
MEETING	DECISION SESSION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING.
DATE	15 MARCH 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS REID (EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

At this point in the meeting the Executive Members is asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

47. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 February be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

48. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - DECISION SESSION

It was reported that there had been no registrations to speak under the Council's public participation scheme.

Councillors Alexander and Simpson Laing had submitted written comments, details of which are reported under the relevant minute items.

49. UPDATE ON PRIVATE SECTOR STRATEGY.

The Executive Member considered a report which outlined the progress made on delivering the Private Sector Housing Strategy and proposed a refreshed action plan to reflect and compliment the changes.

Officers outlined the report in particular the addition of Aim 6 'To help create sustainable homes and reduce carbon emissions from the domestic sector'.

Councillor Simpson Laing submitted the following comments:

- Welcomed the fact that a sixth strategic aim has been introduced with regard to Sustainable Homes and the reduction of carbon emissions from the domestic sector.
- Advised that she believes the powers that the Council has against the private rented sector are still weak due to a lack of inspection powers.

In response Officers advised that due to a lack of funding there can be no increase in staff on the inspection team and at present there is no case for selective licensing in York.

The Executive Member was happy to approve the Officers recommendation.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member noted the overall progress made to date in delivering the Private Sector Housing Strategy.

(ii) That the Executive Member approved Option as outlined in paragraph 17 of the report

REASON: So that the Council can encourage the private sector housing stock to be maintained and reduce the carbon emissions.

50. REMOVAL OF PRIVATE SECTOR RENEWAL FUNDING - IMPACT ON THE YORK HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY.

The Executive Member considered a report which advised on the local impact on services for York's private residents and in particular the York Home Improvement Agency, of the national removal of private sector funding.

Officers outlined the report and advised that the removal of funding is a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review and the national decision to end the allocation of funding of funding for private sector renewal from 1st April 2011. Paragraph 6 of the report highlighted that the removal of the funding would have a direct impact on service delivery especially in relation to improving housing conditions in the private sector. Officers also advised that they are in discussions with Yorkshire Housing to keep the York handyperson scheme operating.

The Executive Member commented that it was disappointing to receive such bad news but was pleased to note the attempts at keeping the Handyperson service operating.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member noted the impact of the private sector renewal funding on service delivery both within the council and with the council's partnering organisation the York Home Improvement Agency.

(ii) That the Executive Member approved Option 1 as outlined in paragraph 15 to not renew the York Home Improvement Agency contract on its expiry.

REASON: To ensure that the Council does not incur unnecessary financial expenditure.

51. ACHIEVING THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD.

The Executive Member considered a report which advised that City of York Council had met the decent homes standard in December 2010 in line with central governments expectations through a programme of modernisation and improvement outlined as set out within Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

Officers outlined the report and advised that City of York Council had retained their whole house modernisation commitment under the York Standard. This is due to the 'Decent Homes' standard prescribing life spans for internal elements covered under Tenant Choice such as kitchens and bathrooms. The life spans differ from 15 to 40 years and would of resulted in tenants receiving elements individually and create more disturbance.

Councillor Simpson-Laing had submitted comments relating to the report and queried why some residents in her ward are only just receiving their new kitchens and bathrooms. Officers advised that some houses had not failed the standards prior to December 2010 and are in the programme to receive modernisation this year.

- RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member noted that the Council has met the decent homes standard in line with the Governments December 2010 target.
- (ii) That the Executive Member approved Option as outlined in paragraph 12 to continue to maintain the York Standard, as set out within the Housing Capital Programme, as the way forward when developing the revised Housing Revenue Account Business Plan.

REASON: To ensure that the Council maintains its housing stock to an excellent standard.

52. DECORATION VOUCHER & DISTURBANCE ALLOWANCE SCHEME ALLOWANCES.

The Executive Member considered a report which proposed changes to the way the Council provides decoration and disturbance allowances for the council housing stock to ensure value for money and contractor performance are being achieved.

Officers outlined the report and advised that during the 2009/10 modernisation a total of £89,782 was spent on decoration vouchers and £84,745 on disturbance allowance. Due to these significant costs, Officers have looked into alternative arrangements to achieve better value for money as follows:

- The introduction of 'paint packs' delivered to the tenants door.
- Works to be completed within 10 working days and disturbance allowance be reduced accordingly.

A consultation carried out in November 2010 had indicated that 98% of tenants that completed feedback cards were in favour of a revised scheme.

Councillor Simpson-Laing had submitted a written comment and advised that although she supported the improvements, she felt that there had been a lot of public criticism on the matter due to the Press coverage and felt that the press should have been given a clearer explanation of the scheme.

The Executive Member queried whether disturbance allowance would be increased if the work being undertaken lasted longer than 10 days. Officers confirmed that the scheme allows for some flexibility.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member approved Options 1 & 2 as set out in the report to change the way Decorations and Disturbance allowances are provided.

REASON: To ensure that the Council provides a value for money efficient service.

53. INTRODUCTION OF TENANT INSPECTORS

The Executive Member considered a report which highlighted the progress made in recruiting tenant inspectors and sought endorsement for the proposed structure for reporting inspectors recommendations.

Officers outlined the report, in particular that following the Governments decision to abolish the Tenant Services Authority, there is the need for Authorities to have some form of self regulation.

The Executive Member commented that the Tenant Inspectors scheme would be useful for encouraging service users to become more involved and that Members could also feedback any comments they receive.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member approved Option 1 and specifically endorsed the proposed structure for reporting recommendations that are set out in paragraph 11.

REASON: By introducing the service it will encourage customer involvement in shaping the housing service and will provide the service with greater transparency.

54. ANNUAL HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE REPORT

The Executive Member considered a report which provided a review of the service performance in highway maintenance over the last year, it examined the issues arising and proposed programmes of work to be undertaken in the financial year 2011/12.

Officers outlined the report and highlighted the following key points:

- Work is now being procured through the Specialist Surfacing Framework Agreement and not Tarmac.
- 200k allocated by Members for high priority drainage works had been spent successfully.
- The 5 carriageway resurfacing schemes that are to carry over into 2011/12.

Councillor Alexander had submitted a written comment to request that the road and footpath scheme for Holgate be given priority due to the number of elderly residents that are concerned about the state of the footpaths in the area. Officers advised that the work would be carried out this financial year.

The Executive Member thanked the winter gritting teams in particular the drivers who had worked tirelessly and acknowledged that the resurfacing schemes had been successful and was happy that more had been completed than anticipated in the past year.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member:

- (i) Noted the review of the 2010/11 and the proposals for 2011/12.
- (ii) Approved the allocation of budgets for 2011/12.
- (iii) Approved the implementation of the proposed programme.
- (iv) Approved the reserve list of schemes.
- (v) Approved the additional £823k capital and revenue scheme programme.
- (vi) Noted that the Executive would be asked to approve the use of £657k from contingencies.
- (vii) Approved the use of preformed speed cushions that are bolted to the roads surface and other such industry wide innovations that will improve City road surfaces.

REASON: To ensure delivery of highway maintenance services in an efficient and cost effective manner.

55. SNOW WARDENS

The Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing considered a report which highlighted the advantages of the recruitment of snow wardens to enhance the city's winter maintenance resilience and to agree the scope of the role and method of funding.

Officers outlined the report and advised that a similar scheme is being trialled in Sheffield. Further investigations are required as to the exact number and profiles of the volunteers to be recruited and would be looked at further once approval for funding had been given.

The Executive Member commented that Community Payback workers had cleared snow during the winter and suggested that Officers look into the possibility of creating a link with such workers to identify ways in which they could assist in clearing snow in areas with a high a number of elderly residents.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member agreed the scope of the Snow Warden role and approved the use of funding as set out in paragraph 15.

(ii) That the Executive Member recommended that Officers look into the possibility of creating a link with Community Payback to cul-de-sacs and streets with many elderly residents to identify ways they could help the elderly to clear snow.

REASON: To enhance the winter maintenance resilience at a local level.

56. PUBLIC PROTECTION LEGAL ACTIONS

The Executive Member considered a report which outlined the results of legal actions undertaken by Environmental Health, Trading Standards and Licensing Services for the period 1st October 2010 to 31st December 2010.

Officers outlined the report and advised that it sought approval for the continuation of the current enforcement policy.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member approved the report and the continuation of the current policy.

REASON: So that the Executive Member reviews formal enforcement activity undertaken by Environmental Health, Trading Standards, and Licensing Services.

57. 2010/11 QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REPORT.

The Executive Member received a quarterly update report on the Performance Indicators in the Housing Service Plan 2010/11 for the period April to December 2010 and progress on Quarter 3 actions contained in the Service Plan.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member noted the report.

REASON: To keep the Executive Member informed on service performance.

Councillor Reid, Chair.

[The meeting started at 4.00 pm and finished at 5.05 pm].