

CABINET

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Thursday, 10 November 2016 at 1.00 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

Present

Councillor Donna Jones (in the Chair)

Councillors Ryan Brent
Jim Fleming
Lee Mason
Robert New
Steve Wemyss
Neill Young

51. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)

These had been received from Councillors Linda Symes and Luke Stubbs.

52. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)

Councillor Wemyss made a code of conduct declaration (non-prejudicial interest) regarding minute 55 the scrutiny review of working with individuals with complex needs.

53. Record of Previous Decision Meetings - 22 September & 12 October 2016 (AI 3)

DECISION: The records of decisions of the Cabinet meetings held on 22 September and 12 October were agreed as correct records, to be signed by the Leader.

54. Appointments to outside bodies and a Mental Health Champion (AI 4)

DECISIONS The following appointments were made by Cabinet:

- i) Councillor Jennie Brent as the City Council's Mental Health Champion
- ii) Milton Village Community Centre - Councillor Ben Dowling as the City Council's representative
- iii) Portsmouth Hospitals NHS Trust (Council of Governors) - Councillor Luke Stubbs to be the City Council's representative

55. TECS Scrutiny Review and Directors Response report - Review into how community safety partners can work together to reduce demand and cost for intensive specialist services currently supporting individuals with complex needs (AI 5)

Rachael Dalby, the Director of Regulatory Services and Community Safety, introduced her response report. She praised the beneficial work of the Traffic, Environment and Community Safety (TECS) scrutiny panel and reported that

work was already underway in reviewing an individual case study and further work would take place to look at key workers for the individuals with complex needs.

A deputation was made by Ms H Reed whose points included questioning the statement within the response report that an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was not required and she hoped the Cabinet had considered the EIA prepared for the TECS scrutiny panel's report. She also queried the accuracy of the costings of the panel's recommendations for changes to services and the potential impact on the voluntary sector.

Councillor Donna Jones, as Leader, responded to clarify the different functions of scrutiny panels and the Cabinet's executive functions and that the recommendations coming forward were identifying ways of taking forward changes and therefore a full EIA for services would be required before changes were further explored and implemented.

Michael Lawther, as The City Solicitor confirmed that the preliminary EIA prepared for the TECS scrutiny panel's report had been circulated to all Cabinet members for consideration (and had been published with the TECS scrutiny panel's initial report) and their recommendations were suggestions and changes to services were not proposed at this stage. Louise Wilders, as Director of Community & Communication, reiterated that full EIAs were undertaken if there were changes in policy.

Councillor Rob New, as Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety, thanked the TECS Scrutiny Panel for its work and welcomed the recommendations, including the reviewing of at least 20 complex cases, and felt that the report was informative for the Cabinet members regarding this area of work and the partnership liaison taking place with joint responsibilities for addressing the broad range of problems suffered by these individuals.

Councillor Wemyss, who had made a non-prejudicial declaration of interest, commended the panel on their work. He commented on the need for agencies to link properly and the importance of the City Council intervening earlier in cases which could save costs for other agencies, such as health and the police. He did however feel that patient confidentiality had not been covered and the referral process when clients may be difficult to engage.

Councillors Jones and New felt that this was an important step in the right direction along with the work of the Homelessness Working Group, to focus on positive outcomes for hard to reach individuals.

In proposing adoption of the response report's recommendations, the Leader stated that Councillor New as Cabinet Member for Environment & Community Safety and Rachael Dalby's team, would be working on implementing the panel's recommendations to bring back to Cabinet, where appropriate.

DECISIONS:

- (1) The Traffic, Environment & Community Safety Panel is thanked for its work in undertaking the review and**

- (2) That the Transport, Environment and Community Safety Scrutiny Panel's recommendations were approved in line with the responses noted in section 4.**

56. Council Tax Support Consultation Results (known nationally as Council Tax Reduction Scheme) (AI 6)

Louise Wilders, as Director of Community & Communication, presented her report on the consultation results brought about by the need to adjust the scheme which cost over £12m per annum and money needed to be set aside from these savings towards the Hardship Fund. She reported a slight amendment to give clarification to recommendation (ii)(e) to reflect compliance dates to be in line with national legislation.

Councillor Donna Jones, as Leader, stated that this had been through a thorough public consultation process and consideration had been given to how neighbouring councils were responding to have a comparative approach with Portsmouth City Council remaining more generous in Council Tax Support still being offered.

Councillor Lee Mason, as the Cabinet Member for Resources, felt that this was the fairest way forward and there had been the need to revise the scheme to be more reflective of claimants' situations (most living in Band C rather than Band G properties) as well as the need to remove the non-cost effective payments of £2 and under.

The Leader also pointed out that a variation had been made to help claimants in Band A&B properties to target those most in need of support. The report set out how the funding could be used most wisely.

RECOMMENDED to Council:

- i. The results of the public consultation on the Council Tax Scheme are noted.**
- ii. To implement a revised Council Tax Support Scheme for Portsmouth from 1st April 2017, with the following key features:**
 - a) To introduce a maximum level of support for all working age applicants to 80%**
 - b) To reduce the capital limit from the existing £16,000 to £6,000**
 - c) To restrict the maximum level of Council Tax Reduction payable to the equivalent of a Band C**
 - d) To set a minimum level of support at £2 per week**
 - e) *To bring the working age Council Tax Scheme in line with Housing Benefit changes proposed by Central Government**

***note this feature will be implemented from 1st April 2017 or whenever the relevant Government Statutory Instrument/Regulation is enacted**

iii. A Hardship Fund of £250k to be provided for 2017/18, subject to annual review, to give support to households in financial difficulty due to a reduction in the Council Tax Support they receive.

The meeting concluded at 1.40 pm.

Councillor Donna Jones
Leader of the Council