

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Thursday, 6 August 2020

Present: Councillor Alan McDermott (Chairman)
Councillors March (Vice-Chairman), Bailey, Dawlings, Mackonochie and Stanyer

Officers in Attendance: Lee Colyer (Director of Finance, Policy and Development (Section 151 Officer)), Stephen McGinnes (Mid Kent Services Director), Paul Taylor (Director of Change and Communities), Patricia Narebor (Head of Legal Partnership), John Antoniadis (Estates Manager), Sheila Coburn (Head of Revenues and Benefits) and Caroline Britt (Democratic Services Officer)

Other Members in Attendance:

APOLOGIES

CAB1/20 Apologies for absence were received from William Benson (Chief Executive) and Jane Clarke (Head of Policy and Governance).

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

CAB2/20 There were no disclosable pecuniary or other significant interests declared at the meeting.

NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS WISHING TO SPEAK

CAB3/20 There were no Visiting Members who had registered as wishing to speak.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING DATED 25 JUNE 2020

CAB4/20 Members reviewed the minutes. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting dated 25 June 2020 be approved as a correct record.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

CAB5/20 There were no questions from members of the Council.

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

CAB6/20 There were no questions from members of the public.

CONSIDERATION OF THE FORWARD PLAN AS AT 10 JULY 2020

CAB7/20 Members considered the plan. No amendments were proposed.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan as at 10 July 2020 be noted.

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2021-22 PART 1

CAB8/20 Sheila Coburn, Head of Revenues and Benefits Partnership introduced a Report that provided details of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2021-2022.

Discussion and responses to Members questions included the following:

- The Cabinet Report of September 2019 explained that the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme was now out of date.
- The many amendments to Universal Credit payments made by the Department of Works and Pensions had a knock on effect to customers in receipt of Council Tax Reductions.
- Each time notification was received of a change in Universal Credit an adjustment was required to the amount of Council Tax Reduction a claimant would be entitled to. This meant the customer could receive numerous bills throughout the year which was confusing.
- An analysis had now been carried out and an income banded scheme was the fairest and simplest to administer and explain to customers. This would also be in line with many other councils including the majority of the other Kent Authorities.
- The simpler income banded scheme included wide income bands within. The only changes that would be necessary were if the claimant moved into a different income band.
- Three models had been considered:
 - o Model 1 – allowed for a maximum support of 80%.
 - o Model 2 – allowed for a maximum support of 80% but also included a 5% uplift in support for those households in receipt of a disability or illness benefit.
 - o Model 3 – allowed for a maximum support of 80% where a household was in receipt of a disability or sickness benefit only. All other households would receive a maximum support of 70%.
- There would be gainers and losers as with all new schemes. The current scheme favoured those in receipt of Legacy Benefits compared to Universal Credit. The reverse would be the case for the Income Banded Scheme as it would benefit those on Universal Credit. Although full migration to Universal Credit was not expected until 2024 more and more people were being moved onto it.
- There was an exceptional hardship policy in place and this would be updated to protect those who might otherwise experience financial hardship.
- A public consultation was mandatory where changes were proposed to the scheme, details of which were contained in the Report.
- The consultation would make clear the need for change and the effects both positive and negative to individual claimants.
- Following the consultation process a further Report would be brought back to Cabinet for a final decision.

RESOLVED –

1. That the finding of the review of the current Council Tax Reduction Scheme is noted.
2. That the potential impact of the proposed changes to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme on working age claimants is noted.
3. That the impact of the proposed changes to the Council Tax

Reduction Scheme on people with the protected characteristics of disability, sex and age, as set out in Section 7 and Appendix b; and weighs up these impacts against any potential savings in the administration of the scheme that may be made by the Council as well as achieving the objective, to maintain costs of the scheme in line with the current scheme into 2021/22 is noted.

4. That Cabinet delegates authority to the Head of Revenues and Benefits to finalise and commence consultation on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme to be implemented for 2021-22

REASON FOR DECISION: In providing financial support to low income households the Council will support communities enjoy good health and resilience to the challenges they encounter.

PROPERTY TRANSACTION REPORT JANUARY TO JUNE 2020

CAB9/20 John Antoniades introduced the report that informed Cabinet of the property transactions completed under delegated authority for the period 1 January to 30 June 2020.

Discussion and responses to Members questions included the following:

- During the first 6 months the Council had disposed of one property asset of Land at Hornbeam Avenue, Tunbridge Wells for £526,000.
- Five new lettings/licences were granted which equated to a net revenue increase of £20,931,000.
- Six rent reviews were completed which secured a net annual rental increase of £1,144.02.
- No properties were acquired by TWBC during this period.
- One new Assured Shorthold Tenancy was granted during this period. The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in a number of tenancy renewals being temporarily placed on hold. Once the current lockdown was relaxed the outstanding renewals would be completed.

To note, the matter was decided in taking the exempt information set out in the Agenda as read.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: To comply with the Constitution.

URGENT BUSINESS

CAB10/20 There was no urgent business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

CAB11/20 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10 September 2020 commencing at 10:30am.

NOTES:

The meeting concluded at 10.50 am.

An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website.