

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 28 March 2017, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S Hore
S Bibby	A Knox
P Elms	G Mirfin
M French	J Rogerson
R Hargreaves	I Sayers
T Hill	D T Smith
K Hind	R J Thompson

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

Also in attendance: Councillors A Brown and S Hind.

624 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence from the meeting.

625 MINUTES

The minutes of the meetings held on 24 January 2017 and 7 February 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

626 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

Councillors S Hore, A Knox and J Rogerson all declared an interest in item 12, Voluntary Organisation Grants 2017/18.

627 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

628 RESPONSE TO CLITHEROE MARKET AREA CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the findings from the extended consultation work in relation to the market area redevelopment project. Following the decision to appoint Barnfield Construction, work was undertaken to develop the scheme in more detail. Barnfield Construction launched its draft scheme at a public exhibition in July; this exhibition was the first opportunity to test the scheme following the preparation of the bid and the work to develop the scheme.

A publication of the draft proposals generated a lot of interest and public response and following that Members resolved to undertake a wider scheme of public consultation to help inform the Council's decisions on the scheme.

The Council appointed Infusion, its partnership organisation to undertake public consultation and prepare a report for the Council. This was carried out over a 6

week period between 8 November and 23 December 2016 and the consultation report was published on the Council's website on Monday, 6 March 2017 following detailed consideration of its findings by the Member Working group. The report also included an analysis of an additional survey undertaken by local councillors, the responses from which were provided to Infusion to inform the findings. In addition to the Infusion consultation, the Council also held a series of focus group meetings as well as discussions with near neighbours.

Without doubt the consultation on the proposals generated significant interest. There were mixed views on different aspects of the scheme, however there were clearly some aspects of the scheme that were not favoured by many as presented in the draft proposal. There was however overall support for investing in the area on a scheme that must be right for the town. The report included the Infusion document with detailed findings from the consultations carried out.

RESOLVED: That Committee endorse publication of the Infusion report and note the findings of the extended public consultation process.

629 CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANT APPLICATIONS 2016/2017

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to approve the allocation of two further concurrent function grants for 2016/2017. This grant scheme had been approved a number of years ago by this Committee and gives grant assistance for those Parishes and Town Councils who provide services in their areas where elsewhere are provided by the Borough Council. Two applications had required further information and related to Clitheroe Town Council and Sabden Parish Council. This information had now been received and so the applications could be considered. The two applications total £1,999.11.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the allocation of two further concurrent function grants; £750.00 for Clitheroe Town Council and £1,249.11 for Sabden Parish Council.

630 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval of the Council's Treasury Management Strategy for the 2017/2018 financial year.

She reminded Members that local authorities were required to report on specific elements of their treasury management activities. These were included in the Treasury Management Strategy or in the Treasury Management policies and practices. The Treasury Management Strategy covers the following areas:

- the current treasury position;
- a review of the prospects for interest rates;
- the Council's borrowing and debt strategy;
- the Council's investment strategy;
- capital programme financing strategy;
- limits on treasury management activities and prudential indicators;
- current debt portfolio position; and
- annual investment strategy

*** RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Council the Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report. ***

631

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to review, approve and adopt the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices for 2017/2018.

The Treasury Management policies and practices document governs the way we manage our investments; it is reviewed on an annual basis to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) code. The Treasury Management practices are split into key principles and schedules which cover the detail of how the Council will apply the key principles in carrying out its operational treasury activities. Since the Treasury Management policy statement and practices were approved in April 2016, there have been a number of minor updates made to the schedules which have been highlighted within the document.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. formally adopt the Treasury Management policies and practices document as attached to the report incorporating:

- Treasury Management key principles
- Treasury Management policy statement
- Treasury Management clauses
- Treasury Management practices and schedules; and

2. recommend to Council the Treasury Management policies and practices 2017/2018.

632

BUSINESS RATE CHANGES ANNOUNCED IN THE MARCH 2017 BUDGET

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of the announcement regarding business rate changes made by the Chancellor in his budget on Wednesday, 16 March 2017 and seeking agreement for delegation to the Director of Resources to implement the relief schemes to enable them to be introduced as soon as possible.

Business rates are periodically revalued to take into account changes to business activity across the country. The purpose of the revaluation is to ensure that business contribute their fair share of tax in different parts of the country and sectors of business activity. The draft 2017 list was published by the Valuation Office Agency on 30 September 2016 and a comparison of the changes in Ribble Valley by category of property was included for Committee's information. In total, rateable values had increased by £1.2 million from £38.8 million to £40 million, an increase of 3%. In the run up to the March budget, a number of groups made representations to the government about the impact that the revaluation would have, in particular on those seeing the greatest increases.

In his March budget the Chancellor announced that he had decided to provide additional relief to those businesses who had been most impacted by the 2017 business rate revaluation and additional relief would be made in 3 instances to small business, pubs and also through a new discretionary relief scheme. Detailed guidance however had not yet been released.

A consultation paper was published on 9 March 2017 about how the discretionary relief scheme would be implemented along with the proposed distribution of £300 million nationally. Ribble Valley Borough Council's proposed allocation is £179,000 ie £104,000 in 2017/2018; £51,000 in 2018/2019; £21,000 in 2019/2020 and £3,000 in 2020/2021.

Until greater detail was known regarding each of these reliefs, it was difficult to estimate how many businesses may be eligible in this area and the government had asked local authorities to provide estimates by 20 March 2017. It was estimated that approximately 20 businesses in Ribble Valley will benefit from the additional small business rate relief; approximately 50 businesses will benefit from the pubs relief scheme dependent upon definition; and with regard to the additional discretionary relief, it was unable to estimate at this time without further detail.

These schemes will not have a financial impact on the Council as the government will fully compensate local authorities by way of a Section 31 Grant for the additional relief granted. The additional discretionary relief scheme would have a limited allocation so it was important that the scheme agreed should not cost more than the funding awarded from the Government.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the information contained in the report;
2. delegate the Director of Resources to respond to the various consultation papers that will result from this announcement; and
3. delegate to the Director of Resources to devise and implement the new schemes to prevent delay in their introduction.

633 DRAFT CYCLE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2017/2018

The Chief Executive submitted a report requesting Committee's consideration of the proposed meeting cycle for Committees for the municipal year 2017/2018. Members were informed that consideration had been given to various issues that had resulted in summer cycle being condensed as far as possible. The meeting dates being arranged around the Easter holidays.

RESOLVED: That the draft meeting cycle as submitted be approved for ratification at the annual meeting on 9 May 2017 (Appendix A to these minutes).

634 UK GOVERNMENT CONSULTATION: BUILDING OUR INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking agreement to the Council's response to the 'UK Government's Building our Industrial Strategy consultation'. On 23 January 2017 the government had released their much anticipated Green Paper entitled 'Building our Industrial Strategy' for public consultation. The strategy sets out how the Government propose to build a modern industrial strategy with the aim of improving living standards and economic growth by increasing productivity and driving growth across the whole country. 10 pillars had been identified that are believed to be important to drive forward the strategy.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper asks 4 principle over-arching questions in the document along with a number of further questions covering more specific and targeted questions across the 10 pillars. Suggested responses to these were outlined in the report. The principal focus of the Council's response is reiterating what has been outlined in the Growth Strategy citing in particular the infrastructure and skills needs in the context of local growth. In addition, the Council's response stresses the importance that local authorities working together across LEP areas need to be given the tools to unlock economic growth opportunities.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the Council's response to the Green Paper public consultation on the emerging UK Industrial Strategy as outlined in the report.

(Councillors S Hore, A Knox and J Rogerson declared an interest in the next item of business and left the meeting).

635 VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANT APPLICATIONS 2017/2018

Committee considered the allocation of voluntary organisation 2017/2018 as proposed by a working group of this Committee. Applicants must clearly demonstrate that the purpose of the grant sought is to provide services or facilities that will meet the needs of communities in the Ribble Valley or directly benefit our residents. The Council had received 20 applications requesting support totalling £173,217. The applications as submitted exceeded the funding available which was £106,990. After careful consideration of all the grant applications received, the working group had recommended grant allocations as shown in Annex 2 of the report.

The Chief Executive informed Committee that a further application had been received from the Royal Lancashire Show which was returning to the Ribble Valley in 2017 for help with the refuse collection element connected to the show days. It was agreed the Royal Lancashire Show should be awarded a grant of £500.

Members asked specific questions with regard to several of the applications made and suggested that an examination of the methodology used to consider these applications be carried out before the 2018 distribution.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the allocation of grants as proposed by the Voluntary Grants Working Group as set out below totalling £108,700;

Organisation Name	Recommended Grant for 2017/18 £
Carers Link Lancashire	£2,000
Chipping Area Internet	£9,700
Chipping Show	£500
Clitheroe Community Bonfire and Fireworks Display	£750

Organisation Name	Recommended Grant for 2017/18 £
Crossroads Care - Ribble Valley	£15,000
Goosnargh & Longridge Agricultural Show	£500
Hodder Valley Agricultural & Horticultural Society	£500
Home Start - Pendle and Ribble Valley	£3,000
Lancashire Best Kept Village Competition	£500
Little Green Bus	£6,000
Longridge Field Day Events	£500
Revitalise Respite Holidays	0
Ribble Valley Breast Friends	£250
Ribble Valley Citizens Advice Bureau	£60,000
Ribble Valley Shop-mobility and Information Centre	£8,000
Ribble Valley Talking Newspaper	£250
Royal Lancashire Show	£500
Spring into Phab	0
The Foundation for Ribble Valley Families	0
The Sanctuary of Healing	0
Whalley Pickwick Festival	£750
Total	£108,700

2. expressed concern regarding the disproportionate level of grant awarded to the Citizens Advice Bureau and agreed to examine future allocations before the 2018/2019 Voluntary Organisation Grants are considered.

(Councillors S Hore, A Knox and J Rogerson returned to the meeting)

636

UPDATE ON FINANCIAL IMPACT OF DECEMBER 2015 FLOODS

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information with an update on the financial impact for the Council of the December 2015 floods. The different elements of expenditure relating to the floods were detailed for Committee's information. A total of 180 household applications had been received and 35 business applications and to date £484,788 had been made to households and £55,919 made to businesses. The expenditure is funded by the Government through a Section 31 Grant in full via Lancashire County Council as the flood authority. The report also made reference to the business support payments and the Community Foundation for Lancashire – Lancashire Flood Appeal.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

637 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a report which covered the following:

- National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR)
- Council Tax
- Sundry Debtors
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax performance
- Housing Benefit over payments

The Director of Resources informed Committee that the DWP had decided to visit a number of local authorities to identify why there was an increase in number of qualification letters issued to local authorities and to identify where best practice can be identified. This Council had been selected as a local authority demonstrating good practice and had received a visit from the DWP which had been well received.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

638 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of the schemes which had been approved for inclusion in the capital programme for this Committee for the 2017/2018 financial year. For this Committee there were 9 approved schemes in 2017/2018 totalling £294,700.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

639 BUDGET WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group meeting held on 11 January 2017.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

640 COMBINED AUTHORITY WORKING GROUP MINUTES

Committee received the minutes of the Combined Authority Working Group held on 16 November 2016.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

641 RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR ENGLAND 2014-2020

The Chief Executive submitted a report updating Committee on the Rural Development Programme. This programme provides money for projects to improve rural life, agriculture and the environment with funding principally contributing to schemes that support such things as growing the rural economy, increasing the productivity of farming, forestry and improving the environment in rural areas. The application process is competitive and therefore there are no guarantees that an application for funding will be successful. The report included further details outlined on a fact sheet.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

642 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

643 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next items of business being exempt information under Categories 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

644 DISCUSSION PAPER ON BUSINESS RATES COLLECTION – UPDATE

The Head of Revenues and Benefits gave Members an update on current issues faced by the revenues section regarding business rates avoidance and bad debtors. He informed Committee of a recent court judgement regarding an extensive business rate debt.

Committee were reminded that the in-year collection rate exceeds 98% and continued recovery action raises this to approximately 99% eventually. However, difficulties are encountered when recovering business rates from some debtors. Specific cases were outlined for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

645 LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE-OFFS

Committee considered a report asking them to approve the writing-off of Council Tax debts of £1,648.29 and Council Tax benefit/housing benefit write-offs of £1,080.12.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of these debts.

646 REDEVELOPMENT OF CLITHEROE MARKET SITE

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the implications of the findings from the extended consultation work in relation to the market area redevelopment project and to agree an approach to progress a development scheme.

The consultation on the proposals had clearly generated significant interest and whilst there were a range of views held about the proposals, it was clear that there were aspects that were not popular or supported by the community. The working group had met and focused on developing core advice to this Committee, the conclusion being that there were concerns about the scale of the scheme overall. Members were reminded that the project had been subject to an extensive procurement process under the OJEU project utilising the competitive dialogue approach to selecting a developer. Therefore any changes to the agreed scheme would need to be assessed in terms of their significance and a judgement taken on the risk to the Council or challenged by other parties.

RESOLVED: That Committee welcome the recommendations of the working group and ask them to identify in more detail acceptable options to amend the scheme; these

options to be considered by the next Policy and Finance Committee in June 2017.

The meeting closed at 7.36pm.

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

APPENDIX A

<p style="text-align: center;">Ribble Valley Borough Council Meeting Cycle 2017/18 (9 May 2017 – 8 May 2018)</p>							
MEETINGS	Day	TIME	1 ST CYCLE 2017	2 ND CYCLE 2017	3 RD CYCLE 2017	4 TH CYCLE 2018	5 TH CYCLE 2018
Community Services	Tues	6.30pm	16 May	29 Aug	17 Oct	9 Jan	13 March
Planning and Development	Thurs	6.30pm	18 May	27 July & 31 Aug	26 Oct	11 Jan	8 March
Personnel	Wed	6.30pm	24 May	6 Sept	25 Oct	17 Jan	14 March
Health & Housing	Thurs	6.30pm	25 May	7 Sept	19 Oct	18 Jan	15 March
Policy & Finance	Tues	6.30pm	6 June	12 Sept	7 Nov	23 Jan & 6 Feb	20 March
Parish Liaison	Thurs	6.30pm	8 June	14 Sept	9 Nov	25 Jan	22 March
Licensing	Tues	6.30pm	13 June	19 Sept	14 Nov	30 Jan	10 April
Planning & Development	Thurs	6.30pm	22 June	28 Sept	30 Nov	8 Feb	12 April
Accounts & Audit	Wed	6.30pm		26 July	18 Oct	21 Feb	11 April
Full Council	Tues	6.30pm	11 July	10 Oct	12 Dec	6 March	24 April

2017
Offices Closed
 Spring Bank : 29 May 2017
 August Bank : 28 August 2017
 Christmas : 25 - 29 December 2017

Annual Council : 9 May 2017
 LCC Elections : 4 May 2017

2018
Offices Closed
 New Year : 1 - 2 January 2018
 Good Friday : 30 March 2018
 Easter Monday : 2 April 2018
 May Day : 7 May 2018

Elections : None 2018
 Annual Council : 8 May 2018