

## **NORTHUMBERLAND COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **CORPORATE SERVICES AND ECONOMIC GROWTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

At a meeting of the **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee** held in Committee Room 1, County Hall, Morpeth on Monday, 17 December 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

#### **PRESENT**

Councillor D. Bawn  
(Chairman in the Chair)

#### **COUNCILLORS**

Beynon, J.  
Cessford, T.  
Parry, K.

Robinson, M.  
Roughead, G.

#### **PORTFOLIO HOLDERS**

Oliver, N.  
Wearmouth, R.

Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary  
Economic Development

#### **OFFICERS**

A. Elsdon  
G. Barnes  
S. Nicholson

Service Director - Finance  
Revenues and Benefits Manager  
Scrutiny Co-ordinator

**Councillor: G. Hill**

**Press: 1**

#### **37. MEMBERSHIP**

The Committee were advised that Councillors T. Cessford and C. Seymour had replaced Councillors G. Castle and M. Swinburn as members of the Committee.

#### **38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillors L. Grimshaw, C. Seymour, E. Simpson and T. Wilson.

### **39. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Services and Economic Growth OSC held on 22 October 2018, as circulated, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **40. FORWARD PLAN**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator presented the latest Forward Plan of key decisions (January - March 2019). (Schedule enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix A).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **41. CABINET REPORTS PREVIOUSLY CONSIDERED BY THE COMMITTEE**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised members of Cabinet decisions regarding issues previously commented on and been subject of report by this Committee. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix B).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **42. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS**

#### **Approval of the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20**

The purpose of this report was to seek Cabinet approval for the local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019-20. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix C).

The report was presented to the Committee by Councillor Nick Oliver, Cabinet Member: Corporate Services and Cabinet Secretary. He then responded to comments from members as follows:

- consultation - the advice from the Communications Team was that consulting 1000 council tax payer by direct mail would provide a statistically meaningful response, the level of which had been good. Letters had been sent to addresses across the whole of the county and those selected were proportionate to those paying the full council tax and those benefiting from the support scheme;
- although he could not be certain of the proposed savings, he was confident that they could be achieved based on the experience of other authorities and the accuracy regarding the number of claimants affected by the proposals. He acknowledged that his ultimate aim was to create the conditions for better employment opportunities in the county and for claimants to be better

prepared and trained to access those jobs, thereby reducing the need for the scheme, and

- there was concern regarding the introduction of the changes coinciding with the rollout of Universal Credit in the county. There was a suggestion that those in receipt of Universal Credit should be protected in the first year of the proposed increase, and that the changes should be deferred until the full impact of the move to Universal Credit was known. However, Councillor Oliver advised members that although the Administration was keen to protect the Council Tax Support Scheme, savings had to be identified without seeking to reduce services elsewhere. The rollout of Universal Credit only affected new claimants, which was a relatively small number of those benefiting from the scheme.

**RESOLVED** that the comments of the Committee, as set out above, be presented to the Cabinet when it considers the report on 19 December 2018.

#### **43. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY REPORT**

##### **Debt Recovery Update**

The purpose of this report was to provide the Committee with information relating to the level of outstanding debt owed to the Council, so that the members may satisfy themselves as to the efficiency and effectiveness of its collection and recovery policies and systems. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix D).

The Committee were advised that the impact of the rollout of Universal Credit on council tax collection rates was considered to be very small as it would only affect those who had had a change of circumstances. With regard to the managed migration to Universal Credit, members were advised that although no date had been set for the transfer to it, it could be brought in as late as 2023.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

#### **44. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY CO-ORDINATOR**

##### **Corporate Services and Economic Growth Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme**

The Committee were asked to review and note its work programme for the 2018/19 council year. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix E).

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the meeting scheduled for 7 January 2019 be cancelled.

#### **45. INFORMATION REPORT - POLICY DIGEST**

The Scrutiny Co-ordinator advised the Committee that the Policy Digest provided

details of the latest policy briefings, government announcements and ministerial speeches which may be of interest to members. The report could be accessed through the service finder element of County Council's website at [www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk).

**RESOLVED** that the information be noted.

#### 46. EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

**RESOLVED** that

- (a) under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the Agenda as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the 1972 Act, and
- (b) the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosure for the following reasons:

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>Paragraph of Part I of Schedule 12A</b>
13	<p>3 - This report contains information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).</p> <p>The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the interest in disclosure because disclosure would prejudice the Port of Blyth's ability to negotiate with partners and give its competitors a commercial advantage.</p>

#### 47. SCRUTINY OF CABINET REPORTS

##### **East Sleekburn Enterprise Zone**

This report was presented by Councillor Richard Wearmouth, Cabinet Member: Economic Development which would update the Cabinet on emerging investment interest and associated economic outputs at the NEP1 Enterprise Zone at East Sleekburn. (Report enclosed with the signed minutes as Appendix F).

The Committee discussed funding arrangements, potential land use and training and employment opportunities.

**RESOLVED** that the Cabinet be advised that the Committee noted the report and that members would have the opportunity to comment further at the Council meeting on 9 January 2019.

Chairman \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_