

TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Monday, 9 December 2013

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Whittingham (Chair)	
	Councillors	RL Abbey	J Hale
		P Gilchrist	C Muspratt
		C Blakeley	L Rowlands
		P Glasman	J Salter
		R Gregson	A Sykes
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	P Brightmore (in place of M Patrick)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	A Jones	A McLachlan
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillor	M Johnston	

21 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

Members were reminded that they should also declare whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

No such declarations were made.

22 MINUTES

A Member, referring to minute 19, 'Minutes' commented that she had not received anything in writing from the Interim Head of ICT as yet on the security of the Wrap2 system. The Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources, apologised for the delay and assured the Committee that he would follow this up with the Director of Resources.

Resolved – That the minutes of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee of 6 November, 2013 be approved.

BUDGET OPTIONS - CONSULTATION RESULTS

The Committee considered a report on the results of the budget consultation and received a presentation from Kevin MacCallum, Marketing and Engagement Manager, Neighbourhoods and Engagement, on the key points. A total of 6,520 responses had been received, 5,283 from residents and 1,094 from members of staff. Some of these responses would have been from both residents and staff.

The Chair reminded the Committee that these were currently officer budget options and Cabinet would be making recommendations in respect of these at its meeting on 10 December.

The Chair then invited the Committee to comment.

Councillor Hale expressed disagreement to the option in respect of the 'Council Tax Over 70s Discount' and also with the option to limit the discount to those in Council Tax bands A, B and C as there were residents who might be asset rich but were in fact cash poor.

Councillor Blakeley queried the small number of responses as a percentage of the Borough's residents and that an assumption could not be made as to the views of the vast majority of residents who didn't fill out a questionnaire. He expressed concern with the option, 'Managing the Money' in respect of that part of this option to implement charges for credit and debit card payments. No transaction charges should be introduced and the £38,000 should be taken out of this proposed option.

Councillor Rowlands expressed concern at the poor response rate from businesses and Kevin MacCallum confirmed that there was not usually a good response; he would examine how this could be improved for future years.

Responding to comments from Councillor Gilchrist, Malcolm Flanagan, Head of Business Processes, informed the Committee that the authority decided the criteria for any local Council Tax discounts and the percentage. The software system in use would only allow one type of discount and introducing a tapered discount would be difficult to administer for the current 13,000 recipients.

Responding to comments from Councillor Sykes, Kevin MacCallum confirmed that all returned questionnaires were taken account of and the Council relied on the honesty of respondents who chose not to give their postcode that they were resident in Wirral.

Kevin MacCallum gave the approximate figures for previous years' responses as follows:

- 5,600 in 2010
- 1700 in 2011 (using the budget simulator method)
- 6500 in 2012
- 6500 in 2013

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Brightmore –

“(1) That this Committee notes the result of the consultation.

(2) That the members of the public, staff and stakeholders be thanked for their participation.”

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Hale, seconded by Councillor Rowlands –

“(1) That the Cabinet be recommended:

- (i). not to implement the option of implementing charges for credit and debit card payments and:
- (ii). not to implement the option to discontinue the council tax discount for the over 70s.

(2) That the members of the public, staff and stakeholders be thanked for their participation.”

The amendment was put and lost (5:7) (Councillors Blakeley, Hale, Rowlands and Sykes voting for the amendment)

The motion was put and carried (7:4) (One abstention)

Resolved (7:4) (One abstention) (Councillors Blakeley, Hale, Rowlands and Sykes voting against) –

(1) That this Committee notes the result of the consultation.

(2) That the members of the public, staff and stakeholders be thanked for their participation.