

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 13 December 2022 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

A R Woolf (Chairman)

J Avery
A C Beal
F Biggadike
M D Booth

R A Gibson
M Hasan
P A Redgate
G T D Rudkin

G P Scalese (Vice-
Chairman)
S C Walsh

In Attendance: The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership, the Assistant Director – General Fund Assets, the Assistant Director – Regulatory, the Housing Services Manager, the Group Manager – Organisational Development and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors H J W Bingham, J L Reynolds and S-A Slade, the Business Intelligence and Change Manager and the Head of Public Protection.

43. MINUTES

AGREED:

That the minutes of the 4 October 2022 Policy Development Panel meeting be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

44. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

The following declarations of interest were made during the meeting:

- a) Councillor Walsh declared an interest relating to agenda item 12 in his capacity as a volunteer of the Boston Woods Trust which had a green burial site. He remained in the meeting during the discussion.
- b) Councillor Biggadike declared an interest relating to agenda item 15 in his capacity as a private landlord. He remained in the meeting during the discussion.

45. ACTIONS

Action
By

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Consideration was given to the actions which arose from the 4 October 2022 Policy Development Panel meeting.

Members referred to point action 38(b) regarding the Consultation on the Draft Lincolnshire Homelessness Strategy. Whilst the original report had stated that 10 people were homeless in South Holland, members highlighted that the 'housing need' also needed to consider the number of people who were living in temporary accommodation and had requested the relevant data be circulated. The response had come forward which stated that there were 56 'households' in temporary accommodation however members wanted decision makers to be aware that the actual number of 'individuals' in temporary accommodation would be higher and therefore the need for housing still existed.

A member apologised to the Committee and the Head of Delivery Strategic Housing regarding the request for a further update to be provided for the 'Acquisition of S106 affordable housing in Gosberton, from a developer' as a response had been provided by email.

AGREED:

That the actions be noted.

46. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none

47. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none

48. ITEMS REFERRED FROM THE PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANEL

The South Holland Centre Task Group was to be reconvened and a meeting was being arranged for January 2023.

49. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 2 December 2022.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan dated 2 December 2022 be noted.

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50. 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 Chairman introduced the report, on behalf of the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, and was satisfied that all seven policies that were overdue for review had explanatory comments.

Members did not make any comments.

AGREED:

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

51. REVIEW OF HR POLICIES (BATCHES 4 & 5)

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought the Policy Development Panel’s views on the proposed HR Policies (Batches 4 and 5) prior to a report to Council.

The Group Manager – Organisation Development introduced the report by stating that these were the final batches of HR policies to be considered by the Policy Development Panel. The policies had been drafted by HR (PSPS), subsequently reviewed by an internal readers panel of staff and union representatives, and had been reviewed and supported by the Senior Leadership Team, regional union colleagues and the Portfolio Holder.

The table at point 2.5 of the report contained a brief summary of the key changes to the policies. After consideration by the Policy Development Panel, the policies would progress to Full Council on 18 January 2023.

Whilst the review of HR policies had applied to existing policies, HR were currently investigating whether the adoption of any new policies would be beneficial for the partnership councils.

Members considered the policies and made the following comments:

- Members referred to point 5.7 of the report and asked whether 5.7.3 specifically applied to SHDC.

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- The Group Manager – Organisation Development clarified that point 5.7.3 referred to all three sovereign councils however Boston Borough Council (BBC) and East Lindsey District Council (ELDC) had additional specific agreements which were stipulated at points 5.7.1 and 5.7.2 respectively.
- Members referred to section 4 of the report in respect of 'Mileage Allowance' claims and queried whether Government guidelines of five pence per mile for electric vehicles would be incorporated into the policy. The five pence per mile rate was not considered sufficient to cover the running costs.
 - The Group Manager – Organisation Development responded that the policy regarding electric vehicle claims had not been updated and any changes would be subject to consultation. Presently:
 - Boston and East Lindsey allowances were based on the HMRC rate; and
 - SHDC allowances were set by the Green Book rate.
 - Exceptions applied where Car Salary Sacrifice Schemes were used – as outlined at point 2.4 of the report.
- Members referred to section 10.2 and suggested, in order to avoid claims of positive discrimination, that 'all people' who had met the minimum criteria would be shortlisted, whether or not a declaration of disability had been made.
 - The Group Manager – Organisation Development responded that the wording used was industry standard however this would be reviewed in the managers' guidance to ensure clarity of the policy that one group would not be directly or indirectly discriminated against.

AGREED:

That the comments of the Policy Development Panel regarding the HR Policies (Batches 4 and 5) be noted prior to a report to Council.

52. FIRST DRAFT S&ELCP ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023 - 2028

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director-General Fund Assets which sought the Policy Development

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Panel's input into the first draft S&ELCP Asset Management Strategy.

The report was introduced by the Assistant Director – General Fund Assets who stated that:

- the first draft of the strategy, outlined at Appendix 1, was being presented to the Policy Development Panel at the current meeting and would be presented to scrutiny committees at East Lindsey District Council in January 2023 and Boston Borough Council in February 2023, prior to going forward to respective Executive Board/Cabinets;
- effective use of public land was essential to support service delivery and ensure that the value needs of residents were met;
- five strategic priorities were outlined in Appendix 1 for scrutiny;
- the strategy would not replace detailed individual policies which related to specific areas of asset management, such as the Industrial Lettings Policy, but it would replace the prevailing highest level asset management strategies at each council and set high-level actions which shaped the ability of each service to meet the needs of communities.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the Assistant Director – General Fund Assets for bringing forward the first draft S&ELCP Asset Management Strategy 2023 – 2028 for scrutiny.
- Members noted that the strategy term was 2023 to 2028 however the priority objectives were scheduled until 2025. What were the objectives beyond 2025?
 - The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that:
 - the strategy would be monitored and reviewed annually;
 - the priorities were front-loaded and future objectives would be driven by the monitoring and review process;
 - the date of the strategy could be shortened to 2025 but a longer-term view had been taken to incorporate the iterative nature of the strategy; and
 - a paragraph would be included in the strategy which outlined the monitoring aims/purpose beyond 2025.

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- Members referred to Strategic Priority 5 and stated that local contractors should be prioritised for work within respective districts wherever possible.
 - The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that the strategy had a deliberate open procurement route which enabled the consideration of location, quality, and efficiency to be balanced by respective Executives. Local procurements were supported within the frameworks of sovereign councils however significant economies of scale could also be achieved.

AGREED:

That following consideration of Appendix 1 of the First Draft S&ELCP Asset Management Strategy 2023-2028 by the Policy Development Panel:

- a) the form and purpose of the strategy be noted;
- b) the 'guiding principles' suggested at section 1.4 be noted;
- c) the suggested 'strategic approach' to asset management at section 2.6 be noted;
- d) the five draft 'strategic priorities' to asset management and delivery dates be noted; and
- e) a review of progress/implementation of the strategy come forward to the Panel by way of a briefing note, one year from adoption.

53. SPALDING CEMETERY BRIEFING NOTE

Consideration was given to the briefing note of the Assistant Director- General Fund Assets which provided the Panel with a basic overview of management and operation of Spalding Cemetery.

The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets introduced the briefing note to the Panel which outlined the following information:

- South Holland District Council responsibilities - the Council was responsible for one cemetery in the district, namely Spalding Cemetery;
- budgetary information;
- Code of Safe Working Practices for Cemeteries;

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- staffing and fees;
- who was entitled to be buried at Spalding Cemetery; and
- support received from the Friends Group.

Members considered the briefing note and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the Assistant Director – General Fund Assets for bringing forward the briefing note to the Panel.
- Members noted that:
 - as Spalding did not have a Town Council, South Holland District Council was responsible for the management/ maintenance of Spalding Cemetery which was funded through the Spalding Special Expenses account; whilst Parish Councils were responsible for their respective parish cemeteries funded through the parish precept;
 - Parish cemeteries were reaching capacity which would likely affect future demand of the Spalding Cemetery;
 - Members noted that grounds maintenance of closed Parish Church cemeteries were the responsibility of the Parish Council - Whaplode Parish Council had purchased land to extend the cemetery; and
 - Members suggested that non-traditional burial practices, such as green burial sites, be investigated as part of future discussions.
- Members referred to the following statement within the briefing note: ‘The Council places no restriction upon who can be buried at the Cemetery in comparison with other ‘local’ cemeteries and has very low charges’, and asked whether Spalding residents were charged the same fees for burial in Spalding Cemetery as those who lived outside of Spalding.
 - The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets would refer to the Fee Policy and report back to the Committee on this matter.
- Members queried whether a common fee structure applied to those who lived inside and outside of the district?
 - The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets stated that:
 - Spalding Cemetery received a high volume of burials for people who lived outside of the South Holland district which, anecdotally, had been attributed to low burial charges;

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- a comparison of burial costs charged by South Holland District Council and Boston Borough Council had shown that the charges in South Holland were 50 per cent less than those charged at Boston; Boston had experienced a decrease in burial demand and an increase demand for crematorium services;
 - the Facilities Manager had reviewed the Spalding Cemetery fees and charges with the Portfolio Holder and increased charges to reflect the local market were being proposed as part of the budget setting process;
 - a review of who could be buried at Spalding Cemetery had not been undertaken however the fee review would likely impact future demand;
 - the capacity of Spalding Cemetery in October 2022 was 360. Capacity reviews were undertaken to inform future decision-making, which could include the consideration of the site extension. Whilst the forecast of burial demand was fluid, it was anticipated that the current capacity would serve for 10 years.
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- Members stated that any potential extension of Spalding Cemetery, which included the purchase and preparation of land for burial purposes, required a long lead-in period and would have considerable financial implications on the Spalding Special Expenses Account. There was an urgency for the issue to be discussed.
 - A proposal was made that the discussion of the future of Spalding Cemetery be moved to Full Council. This was not seconded.
 - The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that the Portfolio Holder was aware of the capacity issues at Spalding Cemetery and the proposed revision of the fees and charges. Specific discussions had not yet been made in terms of future expansion and land purchase.
 - In response the Chairman suggested that the following information be circulated to the Panel by 31 January 2023 for further consideration:
 - current capacities of parish council cemeteries which included details of any future plans being considered when capacity was reached; and
 - the number of burials at Spalding

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Cemetery over the last 5 years specifically distinguishing between those that were for residents of the South Holland district and those who lived outside of the district.

- In addition, members requested that:
 - fees for the burial of non-residents of the district be reviewed/increased to manage capacity and safeguard availability of burial plots for South Holland residents; and
 - that the relevant Portfolio Holder be invited to the 28 February 2023 Policy Development Panel meeting to discuss the plans for Spalding Cemetery.

AGREED:

That following consideration of the Spalding Cemetery briefing note, the comments of the Panel be noted.

54. DRAFT LITTER AND FLY-TIPPING ENGAGEMENT AND ENFORCEMENT STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director - Regulatory which advised the Panel about a draft Partnership Litter and Fly-Tipping Engagement and Enforcement Strategy and requested feedback.

The Assistant Director – Regulatory introduced the report by outlining the following background to the strategy:

- a sustained increase in litter and fly-tipping had been experienced on both a local and national level and the draft strategy outlined a proposed approach of engagement and enforcement to address these issues throughout the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership (S&ELCP);
- a distinction was made between the aim of the draft Litter and Fly-Tipping Engagement and Enforcement Strategy and that of the infrastructure waste requirements reflected in the Lincolnshire Waste Partnership which related to services delivered by Lincolnshire County Council and district council waste collection services;
- a litter and fly-tipping strategy had not previously existed within any of the three sovereign councils of the S&ELCP and therefore the implementation of a new partnership strategy would help to steer the priorities set out within

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each of the authorities' Corporate Plans.

- Appendix A set out The Draft Litter and Fly-Tipping Engagement and Enforcement Strategy.
- Appendix B was a presentation which outlined the salient points of the strategy.

Members considered the report and presentation and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the document and stated that monitoring processes, milestones and timelines needed to be included in the strategy.
 - The Assistant Director - Regulatory stated that:
 - approval of the strategy was expected by February 2023; the interim period enabled the strategy to be presented for consultation/scrutiny across the partnership before being presented to respective Executive Board/Cabinets for approval;
 - a Portfolio Holder briefing note had been issued regarding the procurement of a joint environmental crime enforcement contract. The procurement process for the contract was complete and it was anticipated that the preferred bidder would be approved and in place by February 2023, as the selected contractor needed eight weeks to mobilise.
 - an Action Plan and Communications Plan would be presented alongside the strategy for approval by Cabinet and a suite of performance indicators would be implemented to monitor performance. The communications campaign would be broad, accessible in multiple languages and circulated through appropriate mechanisms.
- Members stated that the communication strategy needed to set out residents' responsibilities regarding:
 - the illegal fly-tipping of privately collected waste; and
 - adherence to new legislation regarding the separation and collection of different forms of waste in order to avoid contamination.
- The Chairman requested the strategy be reviewed by the Policy Development Panel in November 2023.
- Members noted the importance of the strategy and the impact of environmental crime upon the district. It was

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hoped that the enforcement contract would facilitate a higher number of prosecutions for persistent offenders and when this had occurred, that details be widely publicised. Financial penalties were supported by members to motivate behavioural changes and serve as a deterrent to fly-tipping.

- The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that the environmental crime contract enabled the utilisation of patrols and surveillance which would assist with the identification of offenders. A positive impact had been experienced at Boston Borough Council where a significant decrease in fly-tipping had been experienced in areas where overt surveillance was employed.
- Members asked whether the strategy aimed to address the early presentation of domestic waste.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory stated that early presentation of waste would be addressed through education and enforcement; implementation processes would be decided at a local level however education and enforcement action could be deployed through the environmental crime contract.
- Members noted the wide variance in fly-tipping data across the partnership.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that:
 - the reasons for the variance in fly-tipping data across the partnership were complex: remote locations were prone to fly-tipping incidents and Boston had seen rapid increases whereas fewer reports from the East Lindsey district were attributed to the employment of street cleaners in coastal tourist destinations where swift action had been taken; and
 - intelligence was deemed important; the environmental crime contract included surveillance capabilities.
- Members enquired about how elected members would engage with the strategy. Reports of fly-tipping were often made to members directly and the outcome of reported incidents needed to be relayed to ward members/residents.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that
 - local intelligence from residents, ward members and Parish Councils was important and would inform the most effective deployment of resources;

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- the environmental crime contract included a performance reporting requirement, and a key objective was that comprehensive data, at ward level, could be shared with members; and
- members were encouraged to suggest requirements regarding the regularity and format of the requested feedback.
- Members requested regular updates relating to the number, location and status of fly-tipping reports on their wards, from the reporting stage through to prosecution. Members referred to the weekly reports received regarding Planning Applications and suggested a similar reporting approach be taken. Members agreed that the inclusion of a regular feedback mechanism be recommended to Cabinet.
- Members suggested a proactive approach to engagement and education of the strategy was required. Engagement with schools was supported.

AGREED:

- a) That following consideration of the Draft Litter and Fly-Tipping Engagement and Enforcement Strategy, that the comments of the Panel be noted;
- b) That the request for regular feedback to members in connection with reported fly-tipping incidents be recommended to Cabinet; and
- c) That the Draft Litter and Fly-Tipping Engagement and Enforcement Strategy come forward to the Policy Development Panel for first review in November 2023.

55. POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel considered a report by the Interim Assistant Director – Governance (Monitoring Officer) which set out the Work Programme of the Panel.

The Policy Development Work Programme consisted of two sections:

- Appendix A set out dates of future Panel meetings along with proposed items for consideration. The requested report from the Spalding Cemeteries item and attendance by the Portfolio Holder was to be added to the Work

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- Programme for 28 February 2023; and
- Appendix B set out Task Groups that had been identified by the Panel. The South Holland Centre Task Group was to be reconvened in January 2023.

AGREED:

That the Policy Development Panel Work programme be noted.

56. HOUSING COMPLIMENTS, COMPLAINTS AND COMPENSATION POLICY, TENANT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK AND HOUSING ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Housing which asked the Panel to consider the Housing Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy, the Tenant Engagement Framework, and the Housing Estate Management Policy.

The Housing Services Manager introduced the report by stating that the three policies presented to the Panel supported the Council's ongoing preparations for upcoming changes in legislation which would result in the regulation of social housing.

- Appendix A outlined the Housing Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy;
- Appendix B outlined the Tenant Engagement Framework;
- Appendix C outlined the Housing Estate Management Policy; and
- Appendix 1A outlined the exempt information which related to the Housing Compliments Policy.

Members considered the report and appendices and made the following comments:

Regarding Appendix A

- Members welcomed the Housing Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy and suggested that in addition to 'Compliments', 'Complaints' and 'Compensation' that the title of the policy should also include 'Comments'. Members stated that general comments were often more forthcoming and could be analysed to assess underlying issues.
 - The Housing Services Manager noted this request. The policy name would be amended to the Housing Comments, Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy.

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- Members suggested that policy consultations with tenants should also include consultations with the families of tenants to ensure that the broadest response/feedback was considered.
 - The Housing Services Manager stated that:
 - feedback was currently being sought from members of the Policy Development Panel;
 - thereafter a wider consultation directly with existing and prospective tenants would take place;
 - the consultation would include engagement with a focus group which was established under the Sheltered Housing Review; and
 - the policy document would be publicly available for consultation on the SHDC website and social media platforms.

- Members asked if the new regulations also applied to private landlords.
 - The Housing Services Manager replied that the document included stipulations from the Housing Ombudsman which solely applied to social housing landlords. Complaints regarding private landlords would be taken through the existing Corporate Complaints Policy process.

Regarding Appendix B

- Members did not raise any questions regarding the Tenant Engagement Framework.

Regarding Appendix C

- In connection with the Housing Estate Management Policy, a member relayed the negative impact reported by a new South Holland resident regarding parking, green spaces, overflowing bins and anti-social behaviour on a private estate. The specific estate/street was managed by an external management company and the resident had expressed regret at their relocation to the district. Members queried;
 - how the responsible management company/party of any particular street could be identified; and
 - how the undesirable situation stated could be improved for residents in locations where the council did not have landlord/owner responsibilities.

- The Housing Services Manager responded that:
 - private management companies were set up to manage communal areas in the majority of newbuild estates;

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- private enforcement matters should be referred to the Community Safety and Enforcement Manager; advice on the incident specified would be sought and a response reported directly to the member who had raised it;
- a list of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) estates would be shared with members; and
- HRA estates contained properties that were both privately and publicly owned.

Regarding Appendix 1A (restricted)

- Members did not discuss any of the information relating to the restricted Appendix 1A, and therefore the meeting remained in open session.

AGREED:

- a) That following consideration of the Housing Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy, the comments of the Panel be noted;
- b) That subject to the noting of the recommendations of the Policy Development Panel, the Panel recommended adoption of the Housing, Compliments, Complaints and Compensation Policy to Cabinet;
- c) That following consideration of the Tenant Engagement Framework the framework be noted by the Policy Development Panel;
- d) That the Policy Development Panel recommended adoption of the Tenant Engagement Framework to Cabinet;
- e) That following consideration of the Housing Estate Management Policy, the policy be noted by the Policy Development Panel; and
- f) That the Policy Development Panel recommended adoption of the Housing Estate Management Policy to Cabinet.

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

There were none.

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(The meeting ended at 8.29 pm)

(End of minutes)