

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Wednesday, 7 November 2018 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

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

J R Astill
F Biggadike
M D Booth
H Drury

L J Eldridge
P C Foyster
A Harrison
A M Newton

J L Reynolds
E J Sneath

In Attendance: The Housing Services Manager, the Licensing and Business Support Manager, the Place Manager and the Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors J L King and S-A Slade

30. MINUTES

Policy Development Panel - 19 September 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Policy Development Panel which was held on 19 September 2018

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record

Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel - 4 October 2018

Consideration was given to the minutes of the meeting of the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel which was held on 4 October 2018

AGREED:

That the minutes be signed as a correct record.

31. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none

32. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none

Action By

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33. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no tracking of recommendations

34. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

There were none

35. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the key decision plan published on 19 October 2018

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

36. POLICY REGISTER

Consideration was given to the Policy Register dated 24 October 2018.

Members wanted to make note of the fact that several items were significantly out of date. The Vice-Chairman stated that whilst this was true, significant improvements had been made to delivering the policy reviews on time and that the authority was on track to be completely up-to-date in the near future.

AGREED:

That the Policy Register Be noted.

37. REVISED TENANCY AGREEMENT FOR HOUSING TENANTS

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Health and the Executive Director – Place which sought to advise members of the consultation process required to amend SHDC's Introductory and Secure Tenancy Agreement.

The Housing Services Manager stated that the changes were designed to toughen the agreement, including a requirement for new tenants to provide 4 weeks worth of rent up front upon commencing a tenancy and allowances for greater controls over pet ownership in rented properties among other changes. It was stated that the changes were being made to make the Authority compliant with recent changes to several pieces of legislation.

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Members stated that they felt that they agreed with the changes. However, they asked about references to tenants agreeing to the condition of a property when they took it. They were concerned that this would bar tenants from complaining about poor conditions. The Place Manager stated that the authority still had standards that they would be obliged to keep properties in line with.

Members also referred to demands for tenants to move in to properties immediately upon taking of the contract. The Housing Services Manager responded that this was because tenants would not be able to claim benefits until they showed they were moving in.

Members asked which tenants would be consulted and whom the changes would be made for. The Housing Services responded that both the consultation and the final document would be for all tenants and would not exclude any group.

Members asked how checks would be made for compliancy. The Housing Services Manager responded that the authority had implemented annual visits.

The Chairman asked how many chances would be given to non-compliers to the changes. The Housing Services Manager stated that changes were being looked at to toughen up on enforcement as it was generally agreed that the Authority had been lenient on enforcement and that it was the prevailing opinion that this should be changed.

The Chairman asked about paragraph 1.6 of the report, questioning why the current tenants were being given a 28 day consultation period on the new agreement. The Housing Services Manager stated that the Housing Act 1985 made this an obligation.

Members asked if there was any help available for people who were unable to meet tenancy conditions. The Housing Services Manager stated that it was very much the opinion of the Housing Team that they wanted to avoid enforcing against people who had legitimate reasons that meant they were unable to meet conditions, and that considerations would be made on a case-by-case basis.

The Chairman noticed the expansion of the definition of anti-social behaviour and asked for examples of what would be newly considered anti-social behaviour. The Housing Services Manager

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responded that this could now include untidy gardens and intimidating behaviour such as noise etc.

Members asked if there was a system in place of matching a property to a tenant. The Housing Services Manager responded that tenants would only be offered properties which fit their needs.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Panel note the intention to update the Council's Introductory and Secure agreement.
- 2) That the Panel notes the formal consultation process required to make changes to the tenancy agreement.

38. SAFEGUARDING POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Transformation and the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Facilities which sought the panel's recommendation that the Safeguarding Policy go forward to Cabinet for consideration.

The Licensing and Business Support Manager introduced the report stating that the policy had been influenced by similar policies held by other Lincolnshire authorities. It was stated that it was hoped that the implementation would be complimented with some training and extensive communications.

The Vice-Chairman asked what the term 'mate crime' was defined as. The Licensing and Business Support Manager responded that this was related to people maliciously befriending vulnerable people and exploiting them. The Licensing and Business Support Manager stated that she could include clarification of the 'jargon' in the report.

The Vice-Chairman asked if the Authority held responsibility for the acts of their contractors. The Licensing and Business Support Manager responded that the authority did take responsibility but that contractors were always asked for their safeguarding policy to ensure that it was compliant with SHDC's

The Vice-Chairman stated that he had noticed a lack of reference to mental health issues. He wondered if the policy could be used to cover people with Mental Health issues. The Licensing and Business Support Manager responded that this was a good point and that she could put some work in to ensure that the policy had at least some cover for Mental Health issues

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Members asked if anyone needed to receive a DBS check. The Licensing and Business Support Manager responded that officers of the Council would only require such a check in certain circumstances as prescribed by the guidance for DBS checks.

Members stated they had never been DBS checked and felt that the lack of demand for members to be checked seemed to be an oversight. Other members replied that it should be the responsibility of members themselves to take any necessary steps that were relevant to the work they wished to carry out. The Licensing and Business Support Manager responded that members were not checked because there were limitations on whom the authority were allowed to check, but stated that members may be free to apply for a check themselves.

Members felt that it was expected that a District Councillor would have been DBS checked. They felt that all members would come into contact with children and vulnerable people as part of their duties. Members felt that they should be encouraged to volunteer for a DBS Check. Officers stated that they felt that this could be something that could be raised with the Democratic Services and Legal departments for clarification.

AGREED:

- 1) That the Policy Development Panel notes the new safeguarding policy
- 2) That the Policy Development Panel recommend that the policy goes to Cabinet for approval.

39. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

The Chairman wanted information on where the Public Open Spaces Task Group was. A member of the task group responded that there were issues found with the report of the task group and that the Chairman of the Public Open Spaces Task Group was going back to officers for more work to be done to improve the policy and the task group would be meeting again to discuss the changes.

AGREED:

That the work programme be noted.

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 7.50 pm)

(End of minutes)