
Cabinet

Report of the meetings held on 11th December 2014

Matter for Decision

32. COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2015/2016

The Cabinet has considered a report by the Benefits Manager (a copy of which is reproduced as an Appendix) on a proposed change to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2015/2016. The change will see all child maintenance disregarded in the calculation, which will result in greater levels of Council Tax Support entitlement to those customers in receipt of this type of income.

The change will affect approximately 350 households and will cost in the region of £ 2k. It will bring the Council into line with the majority of other Councils. The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) has supported the change (Item No. 28 of their Report refers). **Having requested the Social Well-Being Panel to carry out an evaluation of the overall scheme and, in particular, its effect on employment trends, the Cabinet**

RECOMMEND

the Council approve the change to the local Council Tax Support scheme with effect from 1st April 2015.

Matters for Information

33. ZERO BASED BUDGETING

Executive Councillors have discussed progress of the Zero Based Budgeting (ZBB) programme, in which they have had considerable involvement. They are satisfied that the process has been robust and that much has been learned. There has been a mixed response from services, though this may partly be attributed to a lack of understanding about how the Council defines ZBB and what practical steps are required for the star chamber. The Corporate Management Team has been charged with robustly enforcing the Cabinet's view that cultural change should be adopted along ZBB principles.

The Cabinet has discussed the approaches of individual services to ZBB and their performance in the star chamber. All services have to do more work on their individual budgets. A draft budget is being

prepared by Officers in conjunction with their respective Executive Councillors. There will be scope for further debate by Members and changes to be made before the budget is finalised in February.

Of the improvements that need to be made to the process, the most important is to develop the Council's systems to provide the necessary financial / management information to enable Officers to manage and monitor their services. In particular, the new systems will resolve what service budgets include and what are deemed to be corporate costs. In addition, the information will be independently verified. The Cabinet has asked for a plan for action that will be taken leading to the introduction of the new systems.

The Cabinet has received the comments of Members of the Economic Well-being Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Item No.28 of their Report refers), who have welcomed the Cabinet's approach to working with them. The Panel has invited all Executive Councillors to its meetings in the New Year to discuss their budget proposals and will undertake further scrutiny work on their performance throughout the year.

34. ENERGY MANAGEMENT UPDATE

Executive Councillors have received an update on the energy and cost savings that have been made through the Council's Carbon Management Plan in 2009/14. In 2013/14 projects to the value of £183,000 have been implemented, saving the council an estimated £55,000 per annum. The progress in reducing the Council's energy use and carbon emissions from its buildings and fleet has been recognised.

There is considerable scope to undertake further work. The Cabinet has, therefore, supported a proposal to enter into a partnership with the County Council, the Greater London Authority and Local Partnerships to access the RE:FIT programme. The RE:FIT programme is a nationwide scheme involving an assessment of property to identify the potential for the installation of energy saving measures, leading to the preparation of a detailed Investment Grade Proposal outlining the cost of all potential projects and the guaranteed savings that will result. Initially the Council will commission free desk top energy assessments of the Council's nine main sites and the Cabinet will be consulted before the subsequent stages of the programme are undertaken.

Executive Councillors have stressed that the revenue savings of such capital investments are realised in future budgets.

35. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR, CRIME AND POLICING ACT 2014

The Cabinet has been acquainted with the implications for the Council of Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The Act means enforcement will be streamlined and it gives the Council more control over its enforcement activities. With the exception of the community trigger, which is a duty, all the provisions of the Act

constitute powers so the Council only has to use them if they are appropriate.

Executive Councillors have expressed concerns that public space protection orders and dog control orders will expire if they are not reviewed and re-evidenced, thereby creating an additional workload. More generally, attention has been drawn to the absence of available data on the likely benefits of the Act and on its objectives.

Executive Councillors have commented that the Act could cause resources to be diverted to activities that have less benefit for the public and that the Community Trigger could be used in a way for which it was not intended. It could also have unintended consequences. They have discussed various ways of managing its use.

Having expressed their support for the delegations associated with the new powers created by the Act and with the creation and maintenance of policies and procedures, the Cabinet has requested Executive Councillors, Senior Officers and Overview and Scrutiny to look at how enforcement will be undertaken in conjunction with the police and to devise a draft scheme of thresholds for application to the Community Trigger.

J D Ablewhite
Chairman

