

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 27 June 2017, commencing at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Alcock	A Knox
S Atkinson	G Mirfin
S Bibby	J Rogerson
A Brown	I Sayers
P Elms	D T Smith
M French	R Swarbrick
T Hill	R J Thompson

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

Also in attendance: Councillors M Fenton, S Hind, S Hore and R Sherras.

107 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies from the meeting.

108 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

109 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

110 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed four public participants who all wanted to speak on Agenda item 23, Clitheroe Market Redevelopment.

Jane Barron was representing the market traders and businesses and felt that the current proposals were overbearing for the site and didn't fit with the uniqueness of Clitheroe. A market hall was not desirable nor was a hotel.

David Metcalfe asked the Committee to take on-board the results of the consultation process.

Stuart Gradwell appreciated the major investment in Clitheroe but felt that the development needs to be unique to attract visitors to both the market and the town.

Eileen Ansar informed Committee that she was a Pendle Borough Councillor as well as a market trader in Clitheroe and informed Committee that they did not want a market hall and that although the Council needed to think about progress

and the financial input, they must look after the uniqueness of Clitheroe and consider what the people of Clitheroe want.

111 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

The appointment of Working Groups under the remit of this Committee were confirmed and approved.

RESOLVED: That the following Working Groups be set up:

- Budget Working Group (6 + 1)
- Economic Development Working Group (6 + 1)
- Market Redevelopment Working Group (7 + 2 + 1)
- Press and Public Relations Working Group (4 +1)

112 THE CREATION OF AN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Members to consider an amendment to the Council's Committee structure in order to create an Economic Development Committee.

The Council takes economic development, regeneration and tourism very seriously and has had many successes over the years with both attracting new businesses into Ribble Valley and helping existing businesses to expand.

The Chief Executive went on to explain the current Committee structure and Council Constitution and how this would need to change to create an Economic Development Committee. He outlined the Terms of Reference that would need to be moved away from Policy and Finance Committee and Community Committee to be put under the remit of a new Economic Development Committee.

He informed Members that the Committee would meet five times a year which is the same frequency as all Service Committees that it would have 15 Members but that as a result of this there would be slight changes to the political balance calculation for the Council. He indicated the budgets that would be transferred to the new Committee and outlined the costs associated with doing this.

*** RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Council the creation of an Economic Development Committee as outlined in the report. ***

113 LANCASHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Members to consider our future involvement with the Lancashire Combined Authority. He reminded them that the Council had agreed in principle to become a member of the Lancashire Combined Authority at its meeting in April 2016 and that since that time the Shadow Combined Authority had met on a number of occasions and Leaders had been pleased particularly with what can be achieved through working more closely together. However it has now been made clear by the Government that any significant devolution deal would require agreement to an Elected Mayor for Lancashire.

Members discussed the advantages of collaborate working that did not necessarily require being part of the Shadow Combined Authority.

*** RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Council that we formally withdraw from the Shadow Combined Authority but continue to attend informal meetings with a view to collaborative working. ***

114 RESPONSE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND'S RECOMMENDATIONS

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the draft response to the consultation on the recommendations by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England. The Working Group had met several times and recognised that changes were required in order to gain electoral equality across the borough and had submitted a proposed warding structure for the borough. Based on the proposals received the Local Government Boundary Commission for England have put forward their recommendations and launched a consultation.

The Working Group had met to discuss the recommendations and drawn up a draft response to the consultation which was attached to the report for Committee's information. Following the submission of the Council's response the LGBCE would consider our views alongside all the other responses received and then publish their final recommendations on 29 August 2017.

Committee considered the draft response of the Working Group; they hoped that the Boundary Commission would listen to our views and make the amendments as suggested.

Councillor Simon Hore was given permission to speak on this item as Chair of the Working Group.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the draft response to the LGBCE recommendations as outlined in the report.

115 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval for the Council to take up the LGA's offer of a Corporate Peer Challenge. This was part of their sector-led improvement support to Local Government and was designed to help Council's improve their performance. The scope of the Peer Challenge would be agreed with the Council and if required tailored to reflect local needs and specific requirements. There is however a core component that look at issues of leadership, governance, corporate capacity and financial resilience. The Council have a Peer Challenge is considered to be an effective tool for improvement in a Council's performance. It would normally be conducted over a 3-day period and involves the Peer Challenge team reviewing the Council's policies, strategies, performance as well as having discussions with a range of focus groups.

Should Committee agree to take up the offer it was envisaged that the Peer Challenge would take place later in 2017.

RESOLVED: That Committee give approval for the Council to take up the LGA's offer of a Corporate Peer Challenge.

116 UPDATE ON BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Committee about the flood relief schemes that had been approved in January 2016 as a result of the flooding caused by storms in December 2015 and seeking approval from Committee to extend the Council Tax Relief Scheme.

There were still 3 properties where the occupiers were unable to return home and as such an extension of the deadline would be required in order for them to claim relief.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the extension of the Council Tax Relief Scheme as set out in the report to 31 March 2018.

117 CAPITAL OUTTURN 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report to review the final outturn of the 2016/17 Capital Programme for the Policy and Finance Committee and to seek Member approval for the slippage of some capital scheme budgets from the 2016/17 financial year to the 2017/18 financial year.

The Capital Programme for this Committee consisted of 5 schemes totalling £272,500. This however had been amended at revised estimate stage which left 3 schemes totalling £104,530. Actual expenditure to date was £123,990 which was £19,460 higher than the revised estimate budget; the main reason for this was with regard to performance reward grants on an accounting adjustment that needed to be made.

The one capital scheme that had not yet been completed was the ICT infrastructure refresh and this would require slippage of £6,650 into the 2017/18 financial year.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the slippage of the budget into the 2017/18 financial year of £6,650 for the ICT infrastructure refresh scheme.

118 BUDGET 2017: BUSINESS RATE RELIEF SCHEMES UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Members on the progress made regarding business rate relief scheme announced by the Chancellor in his budget on Wednesday, 16 March 2017. This was to provide additional relief to those businesses who had been most impacted by the re-evaluation and would be made available in 3 instances:

- small businesses;
- pubs; and
- discretionary relief scheme.

Members had resolved at their meeting on 28 March 2017 to delegate to the Director of Resources to devise an implement the new released schemes to

prevent any delay in their introduction. However the announcement of the General Election on 8 June 2017 had resulted in a delay in any detailed guidance from Government.

Guidance had now been received with regard to small businesses and pubs and this relief could now be distributed.

With regard to the discretionary relief scheme it was suggested that the Director of Resources devise criteria that would be considered by the Budget Working Group.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

119 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 support performance;
- Housing Benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

120 OVERALL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information with details of the Capital Programme Outturn for all Committees for the 2016/17 financial year.

During the year the Council had spent £715,909 on 13 capital schemes and performance reward grants which was 74.4% of the revised estimate budget. Slippage in 2017/18 had been requested on 7 schemes, totalling £270,640. Details of all the schemes were included in the report for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

121 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the 2016/17 Treasury Management operations. The report outlined the following topics:

- Borrowing requirements.
- Investments.
- Prudential indicators.
- Local Government Bonds Agency.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

122 OVERALL REVENUE OUTTURN 2016/17

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the Overall Revenue Outturn for the year ended 31 March 2017. The report outlined the final position compared to the revised estimate, the Committee variance after earmarked reserves, general fund balances, business rates and the collection fund.

The final outturn of a surplus of £38,000 means that we have added £46,000 more to general fund balances than was estimated when the revised estimates were prepared.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

123 REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2017/18

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information on the Outside Bodies that are under the remit of the Policy and Finance Committee and their membership.

It was brought to the attention of Committee by the Vice Chair of the Police and Crime Panel that there was a public consultation regarding the proposed closure of the front desk at Clitheroe Police Station. This was felt to be a retrograde step that Members did not agree with.

The Chief Executive suggested that the representation by Members on Outside Bodies should have a thorough review as some Outside Bodies wanted representatives to act as Trustees in the interests of their organisation which caused conflicts of interest with the Council.

RESOLVED: That Committee:

1. rejects the proposals to close the front office at Clitheroe Police Station and called upon the Police and Crime Commissioner to reverse this decision;
2. the Chief Executive be asked to write a letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner with copies to Parish Councils and the MP; and
3. a complete overhaul of the Outside Bodies be undertaken.

124 NOTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP DATED 20 FEBRUARY 2017 – COPY ENCLOSED.

The notes of the Economic Development Working Group which took place on Monday, 20 February 2017 were circulated for Committee's information.

125 BUDGET WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2017.

The minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 25 January 2017 were circulated for Committee's information.

126 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on Outside Bodies.

127 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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.

128 REFERENCE FROM COMMITTEE – RECOMMENDED PURCHASE OF 16 ALMA PLACE, CLITHEROE

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a reference from Health and Housing Committee with regard to a proposal that the Council purchase a one-bed leasehold flat, 16 Alma Place, Clitheroe. The Council already owns two thirds of the property and therefore only needs to purchase one third to take ownership of the leasehold.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the purchase of 16 Alma Place, Clitheroe with a view to financing the purchase through the single homelessness initiative fund monies set aside in an earmarked reserve (subject to confirmation by DCLG) or alternatively through the use of capital receipts.

129 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 two recent receipts of payment.

RESOLVED: That Committee congratulate the department on their performance.

130 CLITHEROE MARKET RE-DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the market area re-development project and agree the approach to progress a development scheme. The report outlined the background to the scheme and how it had progressed thus far with the Working Group concluding how the scheme should be amended.

Councillor Fenton was given permission to speak on this item and asked Committee to pay particular attention to how the scheme should include strong links to the rest of the town centre and in particular Castle Street.

The Leader referred to legal advice that had been received regarding the procurement process and also to the original scheme submitted by Barnfield.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Working Group be asked to reconsider the scheme and to compare and contrast the original scheme submitted by Barnfield to the latest scheme outlined by the Working Group;

2. a valuation of the site be obtained;
3. Officers to seek legal advice on the implications of the final configuration;
4. all these to be reported back to Policy and Finance Committee.

131 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

Committee considered a report asking them approve the writing-off of Council Tax debts of £346.90 and NNDR debt of £6,695.77 where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item.

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

132 COUNCIL DEPARTMENTAL RESTRUCTURE

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider whether to amend the Council's structure and return to 4 departments with the creation of a new post of Director of Planning and Economic Development.

He outlined the suggested new structure which included a Director of Planning and Economic Development and the creation of a fourth department. He also outlined the next steps that would need to be taken and the financial implications which were estimated to be £110,000 per annum which at this stage was not included in the Council's revenue budget.

Committee discussed the creation of the new post and the proposed changes to the Council's departmental structure.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the creation of a new post of Director of Planning and Economic Development;
2. agree to fund any additional costs in 2017/18 from the restructuring reserve fund;
3. ask the Chief Executive to arrange a meeting of Personnel Committee to consider:
 - a) the Job Description and Person Specification for the new post;
 - b) the remuneration package; and
 - c) the recruitment process; and
4. ask the Chief Executive to prepare reports for Personnel Committee and Policy and Finance Committee on the detailed changes to existing departments and staffing arrangements for the new directorate.

The meeting closed at 8.50pm.

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