

EXTRACT

THE CABINET

MEETING, 28TH JANUARY, 2013

Councillor Morris	Executive Cabinet Member
Councillor Mrs Thomas	Executive Cabinet Member
Councillor Peel	Executive Cabinet Member
Cabinet Members	
Councillor Adia	Human Resources, Organisational Development and Diversity
Councillor Bashir-Ismail	Public Health
Councillor M. Connell	Adults
Councillor D. Burrows	Community Safety and Police
Councillor Peacock	Sports, Libraries, Youth and Culture
Councillor Murray	Looked After Children ,Safeguarding and Early Years
Councillor Chadwick	Highways and Transport
Councillor Sherrington	Waste and Recycling
Councillor J. Byrne	Economy, Housing and Skills
Councillor McKeon	Schools
Councillor Zaman	Neighbourhood and Community Services

Other Members in Attendance

Councillor Francis
Councillor Greenhalgh
Councillor Morgan
Councillor Ashcroft
Councillor Mrs Fairclough
Councillor Hayes

Officers

Mr. S. Harriss	Chief Executive
Mr. S. Arnfield	Deputy Chief Executive
Mr. M. Cox	Director of Environmental Services
Mrs. H. Gorman	Borough Solicitor
Ms. M. Asquith	Director of Children's and Adults Services
Ms. D. Ball	Assistant Director of Environmental Services
Mr. J. Livesey	Assistant Director
Mr. T. Birch	Assistant Director
Ms. W. Meredith	Director of Public Health
Mr. J. Rowlands	Assistant Director
Mr. M. Connor	Treasury Accountant
Mr. A. Jennings	Democratic Services Manager

Councillor Morris in the Chair.

An apology for absence was submitted by Councillor Jones.

60. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14th January, 2013 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

61. COUNCIL TAX – CHANGES TO DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS ON EMPTY PROPERTIES AND SECOND HOMES

Councillors Adia and Bashir-Ismail declared interests in the undermentioned item as they owned empty properties in the Borough.

Further to Minute 46 of the meeting held on 26th November, 2012 the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report that sought Members' approval in respect of empty property and second home charges from 2013/14 following the consultation process undertaken.

Members were reminded that the Government was making changes to council tax discounts and exemptions from 1st April, 2013 for empty properties and second homes which was part of a strategy to bring empty homes back into use. These changes would allow councils to use their own discretion around what council tax charges were made for these properties. At the moment the proposals were only draft and the regulations which would be required were likely to be passed later in the year.

As part of the consultation process a number of practical issues and concerns had been raised and a summary and proposed mitigation, where possible, were detailed in Appendix B.

It was considered that the changes to these discounts and exemptions would have a direct financial impact on the people that were responsible for paying council tax charges on empty properties and second homes. Additionally, it was likely that there would also be claimants that found themselves in exceptional financial circumstances due to the changes that would take effect from 1st April, 2013. Therefore, it was proposed to maintain a discretionary fund, to support people in exceptional circumstances as a consequence of these changes.

The amount and the management of the discretionary fund would be evaluated during the first year to determine how or if this continued in future years. It was proposed that for year one this fund was set at £400,000

In order to verify that the Council were raising the correct charges on empty properties it was important that checks were carried out. In the past when empty property charges were lower than occupied property charges and council tax

inspectors carried out regular visits to empty properties to verify that they were still empty. However, with the increased charges some empty property charges would be higher than occupied charges and it was therefore proposed to take on two additional staff (a council tax inspector and a senior council tax officer) to deal with inspections, verification, appeals and discretionary fund applications. The cost of this would be around £60,000 which included salaries, on-costs and mileage.

A full Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix A) had been undertaken in line with legislation and was considered by the Cabinet in its deliberations.

The Council had around 10,000 empty properties on its records in any one year and around 5,000 at any particular point in time. A questionnaire was posted to 3534 individuals responsible for council tax on an empty property in December 2012. The consultation sought information from current owners of empty properties on the impact of the proposed changes and asked for alternative solutions. The same consultation form was placed on the Council's website. A total of 562 responses were received.

Detailed analysis results, including a list of key issues arising from the consultation and the service response to these issues, was provided at appendix C

Resolved – (i) That the proposals detailed in section 3 of the report as the basis for empty property and second home charges from 1st April 2013 be agreed for submission to the Council's meeting on 28th January, 2013 for approval .

(ii) That the following recommendations be reaffirmed following the consultation process, subject to the approval on Council on 28th January, 2013:-

(a) That a total of £1 million, from the additional revenue generated as a result of these changes, be used to fund part of the required £3 million saving for the Council Tax Support scheme.

(b) That the creation of a discretionary fund be approved, in principle, to support any claimant for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and any council tax payer that find themselves in exceptional financial circumstances as a consequence of the changes.

(c) That the creation of two new senior officer posts in the council tax section be approved and that these be recruited within the revenues section in order to ensure they have relevant experience and knowledge.

62. COUNCIL TAX BASE FOR 2013/14 AND BUSINESS RATES BASE FOR 2013/14

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report that set out the calculation of the tax base to be used in the calculation of the Council Tax and Business Rates for 2013/14 (the tax base for tax setting purposes).

The report indicated a tax base before adjustment for losses on collection of 70,463 band D equivalents.

The Council needed to determine its collection rate for the year, which took account of collection difficulties. Based on an assessment of past collection performance, this had been maintained at 98% and resulted in a tax base for tax setting purposes of 69,053 band D equivalents.

Resolved – That the report of the Deputy Chief Executive for the calculation of the Council's tax base for tax setting purposes for the year 2013/14 be agreed for submission to the Council's meeting on 28th January, 2013 and that the Council Tax base for the year 2013/14 shall be 69,053 band D equivalents; that the business rates base for 2013/14, as now detailed, be approved and that the revised NNDR 1 form attached at Appendix 2 is submitted to the DCLG in accordance with the regulations.

63. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME REGULATIONS

Further to Minute 45 of the meeting held on 26th November, 2012 the Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report that sought the Cabinet's approval for the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Regulations which gave the necessary approval to implement the scheme agreed on the 26th November 2012.

Resolved – That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme Regulations be approved subject to the Council's approval on 28th January, 2013.