

Present: Councillor Jackie Kirk (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Andy Kerry, Councillor Liz Maxwell, Councillor
Ralph Toofany, Councillor Pat Vaughan and Councillor
Keith Weaver

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Jane Loffhagen

34. Confirmation of Minutes - 28 November 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2017 be confirmed.

35. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Maxwell declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in “ Regulation 7 Direction on Lettings Boards” as she was a landlord of a property in Lincoln. She left the room during the discussion of this item.

Councillor Toofany declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in “ Regulation 7 Direction on Lettings Boards” as he was a landlord of a property in Lincoln. He left the room during the discussion of this item.

Councillor Kerry declared a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in “Health Scrutiny Update” as he was employed by East Midlands Ambulance Service.

36. Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter

Heather Grover, Principal Planning Officer

- a. presented the proposed Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter for consideration prior to Executive approval.
- b. advised that the aim of the charter was to encourage organisations in Lincoln to undertake activities which benefited both their employees and also the local community in which they were located.
- c. gave an overview of the background of the report and advised that following discussion at the Living Wage Forum, the Corporate Policy Unit had been looking at a new approach recognising good employers in the city.
- d. referred to paragraph 4 of the report and highlighted examples of social responsibility activities and explained the benefits to the organisation, employees and the local community.
- e. advised that signatories to the charter would be published on the City of Lincoln Council's website and elsewhere such as a copy in City Hall reception.
- f. referred to the proposed sign up form at appendix B of the report and advised that there would be no cost to an organisation signing up to the charter.

- g. referred to paragraph 4.5 of the report and advised on what the organisations signing up to the charter would receive.
- h. advised on the key timescales for the approval of the charter and highlighted that the formal launch would be in May 2018.
- i. highlighted the estimated costs to set up and launch the charter, together with the estimated ongoing costs as detailed at paragraph 4.7 of the report.
- j. asked for members questions and comments

Question – Members referred to the examples of socially responsible activities within the Terms and Condition of Section 3 of the Social Responsibility Charter and asked if Bereavement Leave could be added?

Response – Yes this could be looked at.

Comment – Expressed concern that the charter would only benefit larger businesses as smaller businesses would not be able to afford to fulfil the criteria that needed to be met.

Response – Referred to page 5 of the Social Responsibility Charter and advised that small organisations should proactively undertake a minimum of 3 activities with at least one benefitting the employee and one benefitting the local community. This compared to large organisations who were required to undertake ten activities.

Comment – Suggested that no criteria be set for small businesses.

Response – There needed to be a balance, the aim was not to make it too easy to sign up otherwise the charter would have no value, or too difficult resulting in a very small number of signatories. The criteria would be reviewed in 1 years' time.

Question – How would the Charter impact on staff and resources?

Response – Some time would be spent initially developing the form, once the form was set up it could be administered by an apprentice under officer guidance.

Comment – Suggested that veterans could be added as a group to receive concessions and that there was some specific support for carers which could be added to the socially responsible activities examples.

Response – Veterans would be added to the examples for receipt of concessions and the support for carers mentioned would be looked at for adding in.

RESOLVED that

1. the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter be noted and comments referred to Executive for consideration.
2. the Lincoln Social Responsibility Charter would be reviewed by Policy Scrutiny Committee 18 months from implementation.

37. Regulation 7 Direction on Lettings Boards

Donna Morris, Planning Enforcement Officer

- a. presented a report to summarise the results of the consultation undertaken on the options for the application to the Secretary of State to remove deemed consent for residential lettings boards in certain areas of Lincoln and to seek approval to publish a statement of the results.

- b. advised that 3 surveys had taken place to identify the number and type of boards being displayed in the City and by whom.
- c. highlighted the areas of concern as detailed at paragraph 2.2 of the report and advised that the areas were identified through enforcement complaints from residents and Councillors and those identified by officers of the Council.
- d. referred to paragraph 3 of the report and summarised the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulation 2007, and advised that due to the proliferation of lettings boards in certain areas where there was a high number of houses in multiple occupation, it had become increasingly difficult to enforce.
- e. advised that if the application was successful the City Council would have to decide whether to have a full ban on lettings boards or to allow boards of a restricted style to be displayed during certain months of the year.
- f. referred to paragraph 4 of the report and summarised the responses that had been received from the consultation.
- g. invited members questions and comments.

Comment – Most Students would go to the Student Union to find a house to rent rather than walking around looking at lettings boards.

Comment – Lettings boards identified student houses and gave the impression that they could be empty.

Question - Would the lettings boards apply to empty shops?

Response – It would apply only to residential lettings, not commercial lettings or sales boards.

Overall members commented that they supported the full ban of lettings boards.

RESOLVED that

- 1. the application to the Secretary of State for a Regulation 7 Direction to remove deemed consent for the display of lettings boards in the Monks Road area, West End area, Sincil Bank area, Union Road and Waterloo Street with a view to implementing a ban on lettings boards in these areas be supported.
- 2. the proposal be referred to Executive for approval.
- 3. A review of progress be brought back to committee in 18 months' time.

38. Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

Martin Walmsley, Head of Shared Revenues and Benefits

- a. presented a proposed Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for consideration prior to approval by Executive.
- b. advised that the new Discretionary Rate Relief Policy for the City of Lincoln Council was due to take effect on 1 April 2018.

- c. advised that the current Policy had not been reviewed since 15 September 2003, the new policy reflected changes in legislation, new reliefs etc. and to 'future proof' such a policy for potential future relief announcements.
- d. advised that there were no proposals to change the criteria used by officers when awarding discretionary relief. Organisations would not face an increase/decrease in the % of relief awarded.
- e. advised that once approved the policy would be available to print and download from the City of Lincoln Council website.
- f. advised that both North Kesteven and West Lindsey District Council were reviewing their Discretionary Relief Policies.
- g. asked for members questions and comments.

Question – What was the financial impact to the Council?

Response – The amount of the mandatory relief awarded in 2017/18 was just less than £5million , discretionary relief for 2017/18 was £101,000.

Question – Would the changes to the Policy have an effect on these figures?

Response – The Council accounts for mandatory relief awarded within returns to central government. The split of discretionary relief costs was set out in the financial impacts within the report.

Question – Whose responsibility was it to pay rates for empty properties?

Response – Empty properties would not have to pay rates for 3 months, after it expired, the landlord would be responsible for paying the rates.

Question – Referred to the guidelines for awarding relief and asked if the amount of relief awarded was ongoing?

Response – The amount of relief awarded would be reviewed each year.

Question – How would businesses qualify for hardship relief?

Response – It was a decision made by officers, they would view the full business accounts over a period of time to ensure that such an award was appropriate.

Question – Asked for clarification on State Aid?

Response – It was up to 200,000 Euros over a rolling 3 year period.

Question – How would the exiting the EU effect State Aid?

Response – As it stands there would be no changes, however, legal would keep watching for any changes.

Question – Referred to page 19 of the policy which set out the points system for the criteria for awarding discretionary relief and commented that the score was out of 18 or over, however, the maximum score achieved could be no more than 18 and suggested that this could be changed.

Response – It did not need changing as should the system need to change for any reason in the future it could result in a score of over 18.

RESOLVED that the Discretionary Rate Relief Policy be supported and referred to Executive for approval.

39. **Repairs and Maintenance and Rechargeable Repairs Policy**

Bob Ledger, Director of Housing and Regeneration

- a. presented the Repairs and Maintenance Policy and the Rechargeable Repairs Policy for comments.

- b. gave the background to the report and advised that the policies incorporated the terms and conditions approved by Executive in 2015.
- c. advised that both policies were considered by Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee in January 2017 to provide clarity for staff when processing repair requests.
- d. advised that overtime there had been a number of disputes about recharging for plastering work, these were predominantly where incoming tenants have been advised not to steam strip wallpaper but do so resulting in large areas of plastering work coming away from the walls.
- e. explained that the Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee had requested that the Housing Management team reviewed and clarified the policies accordingly.
- f. highlighted the suggested changes to the Repairs and Maintenance Policy as detailed at paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the report.
- g. advised that there were no changes proposed to the Rechargeable Repairs Policy.
- h. invited Members questions and comments.

Question – Asked for clarification of whether it was the responsibility of the tenant or the Council to redecorate a property after extensive plastering work had been completed at the Councils request.

Response – A balanced decision needed to be made by officers based on reasonableness for example was the property in a reasonable state of repair. A policy could not be written to cover every eventuality therefore a balanced decision needed to be made on individual circumstances. There were decoration vouchers available to help with the cost of decorating.

Comment – The plastering in some properties was poor.

Response – The housing stock dated to the 1950's, often tenants did not want the upheaval and mess of extensive plastering work, however, it was something that Officers could look at.

Question - Could bleeding radiators be added to the Councils responsibilities into the Repairs and Maintenance policy?

Response – Bleeding tenants radiators would not be a productive use of Council officer time, an article could be added to Home! magazine advising on how to bleed radiators also we could offer free bleeding keys, however this would be subject to cost.

Question – Could more time be spent with tenants when they move into a property to explain where the stop taps were etc. in the property.

Comment – Suggested that a list of contact numbers and emergency information be added to the inside of kitchen cupboards at the property.

Response – This was something that could be looked at.

Question – What was an emergency repair?

Response – Referred to page 8 of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy which explained what was considered an emergency repair. These would be attended to within 24 hours of being reported.

RESOLVED that the suggested amendments to the wording to the Repairs and Maintenance Policy detailed in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the report be supported.

40. Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2017-18 and Executive Work Programme Update

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the report 'Policy Scrutiny Work Programme 2017-18 and Executive Work Programme Update'.
- b. presented the Executive Work Programme January 2018 – January 2019.
- c. requested councillors to submit what items they wished to scrutinise from the Executive Work Programme and policies of interest.
- d. invited members questions and comments.

Members made no further comments or suggestions regarding the Policy Scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED that:

1. the work Policy Scrutiny work programme be noted.
2. the Executive work programme be noted.

41. Health Scrutiny Update

The Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee updated members of the business that had been discussed at the Health Scrutiny meeting held on 13 December 2017, these were:

- Grantham A&E Department
- Walk in Centre
- Non-Emergency Patient Transport Service
- Winter Pressures

RESOLVED that the report be noted.