



Minutes of the meeting of the **Cabinet** held in Committee Room 2, East Pallant House on Tuesday 3 October 2017 at 9.30 am

**Members Present** Mr A Dignum (Chairman), Mrs E Lintill (Vice-Chairman), Mr R Barrow, Mr J Connor, Mrs P Hardwick, Mrs J Kilby, Mrs S Taylor and Mr P Wilding

**Members Absent**

**Officers Present** Mr S Carvell (Executive Director), Miss L Higenbottam (Democratic Services), Mr P E Over (Executive Director), Mrs M Rogers (Benefits Manager), Mrs D Shepherd (Chief Executive), Ms A Stevens (Environment Manager) and Mr J Ward (Head of Finance and Governance Services)

#### 414 **Chairman's Announcements**

Mr Dignum welcomed the press representative and Chichester District Council (CDC) members and officers who were present for this meeting.

There were no apologies for absence and all members of the Cabinet were present.

There were no late items for consideration at this meeting.

#### 415 **Approval of Minutes**

The Cabinet received the minutes of its meeting on Tuesday 5 September 2017, which had been circulated with the agenda.

With reference to line five of minute 398 *Richmond* should replace *Richard*.

This error had, however, been corrected soon after publication in both the official and the online versions of the minutes.

#### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands to approve the minutes subject to the amendment above.

## **RESOLVED**

That the minutes of the Cabinet's meeting on Tuesday 5 September 2017 be approved subject to an amendment to line five of minute 398 to replace *Richard* with *Richmond*.

Mr Dignum signed and dated the final page of the official version of the minutes as a correct record.

### **416 Declarations of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests.

### **417 Public Question Time**

There were no public questions.

### **418 100% Localisation of Business Rates 2018-2019 Pilot Scheme**

The Cabinet received and considered the agenda report.

The report was presented by Mrs Hardwick.

Mrs Hardwick explained that there was an ongoing trial in unitary authority areas. On 2 September 2017 further bids from two tier and rural authorities were invited. The current system for Business Rate (BR) collection and retention involved allocations between tiered authorities and levies and tariffs based on actual rates collected as against the BR Baseline and as compared against an assessed need. The current scheme left Chichester District Council (CDC) retaining 20% of any growth in BR and West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) retaining 10% of any such growth. The 100% localisation pilot was intended to be fiscally neutral insofar as the Baseline BR level was concerned. Any bid had to offer some form of pay back to central government, whether in the form of giving up grants (Revenue Support Grant and rural grants which were already set to go) or taking on extra commitments. If there was no pay back a tariff would continue to be applied. Under the new regime the West Sussex authorities would retain all anticipated growth in BR (split between tiers in a proportion to be agreed by the relevant authorities).

Mrs Hardwick explained that the process was likely to be highly competitive due to the immediate financial benefit to successful authorities. If a West Sussex bid were to be successful there would be a period to determine whether to accept any offer. It was intended that any such offer would be taken to the January 2018 Council meeting if the deadline for acceptance permitted. Alternatively, if required, the urgency provisions would be deployed.

### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands in favour of making the resolution as set out below.

## **RESOLVED**

That it be approved that authority be delegated to Chichester District Council's Chief Executive and Head of Finance and Governance Services following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance Services, to determine whether to submit a bid to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) for Chichester District Council to take part in the 2018-2019 pilot for 100% business rate retention.

### **419 Amendment to Public Space Protection Order - Dog Control**

The Cabinet received and considered the agenda report and its appendix.

The report was presented by Mr Connor.

Mrs Stevens was in attendance for this item.

Mr Connor explained that there had been a clerical error in the Public Space Protection Order approved by the Cabinet in July 2017. A revised Order detailed the exclusion of dogs from Bishop Palace Gardens and Priory Park all year round.

In response to a question from Mrs Taylor regarding the public awareness of changes to the disposal of dog waste, Mr Barrow outlined a district wide waste bin audit. He explained that it would be likely that as a result of the audit the number of dog bins would be reduced and general waste bins improved. Mrs Stevens confirmed that an article relating to the enforcement trial had been included in the Council's latest *Initiatives* Magazine.

#### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands in favour of making the resolution as set out below.

## **RESOLVED**

That the amendment to the Public Spaces Protection Order – Dog Control related to Schedule 3 the exclusion of dogs be approved.

### **420 Appointments to Outside Organisations**

The Cabinet received and considered the agenda report.

The report was presented by Mr Dignum.

#### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands in favour of making the resolution as set out below.

## **RESOLVED**

That it be approved that with effect from 1 January 2018 the Cabinet agrees the appointment of Peter Wilding to replace Tony Dignum as Chichester District Council's representative on the following outside organisation appointments:

- Coastal West Sussex Partnership
- Coast to Capital Joint Committee
- Local Government Association – Sparsity Partnership for Delivering Rural Services
- Sussex Downs and Coastal Plain Local Action Group
- West Sussex Joint Leaders Group
- West Sussex Rural Partnership

### **421 Discretionary Housing Payments Policy 2017-2018**

The Cabinet received and considered the agenda report and its appendix.

The report was presented by Mrs Hardwick.

Mrs Rogers was in attendance for this item.

Mrs Hardwick explained that the Discretionary Housing Benefit Payment scheme was a central government scheme funded through the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to alleviate poverty and hardship by assisting directly with housing costs where benefit receipts (whether Universal Credit or Housing Benefit) did not fully cover an individual's liability to pay rent or related housing costs. The policy intended to guide the Council's delivery of the scheme for the remainder of this financial year and next. While the DWP allocated funding, the scheme allowed authorities to increase this by a further 50%. Although Council reserves for topping up the DWP funds for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) payments had not been required beyond the DWP budget in previous years, the welfare reforms rolled out since 2013 (including the bedroom tax, the Benefit Cap and Universal Credit) might well increase future demand for DHP. The DHP policy had to ensure that policies and funding could control the budget within the limits of the DWP funded allocation (currently £232,844) and the current reserve of £142,000. The adequacy of the reserve would be considered as part of the 2018-2019 budget process.

Members were invited to submit any minor suggestions or comments on the wording of the policy to Mrs Rogers.

Mrs Hardwick explained that a further recommendation had been added since publication of the agenda for delegated authority to be given to the Head of Finance and Governance Services to make minor amendments to the DHP Policy following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance Services.

In response to Mr Barrow's concern regarding the effect of Universal Credit payments on the public, Mrs Rogers confirmed that payments would be made directly to the tenant but any requirement for payment to cover the waiting period would need to be discussed directly with the DWP.

In response to Mrs Taylor's request to understand how private sector tenants were made aware of the scheme, Mrs Rogers explained that the DHP scheme was advertised on the Council's website and third party organisations referred where appropriate.

### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands in favour of making the resolutions (including the additional third resolution) as set out below.

### **RESOLVED**

1. That the Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) Policy for 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 be approved.
2. That it be approved that during the forthcoming budget process consideration will be given to any additional funding required for 2018-2019 to supplement the earmarked Welfare Reform Reserve.
3. That the Head of Finance and Governance Services be given delegated authority, following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance Services, to make minor amendments to the DHP policy.

### **422 Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Risk Based Verification Policy 2018-2019**

The Cabinet received and considered the agenda report and its appendix.

The report was presented by Mrs Hardwick.

Mrs Rogers was in attendance for this item.

Mrs Hardwick explained that the new policy aimed to assist the Benefits Service to streamline and improve its delivery as part of a wider service review. The Reduction Risk Based Verification Policy (RBV) deployed a system (Xantura) to support the DWP's aim to improve and focus local authority (LA) verification of claimants which assessed the risk posed by claimants in a welfare context according to 50 objective criteria. Claimants were split into low, medium or high risk categories in terms of likely fraud and/or error. The verification required of claimants depended on the resulting category of a claimant. Higher risk claimants were required to provide more robust and extensive evidence. Claimants were then split into four broad classes: pensionable age – non passported, pensionable age – passported, working age – passported and working age – non-passported. Passported claimants were those known to the system as having already claimed elsewhere. A high level assessment of these classes indicated currently approximately 33% of claimants were likely to be high risk.

Mrs Hardwick added that the RBV would reduce fraud and error, increase efficiency in processing claims and satisfy a requirement of the Council's external auditors.

In response to Mr Wilding's request to clarify the practical workings of the system, Mrs Rogers explained how Xantura have collected data from local authorities using Single Housing Benefit Extract (SHBE), a DWP function to assess Local Authority Benefit performance. This information has been used by Xantura to calculate the level of risk in new claims and changes. The scoring is then used to apply a risk score to an individual claim.

In response to Mrs Lintill's request to understand the cost implications of the project, Mr Ward confirmed that the cost had been covered as part of a number of IT investments under the CA-Bens implementation project.

Members discussed the impact of the new data protection regulations on the scheme, in particular the requirement not to make automated decisions. Officers confirmed that procedures would be established to identify the need for a human decision.

Mr Dignum suggested a further recommendation requesting a report following the first 12 months of operation which was agreed by the other members of the Cabinet. Members agreed that the report should also be considered for inclusion in the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee's work programme.

#### *Decision*

The Cabinet voted unanimously on a show of hands in favour of making the resolutions as set out below.

#### **RESOLVED**

1. That the introduction of a Risk Based Verification (RBV) Policy for the purpose of assessing claims for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction be approved with effect from 1 December 2017.
2. That authority be delegated to the Head of Finance and Governance Services to make minor amendments to the RBV policy following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance and Governance Services.
3. That a report be brought back to Cabinet following the first 12 months of operation of the Risk Based Verification Policy.

#### **423 Late Items**

There were no late items for consideration.

#### **424 Exclusion of the Press and Public**

There were no Part II items listed on the agenda and so no resolution to exclude the press and the public was required.

The meeting ended at 10.14 am

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CHAIRMAN

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Date: