

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 12 July 2022 at 6.30pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)
G P Scalese (Vice-Chairman)

A C Beal
F Biggadike
H J W Bingham
M D Booth

R A Gibson
M Hasan
J D McLean
P A Redgate

J L Reynolds
G T D Rudkin
S C Walsh

In Attendance: The Assistant Director - Strategic Projects, the Senior Change and Performance Business Partner, the Head of Revenues & Benefits (PSPS), the Organisational Development Service Manager, the Climate Change and Environment Manager, the Climate Change and Environment Officer, the Strategic Property Manager, the Democratic Services Team Leader and the Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors J Avery and S-A Slade, and the Assistant Director – Corporate.

13. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the following meetings be signed by the Chairman as a correct record:

- Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel 4 May 2022.
- Policy Development Panel 24 May 2022.

14. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the actions which arose from the 24 May 2022 Policy Development Panel meeting.

AGREED:

That the actions be noted.

15. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

Action By

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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**

There were none.

19. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 4 July 2022.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan dated 4 July 2022 be noted.

**20. SHDC POLICY REGISTER AND THE S&ELCP POLICY
REGISTER**

The Panel gave consideration to the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register.

The Senior Change and Performance Business Partner introduced the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register to the Panel. Four policies were coming forward to the current meeting and all other policies were on track with reviews scheduled.

Members thanked the Senior Change and Performance Business Partner on the progress made in bringing the registers up to date.

AGREED:

That the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register be noted.

21. REVIEW OF HR POLICIES (BATCH 2)

The Panel considered the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate to seek the Policy Development Panel’s views on the proposed HR Policies (Batch 2) prior to a report to Council.

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The Organisational Development Service Manager introduced the report by stating that Batch 1 of reviewed HR policies had come forward to the meeting of the Panel on 24 May 2022. An overview of the review process was given at that meeting by the Assistant Director – Corporate and the second batch of reviewed HR policies fell within the same remit. The policies in Batch 2 that were to be considered at this meeting included:

- the Managing Sick Absence Policy and Procedure;
- the Code of Conduct for Council Employees;
- the Probation Policy; and
- the Flexible Working Policy and Procedure.

The table at point 2.5 of the report highlighted the key differences between the current policy and the proposed new policy.

Members considered the report and suggested that the wording of point 45.1 of the Code of Conduct for Council Employees, which covered the use of mobile phones, be reviewed and widened to include hands free usage.

- The Organisational Development Service Manager would review the wording and incorporate references to new technology.

AGREED:

That the comments of the Policy Development Panel regarding the HR Policies (Batch 2) be noted prior to a report to Council.

22. DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Finance, Commercialisation and Partnerships to consider the Debt Management Policy.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits (PSPS) introduced the report and stated that the review of current Debt Management Policy, in place since 2017, had brought forward five changes which were stipulated in the report at point 2.2.

Members welcomed the proposed changes, in particular:

- the inclusion of guidance and support for people experiencing financial difficulties by the signposting of debt counselling services, including through the website, as specified at point 2.2 (ii); and
- that when appropriate, the authority ultimately had the powers to recoup monies owed more quickly through deductions from earnings, as specified at point 2.2 (iii)

Members sought clarification of the process for claiming the £150

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Council Tax energy rebate.

- The Head of Revenue and Benefits (PSPS) confirmed that the majority of rebates had been paid directly to bank accounts. This was possible where a direct debit was set up with the Council and the bank account could be validated. Where payment by this method was not possible, households would shortly receive correspondence which invited applications for rebate claims to be made online or by phone. The deadline for payments was September 2022.

AGREED:

- a) That the Panel recommended that Cabinet approve the continuation of the refreshed Debt Management Policy; and
- b) That the Panel recommended that Cabinet approve the delegation of future review and changes to the Section 151 Officer, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, Commercialisation and Partnerships.

23. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS POLICY

The Panel gave consideration to the report of the Climate Change and Environment Officer to recommend adoption of the Sustainable Products Policy.

The Climate Change and Environment Officer and the Climate Change and Environment Manager were in attendance to present the report and answer member questions.

The Climate Change and Environment Officer introduced the report by stating that the draft Sustainable Products Policy, developed by ELDC, was listed as a Corporate Priority in the S&ELCP Annual Delivery Plan.

The policy detailed the partnership's commitment that the procurement of single use products be discontinued as far as possible, and that the best alternative solution be sought where single use products could not be completely eradicated. The policy would support the partnership in achieving net zero targets in line with the Climate Change Strategy.

The policy outlined the required actions to ensure:

- that a sustainable approach to waste management was taken; and
- that procurement practices were carefully considered.

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Members considered the draft Sustainable Products Policy and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the policy and thanked officers for their work.
- Members stated that future frameworks needed to encourage contractors to look at their own policies with due consideration of this area integral to the tender process.
- Members stated that single use product alternatives needed to demonstrate 'value for money'.
- Members stated that the purpose of single use products needed to be ascertained when alternatives were sought - some were utilised for health and safety reasons.

The Climate Change and Environment Officer thanked members for their comments and confirmed that the Sustainable Products Policy did not seek to outlaw specifics but rather sought a conscientious approach to decision-making, from procurement to disposal.

AGREED:

- a) That the comments of the Panel be noted; and
- b) That the Panel recommends adoption of the Sustainable Products Policy to Cabinet in line with the Council's commitments to resource and waste management.

24. SHDC DRAFT DERELICT AND UNTIDY SITES POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Strategic Projects to consider the draft South Holland District Council Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy.

The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects introduced the report by thanking Councillor Redgate and Councillor Booth for their support with the policy and stated that the Strategic Property Manager would be responsible for the delivery of the policy.

The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects highlighted the main points of the policy, which included:

- a definition and background of the policy - the policy was wider than enforcement alone;
- the impact of problem sites on communities;
- the link to the Council's Corporate Plan;
- the history of the Pride in South Holland programme;
- the process for reporting derelict and untidy sites;
- information management including partnership working, for

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- example, working with the police;
- options for addressing dereliction - the process had not changed but the pathway was clearly set out in the policy;
- the three-step intervention options; and
- commitments;

Members considered the policy and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the policy and thanked the Assistant Director – Strategic Projects, Councillor Booth and Councillor Redgate for their work on the policy.
- Members acknowledged that the new policy had taken sustained effort and time which was deemed necessary due to the breadth of the subject, and in order to fulfil expectations of both the public and members.
- Members stated that the policy demonstrated progress and allowed the Council to work with landowners and building owners to shape problem sites into long-term sustainable sites for the district.
- Members were hopeful that the policy would be incorporated throughout the S&ELCP and enable progress to be made throughout partnership authorities.
- Members asked whether the Council’s stance on using its powers of ‘compulsory purchase’, as stated in the policy, was a strong enough deterrent for the emergence of problem sites.
 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects stated the levels of intervention the Council was able to take and what it would take, would be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The three-step intervention process included the powers of compulsory purchase which could and would be pursued where appropriate. The policy wording would be reviewed to ensure that the message regarding this point was clear.
- Members asked whether a proposed timeline of actions had been discussed in order to avoid protracted periods between interventions.
 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects responded that:
 - set timelines would be challenging as each site had its own specific issues: some sites

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- were tidied only to become untidy again whilst engagement with some site owners had been difficult. Nonetheless, the Assistant Director – Strategic Projects would consider whether a timeline would be beneficial /could be included.
 - Targets would be set to conduct the initial survey, after which time the case would fall within the three-step process; and
 - the Strategic Property Manager was due to conduct enquires/surveys over the next six weeks to bring the Council’s information up to date.
- Members referred to an untidy general refuse area and queried the volume of untidiness which would trigger the policy to take effect.
 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects stated that:
 - whilst all concerns should be reported, any that were not covered by the policy would be referred to the relevant service. In this case, general refuse issues would be referred to the Neighbourhoods Team.
 - It had been proposed that the Strategic Property Manager had access to all reported concerns so that the team had an overview of any related issues coming into the Council.
- Members asked whether a common reason had been ascertained for the existence of untidy sites; and could ‘prevention’ discussions be instigated where issues were anticipated.
 - The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects responded that:
 - the Council was aware of problem sites around the district;
 - the identification of responsibility/ownership could be challenging; engagement was not always forthcoming; and
 - early intervention was key and the Strategic Property Manager would be reviewing initial concerns including monitoring changes of ownership and liaising with the Planning team.
- Members queried whether the Council registered a charge against a property where costly action to secure the site

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had been necessary.

- The Assistant Director – Strategic Projects confirmed that:
 - the default position was the recovery of costs;
 - enforcement regulations allowed charges to be made against properties; and
 - the Council could enforce a sale.
- The Panel agreed that the new policy be reviewed by the Panel 12 months after adoption.

AGREED:

- a) That the draft policy be amended to reflect comments made by the Panel prior to its submission to Cabinet in September 2022;
- b) With comments of the Panel noted, that the policy be adopted by Cabinet; and
- c) That the SHDC Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy be reviewed by the Policy Development Panel 12 months after adoption.

25. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered a report by the Assistant Director Governance (Monitoring Officer) which set out the Work Programme of the Panel. The Work Programme consisted of two sections, the first setting out dates of future Panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration, and the second setting out Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel.

Regarding Appendix A:

- This sets out the meeting dates and scheduled items for the municipal year.

Regarding Appendix B:

- This sets out the Task Groups. There were no current Task Groups and the Chairman asked the Panel to consider any issues that could be taken forward through a Task Group, and to propose these as soon as possible.

AGREED:

That the Policy Development Work Programme be noted.

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**26. ANY OTHER ITEMS WHICH THE CHAIRMAN DECIDES ARE
URGENT.**

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.27 pm)

(End of minutes)