

## **Policy Review – Policy Library**

### **Report of the Task Group on behalf of the Policy Development Committee**

**March 2018**

# 1. Decision Required

- 1.1 The Policy Development Committee is asked to endorse the findings and recommendations of the review contained within this report for consideration and decision.

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Background – Policy Library

On 11<sup>th</sup> June 2012 Policy Development Committee agreed to receive annual policy library reports primarily to influence the committee's work plan for the following 12 months. The committee has continued to receive a copy of the library on an annual basis.

The policy library has been functioning in the council's performance management system (QPR) for several years. The aim was to capture all of the council's key policies, strategies and plans. These also form part of the annual service plans, built in to QPR.

Heads of Service / Corporate Managers are required to update the status of each of their policies, strategies and plans annually in QPR. The update options available are:

- Overdue:
- Due to be updated this financial year
- Update not needed this financial year

The report also contained a list of all corporate policies & strategies (extracted from the Council's performance management system – QPR) and an updated commentary from managers on policies which are overdue. A number of the Weymouth & Portland Borough Council policies have been aligned with either West Dorset District Council, North Dorset District Council or across the whole of the Dorset Councils Partnership.

### 2.2 Reason for review

At its meeting on 31 July 2017, the committee expressed concern about the number of policies that were overdue for review and challenged why this might be the case. In their discussion the committee raised a number of points:-

- Was the review dates for policies that were marked overdue realistic?
- Triggers should be in place to monitor policies that had slipped their deadline date; this would establish why and what action could be taken to address any resource or other issues.
- Concern was expressed about how to manage the backlog and prioritise policies by importance.
- In the light of recent national events and acknowledging the heavy workload of staff, the committee wanted to ensure that there was a robust process for managing and reviewing the policy library going forward.

- Concern regarding a number of policies that were long overdue and managers/brief holders should explain the reasons why these were outstanding.

The committee decided to set up a task group to review the policy library document and consider the above comments.

### 2.3 **Membership and meetings**

The Policy Development Committee established a task group in order to undertake the review. Membership of the policy task group was as follows:

Cllr J Ellis (Chair), Cllr H Bruce (Vice-Chair), Cllr L Hamilton and Cllr P McCartney.

The task group met on a regular basis during the period of the review to examine the different elements of the review as well as undertaking additional evidence gathering outside of the meetings.

## 3. **Scope and Key Focus Areas of the Review**

3.1 The task group set the following objectives for the review:

- To examine the list of policies in the policy library
- To examine the format of the policy library and determine if any improvements should be made and improve the policy library document.
- To seek assurance on the position with particular policies.

## 4. **Summary of evidence considered**

### 4.1 **Documentation**

The following documents and data were used by the policy task group in the process of carrying out this review:

- Report to Policy Development Committee 31 July 2017 – Policy Library – Annual update and its appendices.

The progress of the following policies was also addressed by the task group:

- Communication & Consultation policy
- Customer Access Strategy
- Customer Charter
- Environmental health Statement of Enforcement Policy
- Discharge into the Private Rented Sector Policy
- Housing Allocations Policy
- Joint Tenancy Strategy
- Resident Parking Scheme
- Civil Parking Enforcement Policy
- Town Centre Parking Strategy
- Hotel Policy
- Public Convenience Policy
- Planning Enforcement Policy and Procedure

## 4.2 Witnesses

The following people acted as witnesses, providing verbal evidence and assistance in the process of carrying out this review:

- C Evans – Financial Performance Manager
- C Milone – Head of Housing
- Cllr G Taylor – Brief holder for Housing
- S Cairns – Engineering Projects Manager
- M Hitchcott – Senior Planning Enforcement Officer

## 5. Key Findings

The review focused on three distinct areas, the format of the policy library document, Dorset Councils Partnership (DCP) policies and Weymouth & Portland Borough (WPBC) policies.

### 5.1 Format of the Policy Library Document

The issues:-

- The policy document was difficult to read in order to determine where there were any issues of concern.
- It was desirable that this be made easy to read and readily accessible
- Ownership of each policy should rest with the appropriate Brief holder, this should be stated in the document rather than the Head of Service.
- Focus on overdue policies and why they were in the position of being overdue.

### 5.2 Dorset Councils Partnership (DCP) Policies

The task group examined progress on the following policies:-

Communication & Consultation policy  
Customer Access Strategy  
Customer Charter  
Environmental health Statement of Enforcement Policy  
Discharge into the Private Rented Sector Policy  
Housing Allocations Policy  
Joint Tenancy Strategy

In particular the group decided to focus on the housing policies and as part of their research contacted the Head of Housing and the relevant brief holder. Councillor Taylor and Clive Milone set out the following response to members enquires:-

*“We continue to discharge our duty into the private sector, though sparingly. Nothing has really changed here since we told members about this a couple of years back, and I don’t really think there is much to update them on.*

*The most recent allocations policy changes, which affect all partner councils across the Dorset Home Choice area, have only just been implemented following a long delay in approval at Purbeck DC. We don’t have any further*

*revisions on the cards at present. If we get the go ahead for LGR an entirely new allocations policy covering the new council will need to be developed. There is little point in doing any further work on this at present.”*

In the light of the Head of Housing response above, the task group decided that it was content that the Housing policies listed would continue to be fit for purpose and the customer focused policies were also acceptable.

The task group acknowledged that local government reorganisation and the formation of a Weymouth Town Council had some influence on the review process.

Members therefore concluded that no further action be taken regarding the overdue DCP policies. However it is suggested that future Policy Development Committee agenda's should include a copy of the Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee work plan. Promoting consideration and allowing an overview of joint DCP policies.

### 5.3 **Weymouth and Portland (WPBC) Policy Documents**

Updates were received on progress of the following policies:

Resident Parking Scheme  
Civil Parking Enforcement Policy  
Town Centre Parking Strategy  
Hotel Policy  
Public Convenience Policy  
Planning Enforcement Policy and Procedure

Residents parking Scheme – the responsibility for residents parking became the remit of Dorset County Council when they took the on-street enforcement back in house.

Civil Parking Enforcement Policy – this is the parking policy for the Borough and was considered and approved by Management Committee in March 2017 albeit under a different title. All our parking enforcement is done under the CPE Legislation Town Centre Parking Strategy and this was effectively incorporated into the Off Street Parking Policy in March 2017.

Hotel Policy – this was taken to Management Committee in September 2017 by the Strategic Director (Martin Hamilton) as “Asset Management hotels” paper and included updates to the hotels management policy.

Public Convenience Policy – this requires updating and a matter of some priority, the Buildings and Facilities Manager is working the scope of such an update and a draft would be made available to Policy Development in spring 2018.

Planning Enforcement Policy and Procedure – an addendum to the Corporate Enforcement policy is in progress and planned for completion this financial year.

During this period of the review, the Dorset Council's Partnership received the announcement from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local

Government to create two new unitary councils for Dorset. This decision had a bearing on the review process and impacted its direction. The task group considered the following factors:-

- What could be achieved by April 2019?
- Were the existing policies fit for purpose?

It was concluded that most of these sovereign polices would adequately serve the council for the remainder of its term.

The workload of the DCP staff was acknowledged as was the challenge to complete the Policy Library updates. As part of their conclusion, the members of the group also acknowledged that the new rural Dorset Unitary authority and the new Town Council would be required to establish their own new policies and protocols as part of their creation.

## **6. Recommendations**

- 6.1 That the Policy Library Document use a RAG (Red, Amber, and Green) rating system to highlight current, due and overdue policies.
- 6.2 That the responsible Brief Holder be added to the policy library document
- 6.3 That the policies be filtered into groups of DCP/WPBC for easy reference
- 6.4 That the overdue DCP policies continue to be fit for purpose for the remaining life of Weymouth and Portland Borough Council until April 2019.
- 6.5 That the remaining sovereign policies due for review, selected for consideration by the task group, would adequately serve the council for the remainder of its term until April 2019.
- 6.6 That the Policy Development Committee future agenda include a copy of the work-plan for the Joint Advisory Overview and Scrutiny Committee to promote consideration of joint DCP policies.

## **7. Acknowledgements**

- 7.1 The policy task group would like to express their thanks to those that took time to meet with them and for the information that they provided as part of this review.