

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 21 September 2010, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor E M H Ranson (Chairman)

Councillors:

D Eccleston	A Knox
J B Hill	J Rogerson
K Hind	R E Sherras
S Hirst	R J Thompson
J Holgate	N Walsh

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Development Services, Director of Community Services and Partnerships Officer.

326 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Croasdale, D T Smith and J S Sutcliffe.

327 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 June 2010 were agreed as a correct record with the amendment to Minute 103 regarding resolution 1 which would now read "Ribble Valley Borough Council agree to lend £360,000 to Roefield"; and

Resolution 2 would now read "the Director of Resources be authorised to borrow £360,000 for this purpose from the Public Works Loan Board".

With those amendments the Minutes were duly agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

328 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Roefield Update

The Chief Executive gave Members a verbal update in relation to the efforts which he and the Legal Services Manager had undertaken in securing the Council's investment. He commented that a legal agreement had been drawn up in relation to terms and conditions which the Council wished Roefield to abide by in relation to the loan. He also commented that the extension works had now started and the first instalment of the loan had been drawn down by Roefield. He also commented on arrangements which had been made in relation to any default which might occur on the loan.

329 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Declarations of a non-pecuniary interest were made by Councillors Hill, Knox, Thompson and Walsh in relation to Agenda item 13 and by Councillor Knox in relation to Agenda item 25(b).

330 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

331 REFERENCE FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no references from Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

332 RIBBLE VALLEY STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Director of Development Services presented his report which sought the approval of Committee to the Strategic Partnerships report on the ratification of the action plan for the Sustainable Community Strategy, the allocation of funds derived from the discounted second homes Council Tax for 2009/10 and the recommendation from the board and the allocation of those funds for 2010/11 and revisions to be made to the allocation of Performance Reward Grant for 2010/11, as a result of the extra monies that had been made available to the board because of the under-spend in the Mobile Resource Centre which was now a shared facility with Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils.

Councillor Ranson reminded Committee that the Council had received a contribution of £5,000 to the recent Clitheroe Street Market. He also referred to the possibility that the allocation of funds towards the Tourist Information Kiosk may not be required for that specific purpose and if so the funds would be utilised for other tourism related purposes.

Committee then considered the Performance Reward Grant funding and the discounted second homes Council Tax funding for 2009/10 and 2010/11. Members commented in relation to the QEII playing fields at Whalley, the Hydro Energy Initiative, the Green Doctor Casebook and Steven Park and dog waste bins.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. endorse the Ribble Valley Sustainable Community Strategy Action Plan for 2010/11 as approved by the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership Board on the 7 June 2010;
2. note the allocation of funds for 2009/10 and approve the recommendations of the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership Board for 2010/11 of funds derived from the discounted Council Tax on second homes as recommended by the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership Board on the 13 July and 13 September 2010; and
3. approve the revised allocation of funds from the performance Reward Grant following changes to the funding needs of the Mobile Resource Centre as approved by the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership Board on the 7 June 2010.

333 REVENUE BUDGET FORECAST UPDATE 2010/11 – 2014/15

The Director of Resources gave Committee her latest budget forecast, which took the following matters into consideration:

- public sector pay;
- changes in National Insurance;
- Local Government grant funding;
- Council Tax.

She commented that there were still many unknown factors including the likely amounts by which Government grants would be cut. There were also issues around the building control reserve, freezes in Council Tax, new homes bonus, concessionary travel and staff restructuring.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

334 SHARED SERVICE CONTACT CENTRE

The Director of Resources presented a progress report on the work being undertaken by the Contact Centre over the last 6 months.

The report looked at staffing numbers and diversity of calls, calls dealt with at first point of contact and speed with which queries were being dealt with.

Members were full of praise for the work of the Contact Centre and felt that it was being run extremely efficiently.

The Leader of the Council reminded Committee that the Council needed to look at communications from a long-term point of view and commented that both the Chief Executive and the Director of Resources were currently investigating this aspect.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

335 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

The Director of Resources asked Committee to consider the increase in Members' allowances which were due from 1 October 2010 in line with the agreed scheme. Her report also asked them to agree to form an Independent Remuneration Panel to review the Members' allowance scheme in order to comply with legal requirements.

She reminded Members that the scheme stated that allowances should increase each October in line with the increase in the minimum wage. In 2009/10 Members had agreed to forego the increase as such allowances were frozen at the level for the previous year.

She also informed the Members that the Council needed to establish an Independent Remuneration Panel which was to make recommendations to the authority about allowances to be paid to Elected Members. The last review of

the Council's scheme of Members' allowances had taken place in 2007 and the Members of the panel were listed for Members' information.

She reminded Members that such a panel must consist of at least 3 Members none of whom was a Member of the authority in respect of which it makes recommendations or was a Member of a Committee or Sub-Committee of such an authority, or was disqualified from being or becoming a Member of that authority. She commented that in the past the Council had formed a new panel every 4 years, however she sought Members' views on this matter.

Members then discussed this matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That

1. Members agree to freeze the Members' allowances due to them in October 2010 at the present level; and
2. Committee agree to delegate to the Chief Executive to form a new panel in respect of independent remuneration.

336

RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Director of Resources asked Committee to consider the approval of the updated and revised Risk Management Policy document. She reminded Members that the Risk Management Policy had been originally approved in 2003 and there had been minor amendments in 2006, 2007 and 2009. A comprehensive review of the Policy had been undertaken and Committee were now being asked to consider that revised Policy.

Members were being asked to consider changing the financial criteria for green, amber and red risks as follows:

RISK	CURRENT	PROPOSED
High red	Member approval for virement or additional funds in excess of £10,000	Member approval for virement or additional funds in excess of £100,000
Medium amber	Financial impact not manageable within existing directorate budget and requiring the Director of Resources approval for virement or additional funds between £5,000 and £10,000	Financial impact not manageable within existing directorate budget and requiring the Director of Resources approval for virement or additional funds between £50,000 and £100,000
Low green	Possible financial impact manageable within directorate budget ie less than £5,000	Possible financial impact manageable within directorate budget ie less than £50,000

Other changes were regarding the terms of reference for reporting Risk Management to Committee. This would now be Accounts and Audit Committee rather than Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

She also commented that the Emergency Planning Officer had produced a District Emergency Planning Risk Register which Members were asked to consider whether they wished to form part of the Risk Management Policy or to be a standalone document.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the amendments to the Risk Management Policy and approve as set out above; and
2. note the production of the District Emergency Planning Risk Register and decide to incorporate this within the Risk Management Policy.

337 EQUITY AND EXCELLENCE LIBERATING THE NHS

The Chief Executive presented his report on the recently published Government White Paper entitled 'Equity and Excellence – Liberating the NHS'. The White Paper was currently out for consultation with comments to be received by the Government before the 5 October 2010. This matter had also been considered recently by the Health and Housing Committee.

The main points of the White Paper were around GP commissioning which would be changed so that it operated on a statutory basis and GP practices becoming part of a consortia which would need to have sufficient geographic focus. There was some debate currently on the size of such consortia. An NHS Commissioning Board would commission GPs and family health services such as dentistry, pharmacy and ophthalmic services. This board would have a duty to establish a comprehensive system of GP consortia and the power to assign practices. There was also an issue in relation to the future of Primary Care Trusts and Strategic Health Authorities with the public health element of the NHS being transferred to the top tier of Local Government. There was concern locally about these arrangements and a small sub-committee had been formed to ensure that such consortia worked for the benefits of the Ribble Valley area.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

338 REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE

The Director of Resources referred to discussions at Community Committee who had considered a request for one-off additional funding for the Clitheroe Castle Museum amounting to £13,410 which was submitted by the Community Development Manager at their meeting on 7 September 2010. The Community Development Manager had informed Committee that the capital scheme had been broken down into a number of elements and involved a range of contractors and consultants. One of the appointing contractors was Lancashire County Museums (LMS) whose main area of service was to fit out elements of the Museum as they had the necessary expertise. The Community Development Manager reported that following the completion of the capital scheme and on the understanding that all outstanding invoices had been received, the scheme was closed. However in June 2010 an invoice had been received from LMS relating to works carried out during the Museum fit out stage. Whilst the invoice did relate to work legitimately carried out on the project, it arrived a significant time

after the scheme was completed and accounted for. In order to pay the invoice, it would be appropriate to include it as a one-off supplementary estimate to the revenue budgets.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to finance the sum of £13,410 as a one-off amount from an under-spend on the 2010/11 concurrent function grants budget.

339 CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANTS

The Director of Resources reminded Committee that in November 2008 this Committee had approved a concurrent grant scheme. The Council agreed to support Parish and Town Councils net revenue expenditure in a number of areas of concurrent functions such as burial grounds, footpaths, dog-waste bins and parks and play areas. Support was set at a rate of 25% of eligible net revenue expenditure in the previous years subject to the overall cost to the Borough Council not exceeding £30,000 per annum.

On the 7 May 2010, all Parish Councils had been invited to bid into this fund. 20 applications have been received and net revenue expenditure to be supported total £63,789. Based on the grant rate of 25% the total amount of grant payable for 2010/11 would be £15,947 which was within the £30,000 provided in the budget for the current year.

The Director of Resources also voiced some concern about applications that had been received for this year's grant allocation for Parish Councils claiming for replacing items such as stone coping stones, fixing memorials, hiring tippers and diggers and playground improvements. The scheme did not cover capital expenditure or large one-off items and she recommended that whilst the grants should be approved for 2010/11 there was a need to clarify with Parish Councils the type of work that could be claimed in future under the scheme.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the allocation of grants as proposed in the report;
2. agree to the payment of the approved grants in single instalments rather than 2 instalments; and
3. agree to reiterate to Parish Councils that capital expenditure and large one-off items would not be supported under the scheme.

340 INSURANCE RENEWALS 2010/11

The Director of Resources reported to Committee on the insurance renewals for the period 20 June 2010 to 19 June 2011.

The Council's insurances were renewed on the 20 June 2010 under the terms of the 5-year long-term agreement. The net cost of premiums for 2010/11 was £128,369 compared with the £127,573 in 2009/10.

RESOLVED: The report be noted.

341 MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group from meetings held on 19 May, 23 June and 21 July 2010.

342 AGENDA PAPERS FROM THE PLACE MEETING

Committee received the agenda papers for the PLACE meetings held on 1 July and 26 August 2010.

343 TIMETABLE FOR BUDGET SETTING

Committee were informed of the timetable for setting the 2011/12 budget.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

344 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report detailing the following items:

- (a) National Non-Domestic Rates;
- (b) Council Tax;
- (c) sundry debtors;
- (d) housing benefits performance;
- (e) housing benefits right time indicator 2010/11;
- (f) housing benefit fraud;
- (g) housing benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

345 CAPITAL OUTTURN 2009/10

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the final outturn for the Capital Programme for this Committee for 2009/10.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

346 OVERALL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2009/10

Committee received a report giving details of the Capital Programme outturn for all Committees for the year ending 31 March 2010.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

347 CAPITAL MONITORING 2010/11

Committee received a report on progress to the end of August 2010 on the Capital Programme for this Committee for the current financial year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

348 OVERALL CAPITAL MONITORING 2010/11

Committee received a report on progress on the overall Capital Programme for the current financial year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

349 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2009/10

Committee received a report in relation to Treasury Management operations which included information regarding the following:

- Borrowing requirements.
- Investments.
- Interest received.
- Prudential indicators.
- Temporary investment activity for the year.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

350 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2010/11

Committee received a report on the Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2010 to 1 August 2010. It covered the following areas:

- Borrowing requirements.
- Investments.
- Interest received.
- Prudential indicators.
- Temporary investment activity during the period.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

351 MOBILE RESOURCE CENTRE

Committee received a report informing Members of progress in developing the Mobile Resource Centre which would be delivered through the Performance Reward Grant and had gained approval from this Committee. Committee were informed that a joint proposal had been developed with Pendle and Rossendale Borough Councils for a shared provision and programming and management of the Ribble Valley element would become co-ordinated via the Community Development Section of the Council. This would be done through the development of the Steering Group including officers from relevant departments along with external partners.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

352 REVENUE OUTTURN 2009/10

Committee received a report giving Members the actual position for the revenue budget year ending 31 March 2010 for this Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

353 OVERALL REVENUE OUTTURN 2009/10

Committee received a report informing them of the results of the revenue outturn for the year ended 31 March 2010.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

354 REVENUE MONITORING 2010/11

Committee were given a progress report against the first four months of the year's Revenue Budget in relation to this Committee's expenditure.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

355 OMBUDSMAN'S ANNUAL REVIEW REPORT 2009/10

Committee received the annual report of the Local Government Ombudsman in relation to complaints referred to him relating to this Authority for the year ended 31 March 2010. Twelve cases had been determined by the Ombudsman including 2 ongoing investigations which were as follows:

Report 1 Local Settlement 4 – No evidence of maladministration. 6 and discretion not to pursue exercise 1.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

356 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved that by virtue the nature of the next items of business to be discussed, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

357 PROPOSED SALE OF LAND FOR HOUSING AT MOUNT PLEASANT, PADIHAM ROAD, SABDEN

Committee considered a report asking Committee's approval to market and sell a parcel of Council owned land at Mount Pleasant, Padiham Road, Sabden. The Council owned this particular piece of land which had been vacant and unused for many years. It had been proposed by the Council's Asset Management Group to sell the land for open market housing. The District Valuer had produced a valuation report based on open market value for 2 open market residential dwellings.

RESOLVED: That

1. Committee approve and authorise the marketing and open market sale of the land and delegate the conduct of this matter, including appointing a selling agent and agreeing a sale price and terms to the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Legal Services Manager; and
2. the Chief Executive report back to Committee details of the sale when agreed.

358 SALE OF LAND AT “THE SHELTERS” YORK STREET, CLITHEROE

Committee considered a report asking for their approval to the sale of an unused parcel of Council owned land known as The Shelters at York Street, Clitheroe. The land had not been used by the Council for many years and had a substantial number of large self seeded trees which had grown on the site. The land was vacant and surrounded by large stone wall with access through a side gate. The site was in the centre of Clitheroe and consideration had been given to alternate uses. The land had been valued by the District Valuer and he had recommended a restrictive covenant be included in the Transfer Deed restricting the use to a domestic garden.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve and authorise the sale of the land to the owners of Major House, Church Brow, Clitheroe upon the terms proposed by the District Valuer.

359 ROMAN BATH HOUSE RIBCHESTER – REQUEST FROM LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

Committee considered a report on how to respond to a request from Lancashire County Council to gift to them the land owned by the Council at Ribchester on the site of a Roman bath house. Members were given a potted history of the site and its archaeological importance. Members considered this matter in some detail.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. offer to dispose of the Roman bath house to Lancashire County Council by way of a 25 year Lease at a nominal annual rent; and
2. the Lease to contain conditions to ensure public access and control of future developments and excavations.

360 COUNCIL TAX AND NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES WRITE-OFFS

The Director of Resources sought Committee’s approval to write-off certain Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rate debts. These were in respect of various debts as a result of bankruptcy, death, individual voluntary agreement, business going into administration, liquidation or where debtors were unable to be traced.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of £5,740.64 Council Tax arrears and £65,493.49 of NNDR debts where it had not been possible to collect the amounts due.

COUNCIL RESTRUCTURING

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive relating to a revised Senior Management structure for the Council.

The Chief Executive went through a detailed report outlining proposals to change the current management structure and explained the consequences of the proposals, including the early retirement of two members of staff. His report contained details of the new structure and how departments would reduce from 4 to 3 by changing the location of various functions and services. He also set out changes to pay and conditions for Chief Officers and Heads of Service. He also went through the details of estimated savings for the next 5 years that would result from these changes.

He explained to Committee the views of the Budget Working Group and recommendations of Personnel Committee of the changes outlined.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree the senior management structure as set out in the report;
2. agree the recommendations of Personnel Committee as set out in section 10 of the report.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Jane Pearson (414430).