

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Scrutiny Committee

held on Thursday, 23 January 2020 at 7.00 pm

at the Meeting Room 1, 135 Eastern Avenue, Milton Park, Milton, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present:

Members: Councillors Nathan Boyd (Chair), Ron Batstone, Samantha Bowring, Andy Foulsham, Robert Maddison, Mike Pighills, Patrick O'Leary (in place of Max Thompson)

Officers: James Connelly, Steve Culliford, Paul Howden, Candida Mckelvey, Adrianna Partridge

Also present: Andrew Crawford (cabinet member for finance)

Number of members of the public: none

Sc.20 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Max Thompson. His substitute in attendance was Councillor Patrick O'Leary.

Sc.21 Minutes

The minutes of the last meeting, held on Thursday 28 November 2019, were agreed by all as an accurate record of the meeting. The Chairman signed them as such.

Sc.22 Declarations of interest

None.

Sc.23 Urgent business and chairman's announcements

The Chairman had no announcements to make and briefly ran through housekeeping.

Sc.24 Public participation

There were no members of the public or speakers present.

Sc.25 Council tax reduction scheme 2020/21

Officers Paul Howden and James Connolly presented a report on the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21 which was supported by Cabinet member for finance, Councillor Andrew Crawford. The revisions proposed were to keep the scheme in line with Universal Credit – Vale of White Horse District Council – Scrutiny Committee minutes

with regard to disabilities and bereavement support and to help single parents with children under five.

Single parents of children under five faced difficulty finding work and balancing childcare costs. Those receiving Universal Credit were not expected to work enough hours to live independently of benefits. The proposed changes to the local scheme helped alleviate what tended to be a short term hardship for single parents with young children.

The new proposal included widening of the definition of disability, as per Universal Credit, regarding capacity to work.

Currently, bereavement support payments were considered as income. The new proposal was to disregard this as income and scheme in line with other means tested schemes and minimise stress to applicants.

The costs were outlined in the report. The cost was viewed as minimal compared to the benefit to the public and it was considered a good strategy in the long term for the council. The committee were supportive of the proposed scheme. Public consultation was carried out and there was discussion regarding how consultations were run in general and timeliness of reports to Scrutiny Committee. The committee agreed that this should be a future agenda item.

Discussion was had around the three categories and how officers arrived at those particular three. Officers stated that these categories were highlighted in reports and also in day to day work as most in need. The committee asked to see all categories listed in future reports. Officers would include the equality impact assessment to the report before it was presented to Cabinet.

Democratic services were reviewing the 2020-2021 calendar of meetings and would consider timings for presentation of reports to scrutiny.

RECOMMENDED: to Cabinet;

To recommend Council to adopt the revised council tax reduction scheme.

RESOLVED: to

- (a) note the report and thank the finance team for their work
- (b) request a future Scrutiny Committee agenda item on how public consultations are conducted; and
- (c) request for all relevant available data to be provided in future reports

Sc.26 Work schedule and dates for all scrutiny meetings

The committee reviewed the Scrutiny Work Programme. It was confirmed that the next meeting of the committee would focus on one agenda item. On 6th February 2020, the agenda is on the council budget 2020/21.

Community Infrastructure Levy Spending Strategy and Planning Appeals 2018/19 will be postponed to the committee meeting on 26th March 2020.

The draft corporate plan 2020/24 will be scheduled for scrutiny in June.

Civil parking enforcement is going to Cabinet in April, so to review before this date, this item will be on the agenda of the separate South and Vale scrutiny committees.

The Chairman is working with officers on the A34 diversion item and will report back.

The meeting closed at 7.38 pm