

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (CUSTOMERS AND PARTNERSHIPS) held in Civic Suite, Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon PE29 3TN on Thursday, 7 July 2022.

- PRESENT: Councillor N J Hunt – Chairman.
- Councillors T Alban, S Bywater, S J Criswell, J E Harvey, M Kadewere, C Lowe, S R McAdam, D J Shaw and G J Welton.
- APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor J E Kerr.
- IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S Ferguson.

### **4. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meetings held on 7th April 2022 and 18th May 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### **5. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

No declarations were received.

### **6. NOTICE OF KEY EXECUTIVE DECISIONS**

The Panel received and noted the current Notice of Key Executive Decisions (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book) which has been prepared by the Executive Leader for the period 1st July 2022 to 31st October 2022.

### **7. ENERGY BILLS REBATE - LOCAL SCHEME**

By means of a report by the Revenues and Benefits Manager (a copy of which has been appended in the Minute Book), the Energy Bills Rebate – Local Scheme was presented to the Panel.

Following a question from Councillor McAdam, the Panel heard that around 7,000 residents would initially benefit from the scheme.

Councillor Criswell praised the officers for the work that they had undertaken over the course of the pandemic in ensuring that the needs of residents had been met. He further welcomed the report and the pragmatic approach of the team to ensure best use of the funding available to the benefit of residents.

These sentiments were echoed by Councillor Bywater, who further enquired how residents would know that they were eligible for further support. The Panel heard that affected residents would be contacted directly and that a comprehensive communications plan was in place to support that message.

Following an enquiry from Councillor Shaw, the Panel heard that around 150 residents in Council Tax bands E to H would also benefit from the scheme having been identified as in receipt of Council Tax support.

Councillor Harvey enquired on the anticipated timescales for the project as it was observed that some residents were not yet in receipt of the initial rebate. The Panel heard that those residents who do not pay their Council Tax by direct debit had been contacted for their payment details but that this was a considerable piece of work. It was noted that should no contact be received from these residents by the end of July, their rebate would be credited to their Council Tax account in place of a payment to their bank account. The Panel were further appraised that the roll out of this proposed scheme would begin in August and is anticipated to run smoothly due to the payment detail collection and verification work done so far.

Following a question from Councillor Lowe, the Panel were advised that residents eligible for the rebate were identified on 1st April 2022. In the unlikely circumstance of a deceased resident since this date, the rebate would be passed to their estate.

Councillor Alban enquired whether this work had resulted in a positive increase in direct debit uptake. The Panel heard that this was indeed the case and that it was too early to tell if there would be any direct debit drop out following the initial increase.

The Panel were advised that eligible residents would be contacted directly but that Councillors would be able to signpost to a dedicated webpage should they receive any enquiries.

Having widely praised and welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

**RESOLVED**

that the Cabinet be encouraged to endorse the recommendations within the report.

## **8. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY – REMIT, ROLE AND STUDIES**

By means of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (a copy of which was appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny – Remit, Roles and Studies report was presented to the Panel.

Having welcomed the report, the Panel thereupon

**RESOLVED**

to endorse the recommendations contained within the report.

## **9. CAMBRIDGESHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HEALTH COMMITTEE**

The appointment of Councillor McAdam as a non-voting co-opted Member to the Cambridgeshire County Council Health Committee was noted.

**10. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

With the aid of a report by the Democratic Services Officer (Scrutiny) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme was presented to the Panel.

Chairman