

Minutes of the **Cabinet**  
of the **Test Valley Borough Council**  
held in Main Hall, Crosfield Hall, Broadwater Road, Romsey, Hampshire, SO51 8GL  
on 18 December 2019 at 5.30 pm

Attendance:

**Councillor P North (Chairman)**

**Councillor N Adams-King (Vice-Chairman)**

Councillor P Bundy  
Councillor D Drew  
Councillor M Flood

Councillor A Johnston  
Councillor T Tasker

Also in attendance

Councillor A Dowden  
Councillor C Dowden

Councillor I Jeffrey

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Ward

247 **Public Participation**

No members of the public registered to speak.

248 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

249 **Urgent Items**

There were no urgent items.

250 **Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019**

**Resolved:**

**That the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.**

251 **Recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 13 November 2019**

An Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been established to review proposed changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2020/21.

Cabinet were supportive of the work undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee which requested Cabinet to endorse the following recommendations.

**Resolved:**

**That with effect from 1 April 2020 the following changes be made to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**

- 1. That a fixed reduction of £4 per week should be introduced for non-dependant adults living in a property.**
- 2. That eligibility for Council Tax Scheme was restricted to applicants with less than £6,000 of eligible capital.**
- 3. That the Second Adult Rebate is removed from the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**
- 4. That extended payments were removed from the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**

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**Council Tax Support Scheme 2020/21**

Consideration was given to the report of the Finance Portfolio Holder which set out proposed changes to the Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for the 2020/21 financial year.

An extensive consultation exercise had been undertaken in relation to the proposals for the 2020/21 scheme. Overview and Scrutiny had considered the results of the consultation and had made a number of recommendations to Cabinet regarding changes to the CTS. The Portfolio Holder expressed her thanks to Members of Overview and Scrutiny for their valuable input.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed to the following:

**Recommended to Council:**

**That with effect from 1 April 2020 the following changes be made to the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**

- 1. That a fixed reduction of £4 per week should be introduced for non-dependant adults living in a property.**
- 2. That eligibility for Council Tax Scheme was restricted to applicants with less than £6,000 of eligible capital.**
- 3. That the Second Adult Rebate is removed from the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**
- 4. That extended payments were removed from the Council's Council Tax Support Scheme.**

## 253 **Council Tax Premiums on Long-Term Empty Properties**

Consideration was given to the report of the Finance Portfolio Holder which considered the options available to the Council for charging Council Tax Premiums on long-term empty and substantially unfurnished properties.

New legislation allows the Council to increase the premium charged on properties which have been empty for over two years. Introducing the proposed premiums would serve as a deterrent to property owners from keeping housing stock unoccupied.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed to the following:

### **Recommended to Council:**

**That with effect from 1 April 2020, the Council increases the Council Tax premium charged on long-term empty and substantially unfurnished properties in accordance with the amounts and effective dates shown in paragraph 3.1 of the report.**

## 254 **Council Tax Discount for Care Leavers**

Consideration was given to the report of the Finance Portfolio Holder which proposed the introduction of a Council Tax discount for care leavers.

It was estimated that there were approximately 25 care leavers that could be entitled to support in Test Valley. Young people leaving care and making the transition to adulthood were amongst some of the most vulnerable in the community. The scheme would support care leavers during this period.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed to the following:

### **Recommended to Council:**

**That the Council introduces a Council Tax discount for care leavers with effect from 1 April 2020.**

- **That care leavers living alone be awarded 100% relief until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.**
- **That care leavers living with other adults be disregarded for Council Tax purposes until their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday.**

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### **Empty Homes Policy**

Consideration was given to a report of the Housing and Environmental Health Portfolio Holder setting out an Empty Homes Policy for the Council.

The number of empty homes in the borough was relatively low, to the extent that Test Valley reported the lowest level of long term empty homes of all Hampshire districts.

The Council had reviewed its position with regard to tackling empty homes in order to be able to respond to a small number of properties that generated issues for residents. The Policy set out a proportionate approach to the presenting issues associated with empty homes in the borough.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed to the following:

#### **Resolved:**

- 1. That Cabinet note the contents of this report and approves the draft Empty Homes Policy attached at Annex 1 to the report.**
- 2. That Cabinet approves delegated authority to the Head of Housing & Environmental Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing & Environmental Health, to make minor amendments to the Empty Homes Policy.**

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### **Exclusion of the Public**

#### **Resolved:**

**That, pursuant to Regulation 4 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting for the consideration of the following report on the following matters on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in the following Paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, indicated below. The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information for the reason given below:**

**Valley Housing Business Plan**

**Paragraph 3**

It is considered that this report contains exempt information within the meaning of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended. It is further considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because the information relates to the financial or business affairs of both the Council and third parties.

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**Valley Housing Matters**

Consideration was given to a report of the Finance Portfolio Holder which presented details of the Valley Housing Ltd Business Plan.

Having considered the options and for the reasons set out in the report, Cabinet agreed to the following:

**Resolved:**

**That the Valley Housing Ltd business plan, attached in the Annex to the report, be approved.**

(The meeting terminated at 5.55 pm)