

RECORD OF DECISIONS of the meeting of the Cabinet held on Tuesday, 31 October 2023 at 2 pm at the Guildhall, Portsmouth

**Present**

Councillor Steve Pitt (in the Chair)

Suzy Horton  
Dave Ashmore  
Kimberly Barrett  
Lee Hunt  
Darren Sanders  
Matthew Winnington

**85. Apologies for Absence (AI 1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ian Holder, Hugh Mason and Gerald Vernon-Jackson.

**86. Declarations of Interests (AI 2)**

There were no declarations of interest.

**87. Record of previous decision meeting - 3 October 2023 (AI 3)**

The record of decisions from the meeting held on 3 October 2023 was approved as a correct record.

**88. Update on cost of living and Household Support Fund provision (AI 4)**

Mark Sage, Tackling Poverty Co-ordinator, introduced the report, noting that funding had been granted for 12 months rather than six, and the DWP's requirement that a significant amount had to be applied for by residents.

Councillor Pitt requested that thanks were placed on record from the Cabinet to Mr Sage and his new team for all the work they have done and for getting support to people who needed it.

In discussion, members made the following points:

The funding was not enough to deal with the cost of living crisis. The future of funding was a serious matter as the crisis was not abating. The council was constantly having to battle against central government and wait for the next allocation to protect those in poverty or at risk of falling into it.

Portsmouth was proud that right from the start it was mindful of those were "not quite poor enough." The last iteration of funding has acknowledged this but the council had already done groundwork, for example, in Adult Services, Children's Services and Housing, such as outreach work in adventure playgrounds. There was a good network of understanding residents' needs though the council needed to remain vigilant to stop people falling through the net. Its approach was holistic rather than piecemeal but there was always room for improvement.

Members were glad the cost of living crisis was so prominent in strategic work, for example, the Director of Public Health's annual report and the Health

& Wellbeing Strategy focused on poverty. The latter focused on the "causes of the causes" which was unusual for a strategy.

The report showed how the Health & Wellbeing Board (HWB) worked across portfolios and with external organisations. The HWB incorporated the Children's Trust Board and the Safer Portsmouth Partnership so could work holistically.

Government policies had plunged more people into poverty, for example, the £20 cut to Universal Credit. The amount should have been left alone rather than making people jump through hoops. One third of council tenants were in work but also on benefits. The government could do simple things to change this, for example, each new council home saved £780 in housing benefit or raising the Local Housing Allowance to the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile would save money. The Household Support Fund was spreading support wisely but fewer resources had to go further.

Mr Sage confirmed the amount of food allocated to food banks and pantries was sufficient so far as not all the supplies had been allocated yet. Food banks and pantries did a lot of fundraising and Portsmouth was lucky to have support from the voluntary and community sector (VCS) to supplement the Household Support Fund but the situation had to be kept under review. Councillor Pitt said this was a timely reminder of the value of the VCS and extended thanks to them for all they did. The Cabinet would receive updates on support in due course.

## **DECISIONS**

**The Cabinet noted the report.**

### **89. Water Safety Management Policy (AI 5)**

Mark Collings, Seafront Operations Officer, and Claire Looney, Commissioning & Partnership Manager, introduced the report. Mr Collings was keen for the RNLi "Meet the lifeguard" educational programme in primary schools to be extended to secondary schools.

Members said the policy was important, particularly as Portsmouth was unique in being surrounded by water, and in view of tragedies such as the drowning of two young people in Bournemouth in the summer. It could help save lives as children and young people in particular needed to understand how dangerous water could be. Councillors Pitt and Horton had recently met the University's Vice-Chancellor who was happy to collaborate on encouraging awareness of water safety amongst students, many of whom may be from inland areas and unaware of the dangers of rip tides. Members noted that the council paid for the summer lifeguard service and provided free swimming for the under 12s.

## **DECISIONS**

**The Cabinet**

- 1. Approved the wider distribution of the draft Water Safety Management Policy for consultation.**

- 2. Agreed that following consultation, the strategy will be reviewed following receipt of any responses and brought back to Cabinet at a future date for adoption.**

The meeting concluded at 2.28 pm.

.....  
Councillor Steve Pitt  
Leader of the Council