

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 7th October 2020

**Present: Councillor Oakes (Chair)
Councillors Hughes, Lythgoe, Serridge and Walmsley**

**In Attendance: Mr N Shaw, Chief Executive
Mrs C Burns, Director of Economic Development
Mr A Allen, Director of Communities
Ms C Birtwistle, Monitoring Officer
Ms K Spencer, Head of Finance
Mr M Coogan, Strategic Housing Manager
Mrs C Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
Miss G Ashton, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Ashworth, Haworth, Neal, Pendlebury and Steen
1 member of public**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor A Barnes.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1st July 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Hughes advised that he was an employee of the National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No written questions had been submitted.

6. HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE

The Portfolio Holder for Health and Leisure outlined the report which asked members to consider the latest development in health partnerships and governance structures and support the development of a health and wellbeing strategy for Rossendale.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- It was good to have a strategy and to be involved in decisions for the borough.
- Opportunities would be lost if the Council were not involved.
- Members needed to be mindful of cost pressures.
- The mental health of the borough was important too.
- The report was welcomed as residents needed support.
- The Director of Communities was thanked for preparing the report.

In response to a question raised it was noted that:

- A cross-party group would be involved in drafting the strategy. It would also go to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was cross-party.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet considered the latest development in health partnerships and governance structures and supported the development of a health and wellbeing strategy for Rossendale.

Reason for Decision:

To develop and grow the Council's role in health, providing greater community leadership to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for residents. To work in partnership and in appropriate ways with our partners and members to improve the health and wellbeing of people in Rossendale. To identify shared objectives and base our priorities on need using the latest data and intelligence from our sub regional partners, our PCN partners and our community partners. The Council can play a clear role in bringing together sub-regional partners and supporting and participating in existing partnerships more effectively. The Council has a role to convene, facilitate and influence.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

7. COUNCIL TAX / NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES RECOVERY UPDATE & OPTIONS

The Portfolio Holder for Communities outlined the report which asked members to agree the approach as outlined for the recovery of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR). To approve the Council Tax Partnership Protocol that has been developed between Rossendale Borough Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau. He thanked CAB Rossendale for their work on the protocol.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- The report was welcomed.
- Rossendale was the collection authority for Council Tax and NNDR.
- With the assistance of CAB, collection was taking place sensibly.

In response to a question raised it was noted that:

- Twice yearly a report was presented to Cabinet to agree debts that should be written off. The next report would be presented in the coming months and it will provide details of debts deemed to be no longer recoverable due to reasons such as death or long term imprisonment.

Resolved:

Cabinet considered the report and agreed:

- The approach as outlined for the recovery of Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).
- To approve the Council Tax Partnership Protocol that has been developed between Rossendale Borough Council and the Citizens Advice Bureau.

Reason for Decision:

The report outlines the sympathetic approach that has been adopted by Rossendale Council towards those struggling financially due to the Covid19 pandemic. Support will continue to be provided by Council staff to help residents pay their Council tax and agree payment plans that can be sustained. In addition, the Council have developed a partnership protocol with the

Citizens Advice Bureau to provide a joined up partnership approach to residents that are in arrears for their Council Tax.

8. EMPTY PROPERTY COUNCIL TAX PREMIUMS

The Portfolio Holder for Communities outlined the report which asked members to increase the premium on empty dwellings to the maximum amount permitted from 1st April 2021, with 100%, 200% and 300% premiums for properties empty for 2, 5 and 10 years respectively.

In response to questions raised it was noted that:

- The recommendation should be amended to read “subject to consultation, increase the premium on empty dwellings....”.
- Details of empty properties in Whitworth should be forwarded to the Director of Economic Development.
- A charge may be placed on properties where the occupant owned the property.

Resolved:

1. Subject to consultation, Cabinet agreed to increase the premium on empty dwellings to the maximum amount permitted from 1st April 2021, with 100%, 200% and 300% premiums for properties empty for 2, 5 and 10 years respectively.

Reason for Decision:

It is anticipated that introducing the higher Council Tax premiums in April 2021 will lead to a behaviour change in a large minority of landlords or liable parties with more homes returning to use, increasing housing supply and the offer overall, as well as the economy in the borough. There will be a small amount of addition income for the Council which will be tempered by increased administration burdens.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.00pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE