

REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF GROWTH AND PROSPERITY SCRUTINY PANEL

TO
CITY MAYOR AND CABINET
ON

22 MARCH 2022

TITLE: Referral back from Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Panel in respect of the City Mayor's Decision of 14 February 2022 on Rent and Service Charge Setting for 2022/23 – council owned stock managed by Pendleton Together and the Duchy Caravan Park

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The City Mayor is requested to:

Note the concerns of the Growth and Prosperity Panel and reconsider his decision in respect of Rent and Service Charge Setting for 2022/23 – council owned stock managed by Pendleton Together and the Duchy Caravan Park.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

At its meeting on 28 February 2022, the Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Panel received a call-in of the City Mayor's decision made on 14 February 2022 on Rent and Service Charge Setting for 2022/23 – council owned stock managed by Pendleton Together and Duchy Caravan Park.

The Panel decided to refer the decision back to the City Mayor for reconsideration on the basis that it was concerned that the increased service charges and rent are not proportionate to the service received based on the reduced services and facilities received over the last five years.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Agenda for Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Panel of 28 February 2022.

KEY DECISION: YES

DETAILS:

Following consultation with Cabinet at a Cabinet Meeting on 7 February 2022, the City Mayor made a decision on 14 February 2022 on Rent and Service Charge Setting for 2022/23 – council owned stock managed by Pendleton Together and Duchy Caravan Park as follows:

“Rent and Services Charge Setting for 2022/23

1. An increase of 4.1% for rents in 2022/23 for the Pendleton PFI stock
2. Adjustments to Pendleton PFI service charges in line with the costs of providing those services as detailed in section 3 of the report
3. The creation of a hardship fund for the PFI stock to support households who are in financial difficulties, utilising up to £216k from the additional income for 2022/23
4. An increase of 4.9% for rents in 2022/23 for the Duchy Caravan Site
5. The implementation of a service charge to tenants at Duchy Caravan Site during 2022/23, subject to a detailed further report for decision by the Lead Member for Housing, Property and Regeneration “

The Monitoring Officer received a request from two members of the Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Panel to call-in the City Mayor’s decision. The call-in was accepted as valid and, in line with the Constitution, was added to the agenda for the next meeting of the Panel’.

At its meeting on 28 February 2022, the Growth and Prosperity Scrutiny Panel decided to refer the decision back to the City Mayor for reconsideration. The Panel’s reasons for its decision are stated as the increased service charges and rent not being proportionate to the service received based on the reduced services and facilities received over the last five years.

During the meeting the Panel raised concerns that since the refurbishment of these properties many have been left in a state of disrepair that include badly fitting windows, fire doors with gaps, asbestos not removed in some floors, considerable delay in removing unsafe external cladding following which new cladding has not yet been installed together with appropriate heat installation. Given the increase costs of heating which has not been offset by additional payments the Panel believes that this should have been taken into account when assessing whether an increase in rent and service charge was appropriate or indeed proportionate.

Minutes of the Growth and Prosperity Board Meeting of 28 February 2022 will be available for the City Mayor and Cabinet to review.

KEY COUNCIL POLICIES:

N/A to this report

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND IMPLICATIONS:

N/A to this report, any considerations will be picked up in reports dealing directly with the City Mayor's decision.

ASSESSMENT OF RISK:

N/A to this report, any considerations will be picked up in reports dealing directly with the City Mayor's decision.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Iolanda Puzio, City Solicitor

The Constitution states that, where a decision is referred back to the decision maker by a Scrutiny Panel following a call-in, the decision maker shall reconsider their decision and may amend the decision or not, before adopting a final decision. The final decision will come into force immediately, no further call-in of that decision is permitted.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS Supplied by: Paul Hutchings

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report. Any relevant considerations will be picked up in reports dealing with the City Mayor's decision.

PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS Supplied by:

N/A to this report, any considerations will be picked up in reports dealing directly with the City Mayor's decision.

HR IMPLICATIONS Supplied by:

N/A to this report, any considerations will be picked up in reports dealing directly with the City Mayor's decision.

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS Supplied by:

N/A to this report, any considerations will be picked up in reports dealing directly with the City Mayor's decision.

OTHER DIRECTORATES CONSULTED:

None

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WARDS TO WHICH REPORT RELATES:

Pendleton and Charlestown