

POLICY COMMITTEE

23rd October 2018

Present – The Chairman (Foster) and Councillors Barrett, Dawson, Ireton, Lis, Madeley, Morrell, Mulligan, Myers, Place and Welch.

Also in Attendance – Councillors Hull and Staveley.

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Chief Finance Officer, Solicitor to the Council, Environmental Services and Housing Manager, Human Resources Manager and Committee Administrator.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Brockbank, Heseltine and Rose.

Start: 6.32pm

Finish: 8.08pm

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 11th September 2018 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Exclusion of the Public - That, in accordance with the Council's Access to Information Procedure Rules, the public is excluded from the meeting during consideration of Minutes POL.952 below on the grounds that it is not in the public interest to disclose the Category 3 (financial or business affairs of any particular Person (including the Council)) exempt information therein

Minutes for Report

POL.944

SELECT BEREAVEMENT SERVICES REVIEW

The Chairman of the Select Committee presented the working group's findings following their review of the finance and structure of the service together with scrutinising the implementation of the new business plan as well as looking at potential opportunities for enhancing and improving the service.

In order to inform their review and gain an understanding of bereavement services the Working Group sought the views of relevant officers and considered recent national research on cemeteries and crematoria and other relevant documents.

The Select Committee made the following recommendations:

- a. Particular emphasis should be placed on the need for a clear business strategy with a costed and funded improvement and investment plan for the service; consideration should be given as to whether a reserve should be established and whether investment in the facility should receive priority before surpluses are drawn off in support of other services, it is acknowledged that this approach could present challenges for other service areas.
- b. The service needs to be innovative and to be encouraged to be innovative but in so doing needs to be mindful of the need to maintain a quality core service which meets the needs and aspirations of its customers, and retains the support of funeral directors.
- c. Memorial trees and woodland burial is seen as a key development area for the Service, if no suitable land is available within its portfolio the Council should endeavour to acquire land in a suitable location to enable diversification into woodland burial and memorial trees. Care will be needed in the choice of location which in this Group's opinion should be within a rural, as opposed to urban, environment.

- d. A significant longer term issue to be addressed by the Service is future burial space. A long term strategic plan is therefore needed as indicated in the business development plan; in preparing that strategic plan the Service will need to engage with the Planning Department / Planning Policy Team to enable it to understand what, if anything, would be required to facilitate support for that provision through the planning / planning policy process.
- e. The crematorium should be operated in the most efficient and environmentally responsible way. Holding over enables such an approach and therefore it is suggested that consideration be given to establish a position whereby holding over becomes the default position, with the pricing structure revised, if necessary, in such a way as to encourage this approach.
- f. Steps should be taken to ensure an uninterrupted power supply to the chapel to ensure services at Waltonwrays can continue in the event of a mains power failure.
- g. There is a need to understand why the Muslim burial area isn't being used to the extent originally envisaged, the Leader should seek a meeting with the local Iman to explore with him the use of Waltonwrays Cemetery by the local Muslim community.

During the ensuing debate, Members discussed future investment for the service and the advantages of having a specific reserve should significant expenditure be required to expand the chapel and parking and perhaps, dependent on demand, the purchase of land for the creation of a woodland burial ground.

In receiving the report, Members thanked the Select Committee and officers for their work on the review, and it was

Resolved – That, the recommendations are accepted.

POL.945 **LEEDS CREDIT UNION PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENT –
PROJECT UPDATE**

The Director of Services submitted a report updating Members on the progress of the Craven District Council (CDC) and Leeds Credit Union (LCU) partnership arrangement. The LCU offered a range of products to suit individual circumstances and had provided 126 Craven members with £64,635.27 worth of low cost loans. The LCU had given members, some of whom who had experienced financial hardship, access to a responsible lender with low interest rates, who might otherwise have decided to use a 'payday loan' company with high interest rates.

In debating the matter, Members noted that whilst the partnership arrangement was working well, year three had seen a significant reduction in new members and accounts. Members all agreed that Policy Committee should be presented with an update in twelve months' time particularly highlighting the number of accounts and loans opened/closed.

Resolved – That, the report is noted.

POL.946 **IMPLEMENTING ENERGY COMPANY OBLIGATION
FLEXIBLE ELIGIBILITY – ANNUAL UPDATE**

The Director of Services submitted a report updating Members on the impact of setting a local criteria for Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding. The report set out the definition of a household in fuel poverty and according to the Office of National Statistics lower quartile earning in 2015 across the District was £17,624 per annum compared to £18,998 for North Yorkshire and £19,719 for England. The result of Craven's low waged economy was that 2,611 (10.4%) of households were estimated to be in fuel poverty.

The focus of the funding was to help improve the quality of life for those most vulnerable and to encourage the uptake of energy efficiency improvements to their homes. The Council Plan and Craven's Housing and Homelessness Integrated Action Plan 2017/18 supported the objectives of the funding scheme.

During the ensuing debate, Members requested that a further monitoring report be presented to Policy Committee in twelve months' time which would enable them to analyse the take up of the grant funding by those households identified as having a low income and at the risk of being in fuel poverty.

Resolved – That, the report is noted.

POL.947 **REDEPLOYMENT, RETRAINING, REDUNDANCY AND
RETIREMENT AGREEMENT**

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking approval to implement a revised and updated Redeployment, Retraining, Redundancy and Retirement Agreement (4Rs). Amendments were required due to legislative changes and other developments.

Consultation on the changes had taken place with the Trades Unions and Craven employees and an agreement was reached at the Employees' Consultative Group (ECG) held on 14th May 2018.

Resolved – That, with effect from 1st November 2018, the implementation of the revised Redeployment, Retraining, Redundancy and Retirement Agreement, as now submitted, is approved.

Minutes for Decision

POL.948 **CONFIRMATION OF THE COUNCIL TAX BASE – 2019/20**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report seeking approval of the Council Tax Base for the 2019/20 financial year. The Committee was advised that the formula used to calculate the base was complex requiring forward projections of a number of key variables such as new builds, demolitions and council tax discounts and exemptions. The Chief Finance Officer circulated a revised Appendix A at the meeting.

For every £1 of Council Tax levied, the tax base, as proposed, would enable the Authority to meet £22,525 of expenditure in 2019/20 compared with £22,455 in 2018/19.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) (England) Regulations 2012 the amount calculated by Craven District Council as its tax base for the whole of the area for 2019/20 financial year is set at 22,525.

(2) That, the amount calculated by Craven District Council as the tax base for each of its Parishes for the 2018/19 financial year is that as set out in the revised Appendix A to the report now submitted.

POL.949 **THE ANIMAL WELFARE (LICENSING OF ACTIVITIES
INVOLVING ANIMALS) (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2018**

The Director of Services submitted a report asking Members to consider adopting the new Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 including new fees and charges for licensing of different types of animal businesses. The new regulations meant there would be one generic licence which would contain both general and activity specific conditions. Authorities would have the opportunity to increase their enforcement of the regulations thereby promoting and encouraging higher welfare standards.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the Animal Welfare (Licensing of Activities Involving Animals) (England) Regulations 2018 are adopted.

(2) That, the proposed fees and charges as set out in the Appendix to the report now submitted are approved.

POL.950 **HOMES ENGLAND: ACCELERATED CONSTRUCTION FUND**

The Director of Services presented a report requesting Members accept the offer of a grant awarded to the Council from the Accelerated Construction Fund. The fund was designed to help local authorities overcome barriers to developing their own land and it offered tailor made solutions to housing delivery, aiming to deliver up to 15,000 starts nationwide on surplus, public sector landholdings.

The Council's bid was to help with capacity building and infrastructure costs at Horse Close, Skipton, including the construction and adoption of a new bridge over the canal at Cawder Road. The Accelerated Construction Fund's award was £2,376,394 and followed Home England's technical appraisals and due diligence. The award was a grant not a loan and should the transfer value of the land exceed the estimated 'clean site' land value of £2,250,000, Homes England would claw back up to 96% of any surplus up to the level of the grant.

In accepting the grant, the Council would be able to speed up the delivery of its land at Horse Close for housing and deliver a number of benefits including effective and efficient use of Council assets to provide much needed housing, including affordable housing, for Craven communities.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the Accelerated Construction Fund grant offer of £2,376,394 for remediation and infrastructure works to release land at Horse Close, Skipton for housing development is accepted.

(2) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services in discussion with the Monitoring Officer to enter into negotiation and contract with Homes England to secure the grant offer.

(3) That, the Chief Executive is authorised in consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader to make arrangements to deliver the infrastructure works.

(4) That, a report is brought to Policy Committee during the first quarter of 2019 setting out a proposed development scheme and financial appraisal.

POL.951 **REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY**

The Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer) submitted a report proposing an amendment to the Scheme of Delegation to Officers. In order to ensure timely decisions could be made where acquisition opportunities for commercial activities presented themselves.

In January 2016, a report to Policy Committee had asked Members to consider delegating authority to the Chief Executive but after much debate, the Committee resolved that all decisions to acquire assets were brought to a meeting of the Policy Committee.

However, during a recent Peer Review, it was reported that decision making amongst officers and politicians was slow, frustrating and burdensome, hampering the Council's ability to be agile, particularly around the commercial agenda should vendors require swift action/decision.

Members noted that the Council operated a modernised committee system, limiting the options to delegation to officers or approval by Committee (Council) and wanted reassurance that steps would be taken to obtain the views of local ward members and Group Leaders before the Chief Executive consulted with the Leader, Deputy Leader and the two Lead Members and a decision was made.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the report is noted.

(2) That, the Scheme of Delegation to Officers is amended to include the following authority:

“Subject to consultation with the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council; the Lead Member for Financial Resilience and Enterprising Craven and also the Chief Financial Officer, the Chief Executive is authorised to agree commercial acquisitions up to a monetary value of £3 million. Such decisions to be reported to the next meeting of the Policy Committee.”

POL.\$952

SHARED OWNERSHIP HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

The Director of Services submitted a report seeking approval for the acquisition of land together with a supplementary capital estimate to develop four shared ownership housing units.

[A separate excluded full minute has been prepared for this item. It is published (on pink paper) in an Appendix to Members, relevant officers and others who are entitled to all details.]

Chairman