

Annual Review 2012/13: Communities Policy Development Group

- 1.1 During the municipal year 2012/13 Communities PDG met on seven occasions. This includes an additional meeting to those scheduled to allow the PDG to consider the Council's Housing Programme of Work. At its meetings the PDG considered eighteen substantive items including:

Lincolnshire County Homelessness Strategy	Right to Buy	National Planning Policy Framework
Car Parking Strategy	Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document	Rural Broadband
Sustainable Communities Act	Consultation on Intercity East Coast Franchise	Localisation of Council Tax
Community Right to Bid	Tenancy Strategy	Allocations Policy
Housing Strategy	Community Right to Challenge	Waste and Recycling - Missed Bin Policy
Waste and Recycling – New Contract and Contamination	Planning Enforcement Policy	Question without Discussion referred by Council Biodiversity Duty

- 1.2 Of these items, one, relating to the Council's statutory duty in relation to Biodiversity, was a question referred by Council. The response to this question was presented by the Service Manager for Planning Policy and Partnerships.
- 1.3 Communities PDG also received updates throughout the year on items such as the Sustainable Communities Act and rural broadband, looking at rollout of fibre optic provision; sign-up by individuals, community groups and business to ONLincolnshire and developments relating to the increase of BT exchange boxes. Further updates were presented about ongoing work looking at car parking issues which included: civil parking enforcement, car park provision, resident parking schemes and alternative methods of payment for parking.
- 1.4 The PDG put forward recommendations to officers concerning the Wind Energy Supplementary Planning Document and the Housing Strategy and made nine recommendations to Cabinet. The substantive items to which these recommendations refer are shown in bold in the table above.
- 1.5 Members of the Communities PDG took an active role in two working groups this year. The first worked closely with the Head of Property Development to review car parking across the district which ultimately led to the implementation of a Car Parking Strategy. The second working group worked with the Service Manager and officers from Waste and Recycling Services on the education programme to reduce the amount of contaminated dry recyclable waste left for collection in light of an impending change of contract.
- 1.6 The PDG's response to a consultation on the East Coast Intercity Franchise took account of the Council's plans for growth within the district with a primary focus on Grantham.

2. Conclusion

- 2.1 By ensuring that reports and presentations are prepared and distributed within the agenda management timetable Members have consistently had the appropriate information to allow for informed deliberation and subsequent recommendations to officers and Cabinet.
- 2.2 The production and distribution of the work programme within agenda packs further assists in the Council's accountability and transparency in the development of policy. Improved systems for following up action points have ensured that members of the PDG are fully aware of milestones and achievements throughout the process of policy development.
- 2.3 It is interesting to note that for the first time since 2008 no meeting of the Communities PDG has had to be cancelled due to lack of items.
- 2.4 It has been a productive year for the three Policy Development Groups. Collectively the PDGs have considered forty-three substantive items, made thirty-two recommendations to Cabinet and helped to develop seventeen policies, strategies and schemes for the Authority. Members of Communities PDG have contributed toward thirteen of these policies and made eleven separate recommendations.

3. Moving Forward

- 3.1 Cross-over between Policy Development Groups should be encouraged if we are to work effectively in the future. A joined-up approach to the development of policies and procedures has the potential to involve greater numbers of elected members in a policy's path from proposal through to recommendation and ultimately decision making. This approach has been shown to be effective this year with both Communities PDG and Resources PDG working on the development and implementation of the Car Parking Strategy. This approach could be further enhanced through the use of joint (cross-PDG) working groups so that the different components of policy development could be addressed simultaneously.