

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 9 May 2017 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

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

D Ashby
J R Astill
M D Booth
R Clark

G K Dark
H Drury
L J Eldridge
P C Foyster

A Harrison
C N Johnson
J L Reynolds
J Tyrrell

In Attendance: The Executive Manager - People and Public Protection, the HR Manager, the Head of Services Revenues and Benefits, the Revenues and Recovery Team Leader, the Principal Democratic Services Officer and the Portfolio Holder Finance.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors J L King

44. COUNCILLOR PULLEN

The Chairman referred to the recent death of Councillor Pullen who had served on the Policy Development Panel. He paid tribute to the work of Councillor Pullen and on behalf of the Panel sent his condolences to family and friends.

45. MINUTES

The minutes of the following meetings were agreed as a correct record:

- Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel – 24 January 2017
- Policy Development Panel – 28 February 2017

Minute 39 referred to the circulation of a list of the numbers of empty homes. It was noted that progress on this would be sought.

46. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were no declarations of interest.

47. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were no questions asked under Standing Order 6.

Action By

PS, CM

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL - 9 May
2017**

48. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no tracking of recommendations to consider.

**49. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING
PANEL**

There were no items referred from the Performance Monitoring Panel.

50. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan published on 27 April 2017.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

51. POLICY REGISTER

The Panel gave consideration to the Policy Register that was dated 27 April 2017.

The Panel felt that progress was being made on the register and noted that policy documents were being reviewed. The register would be a standing item on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the Policy Register be noted.

**52. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY AND APPRENTICESHIP
PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Members considered the report of the Executive Manager – People and Public Protection which provided an update on the new Apprenticeship Levy requirement and the future proposed Apprenticeship Scheme.

It was noted that a new Apprenticeship Levy had been implemented by the Government from April 2017, with the aim of funding 3,000,000 start up apprenticeships in the UK by 2020. The Government had committed to boosting productivity by investing in human capital and there was a pledge to develop vocational skills and to increase the quantity and quality of apprenticeships. The start date for the new apprenticeship

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL - 9 May
2017**

funding system had been 1 May 2017 and funding would not be paid until the end of May 2017 however, the process may be delayed by the government calling a General Election for 8 June 2017.

The target for South Holland District Council was to take on 6 apprentices. The Council was working with colleges and institutions relevant to areas that it had difficulty recruiting into such as planning and environmental health. Service Reviews within the Council were also being used as a way of identifying where apprentices would be valuable.

AGREED:

That the report be noted.

53. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL 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.

Councillors identified two topics that could form the basis of future Task Groups:

- Planning design - what was the current policy on the design of new buildings that were considered for planning permission?
- Derelict and dilapidated buildings – what was the Council's policy on dealing with unsightly buildings

In order that the Panel could decide whether or not to set up a Task Group on these topics, it was requested that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Panel, setting out the current issues and/or policies. The relevant officer should also be invited to attend the meeting.

AGREED:

- a) That both sections of the Panel's Work Programme, as set out in the report of the Executive Manager – Governance, be noted; and
- b) That reports be prepared for the next meeting on Planning

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL - 9 May
2017**

Design and Derelict and Dilapidated Buildings, and that the relevant officers be invited to attend the meeting.

54. DEBT MANAGEMENT AND WRITE OFF OPERATIONAL POLICIES

The Panel considered the report of the Portfolio Holder – Finance and the Executive Director of Commercialisation setting out the operational policies for debt management and write off.

Councillors noted that efficient and well administered debt management was crucial to the Council. A review had been undertaken to ensure policies and procedures were in place that enabled effective management of debt, and in particular the processes for identification and recovery of debt owed to the Council.

This review had been instigated at the request of the Cabinet, for more information on the debt recovery process, and for assurance regarding the process and reasons for occasions where debt was considered irrecoverable and recommended for write off. The report and policies were being presented to Policy Development Panel for consideration ahead of recommendation for approval to Cabinet.

In considering the policies the following key points emerged:

- The Policies balanced maximising recovery with being mindful to the debtor so that they had avenues of support.
- They provided a professional and consistent approach to the recovery of debt.
- It was important to identify those that could not pay from those that would not pay
- If debtors returned back to the area, then the Council would still seek to recover the written off debt.
- HMRC had no obligation to give the Council information to help recover debts – the Council could lobby HMRC, DWP and other agencies to help improve the sharing of information.
- Council tenants were not currently asked permission to share their information – consideration should be given to requiring them to permit the sharing of information when they took up a tenancy.

AGREED:

- a) That the Policy Development Panel recommends the policies to Cabinet for approval;

SH

**POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL - 9 May
2017**

- b) That other agencies are lobbied to improve information sharing to help with the recovery of debt; and
- c) Consideration be given to requiring prospective tenants to agree to data sharing when they sign the tenancy agreement.

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

There were no urgent items.

56. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Panel considered the above item without the need to exclude the press and public.

57. DEBT MANAGEMENT AND WRITE OFF OPERATIONAL POLICY

Councillors gave consideration to this item without the need to go into closed session.

(The meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

(End of minutes)