

# Public Document Pack



## Doncaster Council

### **EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS DECISION RECORD**

The following decisions were taken on Tuesday, 15th October, 2019 by Cabinet.

Date notified to all Members: Thursday, 17th October, 2019

The end of the call in period is 5.00 p.m. on Monday, 28th October, 2019 and therefore, the decisions can be implemented on Tuesday, 29th October, 2019.

Present:

Chair - Mayor Ros Jones (Mayor of Doncaster with responsibility for Budget and Policy Framework.)

Vice-Chair - Councillor Glyn Jones (Deputy Mayor, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Equalities.)

#### **Cabinet Member for:**

Councillor Nigel Ball	Portfolio Holder for Public Health, Leisure and Culture
Councillor Joe Blackham	Portfolio Holder for Highways, Street Scene and Trading Services
Councillor Rachael Blake	Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care
Councillor Nuala Fennelly	Portfolio Holder for Children, Young People and Schools
Councillor Chris McGuinness	Portfolio Holder for Communities, Voluntary Sector and the Environment
Councillor Bill Mordue	Portfolio Holder for Business, Skills and Economic Development
Councillor Jane Nightingale	Portfolio Holder for Customer and Corporate Services.

### **PUBLIC MEETING – SCHEDULE OF DECISIONS**

#### Public Questions and Statements

No public questions or statements were made at the meeting.

Decision records dated 1st October, 2019, be noted.

## **DECISION 1.**

### **1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE**

6. Transforming Cities Phase 2: Seeking approval to submit Sheffield City Region bid for transport interventions in Doncaster, to the Department for Transport. If successful, approval to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently draw down funding

### **2. DECISION TAKEN**

Cabinet:-

1. approved the Council submitting the funding bid for Transforming Cities Phase 2;
2. noted that further work will be undertaken on match funding available and the remaining balance will be funded from the Council's Capital Programme, due to be approved in March 2020;
3. delegated the final design of the specific schemes in the phase 2 programme to the Director of Economy and Environment, in consultation with the Mayor and Portfolio Holder; and
4. if the bid is successful, negotiating and agreeing the terms and conditions, the decision to enter into a funding agreement with Sheffield City Region and subsequently drawing down the funding be delegated to the Director of Economy and Environment, and Section 151 Officer, in consultation with the Mayor.

### **3. REASON FOR DECISION**

Cabinet considered a report seeking approval to submit the Sheffield City Region (SCR) strategic outline business case to the Department for Transport (DfT), for transport interventions in Doncaster. The report also sought that if successful, approval be given to enter into a funding agreement with SCR and subsequently draw down funding.

It was reported that the Transforming Cities Funding (TCF) bid is up to £49.4m of transport improvement schemes for across Doncaster. The Council is determined to invest in schemes to help residents get to and from places across the borough. The schemes will improve public transport for residents and communities, support job creation and deliver economic growth. It will also help cut journey times and improve punctuality and reliability of public transport, and bring about a wide range of benefits associated with active travel.

It was emphasised that Doncaster was required to conform to the Central Government Funding Formula and the routing system of the scheme, which was presented at paragraph 8 of the report. This formula determines the specific areas where funding can be used.

Whilst other areas of the borough will not be included in this funding arrangement, the Council would continue to seek further funding for future schemes.

Cabinet welcomed the report and were pleased to see that Doncaster was investing in the active travel network by enhancing existing, or creating new, cycling and walking routes to enable people to come to and from the borough whilst keeping healthy.

**4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

Do nothing – Failure to submit the funding bid will result in Doncaster not benefiting from potential investment.

**5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

**6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

**7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Peter Dale, Director of Economy and Environment.

**DECISION 2.**

**1. AGENDA ITEM NUMBER AND TITLE**

7. To Review the Council Tax Long-term Empty Homes Premium

**2. DECISION TAKEN**

Cabinet approved the proposals to increase the Council Tax long-term empty homes premium as follows:-

- From 1 April 2020: to increase the premium to 100% for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 2 years;
- From 1 April 2020: to increase the premium to 200% for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 5 years; and
- From 1 April 2021: to increase the premium to 300% for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for more than 10 years.

**3. REASON FOR DECISION**

Cabinet considered a report outlining that the Local Government Finance Act 2012 introduced powers for local authorities to charge an additional premium of 50% Council Tax on properties that had been empty for more than 2 years, i.e. 150% charge. Since April 2013, Doncaster Council has charged 150% Council Tax on

these properties.

It is proposed that Doncaster Council increases the Council Tax long-term empty premium from 1 April 2020 and 1 April 2021, in line with the new powers introduced in April 2019. The proposals are aimed at encouraging owners to bring empty properties back into use to provide much-needed additional housing for Doncaster's residents, and reduce some of the issues associated with long-term empty properties, such as vandalism and nuisance.

It was noted that the proposals were initially expected to apply to around 600 properties in the borough, and the Council and St Leger Homes will work with property owners, providing appropriate advice and support to enable them to bring the properties back into use wherever possible, and so avoid paying the premium charges. Where owners choose not to bring their properties back into use, the increased Council Tax will generate savings and help to balance the budget.

Cabinet welcomed the report and were pleased to see that the Council and St Leger Homes were offering support to property owners. It was important to emphasise paragraph 12 of the report, which stated that the premium would not apply to those properties left unoccupied by a person who has moved to residential care, thus avoiding vulnerability. It is hoped that by bringing empty properties back into use, it will help tackle the increasing numbers of homelessness within the borough. Members also noted that having existing properties empty did not reflect well when introducing new homes to the market. The proposal to bring 600 properties back into use would have a positive effect on housing stock available within the Borough.

#### **4. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

##### Option 1

Do nothing – Local Authorities are not obliged to charge a Council Tax premium on long-term empty properties, or set the premium in line with the maximum rates allowed. The Council could decide to retain the existing premium of 50% for all properties that have been empty for more than two years. However, this would be less of an incentive for owners to bring the properties back into use. This option would also be a missed opportunity to generate additional revenue from Council Tax receipts from owners who choose not to bring the properties back into use. This option is not recommended.

##### Option 2

Set the empty homes premium at a level lower than the maximum permitted. The Council could decide to charge a lower percentage premium than the regulations allow. However, as option 1, depending on the level set, this would be less of an incentive for owners to bring the properties back into use. This option would also generate less additional revenue from Council Tax receipts from owners who choose not to bring the properties back into use at a time of extreme budget pressures. This option would also be out of line with the majority of authorities across the country. This option is not recommended.

#### **5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

There were no declarations.

**6. IF EXEMPT, REASON FOR EXEMPTION**

Not Exempt.

**7. DIRECTOR RESPONSIBLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Debbie Hogg, Director of Corporate Resources.

Signed.....Chair/Decision Maker

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