

Minutes

Policy Review Committee

Venue:	Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Tuesday, 14 September 2021
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors C Pearson (Chair), M Jordan, K Arthur, J Chilvers, R Packham and J Shaw-Wright Councillor T Grogan, Lead Executive Member for Health and Culture
Officers present:	June Rothwell, Head of Operational Services, Keith Cadman, Head of Commissioning, Contracts and Procurement, Aimi Brookes, Contracts Team Leader, Sarah Thompson, Housing Service Manager, Michelle Dinsdale, Senior Policy and Performance Officer, Simon Parkinson, Private Sector Housing Officer, Victoria Stoker, Housing Options Supervisor and Victoria Foreman, Democratic Services Officer
Others present:	None
Public:	None
Press:	None

13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M McCartney and M Topping.

14 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

There were no disclosures of interest.

15 MINUTES

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 20 July 2021.

RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee meeting held on 20 July 2021 for signing by the Chair.

16 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Chair had no address for the Committee.

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

Members received an update from the meeting of the Low Carbon Working Group, which had met on 23 August 2021.

Carbon Footprint

Officers began by confirming that the Council's Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions had been calculated by APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) with the preliminary figure for the Council's carbon footprint being 2,592 tonnes for the year 2018-2019. Scope 3 included data on the leisure and waste contracts, business mileage, water use, and predicted energy use of built assets.

The updated value for Scope 1 and 2 emissions was 1,348 tonnes (previously 418 tonnes) as this now included owned and leased vehicles used by the Council, including purchase of the waste collection trucks used by Urbaser (was Amey).

Members were notified that the next steps 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 so Officers could track progress. Using the toolkit would also allow a comparison with other local authorities; it was important to understand how to implement this, and how to adopt into each service area.

The option to transfer the Council's electricity tariff to a renewables tariff were being investigated, but the tariff could be switched in April 2022, in line with our current contract with the energy supplier.

Tree Planting

The Committee noted that the Tree Planting Officer Working Group was to meet with the White Rose Forest Partnership (WRFP) to develop further understanding of the partnership and provide guidance on stakeholder engagement, taking into consideration available resources.

The Council's own tree planting plans were being developed, with an initial focus on investigating the feasibility of tree planting on Council land, producing wider communications about tree planting and creating landowner engagement in collaboration with the WRFPP.

Officers reported that the WRFPP Action Plan 2021-2025 was being launched in November 2021 to coincide with National Tree week and would involve significant communications with landowners and local groups to highlight the opportunities for support and funding towards tree planting schemes.

A climate change page for the Council website was also proposed which would include a section on tree planting, providing advice, guidance and external links to available tree planting opportunities, grants and funding. There was also a potential opportunity for community groups in the area to take on roles in the Council Tree Warden Scheme.

Draft Low Carbon Action Plan and Low Carbon Strategy

The Lead Executive Member had suggested that the Council prepare a strategy to go to Executive, followed by the Action Plan at a later date, to allow time to review the resource allocation for the Action Plan and focus on what was achievable. The Executive Member had also attended the last Low Carbon Working Group meeting to outline his thoughts on the draft Low Carbon Action Plan.

Officers had developed a Draft Low Carbon Strategy which had been reviewed by the Leadership Team and the Executive Member, who gave feedback. It was proposed that the draft Low Carbon Strategy be considered at the Low Carbon Working Group on the 20 September, then presented to the Executive at its meeting on 7 October for approval.

Members noted that the Low Carbon Strategy had been designed to agree a commitment to the low carbon agenda, with two key timescales in mind; a commitment to identifying shorter term projects which could be delivered more quickly, offsetting the Council's known emissions by 2023, when Selby District Council would be replaced by the new North Yorkshire Council and setting out a longer-term commitment to 2030 to align with the timescales of the Council Plan.

Officers explained that the strategy covered the following six topics:

- **Carbon Monitoring** – To monitor, calculate, and report the Council's annual scope 1, 2 and 3 carbon emissions.
- **Travel** - Encouraging sustainable modes of transport for employees, Members and residents.
- **Council Buildings and Energy Use** – Seeking to reduce the Council's Scope 1 and 2 CO₂ emissions to zero through improved energy efficiency of the built environment, divestment from fossil

- fuel energy sources and offsetting of unavoidable emissions.
- **Working Practices** – The Council could seek to reduce its Scope 3 CO₂ emissions through sustainable procurement and off-setting.
- **Natural Environment and Biodiversity** – To protect and improve the quality of the natural environment and biodiversity across the district, including addressing flood risk and planning for sustainable development through the new Local Plan.
- **Influencing Others in the District** – Working collaboratively across the public, private and third sectors at a local, regional, national and global level.

The next Low Carbon Working Group would be on 20 September. Further work with them would include refining and developing the draft Low Carbon Action Plan following approval of the Low Carbon Strategy by the Executive. Focus would also be given to projects which could be considered achievable before Local Government Reorganisation was implemented, with further development of projects that could be delivered in the long term.

Members asked Officers to check if the Council had communicated with any Parish Councils yet about land for tree planting; Officers explained that the Low Carbon Officer had circulated a survey to all parishes, but that the query around tree planting land would need to be checked and the answer supplied to Members after the meeting. Members requested that if such contact had been made, a list of those parishes that had been communicated with could be supplied to the Committee.

The Committee noted that there would be a motion presented at the next Council meeting on the Council's low carbon work and Members' concerns around the lack of progress.

It was also emphasised that any tree planting in the current season needed to be done immediately; Officers assured Members that they were working with the WRFPP to identify the best type of tree for planting this season.

Also present at the meeting was the Lead Executive Member for Health and Culture, who, in response to a question regarding the success of previous tree planting on Hambleton Hough, explained that there was an upcoming meeting about the Hough, after which an update would be provided to Members.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the update.

18 BULKY WASTE COLLECTION SERVICE (PR/21/5)

The Committee received the report of the Contracts Team Leader which had been brought to committee to allow Members to review the current bulky waste collection service; the report set out the details of the existing

service along with benchmarking information from neighbouring authorities.

Officers explained that the collection of domestic waste was governed by the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Controlled Waste regulations 1992. Under regulation 4 of the Controlled Waste Regulations, the Council could charge for the collection of certain items of household waste, which included:

- Any article of waste which exceeded 25 kilograms in weight; or
- Any article of waste which did not fit, or could not be fitted into a receptacle for household waste provided in accordance with section 46

The Committee noted that the Council had provided a separate bulky waste collection service for over 20 years. The service had been chargeable since 2005 with a reduced rate payable by those in receipt of certain income related benefits. The current collection charge was £50 for up to 5 items, reduced to £37.50 for those in receipt of a Means Tested Benefit. A bed base, mattress and headboard would be classed as a single item as would a three-piece suite or dining table and chairs. At the point of booking, residents were given a specific date for collection, which was usually within 10 working days.

Members also noted that despite collections being suspended during April and May 2020 due to Covid-19, the total number of collections carried out during the year was 16% higher than the previous year.

Also in attendance for this item was the Executive Lead Member for Health and Culture.

The Committee asked why collection rates had increased despite the service being suspended for a short while due to the pandemic; Officers thought that the increase could be down to residents doing more DIY at home and taking the pandemic as an opportunity to clear out their homes, therefore producing more material and items that needed disposal.

Members were complimentary about the service and felt that it was delivered consistently and well with reasonable pricing compared to the rest of the county.

Officers were asked if there had been an increase in fly tipping over the past two years and explained that for specific figures, they would need to supply these to the Committee after the meeting. Members noted that when the pricing structure for bulky waste collection had been changed previously there had been no increase in the level of fly tipping.

The Committee asked Officers to bring back a further report on fly tipping to them as it was a matter that required relatively frequent consideration.

RESOLVED:

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The Policy Review Committee noted the report.

**19 HOMELESSNESS (INCLUDING THE HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY)
(PR/21/6)**

Councillor T Grogan left the meeting at this point and did not return.

The Committee were asked to consider and comment on a report about homelessness in the district, presented by the Private Sector Housing Officer and Housing Options Supervisor.

Members noted that Homelessness came to the attention of the Policy Review Committee following an update on Universal Credit (UC) which was discussed at its meeting in July 2021. There had been a national rise in the number of people claiming Universal Credit, which had also been seen in Selby i.e., in October 2020 there were 4,131 claimants in the Selby area, whilst the latest figures in April 2021 showed 5,626 claimants.

Officers explained that measures to help with the economic impacts of COVID-19 were received by the Council (a hardship fund, which in 2020/21 was used to help 2,300 claimants). However, the government's additional uplift for UC claimants was now coming to an end, along with many other support schemes, and it was therefore important to consider the impact of this on residents. This could include increasing debt, potential evictions, reduced funding assistance and general conditions which could exasperate the plight of those close to homelessness or already experiencing it.

The Committee asked a number of questions of Officers, starting with how the Council got to know about rough sleepers in the district and how many there were currently. Officers explained that various sources were used, including notification by the public and the Streetlink service. The Homelessness Team would go out to try and find the person the same day in order to offer assistance. There was one rough sleeper in the district at present that the team knew of, with the annual estimated number (calculated on a single night in November each year) being around five.

Members noted that there had been an increase in requests for housing due to landlord evictions; the temporary suspension of bailiffs had been good, but it had also given a false sense of security, as the notice periods for evictions was back to two months.

The team produced personalised homelessness plans for those that needed it and had emergency accommodation that could be accessed if required; the district's thriving private rented sector was crucial in providing such accommodation. The majority of people needing to access emergency accommodation in the pandemic were in private sector homes.

Members praised the Homelessness Action Plan and asked how those

people at risk of homelessness became aware of the services they could access to help them. Officers explained that to ensure the information was out there the team did a great deal of partnership working, produced leaflets for inclusion in foodbank parcels, worked with the Citizens Advice Bureau and other voluntary agencies and lastly through direct customer contact.

The Committee were very impressed with the work of the team and how committed they were to what they did. Members expressed concern that in the next few months there would be a very difficult crisis period when support offered during the pandemic over the past year would cease; Officers were asked if there was a way through the potential upcoming problems which were a national issue. Officers responded by assuring Members that whilst it may be difficult, there were a number of systems in place to help families and individuals who may be at risk of homelessness, and that it was acknowledged that families were often more vulnerable. However, whilst the support structure was there, the need for committed funding was key; some government initiatives were capital initiatives without a return. It was essential for the service not to be diluted and for the focus on the work of the team to be maintained, alongside strong adult, social care and mental health teams.

The Committee accepted that the team did struggle to assist some people, but that they were doing their best to help. The resettlement of refugees from Afghanistan was a very current issue, and Members asked if this would affect the Selby district. Officers confirmed that two families were being housed in the district at present, and the Council had committed to take a number of Afghans as it did with Syrian refugees a few years ago. All local authorities had been asked to take more if they could, and Selby would be taking in three more families in September/October.

Members thanked Officers for their report and their attendance at the meeting and praised them for the good work they were doing for vulnerable people in the district.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the report.

20 PAYMENT OF COVID-19 BUSINESS GRANTS - VERBAL UPDATE

Officers gave a verbal update on the payment of Covid-19 grants.

Members noted that over 500 businesses had been forced to close in the November and January national lockdown and these businesses had received grant payments totalling £5.9 million; pubs also received an additional £150,232 in grants in separate schemes.

The Committee also acknowledged that the Restart Grant, which was announced in the Budget from 1 April onwards, had now closed for applications. A total of £4,098,032.00 had been paid to 535 businesses in

individual grants ranging from £2,667 to £18,000. The amount of grant per business was determined by the sector the business was in, i.e., retail, leisure and the rateable value of the property.

Officers explained that the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) scheme had been paid to businesses from the November lockdown onwards in phases, to support them through ongoing restrictions; 373 businesses received grants totalling £2,637,506. As all the original funding allocation of £2.6 million was distributed within the required timescale from central government, the Council had secured a further funding pot in order to continue providing assistance; £673,000 was received.

Members were informed that a third phase of funding was considered for those businesses that could evidence that the delay of the recovery roadmap and continuing restrictions had caused them reduced trade and they still had fixed costs of the business to maintain. This phase had now closed with 73 businesses receiving a further £470,073 in grant support payments.

Officers stated that the amount left in the fund was £170,803. A total of £3,119,579.00 had been paid out, and any unallocated spend after 31 March 2022 would need to be returned. Demand for the third phase was low so it was not envisaged that any further grants could be paid.

Officers were able to confirm that there weren't many fraudulent applications and that the Council's checking service was very robust.

RESOLVED:

The Policy Review Committee noted the update.

21 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered the work programme for 2021-22.

Officers discussed adding fly tipping to the work programme alongside the litter picking item at the October meeting, as requested by Members earlier in the meeting, but that this would need to be discussed with the relevant team first.

The draft Corporate Policy Framework was taking longer than expected to develop as it was complex and wide ranging; as such, it was unclear as to which meeting this could be presented at. Members would be kept informed.

Members agreed the work programme as presented.

RESOLVED:

To note the work programme for 2021-22.

The meeting closed at 6.18 pm.
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