

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 19 September 2018 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)
J D McLean (Vice-Chairman)

J R Astill
F Biggadike
M D Booth
L J Eldridge

P C Foyster
J L King
A M Newton
J L Reynolds

S-A Slade
E J Sneath

In Attendance: Building Consultancy Manager, Housing Advisor and Place Manager, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors D Ashby, H Drury, A Harrison and J Tyrrell

14. MINUTES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Development Panel held on 26 June 2018.

AGREED

That the minutes be agreed as a correct record.

15. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

Councillors Biggadike, Eldridge and Woolf did not have a disclosable pecuniary interest, but in the interest of transparency they declared, in relation to agenda item 14, that they were private landlords.

16. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

17. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

18. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

Action By

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There were none.

19. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan published on 7 September 2018.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

20. POLICY REGISTER

Consideration was given to the Policy Register dated 3 September 2018.

AGREED:

That the Policy Register be noted.

21. REVISED STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director – Place which sought the Panel’s recommendation that Cabinet adopt a Revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy.

The Building Consultancy Manager summarised that the policy had been presented previously to PDP. The policy was being reintroduced to PDP with the amendments suggested by PDP included within it. However it was noted that the policy could not be shortened for legal reasons.

Members asked who would be contactable for naming and numbering queries. It was responded that it would be the local district council.

Members asked what the policy was on repeated street names. It was responded that the policy was now to have no repeated names in any one given postal code area.

Councillors asked that it was reported to Cabinet that PDP’s opinion was that it should have been shortened.

CB

Members asked about ‘aesthetically displeasing’ names and stated that the policy of not allowing such names put a barrier to historically or contextually relevant names. The Building Consultancy Manager responded that the under special circumstances that this was not the case. Members asked that officers tweak the wording of this to be clearer that it allows

CB

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special exceptions.

The Chairman asked who had the final say on street names. Officers responded that developers put forward names, but the final decision was that of the planning department. Members asked for details of how many potential street names were put forward to councillors for consultation.

CB

AGREED

That the Policy Development Panel recommend the adoption of the Revised Street Naming and Numbering Policy to Cabinet on 20 November 2018 as per Appendix 1 of the report.

22. GAMBLING ACT - STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager – People and Public Protection which provided information on the draft revised Gambling Policy (Statement of Principles) for the consideration of the Panel.

Donna Hall introduced the Policy Statement of Principles. This was coming to PDP as part of the review of the policy which needed to take place every 3 years.

It was stated that the Policy was currently under consultation which was due to end in October.

Members stated that they felt the review was necessary and worthwhile. However, it was asked whether there were ways that the document could be shortened. The Licensing & Business Support Manager stated that although the policy was long, it was designed specifically to be easily digestible, with a contents section so businesses could look up the items that were only relevant to them. Members stated that they felt there were ways to shorten it, including the use of hyperlinks to online resources, instead of detailing them in the document. They reiterated that their view was that the policy was too long. The Licensing & Business Support Manager stated that they could examine the possibility of shortening the document, but stated that because it was a Statement of Principles they were required by law to detail legislation.

DH

The Licensing & Business Support Manager stated that it was soon to be a requirement for the council to have a local summary of gambling risks.

Members asked if there were steps in place for the risks of online betting. The Licensing & Business Support Manager stated that

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although the Council did not have jurisdiction over online betting, the possibility of raising awareness of the risks would be examined.

AGREED

That the Panel recommend the adoption of the draft revised Gambling Policy (Statement of Principles) to full council.

23. REVIEW OF HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and the Executive Director – Place which sought the panel's agreement to changes to the Housing Allocations Policy.

The Place Manager stated that the policy had been reviewed several years ago, but that some members felt the review was too strong.

The critical points were;

- Housing application process – currently a paper process, it was the intention to move this online, and 80% of customers wanted online.
- Qualifying local connections. Reduce the time this was taking.
- Sheltered accommodation – reduce the lower age limit from 65 to 55 years of age.
- Offers of accommodation – currently offer 3 choices for accommodation. It was hoped that the changes would amend this to 2 choices.

Welland Homes was included in the policy, but could be removed in the future.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health stated that this review was necessary. She stated that the total figure of people on the list would now be more realistic.

Members stated that they were pleased to see this report and felt that it was well written and addressed many important issues.

They asked if a tenant breached the conditions, what was the policy of re-allowing them onto the register. The Housing Services Manager stated if it was a criminal offence, then they would not be allowed back into the register until their probation was over. It was stated if the offence was non-criminal then the person would

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need to be able to prove a period of tenancy elsewhere without incident.

Members asked why in paragraph 8.2.5 of the report it specified that a candidate was viable at age 55 regardless of gender. The Housing Services Manager stated that this was a historic leftover. Officers agreed that this could be examined and removed if necessary.

MC

Members asked what the definition of an 'offence' was. Officers stated that it was purposefully flexible definition to allow for examination on a case-by-case basis. The Housing Services Manager responded that this could be further clarified, just to make it slightly easier to interpret, although it was stated that flexibility was still necessary.

MC

Members asked what a 'Modern Slave's' position was relating to viability for going onto the housing register. Officers stated they would seek clarification.

MC

Members asked if the policy worked with the rehabilitation of offenders act. Officers stated they would seek clarification.

MC

The Chairman felt that where the policy referred to getting help for those who struggled with the application process, there was a risk of that help manifesting itself as those individuals being told to complete the process digitally. He asked if they were comfortable that suitable help could be given, even to those who were not computer literate. The Place Manager stated that, yes, they were confident. Members asked that officers be certain that digital aspects of the policy were well signposted.

Members asked that the policy be reviewed by PDP 6 months after implementation in April 2019.

AGREED

That it be recommended:

- a) That members agree the changes proposed following the review of the Housing Allocations Policy.
- b) That Members approve the revised policy coming into effect from 1st April 2019 once the IT capability was operational to enable applications to self-manage.
- c) That following Members approval, the Council's Private Sector Housing Team and other appropriate external

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partners are advised of the changes.

- d) That the Policy be reviewed by the Policy Development Panel 6 months after it was implemented in April 2019.

24. HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and the Executive Director – Place which sought to update members on changes to legislation and to provide a policy framework to enable the licensing of HIMOs (Housing in Multiple Occupation).

The Housing Services Manager introduced the policy. The policy was being examined due to changes in legislation. At present the policy only allowed two storey properties to be classified as HIMO's but that this was changing to any form of properties.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health stated that the Council's basal rate standards for property types were already higher than the government mandated minimum.

Members asked if adequate parking could be made a licensing condition. Officers stated that they would return an answer for this. They also asked if the Council had the resources required to deal with the inevitable influx of license requests. Officers stated that this would be a gradual process and no issues were anticipated.

PS, VC

AGREED

That the Policy Development Panel note the changes to legislation affecting HIMO licensing and endorses the policy.

25. ADDRESSING LONG TERM EMPTY HOMES

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Director – Place which sought to update members on changes to legislation, a recent initiative taken to reduce the numbers of empty homes and to provide an update on current performance.

The Housing Services Manager stated that an initiative had taken place in which an officer had been working specifically on this issue. As a result over 5 weeks, 255 properties had been investigated and 39 properties were now brought back into use. The Housing Operations Manager wished to return to the Panel to

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present the finding of this initiative in 6 months.

AGREED

- a) That the Policy Development Panel note the progress of made on addressing long term empty homes.
- b) That a further update to addressing long term empty homes be presented to the panel in 6 months' time

(Councillors Newton and King left the room at 19:44.)

26. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and the Executive Director – Place which sought to update members on changes to legislation and provide a policy framework to enable Private Sector Housing Enforcement.

The Housing Services Manager stated that the main drive of the changes was to educate landlords.

The Chairman stated that he felt the current process was far too slow and that renters were too often wrongly viewed as the innocent party. Officers responded that private sector housing officers were good at determining who was at fault and identifying vexatious or petty tenant requests.

Members felt the policy could be streamlined though the use of hyperlinks to the relevant acts rather than detailing the acts. Officers stated that they would examine the possibility of doing so.

AGREED

That the Policy Development Panel note the changes to legislation affecting Private Sector Enforcement and endorse the policy.

(Councillor Slade left the room at 19:51.)

27. REDUCTION OF PAPER AND POSTAGE TASK GROUP

Consideration was given to the report of the Chairman of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group which sought to provide a progress update following the sign-off of recommendations of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group in February 2017.

The Chairman of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task

PS

PS

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Group introduced the report. He felt that the findings were better than he had expected and that he was pleased with the results of progress on moving toward paperless meetings.

The Chairman of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group posited that new member training at induction and as part of the Councillor Development Steering Group could include the promotion of paperless working. He wished to thank Democratic Services for their help compiling the statistics required for the report.

Members asked that members of the Planning Committee be asked to go paperless, they felt that the ad-hoc agreement with the Chairman of Planning that all committee members would receive paper copies of agendas should be examined.

DS

One member stated that they had been hoping for more significant results which could have been achieved by examining the Council as a whole's use of paper, rather than individuals' use of paper. Other members offered a different view, stating that they felt the work involved in getting to this point was worth it when compared to the savings being made.

The Place Manager stated that it was important that paper usage be reduced but that there were sometimes justifications for officer usage of paper and clarified that the policy of the Council was 'paper-lite', not 'paperless'.

The Chairman of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group suggested that the policy's impact on officer paper usage be examined in a years' time and that he was happy to keep the Task Group in session. Democratic Services would check if current members of the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group were happy to remain on the group.

AGREED

a) That the report be noted

b) That the Task Group continue for the foreseeable future in order to progress into the next stages of reduction of paper usage

DS

c) That the promotion of 'paper-lite' working be included in Councillor development in the future; and

DS

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- d) That the promotion of 'paper-lite' working be included in member induction.

DS

28. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Executive Manager – Governance, which set out the Work Programme of the Policy Development Panel. The Work Programme consisted of two separate sections, the first setting out the dates of the future Panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration, and the second setting out the Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel.

The Chairman announced that the next meeting which was due to take place on 6 November 2018, had been rescheduled to 7 November 2018.

It was agreed that the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group would be kept active.

The Public Open Spaces Task Group was meeting in October and was close to finishing. The Chairman asked that the Pre-meeting of PDP would be allowed to view the draft policy before it was published.

The HIMO Task Group's work was now finished and was to be struck from the work programme.

AGREED

- a) That the Reduction in Paper and Postage Task Group be kept active.
- b) That the Panel be presented with the findings of the Public Open Spaces Task Group when they become available.
- c) That the HIMO Task Group be struck from the work programme.
- d) That the Work Programme be noted.

GW

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GW

29. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE URGENT.

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There were none

(The meeting ended at 8.41 pm)

(End of minutes)