

Minutes of a meeting of the **CABINET** held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Priory Road, Spalding, on Tuesday, 10 January 2017 at 10.00 am.

PRESENT

The Lord Porter of Spalding CBE (Leader)
C N Worth (Deputy Leader)
M G Chandler (Deputy Leader)

A Casson
P E Coupland

R Gambba-Jones
C J Lawton

S-A Slade
G J Taylor

Junior Portfolio Holders: C N Johnson

The Chief Executive, the Shared Executive Director Strategy and Governance, the Shared Executive Manager Governance, the Interim Chief Accountant, the Transformation Manager Revenues & Benefits, the Revenues and Recovery Team Leader and the Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies for absence were received from or on behalf of Councillors E J Sneath and G R Aley, together with South Holland Citizens Advice Bureau, Parish Councils and Welland Seniors Forum.

In Attendance: Councillor B Alcock (Chairman, Performance Monitoring Panel) and Councillor A M Newton (Independent Group Leader).

Community Representatives: Business Organisations

In the Public Gallery: The Communications Officer and the Press.

23. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 November 2016 were signed by the Leader as a correct record, subject to amendments being made within the fourth paragraph under Minute Number 15 (Matters arising from the Policy Development and Performance Monitoring Panels – Final Report of the Swimming Pool and Leisure Facilities Contract Task Group) so that the paragraph read as follows:

“The Leader asked how a full time cleaner could be accommodated under the existing contract, and was advised that the contract already made provision for cleaning of the facilities, but had not been enforced. It was requested that the contract be considered and managed more effectively.”

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST.

No interests were declared.

Action By

CM

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25. QUESTIONS RAISED BY THE PUBLIC UNDER THE COUNCIL'S CONSTITUTION (STANDING ORDERS).

No questions were raised under the Council's Constitution (Standing Orders).

26. TO CONSIDER ANY MATTERS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBJECT TO CALL-IN.

There were no matters subject to call-in.

27. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING PANELS

There were no matters arising from the Policy Development and Performance Monitoring Panels.

28. PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORT – QUARTER 2 2016/17

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Governance and Transformation and the Executive Director Strategy and Governance, which provided an update on Council performance for the period 1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016.

The Quarter 2 Performance Report 16/17, attached at Appendix A to the report, provided councillors and residents with information about how the Council was delivering its services and how it was progressing against its Corporate Priorities.

Quarter 2 showed increased levels of performance in the majority of indicators. Two areas of concern were noted;

- Housing Benefit LA Error Rate – performance to the end of December was at 0.54%. Performance was subject to weekly senior management scrutiny between South Holland District Council and Compass Point Business Services.
- Missed Waste Collection Rate – missed collections stood at forty per thousand. Whilst still slightly below target, it did represent a significant improvement over the previous quarter.

Members and officers agreed that some of the Performance Indicators measured and targets that were set needed to be reviewed. As part of this process, Portfolio Holders were requested to liaise with officers to suggest areas for change.

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DECISION:

That the report be noted.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing;*

Reasons for decision:

- *No recommendations were made. The report was presented for consideration in order that members were aware of how the Council was delivering its services and how it was progressing against its Corporate Priorities.)*

29. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME - 2017/18

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder Finance and the Interim Executive Director of Commercialisation which requested the Cabinet agree the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 for recommendation to Full Council.

After consideration of the draft scheme at meetings of the Governance and Audit Committee, Cabinet and the Joint Performance Monitoring Panel and Policy Development Panel, suggestions were incorporated into a consultation report. Consultation with the public took place between 11 November 2016 and 14 December 2016. The results of the consultation were detailed within the report and appendices.

It was noted that the backdating of benefits was to be limited by reducing the period from 3 months to 1 month, and officers were asked whether claims for benefit would be dealt with in a similar time frame. Members were advised that processing times were much improved with the backlog cleared, and claims were now being dealt with much quicker. If all necessary documentation and relevant information was supplied by the claimant, their claims could be dealt with in a month.

RECOMMENDATION TO FULL COUNCIL:

- a) That the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18 be amended with the range of changes consulted upon:
- Second Adult Rebate – Reduce to 20% in 2017/18 (10% in 2018/19 and zero from 2019/20)
 - Introduce a minimum level of Council Tax Support at £5 per week
 - Increase non-dependent deductions by 10%
 - Restrict Council Tax Support to Band D Council Tax
 - Reduce the Capital Limit to £8,000
 - Reduce the lower capital threshold to £3,000

CM

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- vii. Reduce the maximum level of Council Tax Support available to 70%
 - viii. Limit backdating to 1 month
 - ix. Remove family premium for new claims made
- b) The introduction of a hardship policy, with delegation to the Executive Director Commercialisation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance to develop the policy and operational practice.
- c) Delegate approval for the final scheme policy to the Executive Director Commercialisation in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Finance.

(Other options considered:

- *Do nothing, and retain the existing Council Tax Support Scheme for 2017/18;*

Reasons for decision:

- *An annual review of the local Council Tax Reduction Scheme is required, even if no changes are proposed. National funding of the scheme is diminishing, with zero contribution from central government expected by 2019/20, when the full cost will be met by the precepting bodies.*
- *The introduction of a hardship policy will provide time-limited support in individual cases where hardship is established*
- *When revising a scheme which has the effect of reducing the amount of Council Tax support to which any claimant is entitled, the revision must include transitional provision as the authority thinks fit. Provision is included within the proposals.)*

30. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

DECISION:

To consider resolving that, under section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

31. WRITE OFFS

Consideration was given to the joint report of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and the Executive Director, Commercialisation (S151) which recommended writing off irrecoverable debts.

A breakdown of the individual debts was attached as item 12

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within the agenda, which was not for publication by virtue of Paragraphs 1 (Information relating to any individual), 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of any individual) and 3 (Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)).

Members wished to discuss the content of the appendices in detail and it was therefore necessary for the meeting to go into private session.

During discussion of the information, a number of issues were raised, as detailed below. It was agreed that the Portfolio Holder Finance, the Interim Chief Accountant and officers from Compass Point Business Services produce a report to be presented to the next meeting of the Cabinet, detailing processes for the identification and recovery of debt, and that this include the following issues raised by members.

- Patterns to be identified – names to be cross-referenced against accounts to identify serial debtors;
- All relevant departments within the Authority must share information to assist in the identification of potential debts and their subsequent recovery;
- The Authority must liaise with other outside agencies, who may also have monies owed to them;
- There should be triggers within the recovery process to identify debtors earlier;
- Debtors should be identified to ensure that even if a debt was written off, it could still be pursued if further information become available at a later date;
- Dissolved companies – future write-off reports to confirm this was solvent or insolvent and that the process was registered with Companies House.
- Bankruptcy – efforts should be made to recover any debt not protected by the bankruptcy
- Information relating to individual debts must be accurate and up to date.

DECISION:

a) That the following debts be written off:

Council Tax	£44,346.11
Business Rates	£159,641.33
Sundry Debt	£15,143.82
Former Tenant Arrears	£18,979.28
Housing Benefit Overpayments	£26,883.83
Total:	£264,994.37

MW

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- b) That a report be presented to the next meeting of the Cabinet detailing processes for the identification and recovery of debt owed to the Authority, and that these processes include issues raised within the meeting.

MA, MW
CM

(Other options considered:

- *Approve the recommendation with amendments; or*
- *Not to approve the recommendation*

Reasons for decision:

- *All recovery methods available had been considered and where appropriate pursued before making the decision to write off*
- *To gain a better understanding of the recovery methods and processes used and to ensure all debts were pursued thoroughly and robustly.)*

(The meeting ended at 11.10 am)

(End of minutes)

These minutes are published on Friday 13 January 2017. In accordance with the Council's Constitution the DECISIONS detailed above will, unless otherwise stated, come into force and may then be implemented on Monday 23 January 2017 (i.e. after the expiry of five working days from the date of publication of these minutes), unless during that period a notice which is signed by either a Ward Representative (in relation to a matter in their ward) or two members of the Performance Monitoring Panel or any three members, and complies with the requirements of the Council's Constitution, is served on the Executive Manager Governance requesting that the decision be called-in and the Executive Manager Governance approves the request for call-in. Where a decision is called-in it will firstly be considered by the Performance Monitoring Panel on a date to be fixed.

Any FINAL DECISIONS and any URGENT DECISIONS take effect immediately.

Any RECOMMENDATIONS TO COUNCIL detailed above will be submitted for consideration to the meeting of the full Council on Wednesday 18 January 2017.