

POLICY COMMITTEE

21st January 2014

Present – The Chairman (Councillor Knowles-Fitton) and Councillors, Barrett, Beck, Foster, Jaquin (substitute for Wheeler), Lis, Harbron, Heseltine, Ireton, Myers, Place, Sutcliffe, Turner and Welch.

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Corporate Head of Financial Management, Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration, Revenue, Benefits and Customer Services Manager, Legal Services Manager, Project Delivery Officer and Committee Administrator.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Paul English and Wheeler.

Start: 6:33pm

Finish: 7:02pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 3rd December 2014 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes for Report

POL.564

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Wendy Witten, a Skipton resident addressed the Committee on behalf of the Skipton and Craven Action for Disability (SCAD) and the Skipton and Craven Branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society about the Council's proposals to charge Blue Badge holders for parking on Council car parks.

She stated that the proposed charging policy discriminated against severely disabled people and would affect them disproportionately compared with other members of society and the policy also contravened the Equality Act 2010. Blue Badge holders had difficulty using public transport and could not benefit from cheaper parking which was available, but was located further from the Skipton High Street.

Additionally, Wendy Witten highlighted the fact that Blue Badge holders required more time to get around and therefore needed to park for longer and also needed more space which was traffic free around their vehicles in order to unload/load their wheelchairs and mobility aids.

The organisations she represented felt that the proposed policy would have a profound effect on severely disabled people, most of whom already suffered financial hardship. The policy would discourage them from taking part in community life, adding to their isolation and exclusion and would make Craven an unwelcoming place for severely disabled residents and visitors.

In conclusion, she requested the Council look at the policy again and re-consider the needs of the disabled.

In response, the Chairman thanked Wendy Witten for her attendance and stated that any objections would be given consideration during the statutory consultation process.

POL.565

LOCAL GROWTH DEAL PLANS AND PROPOSALS FOR INVESTMENT IN CRAVEN

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report asking Members to support the Growth Deal plans for the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (YNYER LEP) and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership

(LCR LEP). In addition, Members were asked to agree the projects that the Council and its partners had identified for delivery through the plans in the 2015/16 financial year.

The Government had made available £2.1b of capital funding that had to be utilised in 2015/16 and issued guidance on the various elements that should be included in the Growth Deal plans. The LEPs had considered and assembled a programme of projects that met local needs, fitted with the LEP strategies and, importantly, could be delivered within the timescale.

The Growth Deal funding provided a significant and excellent opportunity for Craven District Council to develop a range of schemes that supported the long term economic growth of the area:

- ❖ South Skipton Employment Site: Engine Shed Lane Link
- ❖ Redevelopment of Skipton Town Hall
- ❖ Broughton Hall Business Park expansion
- ❖ Transformation of Bentham town centre
- ❖ Craven Greenways – creation of a sustainable link to communities and employment sites within the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor
- ❖ Craven Greenways – part of the Leeds City Region's Fresh Aire programme along the Leeds-Liverpool canal corridor
- ❖ South Craven transport schemes
- ❖ Improving road infrastructure in Skipton

Resolved - (1) That, the Council notes and supports the Growth Deal plans developed by the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding of Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (YNYER LEP) and the Leeds City Region Local Enterprise Partnership (LCR LEP).

(2) That, the projects identified for delivery in the financial year 2015/16 through the Growth Deal plans, as identified in the report now submitted are pursued with relevant key partners and the appropriate LEP.

(3) That, up to £20,000 is made available from the New Homes Bonus Infrastructure Reserve to support the preparation of delivery plans for those projects as identified in the Growth Deal Plans for delivery in the financial year 2015/16 and where the Council is the lead organisation or has a significant role.

(4) That, the proposed boundaries for the Yorkshire Dales LEADER and the Skipton and South Craven CLLD are approved.

(5) That, the Council acts as lead organisation for the establishment of a community led local development programme for the Skipton and South Craven area.

POL.566

INVESTIGATING FRAUD – COUNCIL TAX / COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

The Corporate Head of Business Support submitting a report seeking formal approval for the updated Prosecution and Sanctions Policy and confirmation of the roles authorised to investigate fraud in respect of council tax support.

It had been necessary to update the Policy which related to benefit fraud offences to reflect legislative changes particularly the new local council tax support schemes. In addition, authorities now had to give consideration to a 'public interest test'. In other words, the factors in favour of prosecution had to be weighed against any mitigating circumstances that could be taken into account such as mental or physical ill health.

Resolved – That the updated policy as now submitted is approved and that the roles in respect of the investigation of fraud relating to council tax support are authorised.

POL.567 COLLECTION FUND - COUNCIL TAX SURPLUS/DEFICIT 2013/14

The Corporate Head of Financial Management submitted a report declaring the estimated surplus on the collection fund for 2013/14. The fund recorded the amount of income collected from Council Tax together with precept payments to the parish/town councils, North Yorkshire County Council, the Police and Fire and Rescue authorities and this Council.

The amount calculated as the 2013/14 collection fund surplus was £300,000 to be shared as follows:

▪ North Yorkshire County Council	£ 207,513
▪ North Yorkshire Police Authority	£ 40,140
▪ North Yorkshire Fire & Rescue Authority	£ 12,185
▪ Craven District Council	£ 40,162

It was a requirement that Craven District Council's share had to be taken into account when setting its element of the 2014/15 Council Tax.

Resolved – (1) That an estimated surplus of £300,000 on the Council's collection fund as at 31st March 2014 relating to Council Tax transactions is declared.

(2) That the Council's element of the estimated surplus is used in calculating the level of Council Tax for 2014/15.

POL.568 COLLECTION FUND – NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES SURPLUS/DEFICIT 2013/14

The Corporate Head of Financial Management submitted a report declaring the estimated National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) surplus/deficit on the Collection Fund for 2013/14. The NNDR Collection Fund recorded the amount of income collected and under the rates retention scheme which came into effect on 1st April 2013, local authorities were able to keep a proportion of the business rates they collected. Local authorities now had a direct financial interest in the rates retention system with an incentive to work with business communities to help grow local economies.

Any surplus or deficit relating to NNDR had to be shared in prescribed proportions between central Government, the County Council, the Fire and Rescue Authority and this Council.

It had been estimated that, for the first year of the new rating regime, £18.723m of business rates would be collected in 2013/14 and, based on latest forecasts for rating assessments and appeals, the amount calculated as the 2013/14 NNDR collection fund surplus was nil.

Resolved – That, it is noted that it is estimated that there will be no surplus / (deficit) on the Council's Collection Fund as at 31st March 2014 relating to NNDR transactions.

POL.569 MINUTES OF SUB-COMMITTEES

The Chairman presented the minutes of meetings of the following sub-committees held on the dates indicated and re-produced as Appendix A to these minutes.

Community Grants Sub-Committee – 30th September and 17th December 2013

Craven Spatial Planning Sub-Committee – 16th September, 20th November and 9th December 2013

Resolved – That the minutes are received.

The Chairman raised under Item 10 – Any Other Business, a matter for information regarding the Coach Street public conveniences in Skipton. Skipton Town Council had approached him asking for capital assistance to help with the costs of refurbishing the public conveniences as they were in a very poor state of repair. As the Tour de France was coming to Craven in July 2014, it was important that the facilities were modernised and refurbished before the event.

The Director of Services advised Members that Skipton Town Council should submit a robust business case as soon as possible so that it could be considered as part of the Council's Capital Programme.

Minutes for Decision

-None –

Chairman

