

## RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET 9 JANUARY 2018 FROM THE CORPORATE PERFORMANCE PANEL HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2017

### CP72 NON DOMESTIC RATES – REVIEW AND UPDATE OF DISCRETIONARY RELIEF POLICY

The Revenues and Benefits Manager reminded the Panel that the Council was able to award Discretionary Relief to its ratepayers to reduce or remit their Non Domestic Rates (Business Rates) bill.

Members were advised that the Council must approve any awards of Discretionary Relief. This was achieved by having a Discretionary Relief Policy agreed by Members, allowing Officers to award reliefs where the policy criteria were met. It was noted that for many years the Council had operated a Discretionary Relief policy that gave help to charitable, not for profit and sporting organisations, based in the borough and whose work benefitted the local community.

The Panel was informed that the Discretionary Relief Policy had been updated on an ad hoc basis over the years and now lacked a logical flow. It was highlighted that some reliefs had also ended. The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that the policy had now been reviewed and refreshed and the report contained the updated policy and noted the changes which had been made.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager explained that there were no changes to the existing criteria for receiving relief, or to any of the Discretionary Reliefs already awarded to local organisations. However, delegated authority to the Council Leader was requested to decide any applications not meeting the criteria in the relief policy.

The Revenues and Benefits Manager responded to questions relating to:

- Changes to the Discretionary Relief Policy.
- Relief awarded to Bowls Clubs.
- Local charitable organisations.
- Cost of some reliefs met by Central Government.
- 205 discretionary charitable relief awarded to organisations receiving the 80% mandatory charitable relief.
- Invitation to apply for discretionary relief relating to conservation and cultural organisations and village and community halls. It was noted that an application form was sent out with the rates bill.

**RESOLVED:** The Panel:

- 1) Agreed the changes and recommends to Cabinet that the new policy is adopted from 1 April 2018.
- 2) Recommends to Cabinet delegated authority was given to the Council Leader to decide any applications not meeting the criteria in the relief policy.

CP73 **CABINET REPORT: SCRUTINY STRUCTURES TASK GROUP**

The Chief Executive presented the conclusions of the Scrutiny Task Group over a year on from the re-structure which had taken place in 2016.

The report set out the Task Group's response to the questionnaire on Scrutiny structures generally which had been issued to all Councillors, and elicited 31 responses. The proposals to change any of the current arrangements were included as recommendations to Cabinet and Council which sought to implement those changes for the 2017/18 Municipal year.

Councillor Daubney referred to Recommendation 7 – That the Leader nominate the Panel/Committee Chairs for agreement at Council with the Vice-Chairs to be appointed by the Panels/Committee and commented that he welcomed this recommendation and added that effective skills were required for the role of a Chairman. However, Councillor Daubney commented that he strongly opposed Recommendation 9 – That the appraisal of Chairs be investigated.

Councillor Morrison concurred with the comments made by Councillor Daubney.

Councillor Howman commented that he did not agree with the abolition of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee which held Cabinet to account and worked effectively. Councillor Howman commented that he felt with the revised arrangements, Cabinet was not being held to account.

The Leader, Councillor Long advised that previously, the Leader proposed Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Committees and Panels which were agreed at Annual Council. Councillors could, if they so wished, debate the proposed Chairmen/Vice-Chairmen, but had not previously done so.

Comments were made regarding Recommendation 2 – That the attendance of Audit Members for Audit training should be obligatory as it is for Planning and Licensing initial training.

Councillor Collop commented that he was disappointed that only 31 responses were received when this was an important decision to make.

The Chairman, Councillor Humphrey concurred with the comments made by Councillor Daubney and invited the Chairman of the Scrutiny Structures Task Group to provide the Panel with information on how the Task Group had reached the recommendations set out in the report.

The Portfolio Holder, Environment and Chair of the Scrutiny Structures Task Group provided the Panel with an overview on how the Task Group reached the recommendations set out in the report.

**RESOLVED:** That the Corporate Performance Panel support the recommendation to Cabinet as set out below:

- 1) That all the current arrangements continue with the exception of those items listed below.

The Corporate Performance made the following comments on the recommendations to be considered:

- 2) That the attendance of Audit Members for Audit training should be obligatory as it is for Planning and Licensing initial training.
- 3) That Panels be encouraged to use the powers available to them and therefore make clear recommendations on items coming before them so they can be incorporated into reports in the progress of being prepared, or taken into account at the Cabinet meeting.
- 4) That Panels should consider their own performance indicators and they be encouraged to monitor the progress in line with the corporate objectives through that route.
- 5) That the number of post implementation reviews undertaken be monitored by the Joint Chairs meetings. **The Panel did not support this recommendation.**
- 6) That in working on policy development and reviews and project programme work, Panels be encouraged to have discussions with portfolio holders:  
  
For example – Cabinet Members could attend a Panel meeting at the beginning of the year to discuss their plans for the year in order to incorporate potential items into work plans in accordance with the Business Plan.
- 7) That the Leader nominate the Panel/Committee Chairs for agreement at Council with the Vice-Chairs to be appointed by the Panels/Committee.
- 8) That terms of reference be approved for Chairs of Scrutiny bodies (set out as appendix). (NB they include the points raised in question 15 set out in the report).
- 9) That the appraisal of Chairs be investigated. **The Panel did not support this recommendation.**
- 10) That the amended arrangements be reviewed after a further 12 months of operation.