

MINUTES of a meeting of the POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Coalville on WEDNESDAY, 1 JULY 2015

Present: Councillor M Specht (Chairman)

Councillors R Adams (Substitute for Councillor N Clarke), R Canny (Substitute for Councillor A C Saffell), J Cotterill, J G Coxon, T Eynon, D Harrison, S McKendrick (Substitute for Councillor J Geary), V Richichi and N Smith

In Attendance: Councillors R Johnson and J Legrys

Officers: Mr D Gill, Mr G Jones and Mrs R Wallace

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors N Clarke, J Geary and A C Saffell.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

There were no questions received.

4. MINUTES

With regards to item 22 – Draft Revenue Budget Proposals and Capital Programmes 2015/16, Councillor R Adams referred to page seven and asked if the information requested by Sean Sheahan in relation to the Council's fleet of vehicles had been supplied. The Deputy Monitoring Officer believed that the information had been forwarded as requested but he would look into it.

It was moved by Councillor M Specht, seconded by Councillor J Coxon and

RESOLVED THAT:

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 January 2015 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

5. DRAFT VALUE FOR MONEY STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING SERVICE

The Director of Housing presented the report to Members.

In response to a question from Councillor N Smith, the Director of Housing explained that the main method of tenant participation in VfM issues was the Performance and Finance Working Group. This group put forward representatives to take part in the tender process, who then were involved in interviewing and assessing contractors, and the contract award process as a whole. Councillor N Smith went on to ask how tenants were made aware of the group. The Director of Housing responded that it was discussed at local Tenants Associations, referred to in the quarterly newsletters sent to all tenants and there was also a Resident Involvement Team within the Council.

Concerns were raised by Members regarding the lack of Member involvement within the strategy as they felt it was crucial. The Director of Housing agreed that there was no

Chairman's initials

specific reference to Member involvement and he would amend the strategy to reflect this before it was considered by Cabinet.

Councillor V Richichi expressed concerns regarding the criteria for ensuring value for money as he believed it would be very difficult to know if the Council was receiving true value for money. He asked if penalties were invoked if a contractor's work was unacceptable as he was aware that tenants were receiving compensation for poor work. The Director of Housing explained that value for money criteria was based on a balance of cost, quality and customer satisfaction. He reported that in the past some of the contracts had not been onerous enough on contractors, and there were sometimes no penalties; however this was something that was now changing and included in future contracts. He added that the Council often would not pay for poor workmanship and although compensation was paid, in some circumstances contractors would pay all or part of the claim.

In response to a further question from Councillor V Richichi, the Director of Housing confirmed that tenant's opinions were used as part of reviewing the work undertaken because if complaints were high and quality was low it would be a sign that contractors were not delivering value for money, and therefore their performance needed to be formally addressed.

Councillor D Harrison requested more information regarding the levels of compensation. He commented that he was happy with the strategy but believed that Members should have more involvement and asked if they could be made aware of residents within their wards that had made complaints. The Deputy Monitoring Officer advised that it would be inappropriate and unlawful under the Data Protection Act for officers to notify Members of complainants. The Director of Housing encouraged Members to attend the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum and their Local Tenants Associations as ways of getting involved further. He also reiterated his earlier comments and assured that Member involvement would be incorporated into the strategy before it was approved by Cabinet.

Councillor T Eynon concurred with Councillor V Richichi in that it was difficult to ascertain if the Council was actually getting true value for money, she believed it was a very managed strategy which had potential but had concerns regarding the underlying details. She also agreed that Members should have more involvement.

Councillor S Mckendrick asked what level of analysis was undertaken on the complaints received as this would help to measure value for money by means of service improvements. The Director of Housing explained that they used benchmarking and financial management to monitor spending. He explained that complaints were broken down and measured by service area but he was aware that further analysis needed to be developed to truly understand the results and implement learning.

In response to a question from Councillor S McKendrick, the Director of Housing reported that resident involvement was coordinated through Justin O'Brien and his team.

In response to a question from Councillor M Specht, the Director of Housing reported that any comments from the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum and the Performance and Finance Working Group would be reported to Cabinet on 21 July. The comments from the Policy Development Group would be incorporated into an amended Strategy within the next few days before being presented to Cabinet.

RESOLVED THAT:

The comments provided by the Committee be considered by Cabinet when it meets on 21 July to discuss the Value for Money Strategy for the Housing Service.

Chairman's initials

6. UPDATE OF THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION

The Deputy Monitoring Officer presented the report to Members.

In response to a question from Councillor R Adams, the Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that as part of the full review of the Council's Constitution, the Policy Development Group would receive the report before it was approved by Council and due to the nature of the document, Members would receive a hard copy. The report would be considered by the Policy Development Group in September.

RESOLVED THAT:

The report be noted.

RECOMMENDED THAT:

That Council approve the updates to the Council's Constitution.

7. ITEMS FOR INCLUSION IN THE FUTURE WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to the future work programme for the Policy Development Group.

After a lengthy discussion regarding Council's emails and the ICT service, Members requested that as an ICT Strategy document was currently being drafted, they would like to be included as part of the consultation before it was approved. Therefore it was agreed that it be added to the work programme.

Due to the recent issues with Section 106 money for health not being used by local General Practitioners as part of approved planning applications, Councillor T Eynon asked if the group could scrutinise the process and involve NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups. The Deputy Monitoring Officer explained that the difficulty was that the Council only held the money on behalf of the General Practitioners and could not enforce that it be used. He did suggest that Members look at the amount of money being held, the amount that was not being spent and what efforts were being made by officers to encourage General Practitioners to use the money. He also agreed to consult the Council's Constitution regarding the participation of NHS England and Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Councillor T Eynon also asked for an update on the development of the Community Involvement Strategy.

RESOLVED THAT:

The following items be put on the future work programme:

- a) The ICT Strategy
- b) Unspent Section 106 Money for local health services.

The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm

The Chairman closed the meeting at 7.30 pm

Chairman's signature