

## Minutes

### Policy Review Committee

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Venue:	Committee Room - Civic Centre, Doncaster Road, Selby, YO8 9FT
Date:	Tuesday, 10 September 2019
Time:	5.00 pm
Present:	Councillors A Lee (Chair), K Arthur (Vice-Chair), J Cattanach, M McCartney, J Shaw-Wright, T Grogan, M Jordan and R Packham
Officers present:	Karen Iveson, Chief Finance Officer, Julie Slatter, Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning, June Rothwell, Head of Operational Services, Sarah Thompson, Housing and Environmental Service Manager, Wayne Palmer, Environmental Health Team Leader, Claire Rogers, Environmental Health Officer, Victoria Foreman, Democratic Services Officer
Public:	0
Press:	0

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#### **14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

#### **15 DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST**

There were no disclosures of interest.

#### **16 MINUTES**

The Committee considered the minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2019.

#### **RESOLVED:**

**To approve the minutes of the Policy Review Committee meeting held on 23 July 2019 for signing by the Chair.**

## **17 CHAIR'S ADDRESS TO THE POLICY REVIEW COMMITTEE**

The Chair had no address for the committee.

## **18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (PR/19/4)**

The Committee received the report of the Council's Chief Finance Officer, which asked Members to consider the content of the report and make any comments on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Officers explained 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 later that month. The key assumptions that underpinned the strategy had been updated.

The MTFS highlighted the delays to the Fair Funding Review and the reform of the Business rates Retention system, following HM Treasury's announcement there would be a one year settlement for 2020/21 and that the system would be reviewed in 2020. It was assumed that the settlement for 2020/21 would be a roll-forward from 2019/20 which could result in a further year of the renewable energy business rates windfall. Should the Local Government Finance Settlement be announced earlier, any necessary changes would be incorporated into the draft Budget as part of the process during the autumn.

The MTFS identified risk and uncertainty around business rates retention, on-going reductions to Government funding and wider economic uncertainty at the prospect of a no-deal Brexit.

The MTFS confirmed the Council's strategic approach to continuing to reduce its base revenue budget and investing 'one-off' or finite resources to stimulate local economic growth, and achieve sustainable income through Council Tax and Business Rates growth. It also set out the Council's reserves strategy which sought to set aside sums to cover known commitments, and cover financial risk as well as earmarking resources to support delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan.

Following the district elections in May 2019, a number of emerging cost pressures had been identified; some resources were available for allocation from the Special Projects Reserve in 2020/21, but these were not recurring and therefore any additional on-going costs would increase the need for base budget savings.

Progress was being made against savings targets but was lagging behind profile, and therefore additional drawdown from the Business Rates Equalisation Reserve was expected. Based on the assumptions within the MTFS, the savings requirement was estimated to rise to £2.4m over the next 3 years.

Members asked a number of questions on the report in relation to council tax increases, the effect of inflation and a no-deal Brexit on the Council's finances, levels of car parking and planning incomes, investment of the Council's reserves and the budget process.

Members requested that budget workshops for Councillors be considered and that the review of the Corporate Plan be added to the committee's work plan; it was confirmed by Officers that workshops could be looked into and that the review of the Corporate Plan had already been added to the work plan.

Some Members were concerned about the potential for a rise in council tax rates due to pressures which the County and District councils were under, and felt that other savings should be thoroughly investigated before increasing the council tax levels. Other Members felt that it was important to increase council tax by the rate of inflation to maintain the base amount.

The following recommendation to the Executive was proposed and seconded regarding council tax levels:

*'The Policy Review Committee consider that council tax should be set at a level to maintain the base, taking into account the level of increased inflation, and supported the Officer view on the matter.'*

A vote was taken on the recommendation with 5 in favour and 3 against; the recommendation was carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. The Committee considered and commented on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.**
- ii. That the provision of budget workshops for Councillors be looked into.**
- iii. That the following be recommended to the Executive:**

*'The Policy Review Committee consider that council tax should be set at a level to maintain the base, taking into account the level of increased inflation, and supported the Officer view on the matter.'*

**19 HOUSING, AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOUSING NEED AT SDC - AN OVERVIEW (PR/19/5)**

The Committee received a presentation and short report from the Council's Housing and Environmental Health Service Manager which gave an overview of affordable housing in order to support future housing policy reviews.

Members noted that the Council's Corporate Plan aimed to meet housing needs through an increased supply and recognised that a proportion of homes needed to be affordable for those who could not access market sale prices or rents. The Council's definition of affordable housing was set out in the Core Strategy.

Members acknowledged that the Council's aims for the delivery of additional affordable homes were set out in a number of strategies and plans:

- Corporate Plan 2015-2020
- York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Housing Strategy 2015-2021
- Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2020-20215 (in draft)
- Empty Homes Strategy
- Housing Development Strategy 2013
- Affordable Housing Supplementary Document (adopted in 2014).

The Council was able to provide affordable housing through the planning system, which required developers of new residential developments (of over 10 units) to provide either on-site affordable housing or off-site financial contributions to be spent on affordable housing elsewhere in the District, where appropriate.

The Committee were informed that smaller numbers of new affordable homes were developed by the Council and by registered providers independently either on small or rural exception sites.

Members noted that in 2018-19 183 new affordable homes were delivered across the District, 11 of which were rural and 19 were directly delivered by Selby District Council and Selby District Housing Trust.

Members were given further information on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), planning to provide affordable housing, what was meant by affordable housing and affordable homes for rent, home ownership products, the delivery of affordable housing through the planning system, the role of registered providers, Rural Exception Sites, the Council's role in the direct delivery of affordable housing and the allocation of affordable housing and North Yorkshire Home Choice.

The Committee requested that the presentation be circulated to them via email after the meeting.

In response to questions from Members, Officers confirmed that the number of properties sold by the Council under Right to Buy annually was around 20 and that there were approximately 450 empty homes in the District. The Committee were pleased to note that an item on setting empty home targets and benchmarking would be considered at their next meeting in October.

Members expressed concerns about the accessibility of services for

residents in smaller villages and more rural areas of the District. Members were pleased that the North Yorkshire Home Choice scheme would be coming back to the committee for discussion later in the 2019-20 year.

The Committee noted that one compulsory purchase of a property was currently underway; initially 20 to 30 properties had been identified for compulsory purchase with a number of discussions having already started due to this initial identification. Officers explained that the majority of data on empty properties came from the Council's council tax information, but that extra information from Members would be useful.

Members also asked Officers about the eligibility criteria for Council housing, and discussed the need for social rented homes, sheltered/supported housing and bungalows in the District. The Committee hoped that through the development of the new local plan for Selby, such needs could be addressed and planned for. Members also asked for more information from Officers on community led housing schemes.

Officers explained further about indicative transfer values to housing associations, which were often dictated by the value of land. It was noted that the values tended to be quite competitive and were often at market rates for housing associations; further thought was being given to Section 106 planning agreements specifying the rate at which housing could be sold.

The Committee noted that there was support from the Executive Lead Member for Place Shaping for the Council to expand its social housing stock, and that the Housing Development Strategy was due for a review. The potential of garage sites for affordable housing had already been explored by the Council, but had not been successful due to viability issues; the process of identifying sites for such development had been more difficult than anticipated.

Members agreed that a different strategy was needed, including better partnerships with the Council and developers in order for the authority to advise early on what types of housing were needed in the District.

Officers explained that they wanted to continue to improve housing and deliver on the national space standard in housing units, which was also being driven nationally by the government. It was very important to the Council that the quality of housing available was good and that pricing was consistent.

There was some concern that housing associations took on most of the new housing stock built in the District, and as such it should be considered how, as a local authority, Selby District Council could improve its chances of obtaining Section 106 properties.

It was noted that the Committee would be considering the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan at their October meeting and Home

Choice at their December meeting; as such Members would be able to continue to look at housing issues and begin to form the basis of recommendations to the Executive.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To note the Officer's presentation and report.**
- ii. To ask Officers to circulate the presentation by email to the Committee after the meeting.**
- iii. To ask Officers to circulate figures for the number of Council homes sold annually under the Right to Buy scheme.**
- iv. To ask Officers to send the Committee more information on community led housing.**

**20 PROGRESS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AIR QUALITY ACTION PLAN (PR/19/6)**

The Committee received the report of the Council's Environmental Health Team Leader which asked Members to consider and comment on the progress with the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan.

Officers introduced the report and explained that on the 29 February 2016 Selby District Council designated its first Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) on New Street, Selby for nitrogen dioxide levels related to traffic emissions.

Members noted that Selby District Council had now finalised an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to help address concentrations of nitrogen dioxide along New Street. The AQAP identified the measures expected to deliver the greatest and most immediate improvements in Selby's air quality and longer term steps needed to address the impact of development. The Executive approved the adoption of the AQAP in May 2018. The AQAP was intended to be a live document that would be continuously reviewed and developed, to take account of future development, traffic growth, and changes in local air quality.

The Committee understood that a 'source apportionment' study had previously been carried out for New Street; 'source apportionment' referred to the process of looking at how different source categories contributed to overall concentrations of a certain pollutant in a particular area. The study had highlighted that traffic sources were likely to be a significant contributing factor to the exceedances of the air quality objectives in the New Street area. Traffic sources were estimated to contribute around 69% to the total nitrogen dioxide in this area, with cars being the predominant source.

The Council was currently working with its partners, including North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC), to deliver measures contained within

the AQAP.

Members noted that as a result of a motion that had been submitted for consideration on 17 September 2019 at a meeting of the Council, Policy Review Committee had been tasked with leading on the development of Council policy on climate change and making recommendations to Council at the earliest opportunity, including how the aims of the motion could be implemented. It was acknowledged that air quality would be a part of the work on climate change.

In response to a question regarding where else in the District air was monitored, Officers reported that it was also undertaken in Tadcaster and Sherburn, but that there had been no breaches of the levels as yet.

Members asked a number of questions about how to tackle poor air quality, including traffic management, education of drivers and anti-idling campaigns. Officers explained that sustainable travel had been more focused on in Selby so far, and that the air quality monitoring was also only taking place in the town at present.

The Committee suggested that more traffic could be diverted around Selby on the bypass, and that the routing of car satellite navigation systems also had a major part to play in the direction of traffic in the town.

Members noted that Officers were already working with local schools to educate parents on how damaging idling vehicles were to air quality.

The Committee agreed that incentives for change were often required and that active promotion of schemes to improve air quality would be needed.

**RESOLVED:**

**To note the progress with the implementation of the Air Quality Action Plan.**

**21 WORK PROGRAMME 2019-20**

The Committee considered the 2019-20 work programme as set out in the agenda.

Members discussed on the aims and interests of the Committee, and proposed the following changes to the work programme for 2019-20:

- That the North Yorkshire Home Choice and Alcohol Licensing Policy review items be moved to the 10 December 2019 meeting.
- That the item on the Empty Homes Strategy scheduled for 15 October 2019 be amended to 'Empty Homes Targets and Benchmarking'.

- Members acknowledged that a motion had been submitted for Council on 17 September regarding climate change, and that one of the proposed resolutions set out in the motion was to task Policy Review Committee to look into the matter further. An item had already been added to the committee's work programme for 15 October 2019 on the low carbon and green agenda. Officers explained that NYCC were also undertaking work on the same subject, and that there was an opportunity for joint or partnership working.
- Councillor T Grogan explained that further discussions were underway with Officers regarding the Taxi Licensing Policy, specifically the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles.
- Lastly, Members requested that the work programme be circulated to the committee once it had been updated.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To note the work programme for 2019-20 and agree that the amendments as set out above be made by Officers.**
- ii. To note that that further discussions were underway with Officers regarding the Taxi Licensing Policy, specifically the provision of wheelchair accessible vehicles.**
- iii. That the work programme 2019-20 be circulated to the committee once updated.**

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.