROGRAMME

Members noted the work programme which would be amended to reflect the suggestions made at the meeting.

RESOLVED:

To amend the work programme for 2020-21 as per the changes suggested at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 6.33 pm.