Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 9 April 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

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

D Ashby	M Geaney	J L Reynolds
A C Beal	R A Gibson	J Le Sage
S Chauhan	M Hasan	T Sneath

In Attendance: The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership, the Group Manager - Communications and Engagement, the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, the Group Information Manager and Data Protection Officer and the Democratic Services Officer.

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

Action By

1. 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 January 2024; and

b) Policy Development Panel meeting held on 6 February 2024.

2. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the update on actions which arose at the 6 February 2024 Policy Development Panel meeting.

The Democratic Services Officer relayed the following updates:

- In respect of action 54. *23/24*, the following response had been provided by the Operations Manager for Environment and Operational Services after the agenda had been published:
'In principle, a publicity campaign along with stickers on

general waste bins to raise awareness that dog waste can now be placed in general bins is something we could do, appropriately funded, resourced and supported, however; the experience of our waste and streets team who empty the general bins across the district would indicate the practice of placing dog waste in general waste bins is common place already'.

- Regarding action 38. *23/24,* a member briefing with Transported was to be scheduled when the committee meeting dates for 2024/2025 had been confirmed.

AGREED:

That the update to actions be noted.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

4. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

5. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

6. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

There were none.

7. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 25 March 2024.

AGREED

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

8. SHDC POLICY REGISTER AND S&ELCP POLICY REGISTER

Consideration was given to the SHDC Policy Register and the S&ELCP Policy Register.

The Business Intelligence and Change Manager introduced the

registers and highlighted the following:

- Regarding policies that were either due for review or were overdue:
    - The 'Unreasonable Behaviour and Vexatious Requests Policy', as noted on the register, was to be considered by the Policy Development Panel at the current meeting;
    - Both the 'Whistleblowing Policy' and the 'Counter Fraud and Corruption Policy' were currently being reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and relevant Assistant Director, and would likely come forward to the Panel at its next meeting;
    - The 'Pension Discretions Policy' and 'Long Service Policy' would come forward to the Panel after the Terms and Conditions Review had been presented to Full Council; and
    - The 'Health and Wellbeing Strategy' had been due for consideration at the current meeting however the Chairman had agreed that this be combined as part of future reviews of the 'Joint Scrutiny of the S&ELCP Healthy Living Action Plan'.
- A number of ICT Policies had been in review and these would come forward to Panel members at the next Policy Development Panel meeting; and
- In addition, an Artificial Intelligence Policy (AI) was in the process of being developed

Members considered the update and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the Business Intelligence and Change Manager for his work on keeping the policy registers up to date.

- Members asked whether the review of the Long Service Policy was included as part of the recent HR Policy reviews and therefore had the work already been completed.
    - The Business Intelligence and Change Manager responded that the Long Service Policy was to be aligned across the partnership as part of the Terms and Conditions review and had been identified to be included within the first phase of the review; and
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership added that whilst the recent report related to Pay Policy, the review of the Long Service Policy was part of a wider Terms and Conditions review which was currently in progress. A paper was expected at Council in the near future.

- Members queried the status of the following policies which were not yet 'in review' but where reviews were imminent; Corporate Enforcement Policy; Data Protection Policy; Climate Change Strategy; and Corporate Debt Policy- Accounting Services.
    - The Business Intelligence and Change Manager responded that:
        - The policies stated were due for review however the status changed to 'in review' only on receipt of confirmation from lead officers that reviews had commenced;
        - For future clarity, a new status to indicate that a policy was 'pending review' could be introduced; and
        - The policy registers were circulated monthly however contact would be made with the four lead officers concerned to ensure awareness of the review dates.

AGREED:

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

9. PARTNERSHIP ENGAGEMENT PLEDGE

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought feedback on the draft Partnership Engagement Pledge prior to consideration at Cabinet.

The Group Manager – Communications and Engagement introduced the report and outlined the following main points:

- The Engagement Pledge, detailed at Appendix A, had followed recommendations from the SHDC Peer Review in July 2023;
- Although the Peer Review had been specific to SHDC, a corporate approach to the recommendation had been taken across the whole partnership;
- The principles within the pledge had been utilised throughout a recently concluded 'Levelling-Up' project consultation; and
- The report had recently been presented for scrutiny at Boston Borough Council and was scheduled to be presented at East Lindsey District Council the following week.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the Group Manager – Communications and Engagement for a clear and concise report.

- Members queried the timelines for consultation and feedback;
    - The Group Manager – Communications and Engagement responded that:
        - The scheduling and duration of consultation and engagement activities were specific to each project and built into each project plan; for example, the timing of the recent Levelling-Up consultation had included the requirement to follow a pre-application Planning process; and
        - In general, the duration of a consultation/feedback period would be weeks rather than months.

AGREED:

That after consideration of the Partnership Engagement Pledge at Appendix A, the comments of the Panel be noted.

10. UNREASONABLE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) which sought feedback from the Panel on a draft updated Unreasonable Behaviour Policy for the Council prior to consideration at Cabinet.

The Information Manager and Data Protection Officer introduced the report which included the following main points:

- The Unreasonable Behaviour Policy replaced the policy formerly known as the Vexatious and Unreasonable Behaviour Policy;
- Appendix A detailed the draft Unreasonable Behaviour Policy which had been fully reviewed and aligned across the partnership;
- The review of the policy ensured that updates were included and that the policy remained fit for purpose and complied with prevailing statutory requirements;
- Adoption of the policy ensured that the council followed clear processes when dealing with incidents of unreasonable behaviour and unreasonably persistent complainants;
- The policy had been clearly written to be accessible and understandable by officers, members, and members of the

public, and set out clear processes for different situations, for example, the 'Periodic Review of Restriction' stated at point 7.2 of Appendix A, was deliberately left to the discretion of officers so that situations could be dealt with according to individual circumstances; and

- Appendix B outlined unreasonable behaviour statistics across the partnership provided by PSPS Customer Contact monitoring; this had evidenced an increase in abusive contact over the period and therefore the requirement of a policy.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the policy which was well-written, and when enforced, would serve to protect officers.

- Members referred to the statistics at Appendix B and noted a significant increase in reports of received abusive behaviour from 2021/2022 to 2023/2024. Was this due to a real increase or more accurate reporting?
    - The Group Information Officer and Data Protection Officer responded that PSPS staff had received training in the identification of inappropriate behaviour which impacted the increase from 2021/2022 to 2022/2023. Therefore, the comparison of the 2022/2023 baseline data with that of 2023/2024 gave a better indication of the increased trend in actual incidents.

- Members queried whether long call waiting times to certain council departments accounted for some of the frustrations experienced.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership responded that a number of mechanisms had been implemented by PSPS to deal with call waiting times, including:
        - A call-back service, which had seen calls being responded to within 30 to 40 minutes;
        - Automated notification of position within the call queuing system so that callers could choose whether to wait or select a call-back;
        - Whilst the Contact Centre endeavoured to deal with enquiries at the first point of contact, detailed enquiries were referred to relevant teams. Whilst response times of referred calls were dependent upon officer commitments/availability, service standards

relevant to each department were in place; and
        - It was acknowledged that post-Covid expectations were greater and therefore the implemented Contact Centre mechanisms and reviewed Unreasonable Behaviour Policy aimed to address the issue from both angles.

- Members relayed an experience where a Contact Centre call waiting period had greatly exceeded the expected automated notification period and suggested that the automated message be reviewed to reduce potential frustration.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership would liaise with the Head of Customer Service regarding this matter.

- Members referred to point 2 of Appendix A regarding the purpose of the policy and queried whether each report was required to be logged as a formal complaint in the first instance.
    - The Group Information Officer and Data Protection Officer responded that the policy applied to any interaction, formal complaint or otherwise. This approach ensured that any burden could be identified and escalated.

- Members noted that the data at Appendix B was combined across the partnership and requested that a breakdown between each authority be provided.
    - The Group Information Officer and Data Protection Officer responded that:
        - The purpose of the data collation was to demonstrate the need for the policy across the partnership and the data had acted as an indicator in this respect; and
        - A response from PSPS was currently awaited regarding the possible breakdown of the data.

- Members requested that a breakdown of Appendix B statistics also be provided by department in order to obtain a true picture of officers' experiences and therefore an understanding of issues that may affect morale, as well as ensuring that a duty of care was in place.
    - The Group Information Officer and Data Protection Officer responded that:
        - The presented data, at Appendix B, related to

the contact made solely with PSPS Customer Services and that reports of abuse experienced by departments were not currently collected;
        - Observations had shown that departments with higher incidents of abuse also dealt with higher volumes of sensitive customers;
        - The policy provided an effective mechanism to deal with the burden of persistent enquirers which potentially impacted multiple officers; and
        - Whilst the policy protected staff, it also limited the controls that could be placed on individuals, for example, an individual banned from a building, or with a limited contact order, would always be given a mechanism to access services on a needs basis.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership added that:
        - It was unknown whether the Customer Relationship Management system was able to provide the requested data at departmental level however this would be investigated; it was noted that the request could prove burdensome if the data was not readily available;
        - Nonetheless, assurance was given that:
            - The existence of the policy provided the protection mechanism for future incidents;
            - Where high levels of inappropriate behaviour had been experienced, such as towards the Homelessness and Housing Teams, a number of training and wellbeing mechanisms had been implemented as part of the council's duty of care to ensure that staff were both supported and protected; and
            - Assistant Directors had been consulted during the review period to ensure that the policy remained relevant to service areas.

- Members concluded:
    - That the requested departmental data be made available to inform action and ensure a duty of care to employees; and
    - That the Panel agreed the policy be referred to the

Chairman of the Performance Monitoring Panel regarding potential future monitoring.

- In response, the Business Intelligence and Change Manager confirmed that the number of vexatious calls were reported to the Performance Monitoring Panel within the quarterly Performance Reports.

AGREED:

After consideration of the draft Unreasonable Behaviour Policy at Appendix A:

a) That the comments of the Panel be noted;

b) That the Policy be recommended to Cabinet for approval; and

c) That the Policy be referred to the Chairman of the Performance Monitoring Panel for potential future monitoring.

11. JOINT SCRUTINY OF THE S&ELCP HEALTHY LIVING ACTION PLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director, Wellbeing and Community Leadership which asked the Panel to receive the Task Group's report and recommendations following scrutiny of the Healthy Living Action Plan.

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership and the following main points were highlighted:

- The report was the culmination of work undertaken by a partnership task group which had South Holland District Council representation from Councillor M Le Sage, Councillor I Sheard and Councillor N Chapman;
- The report sought feedback on nine task group recommendations listed at Appendix A;
- The task group reviewed the Health and Wellbeing offer across the sub-region and in particular the governance of the Healthy Living area of work, which included: the Healthy Living Board, the Health and Wellbeing Strategy; and the Healthy Living Action Plan;
- The joint task group had decided to focus on two key themes of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, those being 'Activity and Wellbeing' and Working with our Communities';

- Whilst Health and Wellbeing was not a statutory area for district councils, the task group recognised the influence and contribution that district councils made towards social determinants of health; and
- In respect of recommendation 9, members were informed that the Boston Borough Council scrutiny committee had recommended that the progress review be extended from six to nine months.

Members considered the update and made the following comments:

- Members queried how low-cost activities were promoted to all members of society across the district.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership assured members that a robust communication plan was in place which ensured that messages were circulated across communities, this included: through schools - including targeted messages to pupils who received free school meals; the voluntary and community sectors; and through the utilisation of social media campaigns; and
    - Through the review of the Healthy Living Action Plan, the task group concluded that influences were being maximised to strengthen community leadership and physical activity in the area.

- Members asked for clarification of 'Glogi' noted at Appendix A.
    - The Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership responded that Lincolnshire County Council Public Health had introduced 'Glogi',a weight management scheme, to some GP surgeries. The district councils served to influence partners by matching knowledge of such initiatives to specific needs in their area.

- Members suggested that the re-ordering of recommendations 1 and 2 would be more meaningful.

- Members were happy to follow Boston Borough Council's suggestion that the progress review be extended to 9 months.

- Members queried the mechanism used to monitor the progress of the recommendations across the partnership.
    - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership stated that:

- Performance monitoring mechanisms were in place and these were integral to the Healthy Living Action Plan;
- The Healthy Living Plan included five lever areas from the Health and Wellbeing Strategy with activities linked to each lever area;
- Each lever area carried Performance Indicators as monitoring mechanisms; and
- At the first 9-month review of the Healthy Living Action Plan, an overview of the Healthy Living Strategy would be included for completeness.

AGREED:

a) That the Joint Scrutiny of the S&ELCP Healthy Living Action Plan, Appendix A, and associated recommendations be noted by the Panel;

b) That the comments of the Panel be noted; and

c) That the Healthy Living Strategy Review be combined with the nine month review of the Joint Scrutiny of the S&ELCP Healthy Living Action Plan.

12. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) which set out the Work Programme of the Policy Development Panel.

The Chairman introduced the report, and the following points were raised:

<u>In respect of Appendix A</u>

- This would be populated with 2024/2025 meeting dates and planned items when the schedule of meetings had been finalised;
- Two longstanding pending items which related to ‘Planning Reform’ and ‘Planning Design’, and which awaited clarification from the production of a Government White Paper, were debated as to whether they remain on the Work Programme;
    - In relation to Planning Design, members referred to the dormant Planning Design Task Group at Appendix B and stated that:
        - The production of a design guide could improve the aesthetics of new buildings and

help to address the issue of vinyl window coverings; and

- Whilst it was acknowledged that progress of the Task Group had awaited the Government White Paper, the issues were still considered pertinent and members therefore agreed that the Assistant Director - Planning and Strategic Infrastructure be requested to update the Panel on the current position, by way of a briefing note, at the next Policy Development Panel meeting.

In respect of Appendix B

- This detailed ongoing Task Groups and those that had been identified for future investigation:
  - The Street Scene Task Group had changed its name to the Business Frontage Task Group and positive progress was being made; a number of interviews had taken place and further witnesses had been identified, including Lincolnshire Police;
    - Members noted that the issue of vinyl window coverings in Holbeach had featured on the front page of the current edition of the local press and that the issue had also been raised as a matter of concern by members of Boston Borough Council.
  - A Special meeting of the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel was scheduled for 18 April 2024 to update members in respect of the South Holland Centre; and
  - The Devolution Task Group could be removed from Appendix B.

Members were encouraged to raise any issues from their wards that could be investigated by way of a Task Group.

AGREED:

That the Work Programme report be noted.

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.42 pm)

(End of minutes)