

**EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

HELD: Thursday, 26 May 2022

Start: 7.00 pm

Finish: 8.48 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: A Owens (Chairman)

Councillors: J Finch (Vice-Chair) S Gregson
E Pope I Rigby
Mrs M Westley D Westley
P Burnside I Eccles
A Fowler D Owen

In attendance: Councillor A Fennell
Councillor K Jukes
Christina Docherty, Contact Centre Manager

Officers: Simon Kirby, Head of Wellbeing & Place Services
Lisa Windle, Head of Corporate & Customer Services
Peter Blakey, Exchequer Services Manager
Ian Wright, Benefits Manager
Estelle Dobson, Revenue Manager
Jane Maguire, Income and Financial Inclusion Manager
Paul Needham, Income and Financial Inclusion Manager
Suzanne Hill, Senior Engineering Officer
Steven Wilson, Markets and Parking Officer
Tom Dickinson, Principal Solicitor
Julia Brown, Democratic Services Officer

1 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

2 MEMBERSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 4, the Committee noted the termination of Councillor D Whittington and the appointment of Councillor Mrs M Westley for this meeting only, thereby giving effect to the wishes of the Political Groups.

The Chairman welcomed new Members to the first meeting of the Municipal Year.

3 URGENT BUSINESS, IF ANY, INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIRMAN

There were no urgent items of business.

4 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5 DECLARATIONS OF PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of Party Whip.

6 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 February 2022 be received as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

7 PUBLIC SPEAKING

There were no items under this heading.

8 RELEVANT MINUTES OF CABINET

Consideration was given to the Minutes of Cabinet held on 8 March 2022 and Extraordinary Cabinet on 6 April 2022 as contained on pages 17 to 28 of the Book of Reports.

9 MINUTES OF CABINET HELD 8 MARCH 2022

A question was raised in respect of Minute 82(B) – Corporate Performance Reporting 2022/23 in respect of when the report will be presented to Cabinet, regarding the proposed PI WL 108 'Average waiting time for callers to the Contact Centre' (seconds), to change the proposed target for 2022/23 from 145 to 60 seconds.

The Head of Corporate and Customer Services informed that this will be presented to Cabinet in September 2022.

A question was raised in respect of Minute 82(D) – Corporate Performance Reporting 2022/23 in respect of a proposed new PI to be formulated to reflect staff turnover/vacancy levels, regarding when this would be presented to Cabinet.

The Head of Corporate and Customer Services informed that this will also be presented to Cabinet in September 2022.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of Cabinet held on 8 March 2022 be noted.

10 MINUTES OF CABINET HELD 6 APRIL 2022

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of Extraordinary Cabinet held 6 April 2022 be noted.

11 LEASEHOLD HOUSING MANAGEMENT POLICY 2022

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Transformation Housing and Resources as contained on pages 29 to 60 and 133 to 136 of the Book of Reports.

The Income and Financial Inclusion Manager outlined the report detailing the following:

- Broad principles for Service Delivery
- Support good practice and compliance with legislation
- Support a robust approach to maximise income recovery
- Key Policy Themes
- Service Charges
- Service Charge Recovery
- Performance and Review

Questions and comments were raised in respect of the following:

- A desk top pilot carried out on 10% of properties linked to service charge actuals and estimates – would 20-25% be better? (10% was found to be an appropriate sample as a quick snapshot to monitor the workload)
- Reserve fund to be 'ring-fenced'
- Leaseholders to be consulted and encourage responses
- Issues of subletting – emergency contact information
- Support of the Policy and is welcomed

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and approved the Leasehold Housing Management Policy 2022, and that the report be passed to Cabinet for their consideration.

12

COUNCIL TAX AND NNDR DISCRETIONARY FUNDING SCHEMES

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Transformation, Housing and Resources as contained on pages 61 to 104 of the Book of Reports, which was to provide an update following the agreement as part of the 2022/23 Budget Setting process to fund £260K to support the most vulnerable affected by rising energy costs, to approve the Borough Council's proposed Local Council Tax Discretionary Energy Support Scheme Policy.

The Head of Corporate and Customer Services outlined the report and responded to questions raised by Members in respect of the following:

- Section 4.5(g)(i) No mention of Pension Credit on list of means tested benefits – This is covered in the existing wording of the Policy Document. Residents on a low income will be encouraged to apply, and the Pension Credit along with other benefits will specifically be mentioned
- Section 4.11 – how a credit of £150 to residents Council Tax will affect their future payments? – The amount will reduce off the outstanding account balance and instalments for the rest of the financial year will be recalculated and reduced accordingly
- Section 9.3 Clarity in Independent Valuation Service – Regulations 13a policy re flooding – The Valuation Tribunal is an appropriate independent route for this under Section 13a Regulations
- Will Residents in receipt of Single Occupancy also receive £150 - Single

- Occupancy will receive discount, regardless of whether they are already in receipt of a discount
- The Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme Policy document S10.1 – anti fraud provision exists – s11.2 – prosecution for false/withheld information will be considered - Proposed amendments to deal with this inconsistency
 - CARF Scheme criteria set by Government make this a difficult relief to apply for – The Team will identify Businesses and support them with their application
 - Implications re means tested assessments on benefits / some benefits fall within income and contribution - Under s13 it is in WLBC discretion to signpost those Applicants. WLBC will mention ESA contribution in literature sent out so this will be made clear
 - CARF Scheme – How do Businesses prove adversely affected by Covid - Ensuring Government criteria are met, and we include set criteria in the application process

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Committee considered and noted the content of the Policy to underpin implementation of the Borough Council's proposed Local Council Tax Discretionary Energy Support Scheme as appended to the report.
- B. That the Committee note the Policy coverage to underpin the recently announced Government funded Schemes to support local Council Tax and Business Rate payers in meeting increased energy bills and the financial impact of Covid 19, as appended to the report, and that the following agreed comments of Executive Overview and Scrutiny Committee be passed to Cabinet for their consideration:
1. That Paragraph 10.1 of the Discretionary Council Tax Rebate Scheme Policy Document to read as follows:
"The Council will not accept deliberate manipulation of this policy or fraud. Any person caught falsifying information to gain a discretion payment, **the Council will look to prosecute** under the Fraud Act 2006 and any amount awarded will be recovered from them.
 2. That Paragraph 11.1 of the 'CARF' Scheme to read as follows:
"Where a ratepayer falsely applies for any relief, or where the ratepayer provides false information, makes false representation, or deliberately withholds information in order to gain relief, **the Council will look to prosecute** under the Fraud Act 2006" and any amount awarded will be recovered from them.

13 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 part 1 of Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

14 ONE-YEAR TRIAL FOR FREE PARKING IN ORMSKIRK AFTER 1PM ON MONDAYS AND TUESDAYS IN 2022/23

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Place and Community as contained on pages 105 to 118 of the Book of Reports, which was to consider the implementation of a one-year trial for free parking in Ormskirk after 1pm on Mondays and Tuesdays as proposed at budget setting on 23 February 2022.

The Parking and Markets Officer outlined the report and responded to questions raised by Members of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and noted the report and support the revised recommendations to Cabinet and the revised proposal at section 12 of the report, to be implemented once the Bus Station reopens and close monitoring of the proposal.

15 MOTORFEST

Consideration was given to the report of the Corporate Director of Place and Community as contained on pages 119 to 131 and 137 to 141.

The Senior Engineering Officer outlined the report and responded to comments and questions raised by Members.

RESOLVED: That the Committee considered and noted the Motorfest report and that the following agreed comment be forwarded to Cabinet for their consideration:
That recommendation 3.3 of the report, as contained on page 137 of the Book of Reports be amended, to remove the word 'nil' and to replace with the word 'reducing'.

.....
Chairman