

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
SPECIAL COUNCIL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
HELD ON THURSDAY 29 JANUARY 2015 FROM 8.52PM TO 9.02PM**

Present: UllaKarin Clark (Chairman), Parry Batth (Vice Chairman), Keith Baker, Prue Bray, Anthony Pollock and Angus Ross

PART I

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 30 January 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence received.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received.

4. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no public questions received.

5. MEMBERS' QUESTIONS

There were no Member questions received.

6. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2015/16

The Committee considered a report relating to the Council Tax Base for 2015/16 in respect of the whole Borough and all constituent parts, which amounted to 63,818 properties, in order that each precepting parish could subsequently set their Council Tax budgets for the financial year.

The Executive Member for Finance advised the meeting that every year there was a need to approve the tax base which was the denominator used to calculate council tax. This was based on the number of houses in the Borough which it was noted had increased. A further calculation was required to be performed which converts the number of houses into Band D equivalents. It was noted that the Council was proposing to allocate £100,000 to parish and town councils, on the same basis as in 2014/15, to offset most of the reduction in the council tax base that arose from the new council tax benefits system.

Councillor Bray highlighted that in relation to how much money the Council would pass on to the parishes, to overcome the difficulty of council tax reduction, the Liberal Democrat Group had tried to propose a motion on this matter for consideration at the November Council meeting but due to lack of time it was not heard. She therefore felt that this agenda item should have been considered at a full Council meeting to give all Councillors the opportunity to debate the item not only for this year but in the future. Therefore if every year it was likely that items would come forward in January then there should be a Council meeting scheduled then.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) the proposed Council Tax Base, for the whole area and by Parish, as set out in the report be agreed;

- 2) the proposed allocation of £100,000 grant to the parishes in respect of council tax reduction, as set out in the council tax base table in the report, be approved.

7. COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION SCHEME

The Committee considered a report setting out a proposed Localised Council Tax Reduction Scheme which would ensure that all working age Borough residents who may experience financial difficulties in paying their council tax liabilities had access to a scheme that offered financial assistance.

Councillor Pollock provided background to the scheme which was set up as a result of the passing of responsibility for council tax benefit to local authorities and reported that a minor review had been undertaken on the scheme for this year and as a result the proposed 2015/16 Scheme was on the same basis as the previously adopted schemes.

Councillor Bray commented that she thought that the scheme was fair as, unlike some other Authorities' schemes, it did not try and extract money from people who had got the least which can cause a lot of anxiety and distress to people and it leads to bad debts. She was therefore supportive of the proposed scheme.

Councillor Baker was pleased that the Council was continuing to allow the disregard for War Widows and War Disability Pensions which he felt was timely having just received a letter from the Ministry of Defence acknowledging the Council signing up to the Military Covenant. He was also pleased that the hardship fund was effectively funded from changes to empty property charges.

Councillor Pollock paid tribute to the Officers who had drafted the original report and also did the work on this scheme and who were very aware of the issues raised by Councillor Bray.

RESOLVED That:

- 1) a local CTR scheme for 2015/16 be adopted on the same basis as the 2014/15 adopted scheme without change to the general entitlement criteria;
- 2) all applicable amounts, premiums, allowances, disregards and deductions used in the calculation of entitlements be uprated in line with the same increases applied to the Government set Prescribed and Default CTR schemes, along with any other minor changes;
- 3) the full disregard currently allowed for War Widows and War Disability Pensions be continued from 1 April 2015 in respect of the Prescribed and Local council tax reduction and housing benefit schemes;
- 4) funds be made available to the hardship fund, known as Section 13A, for those who cannot pay their council tax liabilities. This sum will be funded from the additional tax liabilities collected from the changes to empty property charges that are now levied.

These are the Minutes of a meeting of the Special Council Executive Committee

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