

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

Wednesday, 12th October, 2016

Present: Cllr N J Heslop (Chairman), Cllr M A Coffin, Cllr Mrs M F Heslop, Cllr D Lettington, Cllr H S Rogers and Cllr Miss S O Shrubsole

Councillors Mrs J A Anderson, M A C Balfour, P F Bolt, D J Cure, P J Montague, M Parry-Waller, S C Perry, A K Sullivan and T C Walker were also present pursuant to Access to Information Rule No 22.

PART 1 - PUBLIC

CB 16/69 CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chairman referred to the recent deaths of Councillor Jean Atkinson and Honorary Alderman Anne Moloney and invited Members to observe a minute's silence in their memory.

CB 16/70 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

CB 16/71 MINUTES - 29 JUNE 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 29 June 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CB 16/72 MINUTES - 28 JULY 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet held on 28 July 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

CB 16/73 MINUTES - 6 SEPTEMBER 2016

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet held on 6 September 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE COUNCIL**CB 16/74 CORPORATE STRATEGY**

Further to Decision No D160044CAB, the report of the Chief Executive indicated that a revised draft Corporate Strategy had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 13 September 2016 and commended for adoption by the Council.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Corporate Strategy set out at Annex 1 to the report be commended to the Council for formal adoption. ◀

***Referred to Council**

CB 16/75 SPECIAL EXPENSES SCHEME POLICY ('FAIRER CHARGING') AND UPDATED FINANCIAL DATA

Further to Minute CB 16/60 of the extraordinary meeting of the Cabinet on 28 July 2016, the report of the Management Team provided an update on progress with the "Fairer Charging" project. It was noted that the recommendations from that meeting would be submitted to the Council on 1 November. In the meantime a Special Expenses Policy, which had been reviewed and commended by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 13 September, was presented for consideration.

RECOMMENDED: That the draft Special Expenses Policy set out at Annex 1 to the report be approved by the Council. ◀

***Referred to Council**

CB 16/76 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S LOCAL COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

Further to Decision No D160038CAB, the report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided detailed results arising from the recent council tax reduction scheme (CTRS) consultation process together with the findings of the second stage equality impact assessment (EQIA). Members were reminded of the two main objectives of the review relating firstly to the cost of the scheme in the context of reducing government grants and secondly to targeting support to those most in need. Reference was made to potential arrangements for an exceptional hardship policy and, following Members' agreement of the recommendations, the outcome of discussions by the Kent Finance Officers' group regarding contributions by the major precepting authorities towards the administrative costs of the CTRS.

A more detailed EQIA was circulated before the meeting setting out potential impacts of the various options within the consultation on people with protected characteristics and mitigating actions required in each case. These were taken into account during the careful consideration given to each option and the responses received in the consultation,

including those of the statutory consultee, Kent County Council. It was confirmed that the options aligning the scheme to Housing Benefit regulations also included additional protection for certain claimants with protected characteristics. These covered some of the mitigations within the EQIA and additional protection would be provided by the introduction of an exceptional hardship scheme in the revised CTRS.

The Cabinet recorded appreciation of the work of the Director of Finance and Transformation for her work in leading the Kent Finance Officers' group and, along with colleagues, in bringing forward with clarity the outcome of a very challenging review.

Members were advised that the full CTRS together with the exceptional hardship scheme would be presented to the Full Council on 1 November.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the potential impacts on people with disabilities, carers, women and working age groups be noted together with the following measures to mitigate them:
 - (i) continuing to treat people with disabilities and carers more favourably by disregarding some incomes, thereby giving them a higher entitlement to council tax support;
 - (ii) continuing to make allowances for childcare costs in line with the national scheme;
 - (iii) a further review of the scheme within three years from 1 April 2017 to identify any longer term measures needed to mitigate any ongoing impacts;
- (2) having considered the above, the full consultation results (including the response from the statutory consultee, Kent County Council) and having had due regard to the matters under the Public Sector Equality Duty (as set out in the Equality Impact Assessment), the following options be included in the Council's Council Tax Reduction Scheme from 1 April 2017

Option 1a – reduction of the maximum level of support to 80%;

Option 2 – removal of the Family Premium for all new working age claims (to align with housing benefit rules);

Option 3 – reduction of the period a claim can be backdated to one month (to align with housing benefit rules);

Option 5 – reduction of the period a person can be absent from Great Britain to four weeks to align with housing benefit rules

which provide exceptions when receiving medical treatment or being posted overseas as a member of HM Forces or having fled home through fear of violence;

Option 7 – introduction of standard levels of non-dependant deductions of £0.00 and £10 based on the current rules for housing benefit claimants, maintaining the classifications for the £0.00 deduction rate to protect claimants with disabilities and/or care needs;

Option 11 – removal of Second Adult Reduction;

Option 12 – removal of the Work Related Activity Component in the calculation for new Employment and Support Allowance applicants to align with housing benefit rules proposed for April 2017. This would only be introduced if the change goes ahead in the housing benefit scheme;

Option 13 – limit on number of children taken into account on a claim to two to align with changes to housing benefit rules proposed for April 2017. This would only be introduced if the change goes ahead in the housing benefit scheme;

Option 14 – introduction of a targeted protection scheme based on Exceptional Hardship to mitigate the impact of the changes to the 2017/18 CTRS and assist claimants facing exceptional hardship.

***Referred to Council**

CB 16/77 TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE AND MID-YEAR REVIEW 2016/17

The report of the Director of Finance and Transformation provided an update on treasury management activity undertaken during the period April to July 2016/17. It also included a mid-year review of the Annual Investment Strategy and risk parameters. Members were invited to endorse the action taken by officers in respect of treasury management activity to date, to retain the current risk parameters and note the review of the Council's long term cash balances.

The report had also been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 5 September and the action commended for endorsement.

RECOMMENDED: That the following be commended to the Council: 

- (1) the action taken by officers in respect of treasury management activity for the period April to July 2016 be endorsed;
- (2) the existing parameters intended to limit the Council's exposure to investment risks be retained; and

- (3) the review of the Council's long term cash balances and the use of property funds for subsequent consideration by the Audit Committee in January 2017 be noted.

***Referred to Council**

CB 16/78 REVIEW OF HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

Item CH 16/13 referred from Communities and Housing Advisory Board of 25 July 2016

The Cabinet received the recommendations of the Communities and Housing Advisory Board at its meeting of 25 July 2016 in relation to a review of the Housing Assistance Policy to ensure that it met corporate priorities and reflected current budgetary pressures.

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the proposed amendments to the Housing Assistance Policy and associated budget adjustments be approved;
- (2) the proposed amendments to the Disabled Facilities Grants Policy and associated budget adjustments be approved; and
- (3) a budgetary provision of up to £10,000 be set aside in each of the next three years, fully funded from the Housing Assistance Reserve, in order to modernise the Housing Service.

***Referred to Council**

DECISIONS TAKEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 4, PART 3 OF THE CONSTITUTION

CB 16/79 REVIEW OF MAYORALTY FUNCTION - RECOMMENDATIONS OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Decision Notice D160079CAB

CB 16/80 TECHNICAL CONSULTATION PAPER ON 2017/18 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

Decision Notice D160080CAB

CB 16/81 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE AND BUSINESS RATES POOLING

Decision Notice D160081CAB

MATTERS SUBMITTED FOR INFORMATION**CB 16/82 MATTERS REFERRED FROM ADVISORY BOARDS**

The notes of the meetings of the following Advisory Boards were received, any recommendations contained therein being incorporated within the decisions of the Cabinet reproduced at the annex to these Minutes.

Street Scene and Environment Services Advisory Board of 18 July 2016
Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board of 20 July 2016
Communities and Housing Advisory Board of 25 July 2016
Planning and Transportation Advisory Board of 26 July 2016
Economic Regeneration Advisory Board of 7 September 2016
Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board of 21 September 2016

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

CB 16/83 MATTERS REFERRED FROM ADVISORY PANELS AND OTHER GROUPS

The Minutes of the meetings of the following Advisory Panels and other Groups were received, any recommendations contained therein being incorporated within the decisions of the Cabinet reproduced at the annex to these Minutes.

Parish Partnership Panel of 8 September 2016
Tonbridge Forum of 12 September 2016
Joint Transportation Board of 26 September 2016

RESOLVED: That the report be received and noted.

CB 16/84 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items considered in private.

The meeting ended at 9.20 pm