

Minutes of a meeting of the **POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL** held in the Meeting Room 1, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 25 June 2024 at 6.30 pm.

PRESENT

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

A C Beal
N Chapman
R A Gibson

A Harrison
J Le Sage
T Sneath

J Whitbourn

In Attendance: The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets, the Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership, the Assistant Director – Regulatory, the Business Intelligence and Change Manager, the Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment (virtual), the Climate Change and Environment Officer (virtual), the Scrutiny and Policy Officer (virtual) and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors D Ashby, J Avery, M Geaney, M Hasan, J L Reynolds and M Le Sage

14. MINUTES

AGREED:

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

- a) Policy Development Panel meeting held on 9 April 2024;
and
- b) Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel meeting held on 18 April 2024.

15. ACTIONS

Consideration was given to the update on actions which arose at the 9 April 2024 Policy Development Panel meeting and the tracking of outstanding actions.

AGREED:

That the update to actions be noted.

Action By

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16. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS.

There were none.

17. QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER 6

There were none.

18. TRACKING OF RECOMMENDATIONS

There were none.

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

There were none.

20. KEY DECISION PLAN

Consideration was given to the Key Decision Plan dated 17 June 2024.

- Members referred to the decision 'Land in Holbeach' and asked for an update regarding when the decision would be made.
 - The Democratic Services Officer would refer the enquiry to the relevant officer and circulate the response to the Panel.

AGREED:

That the Key Decision Plan be noted.

21. 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 updates:

SHDC Policy Register

- Regarding policies that were 'red' and therefore overdue for review:
 - The 'Whistleblowing Policy' and the 'Counter Fraud

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- and Corruption Policy' would be presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 12 September 2024;
- The 'Pensions Discretions Policy' and the 'Long Service Policy' would come forward to the 24 September 2024 Policy Development Panel meeting;
- The batch of five ICT policies would be presented to members at agenda item 13 of the current meeting; and
- The 'Customer Feedback Policy' had been scheduled to come forward to the Panel at the 26 November 2024 meeting.
- Regarding policies that were 'amber' and therefore due for review:
 - Members were being updated in respect of the 'Climate Change Strategy' at agenda item 11 of the current meeting; and
 - The 'Strategic Tenancy Policy' was scheduled to come to the 24 September 2024 Policy Development Panel meeting.
- New policies would be added to the registers after they had been approved by Cabinet.

Partnership Register

- The Partnership Policy Register 'red' and 'amber' review dates were identical to the SHDC Policy Register barring the review date for the 'Climate Change Strategy' which did not go forward to committees at East Lindsey or Boston for a first-year review.

AGREED:

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

22. ENVIRONMENT POLICY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which sought approval for a new South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Environment Policy to underpin the Sub-Regional Strategy.

The Assistant Director – Regulatory and the Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment attended for this item.

The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

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- The Environment Policy was a new policy for South Holland. Policies were in place for East Lindsey District Council and Boston Borough Council which had been reviewed and were to be aligned across the three authorities of the S&ELCP;
- The environment had been identified as one of four key priorities in a new Sub-regional Strategy recently adopted for the S&ELCP. The development of the Environment Policy provided a mandate to deliver the strategy;
- The Environment Policy, at Appendix A, outlined the following four themes which would be considered across all Council operations:
 - Theme 1: Protecting and recovering our environment;
 - Theme 2: Mitigating and adapting to climate change;
 - Theme 3: Protecting and enhancing our built environment; and
 - Theme 4: Ensuring a sustainable approach to waste and resource management.

Several priorities had been identified under each theme, as outlined within the report.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members welcomed the report to the Panel and stated that it was needed.
- Members queried how the council intended to work with partners who also had an interest in managing the fens/local environment.
 - The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment responded that:
 - Following the approval of the Climate Change Strategy, a South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN) had been established which placed a focus on climate change outcomes beyond the councils' operational requirements; and
 - SELCAN incorporated a range of private, public and third sector partners and associated information was included in the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Change Strategy update at agenda item 11 of the current meeting.
- Members referred to Theme 1, '*Protecting and recovering our natural environment*' and asked whether the policy

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could help protect the natural environment from industrialisation. Concerns were raised regarding the Meridian Solar Farm Ltd development which affected areas of the district with the construction of solar farms, battery storage and pylons (National Grid infrastructure). Could the council work with external agencies to install solar energy sources on buildings instead of constructing solar farms.

- The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment responded that:
 - The Planning department adhered to the Local Plan, and the Environment Policy would be influential to Planning Policy and provide 'hooks' when the Local Plan was reviewed;
 - In respect of the siting of solar energy sources, this related to the Planning function however the Environment team worked with partners through SELCAN where renewable options for external buildings could be explored; and
 - The new Environment Policy gave the S&ELCP a framework approach for plans and policies that service areas would adhere to, as well as a robust position to co-operate and engage with external partners.
- The Assistant Director – Regulatory added that the Meridian project mentioned was a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) which would not come forward to local councils for a decision however the council would be a statutory consultee as part of the process.
- Members referred to the ambition to reduce the carbon footprint and asked what action was being taken in respect of renewable energy sources on council buildings and housing stock.
 - The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment responded that:
 - An exercise was underway to establish South Holland's carbon footprint with the baseline of emissions data informing a Carbon Reduction Plan;
 - The council was working with WSP (an environmental consulting company) to plan a pathway towards net zero and identify the main project areas - operational emissions from buildings would be key feature of this work;

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- Experience from Boston and East Lindsey colleagues had shown that the pathway to net zero was a long-term piece of work with the target being set at 2040. South Holland may take a more ambitious approach; and
 - Decarbonisation was not cheap, and assessments would be undertaken to establish where 'invest to save' was best served; data and evidence was required to explore and maximise opportunities through external funding.
- Members referred to Theme 3, '*Ensure planning policy sets strong ambition for low carbon, energy efficient new housing development schemes and retrofits of existing stock which are fit for the future*' and queried whether the council stipulated a minimum energy rating requirement prior to the purchase of HRA (Housing Revenue Account) stock. Could this practice be implemented?
 - The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment responded that:
 - Whilst councils had the power to make local decisions, these needed to align with the national policy framework to avoid legal challenges and appeals;
 - The recently adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan was ambitious in terms of its net zero ambitions, and initial feedback had indicated that development had not been impacted;
 - Nonetheless, viability needed to be considered and developers were already required to meet biodiversity net gain stipulations from the Environment Act 2021;
 - It was acknowledged that national legislation/policy needed to strengthen in order to remove the necessity to retro-fit new properties; and
 - Local authorities had the power to set the energy rating criteria of the properties they bought, the main consideration to this approach being cost. A neighbouring council had exercised this position.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory added that:
 - The Environment Policy and Climate Change Strategy gave credibility to the suggestion raised by members and any areas that members wish to be explored could be raised

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- through Portfolio Holder channels; and
 - The policy would also be reviewed by Boston and East Lindsey and ideas from all three authorities shared across the partnership.
- Members highlighted that a review of the Local Plan was to commence at a meeting of the 'South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee' on 1 July 2024. Members were keen that, after approval by Cabinet, the Environment Policy be given a focus during Local Plan review discussions at future Joint Strategic Planning Committee meetings.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that upon approval by Cabinet, engagement with the 'South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee' would be very much supported in order to raise the profile of the policy and shape future policy development; and
 - The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment added that members comments underlined the importance of the policy. The ambition of the policy represented a culture change in that the impact upon the environment of any activity, needed to be considered at the outset, during development discussions, rather than later on.
- Members noted that the details outlined within the policy were brief and queried whether these should be expanded.
 - The Assistant Director – Regulatory responded that the broad design of the policy was deliberate and ensured that the policy could be implemented across the whole partnership to shape and influence detail in service specific strategies and policies; and
 - The Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment added that the broad policy design encouraged and enabled ambition and welcomed fast-paced developments such as those occurring within the technology sector.
- Members agreed that an update in respect of the Environment Policy be presented to the Panel in 12 months.

AGREED:

- a) That the Policy Development Panel recommended the Environment Policy to Cabinet for approval; and

b) That the comments of the Panel be noted.

23. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Regulatory which provided an update on progress against the Climate Change Strategy adopted in April 2022.

The Climate Change and Environment Officer, the Group Manager – Climate Change and Environment, and the Assistant Director – Regulatory attended for this item.

The report was introduced by the Climate Change and Environment Officer which outlined the following:

- Background and context;
 - This included the establishment of the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Action Network (SELCAN) which served as a platform to share best practice and shape developments in relation to Climate Change. Membership of SELCAN was drawn from the public sector (including the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership), the private sector and the third sector. SELCAN held responsibility for the delivery and monitoring of the South and East Lincolnshire Climate Change Strategy; and
- SELCAN's approach and progress achieved to date, which included:
 - The prioritisation of the formation of an engagement framework to enable the sharing of aims and promotion of projects and achievements; and
 - That eight themed SELCAN sub-groups had been formed with each working towards the development of priority proposals over the next 12 to 18 months.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- It was noted that drainage boards and farmers had a strong interest in environmental issues and members queried whether such organisations/individuals were included in SELCAN.
 - The Climate Change and Environment Officer confirmed this was the case and stated that eight SELCAN subgroups had been formed which

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included:

- An 'Agriculture and Food' subgroup, which included stakeholders from growers, logistics and transportation businesses; and
 - A 'Water Resilience and Adaptations' subgroup which had representation from several drainage boards and flood organisations, including the Environment Agency.
- Members were pleased to note the progress achieved to date and looked forward to future continuous progress.

AGREED:

That the progress towards delivery of the Strategic Action Plan, which supported the successful implementation of the Climate Change Strategy in line with the Council's commitments to mitigate and adapt to Climate Change, and to meet its net zero ambitions, be noted.

24. PROPOSED JOINT SCRUTINY ACTIVITY FOR 2024/25 FOR THE SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which asked the Policy Development Panel to approve the scoping documents for the proposed joint scrutiny topics for 2024/25, and to agree the appointment of three members to each of those Joint Task and Finish Groups.

The Scrutiny and Policy Officer introduced the report and stated that:

- The Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of scrutiny committees across the S&ELCP had recently reviewed potential joint scrutiny topics for 2024/25;
- Appendix A listed the proposed topics for joint scrutiny task groups, which would comprise three members from each council, as follows:

'To review the scope of the Sub-Regional Leisure Facilities offer':

- SHDC membership would be drawn from the Policy Development Panel and three SHDC members would be requested to join the task group;
- The proposed scope of the task group was outlined at Appendix B;
- It was imperative that the pre-scrutiny work to review the scope of the sub-regional leisure facilities

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- offer was undertaken during July 2024 in order to meet subsequent project procurement deadlines;
- The final report, drafted by the Scrutiny Officer, would be presented to the Panel in September 2024; and
 - In respect of questions relating to the leisure contract and the contract procurement process, members would receive more information at a briefing scheduled for 2 July 2024.

'Enviro Crime Enforcement Contract'

- Membership would be drawn from the Performance Monitoring Panel and work would not commence until October 2024.

The Chairman asked for expressions of interest from members to join the task group and the following members volunteered:

- Councillor Angela Harrison; and
- Councillor James Le Sage;

The Scrutiny and Policy Officer would seek a third member by contacting members of the committee who were not present at the current meeting.

AGREED:

- a) That the topic and associated scope, set out in Appendix B, with the Task and Finish Group authorised to review the scope and determine the detailed lines of enquiry and witnesses, be agreed; and
- b) That the Committee appointed Councillor Angela Harrison and Councillor James Le Sage to the proposed Task and Finish Group identified in Appendix B. A further member, drawn from the Policy Development Panel, would be sought after the meeting.

25. OFFICER AND MEMBER ICT POLICIES

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director – Corporate which sought the Policy Development Panel's views on the proposed ICT policies for officers and members.

The Business Intelligence and Change Manager introduced the report and highlighted the following points:

- The policies were previously refreshed in 2022 after the formation of the S&ELCP;
- Policies included in the review exercise were appended in

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full, as follows:

- ICT Acceptable Use Policy - Officers at Appendix A;
- Removable Media Policy at Appendix B
- Third Party Access Policy at Appendix C
- Systems Acquisition, Development and Deployment Policy at Appendix D; and
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy – Members at Appendix E;
- Changes to each policy were listed within the covering report with the most notable change being the splitting of the Acceptable Use Policy between members and officers.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members referred to the 'storing of data' and asked whether data should be stored on their device or the cloud (Office 360).
 - The Business Intelligence and Change Manager would check with ICT colleagues for a formal response however it was noted that information stored on a lost device could not be retrieved if it had not been backed-up to the cloud.
- Members stated that they were happy with the report as written.

AGREED:

That after consideration of the report, the comments of the Panel be noted.

26. PLANNING BRIEFING NOTE

Consideration was given to the Briefing Note of the Assistant Director – Planning and Strategic Infrastructure which was requested at the previous Policy Development Panel meeting.

The recommendation was that Planning Reform and Planning Design pending items be removed from the Policy Development Panel Work Programme as such items would be picked up by the Joint Strategic Planning Committee in due course.

- Members referred to the fifth paragraph in respect of 'policy resource across Boston and South Holland' and queried whether a timeline had been set for this consideration.
 - The Chairman responded that this was a matter for the Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

AGREED:

That the Planning Reform and Planning Design items be removed from the Policy Development Panel Work Programme with the caveat that they be taken forward by Joint Strategic Planning Committee.

**27. SOUTH AND EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS
PARTNERSHIP ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2023-2028
ANNUAL UPDATE.**

Consideration was given to the report of the Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets which provided an update on the South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Asset Management Strategy 2023-2028.

The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets introduced the report.

- The South and East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership Asset Management Strategy 2023-2028, approved by Council in May 2023, was at Appendix A;
- A progress update against five strategic priorities was outlined within the covering report, with more work to do.

Members considered the report and made the following comments:

- Members thanked the officers and Portfolio Holder for the achievements outlined within the report.

Regarding Strategic Priority 2:

- Members queried the capacity of the council's Uninterruptable Power Supply (UPS).
 - The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that the UPS covered the whole building as well as the IT infrastructure. The UPS specification gave the council a minimum battery power period of two hours to drawdown its systems in the event of total power loss. This was a sufficient period for the generator to be engaged, enabling business continuity.
- Members asked for a tour of the acquired former Travis Perkins site.

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- The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership understood that plans for a site visit had been discussed by the Assistant Director – Environmental Services and that appropriate communications would be circulated once this was possible; and
 - The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that investment in the facility had taken place subsequent to acquisition of the asset, with further remodelling planned to increase usage and add value.
- Members noted the £200,000 investment for the remodelling of the Sheep Market toilets, which had recently been completed, and gave credit to the team involved. The public had also given positive feedback for the facility via social media. A discussion ensued around the rationalisation of public toilets and whether other facilities around the district would be upgraded. Whilst some members suggested that an investigation of public toilet usage data could inform a potential rationalisation exercise, other members strongly supported the safeguarding and upgrading of current facilities to retain and attract visitors to the district's towns, and that further investment in the facilities was needed.
 - The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that whilst a budget for further upgrades had not been allocated in the current financial year, members were encouraged to suggest sites for improvement ahead of the next budget setting process; and
 - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership added that a funding proposal for additional toilet upgrades, such as for the Winfrey Avenue/Spalding Bus Station may be made through the Long Term Plan for Towns. Further advice should be sought from the Assistant Director – Economic Growth.
- Members asked whether any criminal damage to the Sheep Market toilet facility would be covered by CCTV.
 - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership stated that the upgraded CCTV system covering the Sheep Market was sophisticated and its ability to identify colours of clothing had assisted

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- with supportive evidence gathering for the police. The specific coverage of the CCTV at the Sheep Market facility would be checked; and
- The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets added that the design of the facility limited the extent of any potential criminal damage.
 - Members were pleased to note the transfer of certain playparks and open spaces from SHDC to Parish Councils.
 - The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that:
 - Assurance was given that all contractual arrangements made with Parish Councils protected the future financial position of SHDC;
 - Quadring Parish Council and Fleet Parish Council had approached SHDC regarding the transfer of the land noted within the report. Discussions were welcomed where Parishes had similar ambitions regarding SHDC owned land within their boundaries; and
 - It was to be noted that each disposal process was dependent upon the specific land area and value, and could be subject to complexities.
 - Members enquired whether a map existed which identified land owned by SHDC and Parishes.
 - The Joint Deputy Chief Executive – Programme Delivery and Assistant Director – General Fund Assets responded that , upon receipt of a specific request, bespoke information could be extracted from a Geographic Information System; and
 - The Assistant Director – Wellbeing and Community Leadership referred members to the ‘Public web maps’ tool available from the SHDC website (Maps).

AGREED:

- a) That the progress made in respect of South Holland be noted; and
- b) That the comments of the Panel be noted by the Portfolio Holder.

28. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL WORK PROGRAMME

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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:

In respect of Appendix A:

- A special meeting of the Policy Development Panel had been scheduled for 9 September 2024; and
- Following discussions at agenda item 14, the pending items at Appendix A were to be removed from the Work Programme.

In respect of Appendix B:

- The Business Frontage Task Group was nearing completion, and a final report would be presented to the Panel in the near future.

AGREED:

That the Policy Development Panel Work Programme be noted.

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

There were none.

(The meeting ended at 8.19 pm)

(End of minutes)