

## **COUNCIL – 1 MARCH 2019**

### **STATEMENT BY COUNCILLOR SANDRA TURNER**

#### **CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITIES**

#### **LOCAL TAXATION**

##### **Business Rates Retail Discount**

In the budget on 29 October 2018 the Government advised that a discount in business rates payable of one third would be available to retail occupied premises that had a Rateable Value of £51,000 or less. We are waiting for the software to enable this discount to be applied and estimate around 550 businesses will benefit from the reduction. The relief will be automatically awarded without the need for an application form for the 2019/20 and 2020/21 financial years only and it is intended that the 2019/20 annual bills will include the reduction when issued.

##### **Long term empty Council Tax properties**

Council Tax legislation allowed local authorities to charge a maximum 50% Council Tax premium in addition to the 100% Council Tax charge in relation to any long term empty domestic dwelling. Long term empty was classified as a dwelling which had been empty and unfurnished for 2 years or more. Scarborough Borough Council determined with Member approval that the 50% Council Tax premium should be charged from 1 April 2013 resulting in a 150% Council Tax charge. New legislation has enabled the council to increase these premiums as follows:

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 a 100% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 2 years or more. This will result in a 200% Council Tax charge.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 a 200% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 5 years or more. This will result in a 300% Council Tax charge.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 a 300% premium for properties that have been empty and unfurnished for 10 years or more. This will result in a 400% Council Tax charge.

All Council Tax payers affected by the increase in the premium from 50% to 100% from 1 April 2019 have been contacted to inform them of this increase which will be reflected in their 2019/20 annual bills.

##### **Single Person Discount Review**

During August 2018 the Local Taxation service started a review of Ryedale's 7,665 and Scarborough's 19,738 Council Tax single person discounts. Working with Datatank the Council matched the discounts against credit bureau data and this highlighted properties where financial activity for two or more adults is present. The review is now complete and 558 Scarborough single person discounts have been removed with a value of £213,409. The service is now considering a rolling review of single person discounts to ensure they are correctly applied.

## **CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES**

January has seen the Community Impact Team out in the community raising awareness of the risks associated with County Lines (organised crime groups which exploit vulnerable local young people and adults for drug dealing). Multi agency patrols have also been undertaken in key locations in the Borough to provide reassurance and to engage with communities experiencing issues with crime and anti-social behaviour.

The North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner has undertaken a survey of neighbourhood policing. Scarborough, and particularly the Community Impact Team approach come out of this survey extremely well. Overall across North Yorkshire levels of satisfaction and confidence were relatively low. However, the report highlights two areas that consistently stand out from the others as Scarborough and Richmondshire. The report notes that the “benefits of collaboration in Scarborough, namely the Community Impact Team, are very clear indeed” , with “the level and type of engagement, understanding of local needs and response of local teams to policing issues having a real and positive impact on residents”. As the report acknowledges, for Scarborough this is delivered within the context of higher levels of actual crime and higher levels of people who have directly been a victim of crime or ASB. This is a positive endorsement of the local approach and whilst there is certainly no complacency, this report reflects well on the local neighbourhood policing teams and the Council’s community safety team, as well as the range of other partners who contribute to the team.

## **HUMAN RESOURCES**

### **Implementation of the new National Pay Spine**

In April 2018 the Trade Unions had accepted a two year national pay deal for staff employed on Local Government Services (LGS) conditions and this was subsequently implemented by the Council. The two year deal also included the introduction of a revised national pay spine which the Council is required to implement from 1 April 2019.

The new pay spine not only ensures that the national pay spine is legally compliant with the National Living Wage (NLW) but also future proofed in order to absorb yearly increases in the NLW rate, enable pay differentials to be maintained and remove any equal pay issues.

The process for assimilation to the new pay spine has now been discussed and a collective agreement signed with the recognised Trade Unions. The approach focuses on ensuring that the method used is beneficial to as many people as possible and in line with the agreement all staff will therefore receive a pay award of at least 2%. A number of enhanced payments are also linked to the national pay spine and these will also be revised to reflect the new rates.

The Human Resources Services are now in the process of making the necessary arrangements to implement the changes with effect from 1 April 2019.

## **PROMOTING DEMOCRACY**

### **Single Use Plastics Logo Competition**

Members will be aware that we have been running a competition for children to design a logo to encourage residents and businesses in the Borough to consider using alternatives to single use plastics and celebrate our very special Borough. The logo will be used on the Council's refuse collection vehicles, signage and promotional material. I would like to congratulate all the entrants for the fantastic effort and the very high standard of entries we have received. The completed entries are in the corridor and I would encourage all councillors to vote for their favourite.

### **Cabinet Members' visits to schools**

As part of the youth engagement work, Cabinet Members have visited seven schools in the Borough, both primary and secondary. We discussed issues important to the young people of our Borough and were delighted with the enthusiasm shown by the children for their local area. Our next schools council is for young people aged 14 to 18 and takes place on 26 March. We are looking forward to welcoming the students from Scalby, Graham and Caedmon Schools, who have been asked to present their ideas for the future of our town centres.

### **Eco-Champions**

Our Eco-Champions Scheme for Schools will launch soon and I would ask all Members to encourage their local schools to join the scheme and gain recognition for their good work on sustainability issues.

## **EMPLOYMENT & SKILLS**

### **Sirius Foundation**

The Foundation has currently awarded funds to seven projects across the Yorkshire and Teesside area. The projects all provide education programmes designed to enhance local people's skills, which is one of the core aims of the Foundation.

From the borough of Scarborough beneficiaries included:

- YMCA Scarborough 'Youth Matters'
- SASH in Whitby and Scarborough
- Age UK
- Northern Regeneration CIC
- Community Furniture Store Ryedale in Scarborough

Further information can be found at <https://siriusminerals.com/latest-news/news-stories/sirius-foundation-awards-second-funding-round/>

### **York Potash update**

Works on the shafts at Woodsmith mine are progressing well and on track for first production of polyhalite in 2021. Work has ramped up at the northern end of the project at the Wilton site with the tunnel portal being constructed ready for the launch of the first tunnel boring machine which is due to arrive on site in the coming days. There are currently 900 people working on the Sirius Project – at the head office in Scarborough, Woodsmith Mine near Whitby, Lockwood Beck in East Cleveland and Wilton. Two thirds of the workforce are from the local area, which is in excess of the 35% estimated during planning. This includes 200 people from Scarborough Borough, the vast majority of whom are working at Resolution House in Scarborough

or the mine site. The rest of the local workforce is made up of people from elsewhere in North Yorkshire and Teesside. In November, Sirius launched its programme to create 50 new engineering apprenticeships. Over 400 people attended three information sessions held in Whitby, Scarborough and Middlesbrough. Recruitment has begun to select the first ten to start in September 2019, with applications open until the end of April. The four-year apprenticeship to train Advanced Engineering Technicians will be run in partnership with TTE Technical Training Group. Sirius will be providing transport from Scarborough and Whitby for its apprentices.