



MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 27th JULY 2023

PRESENT: Councillors D Cook (Chair), C Bain, L Clarke, G Coates, S Doyle, D Maycock and B Price

CABINET Councillor T Jay

The following officers were present: Joanne Goodfellow (Assistant Director Finance), Michael Buckland (Head of Revenues), Paul Weston (Assistant Director Assets) and Tracey Pinton (Legal Admin & Democratic Services Manager)

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors R Claymore, M Bailey

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of Interest.

16 CHAIR'S UPDATE

Nothing to update

17 RESPONSES TO REPORTS OF THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

None.

18 CONSIDERATION OF MATTERS REFERRED TO THE CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FROM CABINET / COUNCIL

No new items referred.

19 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME 2024/25

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Operations & Finance to provide an update on the proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme and to request permission to undertake a consultation with the public and our Preceptors.

The Head of Benefits & Revenues Michael Buckland updated the committee on the work undertaken so far and would like to request permission from Cabinet to undertake a consultation with both the public and the Major Precepting Authorities in respect of proposed changes to the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme with effect from 1st April 2024.

Each year the Council is required to review its Council Tax Reduction Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the schedule 1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and to either maintain the scheme or replace it.

Council Tax Reduction (CTR) was introduced from 1 April 2013 when it replaced the Central Government funded Council Tax Benefit regime. From its inception, the funding available to the Council from government has reduced year on year.

As with the majority of authorities within England, the Borough Council need to make changes to the CTR scheme for working age applicants (the scheme for pension age applicants is prescribed by Central Government) in order to reduce the significant administrative burden placed on the Council by the introduction of Universal Credit.

This report requests permission to consult on changes required to the scheme and makes recommendation for the 2024/25 scheme.

The Committee sought clarifications in the following areas:

- Clarification on rationale to reducing the capitol to £6,000.00 –to make it a limit of £16,000 would make the scheme much more expensive.
- Peoples' expenditure rises very quickly what is being done in terms of money advice or green energy support - There are lots of things we have set up with the CAB, TAC we will always speak to people even at recovery stage, moving forward we will work together with housing and looked at vulnerable debtors this is part of a strategy in trying to lift vulnerable people out of poverty to help as many people as we can.
- The scheme at present it does say support people under the armed forces compensation scheme the scheme coming only quotes those that are on the war pension not armed forces compensation – we will look into that in terms of whether we continue to do so.

RESOLVED That the Committee

Endorsed the report and the recommendations in the report;
and

Asked that the item is bought back to Committee on 8th August for a follow up discussion before going to Cabinet on 17th August.

(Moved by Councillor D Cook and seconded by Councillor B Price)

20 UPDATE ON HOUSING REPAIRS SERVICE

Report of the Assistant Director – Assets to provide an update on the performance of the housing repairs and voids service, including Key Performance Indicators, tenant feedback data, void performance data, complaints and Member Enquiries.

The Chair requested that a working group was established to include the following members Councillors D Cook, B Price, D Maycock, S Doyle and G Coates also to include the Councillors R Kingstone, B Clarke

Assistant Director – Assets welcome a working group but be mindful we are working on the new Social Housing Act and there will be a project to address information coming out of that. There are some very clearly defined standards that we will have to meet, notably annual property inspections could be a requirement which will have a cost and resource implications. Right first-time fix looks as though that may be dropped from the requirements because of the level confusion across the industry on what this means.

Committee sought clarity on the following;

- What are the definitions for the repairs - Emergency, urgent and routine – confirmed a link in the report to the Housing Repairs Policy which sets out the definitions.
- What is the figure of the damp equipment we have. – there are two pieces of equipment, used when no cause can be identified, one is used in the property that is reported as damp with no identified cause and one in a similar property with no damp to identify the difference between the two properties, also use a damp survey company.
- There were concerns around where cases of damp and mould are closed is there a potential to re-open rather than start the process again. Officer confirmed that there is a piece of work ongoing to look at this issue.

The Chair will contact Members to organise an initial face to face working group meeting.

21 WORKING GROUP UPDATES

None

22 FORWARD PLAN

The Chair requested that the Local Plan Issues and Options report be looked at by Corporate Scrutiny on 4th October 2023

23 CORPORATE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PLAN & ACTION LOG

The workplan will be updated as follows.

Local Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25 to be included on agenda 8th August 2023

Local plan Issues and Options to be included on agenda on 4th October 2023

Chair