

# MINUTES OF THE CABINET POLICY DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP HELD ON

25 November 2021

7.30 - 8.13 pm

## PRESENT

### Overview Working Group Members

Councillor Shona Johnson (Chair)

Councillor Ash Malik (Vice-Chair)

Councillor Jodi Dunne

Councillor Michael Garnett

Councillor Maggie Hulcoop

Councillor Clive Souter

Councillor Nancy Watson

### Officers

Lisa Thornett, Corporate Governance Support Officer

Donna Beechener, Revenues and Benefits Manager

Simon Freeman, Deputy to the Chief Executive and Director of Finance

### 19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None.

### 20. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

### 21. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2020 be agreed as a correct record.

### 22. MATTERS ARISING

None.

### 23. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME

The Working Group received a draft report on Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

Councillor Maggie Hulcoop asked whether, because of the pandemic, the courts were still catching up on cases that had been postponed. Donna Beechener, Revenue and Benefits Manager, explained that Council Tax and Building Rates run differently as the Magistrates Courts are used. The Council provides a report and then a hearing would be held where a decision would be made. Donna Beechener confirmed that the Council

was given monthly court dates. Councillor Hulcoop agreed that the report was good as it would allow the claimant to know what was coming in and would reduce officer's time in making slight changes.

Councillor Jodi Dunne asked what was considered as hard recovery. Donna Beechener explained that hard recovery was a statutory process. She also explained that the soft recovery process allowed the officers to engage with the residents to offer support and assistance where possible.

Councillor Michael Garnett asked that, where in paragraph 10 it refers to the £150 hardship reward, whether this was paid to both working and pensionable claims. Donna Beechener confirmed that it was only to working age claimants. She also explained that the remaining £96,000 was being used to help people with their arrears.

Councillor Clive Souter asked if the closing of the cash desk during the Covid-19 pandemic made a difference. Donna Beechener advised that it was difficult to respond but evidence suggested that the closure did not have any significant impact as many residents found alternative ways to pay.

**RESOLVED** that the Working Group:

- A** Acknowledged the current position regarding the 2021/22 Local Council Tax Support Scheme and endorses continuing stability within the scheme for 2022/23.
- B** Recommended to Cabinet that the current Local Council Tax Support Scheme remains unchanged for the 2022/23 financial year.

#### 24. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Working Group received a draft report on the Treasury Management Report.

Councillor Clive Souter asked what effect the potentially big spike in interest rates would have on money borrowed. Simon Freeman, Director of Finance and Deputy to the Chief Executive, advised that, whilst there may be increases for public sector bodies, this may not be as significant as increases in the retail banking/finance sector and the link between pwlb rates and government gilts could help.

Councillor Jodi Dunne asked whether there was a formal investment review or whether it was just ongoing. Simon Freeman advised that the Council engaged with external treasury advisors quarterly and keeps investment advice and criteria under review. The Council also received a daily update of risk.

Councillor Mike Garnett asked if there were more investments that would provide returns for the Council. Simon Freeman advised that this could be possible but will be driven by the business sector following Covid and the property requirements that they may or may not have as the economy emerges from the pandemic.

**RESOLVED** that the Working Group considered the report and the underpinning principles that support the Council's Treasury Management Strategy.

25. **WORK PLAN**

**RESOLVED** that the work plan was noted.

26. **MATTERS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None.

CHAIR OF THE WORKING GROUP