

CABINET

Minutes of the meeting of the held on 12 July 2012 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Fleming (Chairman)

Cllrs. Mrs. Bosley, Mrs. Bracken, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Davison, Mrs. Hunter and Ramsay

Cllrs. Davison and Mrs. Parkin were also present.

13. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 14 June 2012 be approved and signed as a correct record.

14. Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

15. Questions from Members (maximum 15 minutes)

Councillor Richard Davison asked when a report concerning under occupation of social housing would be considered by the Cabinet. In response the Leader confirmed that a report would be presented at the next meeting of cabinet.

16. Matters referred from Council

No matters were referred from Council.

17. Matters referred from the Performance and Governance Committee and/or Select Committees (Paragraph 5.20 of Part 4 (Executive) of the Constitution)

There were no references from the Performance and Governance Committee or from Select Committees.

18. Localisation of Council Tax Support

The Local Government Finance Bill introduced one of the biggest fundamental changes requiring all council tax billing authorities to devise a local Council Tax Support Scheme to replace the current national Council Tax Benefit Scheme to commence on 1 April 2012.

Members considered a report setting out the options of a local scheme and proposing a scheme recommended by the Kent Forum. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Resources tabled the following revised recommendation:

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Recommendation to Council that:

- (a) Members approve that the Council consult with its community on the proposal to reduce the council tax support payable to working age claimants by a standard percentage amount that delivers a local support for council tax scheme within the funding provided by Government; and*
- (b) Members approve the principles of broad-based consultation and delegate authority to the Leader of the Council and the Portfolio Holder for Value for Money to approve the information and questions provided to the community within the consultation questionnaire.*

The Leader introduced the report stressing that the Government had been keen to protect more elderly claimants and within the Sevenoaks District this group accounted for 53% of the recipients of council tax benefit. The proposals under consideration would protect the District Council from any future increases in the number of recipients of council tax support.

The Leader also noted that the recent article that had appeared in *The Chronicle* would have laid the way for the consultation that was being proposed.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Resources outlined the consultation process, highlighting that the consultation would be promoted within *InShape* and via the Council's Twitter account. West Kent Housing Association had also agreed to facilitate the consultation and Officers would be meeting with the Citizens Advice Bureaus and other community groups in order to outline the proposals and promote the consultation process.

The Deputy Chief Executive and Director for Corporate Resources acknowledged that the Town and Parish Councils were particularly concerned about the effect that the changes would have on them. Officers hoped that using the current council tax software it would be possible to model the cost implications for each town and parish council. Using this information the individual Council would be able to assess how much their precept would increase.

Members noted that the consultation would commence over the summer holiday but noted that an eight week consultation period was proposed which should give residents sufficient time to respond. Members also noted that the consultation would be open to all council tax payers and not just those in receipt of council tax benefit.

In response to a question, the Leader noted that the information that most affected the Town and Parish Councils was the number of residents of working age or over 65 in receipt of council tax benefit living in the Parish. Using this information, parishes would have to consider how to best meet any shortfall in funding there may be.

Members thanked Officers and the Services Select Committee for the work that had been undertaken to develop the recommendations presented at the meeting.

Resolved: that full Council be recommended to approve:

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- (a) That the Council consult with its community on the proposals to reduce the council tax support payable to working age claimants by a standard percentage amount that delivers a local support for council tax scheme within the funding provided by Government; and
- (b) The principles of broad-based consultation and delegate authority to the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Value for Money to approve the information and questions provided to the community within the consultation questionnaire.

19. Community Right to Challenge

Members considered a report setting out the duty placed on local authorities in the Localism Act 2011 to administer the Community Right to Challenge. The Community Right to Challenge allowed relevant bodies to express an interest in running Council services and placed a duty on local authorities to consider expressions of interest. Where expressions of interest were accepted a full tender process for future delivery of that service would have to be conducted.

The report proposed that Members adopted a policy that aligned the management of the Community Right to Challenge within existing budget setting processes and ensured the Council placed a priority on the cost to the district and the quality of service delivered when drawing up any tender document that is required as a result of an expression of interest under the Community Right to Challenge.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Improvement introduced the report highlighting that there were a number of complexities in the way in which the various activities carried out by the Council interacted. As a result of this, any change to one service may have an unforeseen effect on other services. In order to limit the impact of any changes to services, the Council had developed a process that was as simple as possible.

Members noted that the Community Right to Challenge simply enabled organisations to trigger a procurement process and did not provide any guarantees as to the eventual supplier of services. It was also stressed that the processes needed to align with the Council's budget timetable.

In response to a question, the Policy and Performance Manager reported that the final guidance issued by the Government did not preclude larger companies from having a role in the Community Right to Challenge as long as they were in partnership with a sponsoring local organisation.

Members commended the report that had been presented to the meeting and thanked Officers for the work that had been undertaken in developing the timetable.

Resolved that Council be recommended to:

- (a) Approve the Sevenoaks District Council Community Right to Challenge Policy; and

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- (b) Delegate authority to the Portfolio Holder for Planning and Improvement to agree any final adjustment to the Community Right to Challenge Policy that may result from the finalisation of Government policy and statutory guidance.

20. 2012/13 Performance Indicator Targets

Members considered a report reviewing the list of performance indicators collected by the Council. The process helped to ensure that services maintained the right focus and that progress against key Council and service objectives was measured.

The Portfolio Holder for Planning and Improvement introduced the report, noting that the number of performance indicators had been reduced. Each Portfolio Holder had been provided with the targets for their individual portfolio and had confirmed that they were happy with the proposed changes.

Members noted that there would be a duty in the future for the Council to make available information which was clear to the public. The Policy and Performance Manager highlighted that there had been a presence of performance indicators on the Sevenoaks District Council website for sometime. In the future there would be a requirement to make the information available in editable formats and there was some work to be undertaken to achieve this.

In reviewing the indicators in the report, a Member suggested that it may be helpful to develop a method for indicating where a low value was a positive indicator.

In response to a question, the Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources confirmed that all “red” performance indicators were reviewed by the Performance and Governance Committee who then referred individual indicators to Select Committee for more in-depth scrutiny, a system that appeared to be working well.

Resolved: that the Council’s performance indicators and targets for 2012/13 be approved.

IMPLEMENTATION OF DECISIONS

This notice was published on 16 July 2012. The decision contained in Minute 18 takes effect on 24 July. The decisions contained in Minutes 19 and 20 take effect immediately.

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 7.35 PM

CHAIRMAN