

## Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 26 January 2016, starting at 6.30pm  
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	M Robinson
K Hind	J Rogerson
T Hill	I Sayers
S Hore	D T Smith
A Knox	R J Thompson
G Mirfin	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services, Head of Revenues and Benefits.

### 548 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Alcock.

### 549 NOT IN ATTENDANCE

Councillor R Elms and Councillor R Hargreaves.

### 550 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2015 and Special Policy and Finance held on 30 November 2015 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 551 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

There were no pecuniary and non-pecuniary declarations of interest.

### 552 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

### 553 REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/16

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Members to approve the revised 2015/16 Capital Programme for this Committee. The original Capital Programme had been approved by Policy and Finance Committee in February 2015 and included three schemes at a total estimated cost of £371,400. In addition a budget of £100,000 for the economic development initiative scheme had moved from 2014/15 into 2015/16, making the total approved budget of £471,400. A review of the schemes had now taken place and discussed with budget holders so that the revised programme reflected their progress and

estimated full year expenditure. The revised estimate remained at £471,400 which was the same total originally approved budget.

The Director of Resources highlighted that the summary position only showed 0.8% expenditure to date and gave the main reasons for this. The combined contract for the Council Offices reroofing and Council Offices replacement windows and roof lights scheme was currently ongoing and was expected to be completed by the year end.

With regard to the Clitheroe Townscape Scheme, this was on hold whilst it was established whether Lancashire County Council's funding contribution would support expenditure on enhanced town centre improvements. The Economic Development initiatives was also awaiting a site acquisition to progress and should there be any unused budget from 2015/16, this would be moved into 2016/17 as slippage.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the revised Capital Programme for 2015/16 as outlined in the report.

#### 554 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2015/16

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Members to agree a revised Revenue Budget for 2015/16. The original estimate was approved in March 2015 but this had changed part-way through the year with the approval of additional funding for hosting a stage of the Tour of Britain Cycle Race. This had been approved by Policy and Finance Committee in September 2015, but it was agreed that this would be funded from existing earmarked reserves. She reported that the revised budget is £84,560 lower than the original estimate which is reduced to £73,070 lower than the original estimate after allowing for transfers to and from earmarked reserves. The comparison between the original and revised budgets for each cost centre was outline in the report along with the main variances.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the revised budget for 2015/16.

#### 555 ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to agree to a draft revenue budget for 2016/17 for consideration at Special Policy and Finance Committee. She reported that our provisional settlement funding assessment had been received on 17 December 2015 at £1,862,605 for 2016/17 which represented a reduction of 17% in our core government funding. The finance settlement also included the option of a guaranteed settlement for every Council for the 4 years 2016/17 to 2019/20 where the Council can demonstrate efficiency savings. This core funding showed that the grant reductions in future years would be far more severe than anticipated and that by 2019/20 not only would the revenue support grant be eliminated but the Government proposed to introduce a further reduction of £109,000 which would increase the tariff payable under the Business Rates Retention Scheme. Based on this information the three year forecast had been reviewed and now indicated increased

requirements for reductions to the Council's budget of £423k in 2016/17; £756k in 2017/18 and £1,161k in 2018/19 which were markedly worse than predicted. The Budget Working Group would continue to meet and would ultimately make recommendations to the Special Policy and Finance meeting on 9 February 2016.

The draft Revenue Budget for 2016/17 was included for the individual budget areas under this Committee. Comments were also provided on the main variances.

The draft budget was summarised in two ways; one over the cost of the service provided by the Committee and the other over the type of expenditure and income. The net costs for this Committee had decreased by £123,310 but after allowing for transfers to and from earmarked reserves, the position changes to an increase in net expenditure of £35,010; the main reasons for this were summarised in the report. The report also included a list of subscriptions falling within the remit of this Committee and the Director of Resources reminded Members that the fees and charges for this Committee had been agreed in October 2015 and reflected in the Committee estimates. These had been increased by 1.5% and would be applicable from 1 April 2016.

**RESOLVED:** That Committee agree the Revenue Budget for 2016/17 for submission to Special Policy and Finance Committee subject to any further consideration by the Budget Working Group.

#### 556 FLOODING IN RIBBLE VALLEY – DECEMBER 2015

The Chief Executive submitted a detailed report on the floods in the Ribble Valley in December 2015 and the action that had been taken. He outlined the response to the emergency which had happened on 26 December 2015 as a result of storm Eva, where there was widespread flooding affecting parts of Whalley, Billington and Ribchester. He also outlined the recovery operation that had taken place and the financial implications of such. He thanked the many staff and Councillors that had attended this emergency situation.

He informed Committee that he anticipated the ongoing work of the Council would continue to be severely disrupted for many months to come whilst support was given to those affected by the flooding. He outlined the Government's Belwin Scheme to reimburse local authorities in dealing with emergencies as well as a series of grants/financial aid that they had also announced to aid households and businesses to recover.

Members were very appreciative of the work and personal commitment the officers had given over this holiday period and referred to lots of personal experiences they had experienced during this time. Members also felt it was imperative that as suggested by the Chief Executive a recovery plan should be formulated to go alongside the Emergency Plan that already existed. They also felt that specific issues should be followed up with the Lancashire County Council and the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. endorse the action taken;
2. continue to support our residents and businesses affected by the flooding and that should additional staff be required for surveying works, this be approved;
3. agree to the Council Tax and Business Rate Relief Schemes that had been put into operation as set out in the report; and
4. authorise the Director of Resources to seek to recover expenditure incurred on the floods from Central Government under the Belwin Scheme.

557 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report providing Members with an update regarding the Local Council Tax Support Scheme and requesting that minor amendments to this scheme be approved and recommended to full Council on 1 March 2016. She reminded Committee that the Local Government Finance Bill imposes a duty on billing authorities to make a scheme by 31 January each year and to consult with major precepting authorities and other persons likely to have an interest in the scheme if any significant changes are proposed. The scheme adopted by the Council matched the previous Council Tax Benefit Scheme but with a 12% reduction in entitlement for those of working age.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits outlined the minor changes proposed to the scheme which related to a number of changes to supporting legislation but would not have a material impact on the amount of local Council Tax support awarded. He also reported that it was no longer compulsory for the uprating to apply to cases of working age and was therefore left to each local authority to determine how to treat this issue in their own scheme. Given the experience that we have had in implementing the scheme since 2013/14 it was felt sensible to continue with the scheme based on the previous Council Tax Benefit Scheme with a 12% reduction in support for claimants of working age.

In order to ensure the Local Council Tax Support Scheme continues to mirror the Housing Benefit Scheme and the Scheme applicable to pensioners, it is necessary to update it in the same ways.

\*\*\* RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to full Council the approval of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17 as outlined. \*\*\*

558 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report requesting Committee's approval to write-off certain National Non-Domestic Rate debts. There was one case where the company had been dissolved and therefore there was a need to write-

off the NNDR debt. The company had been dissolved and there was therefore no more means by which to collect the business rate debt.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of £3,141.47 NNDR debt from UKS Clitheroe Ltd, where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

#### 559 BUSINESS RATE POOLING IN LANCASHIRE

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Members on the latest position on Business Rate Pooling in Lancashire and asking that they agree to Ribble Valley Borough Council being the lead authority for the Lancashire Business Rates Pool for three complete years. She reminded Committee that the draft scheme had been agreed and authorities had been asked to confirm whether they formally wished to join the pool, with a deadline to do so. Bids had also been invited from district members to act as lead authority for the pool. The following authorities had agreed to join:

- Lancashire County Council;
- Burnley Borough Council;
- Chorley Borough Council;
- Hyndburn Borough Council;
- Pendle Borough Council;
- Ribble Valley Borough Council;
- Rossendale Borough Council;
- South Ribble Borough Council;
- West Lancs Borough Council; and
- Wyre Borough Council.

In the absence of any other bids, the Director of Resources had volunteered Ribble Valley Borough Council to be the lead authority subject to this Committee's approval for this a fee of £20,000 per annum would be received ie £2,000 payable per pool member including ourselves. The bid had been submitted to DCLG on 5 November 2015 and on 8 December 2015 notification had been received from the Government that they had formally designated the Lancashire Pool for Local Business Rate Retention purposes under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, with a withdrawal date of Friday, 15 January 2016. No member of the Lancashire Pool had withdrawn and hence the pool would go ahead for 2016/17.

The Director of Resources again reminded Committee of the pool benefits along with the potential risks with regard to forfeiting the right to a safety net as a condition of joining the pool. However on the provisional calculations based on our NNDR1 for 2016/17 the estimate business rates income to be retained was considerably above the safety net position.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note that the Council is now formally a member of the Lancashire Business Rate Pool; and

2. agree to Ribble Valley Borough Council acting as lead authority for the Lancashire Business Rate Pool.

560 CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANTS

The Director of Resources submitted a report requesting Committee's approval for a further allocation of concurrent function grant for 2015/16. She reminded Committee that at the last meeting they had approved 19 applications with qualifying revenue expenditure totalling £57,734 which meant that approved grants totalled £14,434.

She now reported that an additional application had been received from Chatburn Parish Council with £2,414 of qualifying revenue expenditure which on the terms of the grant scheme would equate to £604. This was still well within the £20,000 budget provided when added to the previously approved grants.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the latest application for concurrent grant funding made by Chatburn Parish Council totalling £604.00

561 LONGRIDGE OVER 60'S CLUB GRANT REQUEST

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining a request from the Longridge Over 60's club for a further review of the grant that is awarded towards the cost of rent charged for their use of Towneley Buildings, Longridge. She reminded Committee that in June 2009 this Committee had agreed to grant both Lancashire County Council who occupy part of the building for the Youth and Community and the Over 60's Club a new 15 year lease. As a result the District Valuer was consulted and it was recommended that the Council charge the Longridge Over 60's Club an annual rent of £7,850 per annum for the Lease with 5 year rent reviews. The Over 60's club had subsequently requested a grant towards the rent and this Committee had approved a grant phased over 5 years, starting at £7,750 in 2010/11, reducing by £100 each year to £7,350 in 2014/15.

At the time of informing the Over 60's Club in June 2010 of the new Lease and grant it was explained that the Council would review the grant awarded as part of the five year, yearly rent review process. This had now happened and the District Valuer had recently reviewed the rent for Towneley Buildings and suggested that it should remain at the same level of £7,850. One of the Trustees had been informed of this rent review and that the level of grant would continue on the same basis as previously approved reducing by £100 each year, starting at £7,250 in 2015/16.

Following this notification a letter had been received from the Trustees suggesting that they had not anticipated having to pay more than £500 per annum for the use of the building and requesting that the Council reconsider the level of grant offered.

Committee discussed the request made and the financial implications for the Council.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree that the level of grant currently being provided to the Longridge Over 60's club towards their rent at Towneley Buildings, Longridge, continue on the same basis as previously in that it there would be a reduction of grant by £100 per year over the next five years until the five yearly rent review.

562 THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE CLITHEROE ROYAL GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOUNDATION – CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee about the proposed changes to way in which the Clitheroe Royal Grammar School Foundation is administered. A letter had been received from Chairman of the Foundation Trustees for the structure to change with regard to the number of nominated Trustees made by the Council. It was proposed that the number of Trustees nominated by elected bodies which represent the local community be reduced; in the case of the Borough Council from three and one. In the meantime the three Trustees nominated by the Borough Council would remain as appointed.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to support the proposal to change the Constitution of the Clitheroe Royal Grammar School Foundation; and
2. arrange for the Council to be represented by nominating a single Trustee once the changes have been put into effect.

563 REVIEW OF 2015/2019 CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval of the Council's reviewed Corporate Strategy for 2015/2019. This document sets out the strategic direction of the Council for the period 2015/2019 providing a focus to ensure that the services we deliver meet the needs of our communities. The Strategy contains five corporate priorities to address issues that matter most to the borough and are deliberately limited to focus attention over the lifespan of the strategy. Each priority has a number of objectives which are supported by key actions and key measures of success.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the reviewed Corporate Strategy 2015/2019 as attached to the report.

564 REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE

There were no references from Committee.

565 ANALYSIS OF THE 2015 INDICES OF DEPRIVATION

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information about the indices of deprivation for 2015. This outlined national results, local results and the fact that this data had been used to establish a series of ward profiles to summarise a variety of information at ward level.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

566 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2015/2016

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2015. The report outlined the following topics:

- Public Works Loan Board.
- Borrowing requirements.
- Temporary investments.
- Prudential indicators.
- Local Government Bonds Agency.
- Approved organisations.
- Recent events.
- Exposure to risk.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

567 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered and information report which covered the following areas:

- National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).
- Council Tax.
- Sundry debtors.
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax support performance.
- Housing Benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

568 MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

A copy of the minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 22 October 2015 were included for Committee's information.

569 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

570 TOUR OF BRITAIN – STAGE 2

The Director of Community Services submitted a report for Committee's information outlining the outcomes on the costs for staging Stage 2 of the Tour of Britain.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

571 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be exempt information under Category 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

572 SALE OF COUNCIL OWNED LAND

The Director of Community Services submitted a report asking Committee to consider an offer received to purchase the Peel Street Car Park comprising 13 spaces for £200,000.

Committee considered the offer and felt that should this go ahead the proceeds of the sale should be ring-fenced.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the sale of the car park to the retailer Lidl.

573 EMPLOYMENT LAND – BARROW BROOK

The Chief Executive submitted a report updating Committee on the progress with land at Barrow Brook and to confirm actions for the next steps with regard to acquisition of the site. He updated Committee on the outstanding issues with regard to ransom strips and adoption of the highway and the negotiations that had been made to date. As detailed discussions had been undertaken the Council has had site of the related contracts; a number of matters had arisen where clarification had been sought, these related to detailed requirements for ransom strips, access rights, overage and the nature of the disposable as landowners seek to ensure their interests are protected.

Members discussed these various aspects relating to this piece of land.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Chairman, authority to proceed with the purchase of the site if the Council can acquire clear title to both the land in question and the access strip; all subject to satisfactory negotiations with the County Council regarding the adoption of the whole of the site access road; and
2. authorise officers to consider Compulsory Purchase Order proceedings if a satisfactory outcome cannot be negotiated with the landowners.

574 LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE-OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report requesting the approval to write-off two Council Tax debts relating to individuals and three Council Tax Benefit/Housing Benefit write-offs relating to three individuals.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of £4,069.34 of Council Tax debts and £4,563.47 of Housing Benefit debts where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Jane Pearson (425111).