



CABINET

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT PENALLTA HOUSE, TREDOMEN ON WEDNESDAY, 11TH DECEMBER 2019 AT 10.30 A.M.

PRESENT:

Councillor P. Marsden - Chair

Councillors:

C. Cuss (Social Services and Well Being), N. George (Neighbourhood Services), C.J. Gordon (Corporate Services), S. Morgan (Economy, Infrastructure and Sustainability), L. Phipps (Homes and Places) and E. Stenner (Environment and Public Protection).

Together with:

C. Harry (Interim Chief Executive), R. Edmunds (Corporate Director – Education and Corporate Services), D. Street (Corporate Director – Social Services and Housing) and M.S. Williams (Interim Corporate Director – Communities).

Also in Attendance:

S. O'Donnell (Principal Council Tax & Non-Domestic Rate Officer), S. Harris (Interim Head of Business Improvement Services and Acting S151 Officer), R. Tranter (Head of Legal Services and Monitoring Officer) and C. Evans (Committee Services Officer).

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs B. Jones (Finance, Performance and Governance).

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest received at the commencement or during the course of the meeting.

3. CABINET – 27TH NOVEMBER 2019

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2019 were approved as a correct record.

MATTERS ON WHICH EXECUTIVE DECISIONS WERE REQUIRED

4. COUNCIL TAX BASE 2020-2021

The report sought Cabinet agreement for the proposed calculation of the Council Tax Base for 2020/21.

The report provided the details of the Council Tax Base for 2020/21 for tax setting purposes and the collection percentage to be applied.

Cabinet were advised that the Local Government Finance Act 1992 and the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) (Wales) Regulations 1995 as amended set out the rules for the calculation of the Council Tax base. This is the amount required by the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to be used in the calculation of the Council Tax. The Council Tax base for discounted chargeable dwellings expressed as Band D equivalents has been calculated at 62,101.79 for 2020/21. This figure is used by Welsh Government as part of the process for calculating the Revenue Support Grant. The in-year collection rate for Council Tax has been maintained around 97% over the past few years; this has been achieved against the backdrop of reducing budgets and staffing levels. The Authority actively pursues all Council Tax arrears which results in the collection rate of 97% being regularly exceeded over time. This generates a Council Tax surplus at the end of the financial year; for 2018/19 the Council Tax surplus was £1.41m. It was noted that the surplus is used to support the Authority's base budget.

Officers explained that the collection rate is regularly exceeded over time and it is proposed that the budgeted collection rate be maintained at 97.50% for 2020/21. The Council Tax base for 2020/21 is 62,101.79 x 97.50%, which equates to 60,549.25. Members were referred to paragraph 5.5. in the report that lists the Community Council areas within the Borough with the associated figures for Band D properties. Officers advised that increases in Band D equivalents can result in a reduced Revenue Support Grant when the final settlement announcement is made later this financial year.

Cabinet thanked the Officers for the report and discussion ensued.

A Member, in noting the Community Council's Tax Base in 5.5 of the report, sought clarification on the rationale and the differences between Community Council areas. Officers explained that the Council Tax base reflects the number of Band D equivalent properties per Community Council area. Further clarification was sought around the figures allocated for Gelligaer and it was noted that this Community Council area includes Gelligaer, Hengoed, Cefn Hengoed, Penpedairheol, Ystrad Mynach and Tir-y-Berth.

A Member queried the collection rate on Council Tax arrears and whether the target is consistent. Officers explained that the collection rate of 97.5% is in line with other Welsh Local Authorities. It was noted that the authority is very proactive in recovering debts, in particular over a 3 year term, in which many arrears are recovered.

Discussions took place around the implications to the Revenue Support Grant (RSG) should there be an increase in the Council Tax percentage. Officers explained that whilst an increase in Council Tax revenue would reduce the RSG, the additional monies from Council Tax would exceed this reduction.

Members queried the Attachment of Earnings process and its effectiveness for recovering arrears. Officers explained that this process is effective and it is the first course of action we would look to use after obtaining a Liability Order at Court.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the recommendation in the report be approved. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that for the reasons contained in the Officer's report: -

- (i) the Council Tax collection rate is maintained at 97.50% for 2020/21;
- (ii) the Council Tax Base for the year 2020/21 be 60,549.25, with the Council Tax Base for each Community Council area as outlined in Paragraph 5.5.

5. CABINET FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME – TO NOTE

Cabinet were provided with the Cabinet Forward Work Programme, which detailed the scheduled reports from 11th December 2019 to 10th June 2020. Members were reminded that the Cabinet Forward Work Programme is a working document and therefore subject to change.

A Member requested that the responsible Cabinet Member be changed for Corporate Volunteering. Officers agreed to update this accordingly.

Following consideration and discussion, it was moved and seconded that the Forward Work Programme be noted. By a show of hands this was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED that subject to the aforementioned amendment, the Cabinet Forward Work Programme be noted.

The meeting closed at 10.42am.

Approved and signed as a correct record subject to any corrections made at the meeting held on 15th January 2019.

CHAIR