

POLICY COMMITTEE

14 September 2021

Present – The Chairman, Councillor Foster and Councillors Barrett, Heseltine, Ireton, Lis, Metcalfe, Morrell, Mulligan, Myers, Noland, Ogden, Place and Rose.

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer), Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer, Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration, Exchequer and Performance Manager, Communications Officer and Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for Absence and Substitutes – Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Madeley and Wheeler.

Confirmation of Minutes –

Resolved – The minutes of the Policy Committee meeting held on 22nd June 2021 were confirmed as a correct record.

Declarations of Interest –

There were no declarations of interest.

Start: 6.33pm

Finish: 7.49pm

Minutes for Report

POL.1143

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr Charles Dobson from the Skipton Refugee Support Group addressed the Committee on a report before it that evening recommending that the Council take part in the Government's Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Scheme. Mr Dobson spoke in support of the proposal for the Council to participate in the Afghan resettlement scheme. Members of their support group had acted as "befrienders" to the Syrian families living in Skipton under the previous resettlement scheme and were more than ready to play their part in supporting any Afghan families that were allocated to Craven. The Chairman thanked the Skipton Refugee Support Group for the support they had given to refugees in Craven and welcome their offer towards Afghan refugees.

Councillor David Painter a Skipton Town Councillor addressed the Committee regarding fly tipping in Skipton as he felt the Council were not doing enough to tackle the issue or reply to correspondence.

On the same issue, Councillor Winston Feather, another Skipton Town Councillor agreed with Councillor David Painter's comments that fly tipping in Skipton was not being satisfactorily dealt with. A member of the public, Mr Robert Owens also addressed the Committee and stated that the Council was reactive rather than proactive.

In response, the Chairman apologised if any correspondence had gone unanswered and he suggested a meeting between the Town Council and Craven District Council would be a positive step forward. The Lead Member for Greener Craven, Councillor Carl Lis commented that the Waste Management Service had received a number of compliments about the cleanliness of the area so he was surprised with Councillor Painter's comments. He stated that a waste education programme was being developed and this would be considered by this Committee very soon as he felt educating the public was an important way forward in stopping fly tipping.

The Vice-Chairman, Councillor Simon Myers helpfully suggested that the Town Councillors pursue the problem with those District Councillors who represented Skipton as it was a matter for them rather than the Policy Committee.

POL.1144

**PERFORMANCE MONITORING UPDATE – QUARTER 4
2020/21**

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report presenting performance highlights for quarter 4 of the financial year 2020/21 in accordance with arrangements set out in the Council's Performance Management Framework. Members were informed of progress and details of current performance against the Council Plan and priority indicators.

Despite continuing challenges resulting from the pandemic response and the planning for the forthcoming local government reorganisation, the majority of Council Plan actions were progressing as planned. Services returned updates for 19 actions; 12 of those actions were progressing as planned and 1 action had not started. The remainder of actions were rated 'amber' and details were set out in the Chief Finance Officer's report.

Resolved – That, the performance highlights described in the report now submitted, are noted.

POL.1145

WOODLAND CREATION IN CRAVEN – 2018 to 2050

The Director of Services presented a report regarding the challenges of woodland creation in Craven and sought Members approval to agree a target for tree canopy coverage in Craven up to 2050 for consultation purposes.

The planting of trees and new woodland was an essential component in achieving climate emergency targets as well as helping flood prevention, capture carbon from the atmosphere and create robust, diverse habitats. Currently Craven only had woodland coverage of 5.4% and this compared poorly to the England average of 12% and the UK average of 13%.

The White Rose Forest Partnership covered all of West and North Yorkshire and, as a member, Craven was working with several initiatives that aimed to increase tree coverage. The report highlighted what had been achieved in Craven so far but significant tree and woodland planting was still required for tree cover to be increased from 5.4% to 19% equating to 32 million trees. This would be a huge undertaking given the need to find sufficient land, resources and capacity.

It was, therefore, proposed that the ambition for Craven should be to achieve a tree cover of 13% or an extra 17.9 million trees by 2050.

There would be an initial consultation meeting with stakeholders from the environmental sector and the arboriculture industry to better understand both the scale of ambition and the capacity to deliver large scale woodland planting. This would then be followed by four weeks of public consultation. In discussing the consultation process, it was mentioned that much of the land in Craven was tenanted and they should be consulted as well as the landowners.

Resolved – (1) That, an ambition for new woodland creation of 8,929 hectares by 2050 is approved.

(2) That, a target of 3,074 hectares of new woodland by 2030 is approved.

(3) That, a consultation meeting with stakeholders followed by four weeks' public consultation to inform the final tree canopy target is approved.

(4) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for the Environment to agree the final target.

POL.1146

**AFGHAN RESETTLEMENT AND ASSISTANCE POLICY
SCHEME**

The Director of Services submitted a report informing Members of the current position with regard to the resettlement of Afghan nationals in North Yorkshire. Approval was also sought for Craven District

Council to take part in the Government's Afghan Resettlement and Assistance Policy Scheme (ARAP), thereafter called 'the scheme'.

The scheme supported current and former Afghan locally employed staff (LES) who had worked for the British Armed Forces and provided appropriate support that honoured their service and reflected their work and risks involved. The UK Government pledged to resettle around 3,000 Afghan LES and their families by the end of September 2021.

Migration Yorkshire had proposed that participating local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region adopted the 'fair share' approach based upon population levels. This equated to about 40 people for North Yorkshire. Selby, Hambleton and Harrogate had already resettled 42 people (8 households) in the last few weeks. Due to the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan the UK Government to increase resettlement numbers meaning North Yorkshire's share would be around 100.

To avoid isolation and enable better targeting of resources, the preference was for new arrivals to be resettled in the three council areas mentioned above, however, a private landlord in Craven had offered a six bedroomed house in Skipton which was the Council's preferred location for reasons identified in the report. That size of house was very sought after by the Home Office so larger families could be accommodated hence North Yorkshire County Council had agreed to the resettlement of families in Craven with the stipulation that the property could be secured and that the Council housed at least one other household to prevent isolation.

In the event that private sector accommodation could not be secured, Craven would have to approach its registered provider partners who have indicated their support. This could require the allocation of properties outside existing nomination agreements and Members were asked to give delegated authority to the Director of Services to vary any agreements as necessary. The scheme was wholly grant funded by the Government although should the housing element of Universal Credit not cover the full rental costs, the Council need to provide rent top up from its Discretionary Housing Payment Fund.

Resolved – (1) That, support for the Afghan resettlement scheme is approved.

(2) That, the Council's commitment to this scheme shall be a minimum of 15 people (approximately 2/3 households).

(3) That, delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive to enter into a partnership agreement with North Yorkshire County Council and Migration Yorkshire concerning this scheme.

(4) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services to vary existing nomination agreements with registered providers to enable the allocation of social housing to the Afghan LES.

(5) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services to apply to the Afghan LES Housing Costs Fund.

(6) That, in the event of any shortfall in rent, payment will be made from the Council's Discretionary Housing Payment Fund.

Minutes for Decision

POL.1147

OUTTURN REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT **- QUARTER 4 2020/21**

The Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer) submitted a report advising Members of the revenue budget position of the Council, based on the quarter 4 review of income and expenditure to the end of March 2021. The Council's financial position had continued to be affected by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic. Major income streams such as car parking and leisure had been affected by facility

closure and would continue to be affected as activity recovers but not to the income levels that were assumed when the budget was approved. However, the Government's Sales, Fees and Charges Compensation Scheme had enabled the Council to claim £1,875k to support the losses of income over the 2020/21 financial year.

The general fund reserve balance stood at £995k and it was possible that support from general balances may be required in the current year or over the medium term as part of the response to current financial pressures.

The Council had £6,720k in earmarked reserves as at 1st April 2020 and at the end of quarter 4, £176k of savings had been confirmed as achieved as per the definitions of the Income and Savings Plan. However, in relation to income generation, commercial waste was likely to be impacted as a consequence of measures in response to Covid-19 and were being carefully monitored.

The Chief Finance Officer would determine how in-year variances were treated, the latest forecast showed an increased in-year deficit, but that should be addressed when the latest tranche of Government support for lost income was confirmed, though it was still likely that reserves may be needed to support the Council's finances both in this financial year and indeed, in future years.

During the ensuing debate, Members thanked all officers for their efforts in what had been a challenging year for public services.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the outturn revenue budget monitoring position as at 31st March 2021 is noted.

(2) That, the latest position of the savings achieved this quarter and identified as green in Appendix B to the report now submitted is noted and that these savings will be transferred to an earmarked reserve for support to the 2021/22 budget and beyond.

(3) That, a revenue budget of £27,191 is carried forward for completion of revenue commitments in 2021/22 as identified in Appendix D to the report now submitted, is confirmed.

(4) That, the transfer of the balance of the revenue budget surplus to earmarked reserves is approved and that the allocations are delegated to the Chief Finance Officer (S.151 Officer).

POL.1148

CAPITAL PROGRAMME OUTTURN REPORT –
2020/2021

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report informing Members of the outturn position of the Council's capital programme for 2020/21 and the sources of funding.

The 2020/21 capital programme of £4,495k approved in February 2020 was further enhanced by the inclusion of £5,036k of slippage from the 2019/20 programme as well as some significant additions namely the redevelopment of the Council's depot and the works on the Engine Shed Lane link road, giving a revised programme of £15,443k.

At 30th March, the outturn spend on the 2020/21 programme was £9,166k and the report summarised the programme and provided an update on the status of various projects. Due to continued reliance on capital receipts and the Council's reserves to fund expenditure over the medium and long term, it was agreed that 2021/22 projects would be reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Resources to fund the capital programme and a forecast of future receipts and programme costs were set out in the report now submitted.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the outturn position of the 2020/21 capital programme and how the programme has been financed is noted.

(2) That, £9,380,371 is carried forward for the continuation of the 2020/21 projects in 2021/22.

POL.1149

REVIEW OF COUNCIL PRIORITY ACTIONS

The Chief Executive submitted a report presenting an analysis of a review of all Council priority actions, including actions in the Council Plan, major projects and the Climate Emergency Strategic Plan, in respect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The reorganisation of local government in North Yorkshire would create a single unitary authority across the county effective from April 2023 and this would impact on the Council's ability to deliver on its Council Plan priorities.

The Chief Executive's report described areas where activity was unlikely to be completed before the date of transfer of responsibilities, suggested actions related to that activity and the overall impact on the Council's ability to deliver on its activity as a result.

The Council would not deliver the following Council Plan priority actions but they would be marked as a priority for inclusion in the corporate plan of the new authority:

- delivering schemes through the Joint Venture Company;
- using Council assets to build 25 homes per annum (2022/23); and
- the creation of new employment sites in Bentham, Ingleton and Settle (Anley Crag)

Priorities listed as either at 'significant risk' or 'at risk' were identified in the report along with 8 major projects that would not be completed by April 2023 and should be reviewed for inclusion in the service plan of the new authority as should a range of actions relating to the Climate Emergency Strategic Plan.

The Chief Executive stated that the Council had to be realistic as to what could be achieved before the new authority came into being and acknowledged further cuts to the Council's priorities may be required and that a further report(s) would be submitted to the Policy Committee as necessary.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the analysis of priority actions is noted.

(2) That, the increased risk to delivery during the period of Local Government Reorganisation is noted.

(3) That, the changes to the Council's priorities as described in the report now submitted are approved.

Any other items – There were no late items of business to consider.

Date and Time of Next Meeting – Tuesday, 19 October 2021 at 6.30pm.

Chairman