Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 12 December 2023 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)
L J Eldridge (Vice-Chairman)

D Ashby	S Chauhan	T Sneath
J Avery	R A Gibson	
A C Beal	J Le Sage	

In Attendance: The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership, the Assistant Director - Regulatory, the Assistant Director - Leisure and Culture, the Climate Change and Environment Officer (virtual), the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, the Service Manager - Safer Communities, the Strategic Operational and Property Manager, the Portfolio Holder – Economic Development and Partnerships and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors N Chapman, M Geaney, M Hasan, J L Reynolds, M Le Sage, S-A Slade and J Whitbourn

Action By

28. MINUTES

AGREED:

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

a) Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel meeting held on 25 July 2023;

b) Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel meeting held on 11 October 2023; and

c) Policy Development Panel meeting held on 11 October 2023.

29. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the update on actions which arose at the 11 October 2023 Policy Development Panel meeting.

AGREED:

That the update to the actions be noted.

30. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

31. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

32. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

33. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

There were none.

34. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 4 December 2023

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

35. SHDC POLICY REGISTER AND S&ELCP POLICY REGISTER

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

The Business Intelligence and Change Manager introduced the report and gave the following update:

- All outstanding policy reviews were on track, and were scheduled for the current meeting or the Policy Development Panel meeting being held on 6 February 2024; and
- Members were asked their views on whether they wished to scrutinise the partnership Health and Safety Policy. Due to the policy being statutory in nature, with little room for member influence, it was suggested that the policy follow the same governance process as at BBC and ELDC where it would be presented directly to the Leader and Chief Executive for approval.
    - Members wished to follow established SHDC practices and agreed that the Health and Safety

Policy be considered by the Policy Development Panel.

- Members considered the merging of the SHDC and S&ELCP Policy Registers however this was discounted on the grounds of clarity.

AGREED:

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

36. SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTS POLICY - REVIEW ONE YEAR POST ADOPTION

Consideration was given to the report of the Climate Change and Environment Officer which asked the Panel to review progress and ensure that the policy achieved its intended aims.

The report was introduced by the Climate Change and Environment Officer and the following points were highlighted:

- The policy included the commitment of the S&ELCP to discontinue the procurement of single use products within internal operations as far as possible;
- The Performance Monitoring Panel had previously provided input to a Monitoring Measures Action Plan which was now in place and detailed at Appendix A;
- The Climate Change and Environment Officer and the Head of Procurement and Contracts shared knowledge and information to assist with the embedding of the policy within partnership practices;
- A physical audit at the SHDC Priory Road offices and the West Marsh Road depot facility had been undertaken which had highlighted a number of efficiency measures that were already in place. Recommendations included a central approach to procurement with a reduced reliance on Amazon and P-cards;
- A frequently used suppliers list had been developed which enabled the identification of sustainability and efficiency improvements; and
- The monitoring plan and review processes had demonstrated that the policy was fit for purpose and on track to deliver its aims.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members stated the importance of utilising local suppliers.

- Members asked whether local stationery providers had been identified;
    - The Climate Change and Environment Officer responded that:
        - The majority of stationery orders were currently provided through Amazon;
        - Local suppliers had been identified and the localism aspect of the policy would form part of the supplier assessment; and
        - A cost/benefit analysis needed to be considered on a case-by-case basis;

- Members queried the reduction of single use plastic achieved over the previous year.
    - The Climate Change and Environment Officer responded that monitoring was in the early stages and the data would be available in 12 months' time.

- Members referred to the Monitoring Measures Action Plan at Appendix A and noted that 'costs' were stated as being within existing budgets. Were financial savings anticipated?
    - The Climate Change and Environment Officer confirmed that the aim was to achieve financial savings rather than incur additional costs; and
    - The Assistant Director – Regulatory stated that the policy was being delivered within existing budgets. The policy aimed to identify opportunities which delivered both carbon and financial savings across the partnership.

- Members queried whether suppliers were subject to environmental impact scrutiny.
    - The Climate Change and Environment Officer stated that
      a new IT system within the Procurement Team collected information relating to supplier accreditations and environmental commitments which would assist with procurement assessments in terms of social value credentials.

- Members stated that the policy had been tested and was fit for purpose and therefore future updates to the Policy Development Panel need only be programmed as part of the normal review cycle. Members agreed that review of the policy's performance be indicated to the Performance Monitoring Panel.

AGREED:

After consideration of the Sustainable Products Policy by the Policy Development Panel:

a) That the progress towards the monitoring measures outlined in the action plan which supported the successful implementation of the Sustainable Products Policy, in line with the Council's commitments to resource and waste management, and mitigation and adaption to Climate Change be noted; and

b) That review of the policy's performance be indicated to the Performance Monitoring Panel.

37. MOBILE HOMES AND CARAVAN SITE LICENSING AND FEE POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership which provided an update on the Mobile Homes and Caravan Site Licensing and Fee Policy.

The report was introduced by the Service Manager - Safer Communities and the following main points were highlighted:

- The report outlined activities carried out by the Council in relation to the Mobile Homes and Caravan Site Licensing and Fee Policy; and
- An update to the policy was presented to the Panel and detailed at Appendix A; a minor change to the policy was highlighted at point 3.1.

Members considered the update and made the following comments.

- Members referred to point 2.1 of Appendix A and asked under which circumstances fees applied. The consistency of fee levels for different cases was also queried:
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities responded that:
        - Where a local authority owned a site, it was not appropriate for charges to apply;
        - Local authorities had the power to waive fees for charitable organisations;
        - A standardised approach to fees applied for licensed activities; and
        - The application fee was separate to the

Planning fee.

- Members asked whether any caravan sites were used to accommodate homeless people.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership confirmed that this was not the case.

- Members noted that some caravan sites were below sea level and asked whether flood warnings were in place for residents.
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities confirmed that sirens were in place and residents/holidaymakers were encouraged to register for Flood Watch.

- Members referred to point 5.6 of Appendix A and queried the accuracy of the dates stated during which time applications needed to be submitted.
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities confirmed that applications could be made at any time of the year and the point would be amended to reflect this.

- Members referred to point 5.9 of Appendix A and sought clarification on the type of background checks undertaken.
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities responded that applicants were required to pass the 'fit and proper person' checks. This did not relate to an applicant's employability unless employment related fraud had been committed.

- Members asked whether a licence application could be in joint names and therefore require more than one 'fit and proper person' check.
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities responded that whilst a single site licence was required, where a legitimate business or personal connection was established, the application could include multiple individuals.

- Members queried whether DBS checks would be a cheaper option.
    - The Service Manager - Safer Communities confirmed that a basic DBS check was carried out as part of the required wider checks.

- Members noted that 50 registered sites required an annual inspection and asked whether the designated inspection

resource, of one staff member, was adequate to ensure the work could be completed.

- The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership stated that:
  - The SHDC officer was extremely experienced;
  - Partnership working had enabled capacity to be shared across the three authorities which offered support and resilience as required; and
  - The collaborative approach across the three authorities had also enabled the sharing of experience and best practice.

- Members asked whether residential caravan sites incorporated children's play facilities.
  - The Service Manager - Safer Communities responded that the provision of play facilities varied. Safety issues, such as road layouts and speed limits, were determining factors; and
  - The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership stated that play equipment on residential caravan sites fell under the remit of the Private Sector Housing Team.

- Members queried the time allocated for tasks listed on page 13 of Appendix A.
  - The Service Manager - Safer Communities clarified that the breakdown represented an allocation of time for the purpose of fee calculation only. The time taken per task was logged and charged according to the rates stated; and
  - Fees and charges were reviewed periodically to ensure they were set at the correct level.

AGREED:

After consideration of the Mobile Homes and Caravan Site Licensing and Fee Policy by the Policy Development Panel:

a) That the contents of the report be noted; and

b) That the comments of the Panel be noted.

38. GRAFFITI AND STREET ART MANAGEMENT POLICY 2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive - Communities which asked the Panel to consider the

outcome of the implementation phase of the Graffiti and Street Art Management Policy 2022 to establish Street Art in South Holland to provide safe and welcoming public spaces for our local communities

The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture presented the report to the Panel which included the following areas:

- Background to the report and formation of the policy;
- Corporate Plan priorities supported by the policy;
- An outline of the content and structure of the Graffiti and Street Art Management Policy 2022.
- Piloting phase of the policy;
- Policy implementation and next steps;
- Appendix A detailed the full policy; and
- Street Art 'Bloc' Concept Designs and Project Artwork images were presented at Appendix B.

Members considered the update and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture for the update.

- Members stated that concerns had been expressed in terms of the restriction of artwork which would be permitted under the policy and queried the level of demand following implementation.
    - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture responded:
        - That the policy had achieved its aims and had worked well;
        - Positive project outcomes had arisen when the agreed concept and final artwork themes were aligned;
        - The perception of street art was subjective however ongoing work had evidenced that there was a place for the artform; and
        - Future street art opportunities would be explored as part of the National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) project which focussed on 'heritage' and 'place' and would enable creative expression.

- Members asked whether communities across the district had engaged with street art opportunities; and queried the time period that current artwork would remain in place.
    - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture responded that:

- The current street art would remain in place however a space for changing public street art could be considered; and
- Whilst the current demand for street art was unknown, the partnership organisation, Transported Art, would be engaging with schools across the district to assess demand.

- Members stated that the policy had been thoroughly and successfully tested during the skatepark art project where three concepts had been accepted by SHDC. The Strategic and Operational Property Manager and the Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture were praised for their involvement and assistance with the project.

- Members asked whether any additional art or vandalism had occurred at the skatepark street art site.
  - A member responded that graffiti had been minimal, and that young people had been respectful of the site and of the street artists who were held in high regard. Social media feedback regarding the site had been positive;
  - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture responded that:
    - Whilst graffiti was a risk, engagement and education through schools was taking place;
    - Public art around the district, such as mosaics, had been valued and respected; and
    - The policy supported remedial action should issues arise.

- Members referred to 5.3 of the report and asked whether the £1,955,799 NPO funding, for the period 2023 to 2026, would be allocated equally across the three projects
  - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture stated that whilst the funding would be rolled-out across the three partnership-wide projects, a breakdown of the funding was yet to be established.

- Members referred to the success of the skatepark project and expressed a strong desire for the enablement of further/similar projects to take place across the district. Members asked whether any of the NPO funding could remain within SHDC to support artists to work directly with young people, rather than wholly devolved to partnership organisations where results were unclear.
  - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture

responded that:

- Appointment of a Project Manager across the three authorities would take the NPO scheme forward;
- SHDC had plans to propose a number of projects; and
- The partnership organisation Transported Art delivered positive outcomes in communities and schools where activity had taken place. It was proposed that a representative(s) from Transported Art be invited to attend Spalding Town Forum to inform members of their activities and achievements.

- Members agreed that a presentation by a Transported Art representative(s) would be beneficial however this should be open to all members and take place at either a Full Council meeting or a Member Briefing.
  - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture noted this request.

- Members suggested that engagement take place with youth forums and that ideas be integrated with the work of Spalding Town Forum.

- Members raised awareness of Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) in respect of digitised artwork. It was suggested that SHDC street art could potentially be tokenised to offer a revenue benefit and give further opportunities for street artists and investors, such as involvement with the NPO heritage project.
  - The Assistant Director – Leisure and Culture responded that the aim of the NPO project was engagement of heritage and place through artforms.

- Members concluded that:
  - The policy had been tested and deemed fit for purpose;
  - Positive policy outcomes had been achieved through the collaboration with artists and evidenced by feedback from the public; and
  - It was hoped that the policy would lead to the further growth of art around the towns and villages of the South Holland district.

AGREED:

Following consideration by the Policy Development Panel:

a) That the outcome of the implemental phase, which followed the adoption of a new Graffiti and Street Art Management Policy, be noted;

b) That officers continue to pursue ongoing work with the arts and education sectors to develop a project to provide a more permanent opportunity for street art in the future; and

c) That, as requested by members, a presentation by Transported Art be made to all members at either a Full Council meeting or a Member Briefing.

39. DERELICT AND UNTIDY SITES POLICY UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – General Fund Assets which updated the Policy Development Panel on the progress of the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy

The Strategic Operational and Property Manager introduced the report and highlighted the following areas:

- Background to the policy which was approved at Full Council in 2022;
- Progress made, since implementation of the policy, in respect of five sites in the district; and
- The suggestion that, optimally, the policy be encompassed by existing Local Authority powers delegated to Planning Enforcement and Building Control to enable earlier intervention and engagement.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members acknowledged that the policy covered commercial properties only however they were keen to understand how local authorities could encourage or enforce empty residential properties to be brought back into use.
    - The Strategic Operational and Property Manager responded that:
        - The policy only applied to derelict and/or untidy commercial sites;
        - Local authorities had limited legislative authority over privately owned shop units/sites. However, engagement and encouragement of mutual participation was sought; and
        - The services of Planning Enforcement and/or Building Control would be called upon where

an empty building was considered untidy and/or dangerous;

- Members queried the action that could be taken should engagement with owners of derelict and/or untidy sites not be forthcoming. The public were concerned about the derelict sites in the district and members suggested that the policy needed to be reviewed/strengthened to enable further action to be taken.
    - The Strategic Operational and Property Manager responded that:
        - Further engagement with owners was always sought and encouraged prior to further action;
        - Action taken had included the challenge of rateable classifications of existing derelict sites; and
        - Whilst the policy was focused on engagement and encouragement to bring sites back into order, local authorities could utilise enforcement powers when appropriate in respect of tidying sites. In such instances, costs could be charged to the owners.

- Members referred to point 1.2 of the report and queried whether the policy could reside with Enforcement and Building Control. Members were keen that the policy be placed within the team which maximised its potential.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership responded that:
        - For context, the policy had been originally tasked to a senior member of staff in the Assets team who had expertise and experience in the subject area; and
        - Issues were dealt with collaboratively across multiple council departments, including Planning Enforcement, and therefore the position of the policy within the departmental structure of the council did not influence action that could be taken. Nonetheless, where the policy resided departmentally could be reviewed.

- Members noted empty sites across the whole district and acknowledged that any decisions regarding the fair prioritisation of Compulsory Purchase Orders (CPOs) would be challenging within current budget constraints.

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- Members referred to the council's challenge of a derelict classification for an existing Spalding site, and debated whether the desired overturning of the classification, in order to change its rateable status, could lead to deliberate demise and a worsening of condition.
    - The Strategic Operational and Property Manager responded that:
        - The situation was challenging but engagement was always encouraged prior to action; and
        - Appropriate referrals would be made to Planning Enforcement.

- Members referred to empty homes within their wards and asked whether a similar policy could be set up for residential properties.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership stated that:
        - Empty residential homes were under the remit of the Private Sector Housing team;
        - A different process existed for the complex issue of dealing with empty residential homes, for example, many apparent empty homes were wanted; and
        - A new Empty Homes Policy was planned for the partnership and details would come forward to members at a future Policy Development Panel meeting.

- Members suggested that the council investigate whether a CPO was more easily obtainable on derelict buildings. The outcome of which may change the direction of current action in respect of challenging derelict classifications for rateable purposes. Members also recognised that the granting of a CPO was complex.

AGREED:

After consideration of the Derelict and Untidy Sites Policy update by the Policy Development Panel:

a) That the report and progress made in bringing derelict sites back to use be noted; and

b) That the comments of the Panel be noted.

40. 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 Policy Development Panel.

The Chairman introduced the report and outlined the following main points:

- Appendix A set out the dates of future Panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration. The next meeting was the Joint Budget Scrutiny meeting to be held on 25 January 2024.

- Appendix B set out the Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel. The new Street Scene Task Group would commence in January 2024.

Members considered the report and made the following comment:

In respect of Appendix B, members referred to the pending Devolution Task Group and asked Democratic Services to seek guidance from the Leader regarding potential progress.

AGREED:

That the Policy Development Panel Work Programme 2023/2024 be noted.

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

The Chairman relayed festive greetings to all those in attendance.

(The meeting ended at 8.30 pm)

(End of minutes)