

ITEM 4

Commenced: 6.01pm
Concluded: 7.30pm

Resources and Governance Board 8 July 2013

Present Councillor Martin (Chair)
 Councillors Ashburner, Radford, Davis, Higginbottom, Jones, Roberts and Stanton

1/13 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Nawaz.

2/13 Late items introduced by the Chair

There were no late items.

3/13 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4/13 Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2013

The minutes were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5/13 Call-in

There were no items.

6/13 Discretionary Welfare Payments

A report from the Strategic Director of Resources was considered. The report detailed how the Welfare Reform Act 2012 introduced the biggest changes to the welfare system for 60 years, with the Government aiming to save £18bn over five years. It was reported that the cumulative impact from the council's perspective was a £5.1m reduction in benefits previously paid to Derby residents to help with rent and council tax liabilities, including:

- £2.7m through the abolition of council tax benefit;
- £1.9m through reduced housing benefit resulting from bedroom size criteria; and
- £500,000 through Local Housing Allowance changes and the Housing Benefit cap.

The Director of Customer Management delivered a presentation, informing members that the benefit cap would apply from Monday 15 July and that

universal credit changes would be rolled out from October 2013. It was also reported that the Discretionary Housing Payment scheme had been reviewed to take account of the allocation of benefits, but that 666 applications had been received already in 2013/14 compared to 531 for the whole of 2012/13.

Members were informed that the council tax hardship policy had been introduced because the changes meant discretionary housing payments could no longer be utilised. Funding of £200,000 had been set aside for this purpose. The director also reported on the council's introduction of a new Local Assistance Scheme, which provided emergency non-cash financial support for residents.

Board members were concerned at the increase in applications for Discretionary Housing Payments and asked a number of questions. The Director of Customer Management confirmed that demand was expected to increase further still. It was explained that unsuccessful applicants would be signposted to budgeting advice and that applicants were restricted to one application per financial year. Following a further question about the staffing implications, it was reported that staff had been retrained to process applications and around 10 full time equivalent posts (FTE) were assigned to this duty per week, in addition to 1.4 FTE supporting Discretionary Housing Payments.

Members were keen to be kept updated of any changes to the Local Assistance Scheme arising from the three-month review that had been requested by Council Cabinet.

Resolved to receive an update on the Discretionary Housing Payment and changes to the Local Assistance Scheme and a more detailed briefing at the meeting on 19 November 2013.

7/13 Council Cabinet Forward Plan

It was reported by the Scrutiny and Civic Services Manager that there were no items under the board's terms of reference on the Forward Plan.

8/13 Remit and Work Programme

A report of the Strategic Director of Resources, detailing the board's terms of reference, was considered. The Chair reported that she had met with the relevant directors and a number of areas for proposed topic review were considered. These included ICT, customer management and Derby Direct, individual electoral reform, procurement and traded services.

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services advised members that issues of procurement would be best considered under the remit of the Audit and Accounts Committee. A lengthy debate took place on the outcome of the Review of the Electoral Cycle conducted by the Resources and Governance Board in the previous municipal year. It was acknowledged that as no consensus was possible among board members, no final report with definitive

recommendations could be presented to Council.

Resolved to note the report and submit potential topics for review to the Scrutiny and Civic Services Manager for agreement at the next meeting.

9/13

Proposed Review of Call-in Procedure

A report of the Strategic Director of Resources was introduced by the Scrutiny and Civic Services Manager. It was proposed and recommended that the board conduct a review of the procedure, protocol and notice of call-in.

Resolved to request that the Director of Legal and Democratic Services present a revised procedure to the board following consultation with the group leaders.

MINUTES END