



Councillor Jim Deans – Chair of Policy Review Committee

The Policy Review Committee has met twice, on 17 December 2018 and 15 January 2019, since the previous update given to Council in December 2018.

17 December 2018

The main items of business on the agenda for this meeting were the draft Planning Enforcement Management Plan and the Committee's work programme 2018-19.

Planning Enforcement Management Plan

The Committee were asked to note the progress and provide comments on the draft Enforcement Management Plan, prior to its consideration by the Council's Executive, provisionally planned for February 2019. The report gave an up to date position on Planning Enforcement performance and provided an opportunity to comment on the draft Enforcement Management Plan (EMP).

The Committee noted that the overall caseload had been reduced by around 25% despite the generation of new cases on a weekly basis; response times and customer service was improving.

Members discussed the draft EMP in detail and made a number of comments and suggestions. The Committee felt it should be made clearer that whilst there was still a backlog of historic cases, these were continuing to be worked through whilst the future of the service and improvements to it were developed at the same time.

In relation to the timescales for dealing with cases, Members felt it should be clarified that the timescales listed in the EMP were the very maximum or 'worst case scenario', and it was likely that most cases would be responded to in a timelier manner. Members understood that some cases could take longer to resolve than others due to sensitive negotiations, and that flexibility was essential.

The listing of untidy land as a lower priority matter caused concern for some Members, as this was a topic that the public contacted their local Councillors about regularly. Officers explained that it was important to set realistic expectations for the public and Members, and that whilst every case would be taken on its own merit, there needed to be a framework to work within.

Unauthorised advertisements were also raised as an area of concern by the Committee, as they had a detrimental effect on the local area; Officers were asked to consider whether some forms of unauthorised advertising, i.e. in conservation areas, could be prioritised. However, Members did acknowledge that the prioritisation of some enforcement matters above others was difficult and there wasn't a 'one size fits all' that could be implemented across the whole District or within the EMP.

The Committee queried the resource available in the Planning Enforcement Team and asked Officers to confirm if they felt they had sufficient resource to tackle the existing backlog of cases, as well as dealing efficiently with new ones. Officers confirmed that they felt the service was now working efficiently, but that the matter should be monitored and looked at again around six to twelve months after implementation, to ensure that improvements within the service, as a result of the EMP, were continuing to be seen.

Members also indicated that some of the details and wording in the draft EMP could be streamlined and strengthened; the inclusion of elements replicating parts of the NPPF could offer opportunities to appellants where there was perceived to be a difference in the form of words on matters concerning responses to the processes for dealing with action. In order to keep the information in the EMP simple, further explanatory notes could be provided to accompany it when published online.

Proactive monitoring of the performance of the EMP and the Planning Enforcement Team was suggested as an essential component to the implementation and success of the plan. The Committee suggested that a Planning Sub-Committee be established to meet and monitor the progress of the enforcement caseload on a quarterly basis. The Committee also requested that an all-Member briefing to formally launch the document take place following agreement of the EMP by the Executive.

Work Programme 2018-19

The Chair took the Committee through the current work programme and noted the upcoming items for the January and April 2019 meetings.

The Committee asked that following the next Universal Credit update in September 2019, the matter then be considered every 6 months. Members also agreed that the Planning Enforcement Management Plan should be reconsidered by the Committee again six months after its initial implementation.

With reference to the other potential items for the future, Members agreed that Housing Need was an area they would like to consider in the future.

15 January 2019

The main items of business on the agenda for this meeting were the Taxi Licensing Policy, the draft Budget and the Committee's work programme for 2018-19 and draft programme for 2019-20.

Taxi Licensing Policy

The Committee received a report from the Licensing Manager which asked Members to note the contents of the report and to make any comments on the draft Taxi Licensing Policy.

Members noted that Selby District Council's Taxi Licensing Policy was being reviewed; a consultation on the proposed policy took place between 1 December 2018 and 12 January 2019. The Council had received 19 responses out of 192. The feedback received indicated a level of agreement with the Council's recommendations, which had been incorporated into the proposed new Taxi Licensing Policy which went out for public consultation in December 2018.

Members discussed the matter in details and considered a number of points, including the following:

- The introduction of an age limit on existing vehicles
- Ensuring the correct spelling of discrete was used in the policy.
- Inspections for vehicles applying for discrete licences.
- Fare levels for wheelchair accessible vehicles, and if they could charge a higher rate – Officers confirmed they could not.
- The importance of drivers informing the Council's Licensing Team if they developed a health condition that could affect their driving.

The Committee noted and endorsed the proposed amendments to the Taxi Licensing Policy and the recommendations by Officers.

Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan

The Committee received the report of the Chief Finance Officer and were afforded the opportunity to comment on the Draft Revenue Budget and Capital Programme 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan.

The Chief Finance Officer updated the Committee on the discussions that were had at Executive meeting on 10 January 2019; the draft minutes of the meeting were circulated to the Committee. The Executive had resolved to amend the proposed increase in council tax to £3 for an average band D property. The Executive Member for Finance and Resources explained the financial impact of this amendment and that there would also be an ongoing impact to the council tax income base and required savings for future years.

Members debated the report in full and queried a number of issues, including the outcome of the government's upcoming Fairer Funding Review, the impact of the 1% reduction in housing rents on the Housing Revenue Account, the future of renewable energy business rates from Drax Power, the option of freezing council tax for one year, investment of the Council's reserves and returns on property funds, identification of new savings opportunities, levels of borrowing and the expected return in revenue of the Programme for Growth (P4G).

The Committee noted the Draft Revenue Budget, Capital Programme 2019-20 and Medium Term Financial Plan, including the amended proposed increase in council tax to £3 for an average band D property and the draft budgets, bids and savings for public consultation.

Work Programme 2018-19 and 2019-20

The Committee considered the work programme for the rest of the 2018-19 year, and the draft work plan for 2019-20.

Members noted the upcoming items for the next meeting of the Committee and were content with the draft work programme for 2019-20. It was expected that more items would be added to the 2019-20 draft work programme in the coming months.

Councillor J Deans
Chair, Policy Review Committee