

Report of the Head of Governance and Scrutiny Support

Report to Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources)

Date: 29 November 2017

Subject: Business Rates – Scrutiny Inquiry Update

Are specific electoral wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

Purpose

1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the Boards inquiry into business rates.

Background

2. At the beginning of the municipal year, the Scrutiny Board identified 'Business Rates' as a specific inquiry topic.
3. At its meeting in September 2017, the Scrutiny Board considered a range of information associated with it inquiry around business rates, the associated risks to the Council and mitigating actions. At that meeting the Board identified the need for a range of follow-up / additional information, which has already been provided to members of the Board.

Main Issues

4. The information attached at Appendix 1 (presented as presentation slides) is intended to summarise the key information presented and requested by the Scrutiny Board to date.

Next Steps

5. As part of the inquiry, arrangements are being finalised for members of the Scrutiny Board to attend and observe a Valuation Tribunal Hearing on 12 December 2017. The

outcome of this attendance will be reported back to the Scrutiny Board. Any further details in this regard will be presented at the meeting.

6. Following attendance at Valuation Tribunal Hearing, it is proposed that members of the Scrutiny Board meet with representatives of the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) at a working group meeting. This will provide an opportunity for Scrutiny Board members to better understand the role of the VOA and consider any associated matters relevant to the collection of Business Rates. Precise details of the working group meeting remain to be finalised and any further information in this regard will be presented at the meeting.
7. The information presented at Appendix 1 is therefore presented in preparation for the next steps of the inquiry.
8. It should be noted that representatives from the VOA will be unable to attend the Board due to existing commitments elsewhere. It should also be noted that the Council's Business Rates Manager will not be in attendance at the meeting.
9. Members of the Scrutiny Board are therefore asked to note the information presented, recognising there will be the opportunity to discuss any specific matters in more detail at a future meeting with representatives from the VOA.

Recommendations

10. Scrutiny Board (Strategy and Resources) is asked to note the information presented in Appendix 1 and the proposed next steps highlighted in the report.

Background documents¹

11. None.

¹ The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.