
MEETING	DECISION SESSION - EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR NEIGHBOURHOODS AND HOUSING.
DATE	3 FEBRUARY 2011
PRESENT	COUNCILLORS REID (EXECUTIVE MEMBER)

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Executive Member was asked to declare any personal or prejudicial interests in the business on the agenda. None were declared.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the decision session for Neighbourhoods and Housing held on 21st December 2010, be signed by the Executive Member as a correct record.

38. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - DECISION SESSION

It was reported that there had been two registrations to speak. Details of the speakers will be included under the relevant minute item.

39. 2011/12 NEIGHBOURHOODS BUDGET PROPOSALS

The Executive Member received a report as part of the consultation on the 2011/12 budget process. The report presented the 2011/12 budget proposals for Neighbourhoods and Housing. It included:

- The national context regarding local government funding and the implications for City of York Council.
- The approach that has been adopted to develop budget proposals.
- The outcomes of the customer budget consultation.
- The revenue budget for 2010/11 to show existing budgets.
- The budget adjusted and rolled forward from 2010/11 into 2011/12.
- The cost of pay and price increases and increments for the portfolio.
- Proposals for service pressure costs and savings options for the portfolio area.
- Fees and charges.
- The Housing Revenue Account.

The Executive Member made the following comments:

- The merging of the Communities and Neighbourhoods directorates had given scope to improve on efficiency and further reduce costs.
- Important to protect street level services.
- The letter from residents of the Glebe was noted and would be referred to the Executive as part of the Housing Capital programme.
- The 77.7% increase in relation to adult interment at Dringhouses cemetery seems to be excessive and suggested that it be increased over the next two years.

The Executive Member thanked officers for all their hard work on the budget process.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing notes the report and recommends it to the Executive for incorporation into the Councils budget for 2011/12 with the following recommended amendments/suggestions:

- (i) That the request for double glazing from the residents of The Glebe, Dunnington be considered when the Housing Capital Programme is presented to the Executive.
- (ii) That the Executive consider the rise in charges of 77% for adult interment at Dringhouses Cemetery be raised over two years e.g.; £150 this year and £140 next year.¹

REASON: As part of the 2011/12 budget consultation.

Action Required

1. Note request to amend adult interment cost at Dringhouses cemetery and advise Executive accordingly. DM

40. UPDATE ON EMPTY HOMES POLICY.

The Executive Member considered a report which advised of the results of the empty homes field survey carried out in November and December 2010 and the potential implications for the council's empty homes policy. It also advised of the recent empty homes policy proposals from the coalition government and the likely impact of these proposals upon the empty homes policy, having regard to the results of the field survey.

Councillor Simpson-Laing who had registered to speak on this item expressed her disappointment in both of the options in the officers report and that the council had made little progress. She suggested that York would benefit from having a guardianship scheme in place for empty commercial properties in the city and that this could be a way forward.

Officers outlined the report and advised that 161 properties had not responded to the postal questionnaire sent out in June 2010. Following a field survey of these properties, 95 were confirmed as status unknown. As the data is uncertain and the new government is expected to make further announcements regarding policy on the matter, Officers felt it would be beneficial to leave the Council's policy unchanged while more work is carried out on the data.

The Executive Member commented that she agreed with Officers and approved Option 2, with the additional recommendation that Officers bring a further report to a future decision session once the governments policy position is clear.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member approved Option 2 to leave the existing empty homes policy unchanged, to note the results of the postal survey and associated fieldwork and approve work to ensure that baseline data is more robust, including an annual field survey.

REASON: There is no statistical or anecdotal evidence to justify changing the council's existing empty homes policy. However, possessing accurate information regarding the number of empty properties in the city is essential in order to inform local empty homes strategies and enable us to respond to emerging national policy agendas and funding mechanisms. An annual field survey provides the best value for money response to these challenges and opportunities.

RESOLVED: (ii) That a further report be brought back to the Executive Member when the Governments position on the subject is clearer.

REASON: To keep the Executive Member informed.

41. ANNUAL PARKING SERVICES REPORT 2009/10

The Executive Member considered the fourth annual report for Parking Services. The report related to 2009/10 and is for information only.

Officers advised that the Council has a statutory duty to provide annual reports on enforcement activities in order to be as transparent as possible.

The Executive Member commented that she was pleased with the information provided in the report, in particular that 95% of the Council's car parks had achieved an award for safety and only 5 parking ticket appeals had been to the independent parking adjudicator.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Member noted the Annual Parking Services Report for 2009/10.

REASON: To keep the Executive Member informed on enforcement activities within the directorate.

42. PETITION RELATING TO SELECTIVE LICENSING

The Executive Member considered a report which advised of a petition received requesting that the council apply for selective licensing powers over houses in multiple occupation (HMO's) for the Hull Road ward area of the city.

Councillor Alexander who had registered to speak on this item advised that the recent article 4 direction being considered by the Executive can be seen as an attack on the tenants of HMO's where as selective licensing puts the onus on landlords and allows for some unity between them and residents. He asked that Officers look further into the licensing introduced under the Housing Act 2010, in particular additional licensing, to ensure that York has the balance right in the future.

The Executive Member noted the report and the comments made by Councillor Alexander. She requested that Officers provide further information on additional licensing in their report due in spring 2011.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Executive Member noted the information in the report and considered the petition and acknowledged advice from Officers that selective licensing is not the most appropriate tool to tackle Houses in Multiple Occupation in the Hull Road Ward.

REASON: Legal tests have not been met.

RESOLVED: (ii) That Officers include further information on Additional Licensing in their forthcoming report due in Spring 2011 on the introduction of an Accreditation Scheme.¹

REASON: To inform Members further on the subject.

Action Required

1. Provide further information on additional licensing in future report.

SW

Councillor Reid, Chair

[The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 5.10 pm].