

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 10th October 2018

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Lamb, Oakes and Walmsley**

**In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Chief Executive
Ms C Burns, Director of Economic Development
Ms C Birtwistle, Monitoring Officer
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance
Mr P Morton, Public Protection Manager
Miss G Ashton, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Essex, Haworth and Robertson
1 member of the press
2 Members of the public**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor MacNae, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Tourism and Ms S Plum, Director of Communities.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 3.1 There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 The Leader of the Council advised that no written questions had been submitted. Questions from members of the public were permitted at this point.

6. PILOT SCHEME TO INCREASE ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY IN RELATION TO ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operations outlined the report which asked members to approve the 12 month trial of a third party company providing on-street enforcement. It was hoped this would improve littering in the borough and would release Council staff to take more action on fly tipping issues. The Public Protection Manager added

that this was an enhancement to the service provided by the Council and was not a replacement.

6.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:

- The report was welcomed and supported.
- There had been positive outcomes from the Public Protection Unit (PPU).
- The PPU couldn't provide enforcement 7 days per week and the arrangements had a zero cost to the Council.
- It was hoped that more permanent arrangements would be put in place at the end of the pilot.

6.3 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:

- Would enforcement officers wear a uniform.
- What criteria had been used to appoint the company for the pilot scheme.
- The pilot was being approved without following the tendering process.
- Were the terms and conditions of the company's enforcement staff known.
- The pilot was supported.

6.4 In response to the questions raised, it was confirmed that enforcement officers would wear a uniform. In relation to the criteria used to appoint the enforcement company, the meeting were advised that only one company had offered a 7 day, zero cost service. A formal tender process would take place at the end of the pilot if successful. It was noted that the terms and conditions offered by the enforcement company were better than what the Council could offer.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approved the 12 month trial of a third party company to provide an on-street environmental crime enforcement capability with the following provisions:
 - a. The contract is at zero cost to the council.
 - b. The contract is flexible to include additional enforcement activity as deemed appropriate.
 - c. The providers take a proportionate approach in accordance with the legislation.
 - d. That education and awareness raising of the consequences of environmental crime are included.
 - e. That if successful, proposals for a more permanent arrangement are developed.

Reason for Decision:

To give the Council increased capability to tackle environmental crime at zero cost.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

7. COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATE & HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT WRITE OFFS

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources outlined the report which asked Members to approve the write off of irrecoverable debts in relation to Non-Domestic Rates, Council Tax and Housing Benefit overpayments. The report highlighted the work undertaken by the Officers to recover monies in relation to the largest Council Tax debt.
- 7.2 There were no questions or comments from Cabinet Members.
- 7.3 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
- Individual names had not been published in the report.
 - Some missed payments spanned years.
- 7.4 In response to the comments raised, it was noted that individual names could not be published. The Head of Finance offered to share the enforcement details of the irrecoverable debts.

Resolved:

1. That Members approved the write off of £41,182.22 in respect of irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rate debt.
2. That Members approved the write off of £31,403.10 in respect of irrecoverable Council Tax debt.
3. That Members approved the write off of £11,080.09 in respect of irrecoverable Housing Benefit Overpayment.

Reason for Decision:

To clear debts from the ledgers which were deemed irrecoverable.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

8. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources outlined the main points from the report. It was noted that income would reduce due to the termination of the revenue support grant and the reduction in the New Home Bonus. The Senior Management Team in consultation with the Leader, Cabinet and largest opposition party Leader had met to consider saving options, new challenges and potential risks.

It was noted that the Council had applied to be a 75% Business rates retention pilot for 2019/20.

- 8.2 There were no questions or comments from Cabinet Members.
- 8.3 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
- Officers were thanked for the production of the document.

- The Leader of the Council was thanked for actively working with the opposition to consider the Council's financial security.
- Digital transformation could take a number of years.
- The Council were applauded for joining the majority of Lancashire local authorities in applying for the Business rates retention pilot.
- Some authorities had advised residents of the pilot project.

8.4 The Leader of the Council advised that the application for the pilot scheme had not been accepted so residents had not been notified of the application and the potential benefits.

Resolved:

1. That Members noted and considered the contents of the report.
2. That Members approved the contents and strategic direction of the report.

Reason for Decision:

To focus on delivering efficiencies and/or income generation in order to ensure balanced and fully funded budgets over the medium term.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.05pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE