



Minutes of the extraordinary meeting held on Wednesday 16 January 2013 at 6.00 pm

Present:-

Councillor Mike Thompson (Mayor) in the Chair

Councillors Caroline Ansell, Margaret Bannister, Colin Belsey, Janet Coles, Alun Cooke, Philip Ede, David Elkin, Jon Harris, Carolyn Heaps, Pat Hearn, Sandie Howlett, Gordon Jenkins, Tom Liddiard, Gill Mattock, Harun Miah, Jim Murray, Alan Shuttleworth, Barry Taylor, Troy Tester, David Tutt, John Ungar, Steve Wallis, Patrick Warner and Annabelle West.

- 50. Former councillors – minute silence.** The Council observed a minute silence in respect of two former councillors, Honorary Alderman Winifred Ouzman and Honorary Alderman Peter Harffey, both of whom had recently died.

Winifred Ouzman was elected to the former County Borough of Eastbourne on 11 May 1970 for the Ratton ward and served till that Council's dissolution on 31 March 1974. She was then elected to the Borough of Eastbourne on 11 June 1973 for the Ratton ward, re-elected on 10 May 1976 for the Ocklynge ward, and retired on 7 May 1979. She was made an Honorary Alderman on 30 July 1979.

Peter Harffey was elected for the Upperton ward on 25 March 1982. He served until he retired on 6 May 1991. He was made an Honorary Alderman on 19 August 1991.

- 51. Apologies for absence.** Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Murdoch and Stanley.
- 52. Declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) by members as required under Section 31 of the Localism Act and of other interests as required by the Code of Conduct.** No interests were declared.
- 53. Local council tax reduction scheme and discounts and exemptions policy.** The Council received the report of the Senior Head of Community to consider and approve a new scheme for Council Tax Reduction and a new Policy for Discounts and Exemptions. This was in the light of there no longer being a national Council Tax Benefits system from 1 April 2013 and the consequential requirement for the Council to introduce its own Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

There were currently 10,000 council tax benefit cases in Eastbourne with a total cost of £10m. Government funding under the new arrangement would see a 10% shortfall in the required funding and it was for local authorities to determine how to manage that funding reduction. Further, it was reported that of the 10,000 Eastbourne cases, 5,300 were in respect of pensioners

who were protected under the rules, meaning that the shortfall would have to be generated from the remaining 4,700 cases of working age claimants.

Given the scale of the task, the five district and borough councils in East Sussex had worked collaboratively to devise a county-wide scheme that took advantage of the opportunities presented from the changes to discounts and exemptions to mitigate the financial affect on those claimants who would be affected by the 10% cut in funding.

The report set out 3 options for consideration by the Council, all of which had been subject to equality and fairness analyses. The proposed draft transitional grant scheme (option 2 in the report) was being recommended by all districts and boroughs and had been the subject of consultation with major preceptors, interested parties and all claimants. 170 responses had been received in respect of consultation on the proposed scheme and 71 responses in respect of consultation on proposed discounts and exemptions. The majority feedback in both cases was in support of the proposals.

Having regard to the consultation and the equality and fairness analysis, option 2 was now presented to the Council for approval. It was considered that this scheme best achieved equality and fairness, was widely supported, and qualified for the one-year transitional grant being offered by the Government with a value of £234k to Eastbourne Borough Council. It was also a feature of the proposed new Eastbourne scheme to extend 'run-ons' from 4 to 8 weeks to provide additional support to help people return to work. It was estimated that adoption of this proposed scheme would result in a year 1 funding shortfall of £10,000. Details of how the scheme would operate were set out in the report together with a time-line leading to annual billing in March 2013. If approved, due to this being a new and untested scheme, it was intended that there would be a review for year 2.

It was moved by Councillor Tutt, seconded by Councillor Elkin, and;

Resolved:

- (1) That the proposed Local Council Tax Support Scheme for Eastbourne Borough Council be approved.
- (2) That delegated authority be granted to the Senior Head of Community in consultation with the Chief Finance Officer to make minor amendments to the text of the final scheme.
- (3) That, accordingly, the "Eastbourne Borough Council - Council Tax Reduction Scheme s13A and Schedule1A of the Local Government Finance Act 1992" as set out in Appendix G to the report, be made.
- (4) That the Chief Finance Officer be authorised to take all appropriate steps to implement and administer the scheme, including:
 - (a) publishing the scheme in accordance with statutory requirements

- (b) applying for any funding for which the Council may be eligible
- (c) responding to any other government initiatives or consultation exercises
- (5) That the Monitoring Officer be authorised to make suitable amendments to the Council's Constitution to reflect the council's new functions in relation to council tax reduction schemes.
- (6) That the discount for second homes be set at 0%.
- (7) That the discount exemption for dwellings in Class A be set at 50%.
- (8) That the exemption for dwellings in Class C at a discount of 100% for a period of one month be approved.
- (9) That a premium of 50% be set for dwellings empty and unfurnished for more than two years which are not being actively marketed for sale or rent.
- (10) That extended 'run-ons' from 4 to 8 weeks be approved to provide additional support to help people return to work.
- (11) That the Senior Head of Community and his staff be thanked for their work in designing the scheme and reporting it to Council.

54. Business Rate Income for 2013/14. Councillor Gill Mattock reported on this matter on behalf of the Cabinet. It was moved by Councillor Mattock, seconded by Councillor Elkin, and;

Resolved: That delegated authority be granted to the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the lead Cabinet member for finance, to determine the final amounts for business rate income for 2013/14 and subsequent years.

The meeting closed at 6.25pm

**Councillor Michael John Thompson,
Mayor, Chairman**

(pf:council\13.01.16\mins)