

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Chris Burke, Councillor Sue Burke and
Councillor Bob Bushell

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Donald Nannestad and Neil Murray

39. Confirmation of Minutes - 20 September 2021

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2021 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

40. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

41. Localised Council Tax Support Scheme 2022/23

Purpose of Report

To propose options for consultation on a 2022/23 Council Tax Support scheme, and an accompanying Exceptional Hardship Payments scheme.

Decision

- (1) That the potential options for a Council Tax Support scheme for 2022/23 (as detailed in Section 5 of the report to the Executive) be approved for public consultation and scrutiny.
- (2) That public consultation and scrutiny be approved on an Exceptional Hardship Payments scheme fund of £25,000 for 2022/23 (which would represent an increase of £5,000), to augment the Council Tax Support scheme awards, and which would be funded through the Collection Fund.
- (3) That a public consultation on the proposals in (1) and (2) above begin on 27 October 2021 and conclude on 8 December 2021, and include members of the public, appropriate organisations and the major precepting authorities; and the Policy Scrutiny Committee on 23 November 2021.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As set out in Section 5 of the report to the Executive, three options for a Council Tax Support scheme would be subject to public consultation and scrutiny:

- Option 1: No change to the current scheme.
- Option 2: 'All working age' banded scheme (as detailed in paragraph 5.6 of the report).
- Option 3: 'De Minimis' scheme (as detailed in paragraph 5.7 of the report).

There would be public consultation on the Exceptional Hardship Payments Scheme, as detailed in paragraph 5.9 of the report.

The outcome of the public consultation would be considered by the Executive on 4 January 2022 and the proposed 2022/23 scheme would require a decision by the Council.

Reasons for the Decision

The Council Tax Support Scheme (CTS), which replaced the national Council Tax Benefit system on 1 April 2014, may be determined by each billing authority, after consultation with precepting authorities, key stakeholders and residents.

As at the end of August 2021, there were 8,870 residents claiming CTS in Lincoln, of whom 2,704 were pensioners who were protected under the CTS. There was discretion to determine the level of support to the remaining 6,166 working age claimants where a decision by the Council would be required to apply the CTS to non-vulnerable working age adults. Historically CTS would be applied to vulnerable working-age adults, which included people in receipt of certain disability premia, a war pension or the Employment and Support Allowance.

The current, 2021/22 scheme had the following features for working age adults:

- a capital limit £6,000;
- a minimum entitlement of £2 per week;
- property banding capped at band B, so that a customer residing in a band C and above property, would only have their CTS calculated on band B liability;
- backdating restricted to one month; and
- any temporary absence from home was in line with Housing Benefit regulations.

Modelling for each of the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme options had been based on assumptions such as the freeze on social security benefits, based on current national policy; Council Tax increases of between 1.9% and 2.5%; an increase in caseload for 2022/23 of no more than 5%; and a collection rate of 98.75%.

The Exceptional Hardship Payments (EHP) provided a further financial contribution where an applicant was in receipt of CTS, but the level of support did not meet their full Council Tax liability. The Council was required to provide financial assistance to the most vulnerable residents, who have been disproportionately affected by the changes made in 2021 to the CTS.

Since April 2013, the Council had operated an EHP scheme each year, to provide a safety net for those in receipt of CTS, who were experiencing difficulty paying their Council Tax. The current EHP budget was £20,000 and the cost of EHP is borne solely by City of Lincoln. As at 31 August 2021, a total of £9,070 of EHP had been awarded for 2021/22. The government-funded Council Tax Hardship Scheme, available in 2020/21 and 2021/22, was not expected to be available in 2022/23. It was therefore agreed that the proposed EHP budget be increased from £20,000 to £25,000 for 2022/23.

42. Review of Public Spaces Protection Order Allowing for the Gating of St Peter's Passage

Purpose of Report

To advise on the process and consideration given to date, to review an existing Public Space Protection Order allowing for the gating of St Peter's Passage in the City Centre area of Lincoln. To seek approval from the Executive on proposals regarding the review of the existing Public Space Protection Order (PSPO), which prevents access to this passageway.

Decision

- (1) That the comments from the Policy Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- (2) That the Public Space Protection Order to remit the gating of St Peter's Passage be renewed for a further period of three years.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

In 2018, the City Council exercised powers under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act, and applied a Public Space Protection Order to St Peter's Passage for a period of three years. This was because St Peter's Passage had attracted anti-social behaviour and criminal activity. The gating of St Peter's Passage had removed the crime and anti-social behaviour, as well as removing the public health risk posed to the public, street cleaning employees and partner agencies, as the Passage was often in an unsanitary condition. It was not possible to rely on natural surveillance, as the passage was not overlooked.

A consultation exercise had been undertaken between 2 and 30 August 2021 and nine responses had been received to the consultation and all were in support of the continued gating of St Peter's Passage. Furthermore, the proposal to continue with the gating of St Peter's Passage gating had been supported by the Policy Scrutiny Committee on 5 October 2021 for a further three years.

There was no evidence to suggest that the antisocial behaviour experienced at St Peter's Passage had been displaced to other areas of the City. There had been reports of similar antisocial behaviour reported at St Peter in the arches, however from the CCTV images this had not been from the same cohort that once used St Peter's Passage and was attributed to the night-time economy.

43. Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme (LAD)

Purpose of Report

To update the Executive and seek comments on the Local Authority Delivery (LAD) element of the Green Homes Grant scheme phase 1 (LAD 1). To request approval, subject to a successful application, for delegated authority for the City Solicitor and Chief Finance Officer to accept the offer of funding, sign the Memorandum Understanding, proceed with implementation of the LAD2 scheme and to include the project in the General Investment Programme.

Decision

- (1) That, subject to the approval of proposed delivery profile by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, authority be delegated to the City Solicitor and to the Chief Finance Officer to accept the offer of funding for the Green Homes Local Authority Scheme – Phase 2; to sign the Memorandum Understanding; and to proceed with its implementation.
- (2) That, subject to (1) above, authority be delegated to the Chief Finance Officer to include the final scheme cost in the General Investment Programme (to be fully funded by external grant).

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Reasons for the Decision

On 26 June 2021, the Executive had approved the Council's acceptance of £479,600 in capital funding to retrofit up to 40 energy inefficient homes in Lincoln, where households had been identified to be living in fuel poverty. The Council had confirmed a contract to deliver the Green Homes Grant Local Authority Delivery Scheme Phase 1, which was due to be completed by March 2022.

In August 2021, the Council was invited to submit a funding application for the Sustainable Warmth Fund (LAD 2) for funding to extend the scheme until March 2023. The Council was awaiting the outcome of the bid. However, owing to the limited timeframe to accept any offer of funding, a delegation to the City Solicitor and the Chief Finance Officer to accept the offer of funding. The Council had submitted an expression of interest for £2.8 million funding to enable retrofit works to be undertaken on a further 300 homes. Total funding of £3,432,262 had been allocated to the City of Lincoln, of which £514,622 would be spent on capitalisation costs (to cover administration, employee, ancillary costs) and £2,917,640 would be allocated for energy efficiency measures. The Council had developed a delivery profile to target 300 homes with an upgrade to their energy efficiency rating. A total of 2,153 of the Council's properties had an energy rating of D or below, and work was in hand identifying properties most in need.

44. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business, because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

This item was considered in private as it was likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider this item in private.

45. CCTV Update

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

- (1) That the comments of the Performance Scrutiny Committee and the Policy Scrutiny Committee be noted.
- (2) That the recommendations to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.