

Present: Councillor Stephen Woodliffe (Chairman), Councillor Anton Dani (Vice-Chairman), Councillors Tom Ashton, David Brown, Frank Pickett, Judith Skinner, Yvonne Stevens, Peter Watson and Judy Welbourn

Officers –

Assistant Director - Assets, Assistant Director - Regulation, Safer Communities Service Manager, Environmental Health Manager, Service Manager – Affordable and Accessible Homes, Deputy Chief Executive - Communities., Assistant Director - Wellbeing and Community Leadership and Revenues and Benefits Operations Manager

### **30 MINUTES**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed by the Committee and signed by the Chairman

### **31 APOLOGIES**

Apologies of absence were received from Councillors; Alison Austin, Alan Bell and Paul Goodale.

### **32 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Councillor Yvonne Stevens declared that she knew the owners of the Called-In item, as such she would be leaving the meeting before that item.

Councillor Judith Welbourn declared that she has family living in the Ingelow Avenue area but confirmed this would not mean she was pre-determined.

### **33 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

None.

### **34 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF AND LOCAL DISCOUNTS POLICIES**

Following a request from the Chairman a report was brought to the Committee which provided details of Business Rates reliefs and an overview of the various types of reliefs currently available.

Legislation provided for a number of rate reliefs covering different situations and circumstances. Some were discretionary reliefs, others were mandatory. All rate relief awarded was administered and awarded in line with the legislation and/or Boston's own local policy, ensuring a fair, equitable and consistent process to supporting eligible businesses and organisations across the borough.

The Chairman invited a member of the public, Mr Chris Mountain, owner of Boston Soap, to address the Committee. During his speech Mr Mountain explained that he believed the high business rates were causing many shop fronts in the town centre to be vacant, and that new businesses would not be able to afford the current rates.

Following questions from Members the Deputy Head of Revenue and Benefits confirmed that the rateable value of shops are determined by the Valuation Office and not the Council.

The Leader of the Council expressed his willingness to write a letter to the Secretary of State regarding Boston's Town Centre.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee implore the Leader of the Council to write a letter to the Secretary of State outlining the concerns for Boston's town centre.**

**35 CORPORATE ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

The Environmental Health Manager presented a report which set out the Council's approach to how it would carry out its regulatory enforcement activities, of individuals, groups and businesses. The policy had been developed in collaboration with the South and East Lincolnshire Partnership, in order to ensure that the way in which the Councils regulate businesses and individuals was both lawful and consistent across the partnership.

It also demonstrated how undertaking regulatory activity in accordance with the provisions of the policy would ensure that the Council meets its responsibility to regulate and enforce fairly, openly, consistently and proportionately.

The Council was responsible for enforcing a wide range of legislation, with powers of enforcement usually delegated to individual officers in the various service areas concerned. The decision to take (or not to take) enforcement action is a serious one that may have implications for all involved. It was therefore important that there was a policy in place that ensures fairness, openness, proportionality and consistency.

Members were in support of the policy being developed in collaboration with the partnering Councils.

In response to a question raised from the Mayor, the Environmental Health Manager confirmed that, while there is not a service standard for keeping both offenders and witnesses informed in the progress being made, the department always updates all parties involved.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee support the report on to Cabinet with the following recommendations;**

- 1. To add Ward Members into the consultation list under '6.2 – How Decisions are Made on Enforcement Action'.**

**To add that Members will be kept up to date with any revisions that are made under the delegated authority for information purposes only into Recommendation 2.**

**36 MEES PROJECT**

The Safer Communities Service Manager presented a report to the Committee which brought forward two updates to the Private Housing Policy Framework to introduce

Locally Adopted Charges for the enforcement of Minimum Energy Enforcement Standards (MEES) and Electrical Safety Standards. Both pieces of legislation had been in force for some time and would enable the Housing Standards Team to take appropriate action where landlords are non-compliant. The report set out updates required to the Council's existing Private Sector Housing Policy Framework to enable the Council to take action where it has reasonable grounds to believe that a landlord has failed to fulfil their duties under these regulations.

A funded award from the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) had been secured to undertake a project specifically focussing on enforcement of the MEES regulations and these charges need to be in places in order for engagement and Compliance Notices fail, the Council has the power to proceed the issue to Civil Penalties.

The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 introduced a minimum level of efficiency which private-rented properties must meet, known as the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES).

The Electrical Safety Standards in the Private Rented Sector (England) Regulations 2020 require Landlords to have property electrics checked at least every five years by a suitably qualified person. The electrics must meet standards and Landlords must give their tenants proof of this.

The Committee raised concerns regarding the 30 day timeframe Landlords had to make necessary changes to their rental property. In response the Safer Communities Service Manager assured the Committee that if the delay had been caused by external factors (supplies being unavailable ect) the 30 days could be waived in some circumstances.

Following questions from the Mayor, the Safer Communities Service Manager confirmed that he was unaware of the day-to-day spending of the funding as that did not sit within his department.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Committee support and endorse the report through to Cabinet.**

**37 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

It was agreed by the Committee that, under section 100(A)(iv) of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item if business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Order.

**38 WORK PROGRAMME**

The Assistant Director – General Fund Assets and Lead Officer added SELCP Asset Management Strategy for the 2 February 2023 meeting.

The Meeting Closed at 10.37 pm