

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM CABINET ON 9 JANUARY 2018 TO COUNCIL ON 25 JANUARY 2018

CAB105 **EQUALITIES POLICY**

The Policy, Performance and Personnel Manager presented a report which explained that the Council's corporate Equality Policy was last updated in 2008. Since then there had been changes to legislation with regards to equalities issues, which had been reflected in the Council's procedures and practices but which were not reflected in the current policy. The policy had therefore been revised to bring it up-to-date with regards to the roles and responsibilities of a local authority. An amended Glossary of Terms had also been distributed.

RECOMMENDED:

1. That the proposed revised Equality Policy be approved
2. That the steps required to implement the new policy, including the provision of training be supported.
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director, Central and Community Services, in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder, to agree amends/updates to the Policy that may be required to ensure it remains compliant with legislation

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties with respect to equalities

CAB106 **NON DOMESTIC RATES - DISCRETIONARY REVALUATION RELIEF 2017/18**

The Revenues and Benefits Manager presented a report which explained that at the Budget on 8 March 2017 the Chancellor had announced the Government would make available a discretionary fund of £300m over four years from 2017/2018 to support those businesses facing the steepest increases in their business rates bills as a result of the 2017 business rates revaluation.

It was noted that every Billing Authority had been awarded a share of the £300m based on the increases in their rates bills, and Billing Authorities were free to decide on a scheme to allocate this to their ratepayers.

The Council agreed its Discretionary Revaluation Relief Scheme for 2017/2018 on 21 September 2017. Take up of the scheme had been monitored closely and it appeared that, now the majority of eligible businesses had claimed their relief, there was surplus funding available for 2017/2018. Any unspent funding at the end of the year had to be returned to Central Government and could not be transferred to another year. Therefore the report detailed the options for distributing the surplus.

Cabinet Members asked whether there was any possibility that further claimants would come forward, and whether the claims would be similar for year 2. It was explained that there was a small contingency set aside from the budget, but that

much work had gone into getting eligible businesses to apply, and the year 2 calculations had been mapped using this years figures.

It was noted that the Corporate Performance Panel had considered the report and supported the proposed recommendation.

RECOMMENDED

That the Discretionary Revaluation Relief Scheme be amended as detailed in Section 3 of the report.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council's Discretionary Revaluation Relief Scheme distributes the maximum amount of help available to local businesses whose business rates bills have increased as a result of the 2017 revaluation.

CAB107 SCRUTINY REVIEW

Councillor Long presented the report which presented the conclusions of the Scrutiny Structures 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 issued on Scrutiny structures and arrangements generally which had been issued to all Councillors, and elicited 31 responses. Any proposals to change the current arrangements were included as recommendations to Cabinet and Council for implementation for the 2017/18 Municipal year.

Under Standing Order 34 Councillor Joyce addressed the Cabinet explained that he hadn't completed the survey but felt that combining policy review and scrutiny meant that a Panel would be scrutinising itself. He also commented that he supported the recommendation that the Leader should appoint the Chairmen.

Under Standing Order 34 Councillor Pope stated that there were many comments about the Audit Committee. He questioned how the Committee could have more training sessions when they currently had them prior to each meeting. He asked why the training should be obligatory when it wasn't for other Panels and suggested that the numbers on panels would be better suited with a lesser number such as 9. Councillor Pope also commented that he supported the Leader appointing the Chairmen, and also stated that when members couldn't attend meetings they should obtain a substitute for the meeting as in not attending it was preventing other members from taking up the opportunity.

In response to Councillor Pope's questions, the Leader explained that in no way was the content of the report or the responses to the questions a criticism of himself or the Audit Committee but a compliment. The responses indicated that the arrangements he had set up for the new Committee were supported by Members and should continue into future years. The reasoning behind the recommendation

that Audit training be obligatory was because they were carrying out specific tasks on behalf of the Council and should be trained accordingly. Councillor Long also indicated that making the size of the Panels larger ensured proportionality and membership of more of the opposition members with smaller groups.

In response to Councillor Joyce's comment on scrutiny, Councillor Beales explained that the Panels were involved in the development of policy which would then come forward to the Cabinet for a decision and recommendation to Council. The Panels would then scrutinise and monitor the decisions of Cabinet.

Each of the Panels had considered the report and had submitted their comments to Cabinet as set out in the extracts published. Cabinet gave full consideration to those comments made.

Taking into account the comments of the Panels it was agreed that recommendation 9 in the report relating to the appraisal of Chairmen be deleted (and the following recommendations be renumbered)

RECOMMENDED:

- 1) That all the current arrangements continue with the exception of those items listed below
- 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 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.
- 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 an appendix). (NB they include the points raised in question 15 set out in the report)

9) That the amended arrangements be reviewed after a further 12 months of operation.

Reason for Decision

To seek to make the roles and functions of the Council's policy development and scrutiny panels more effective and thereby enhance the good governance of the Borough Council. Report recommendation 9 was deleted to take into account comments made from the Panels.