

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 7 November 2017, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

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

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

Also in attendance: Councillor N Walsh.

383 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence from the meeting.

384 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 September 2017 and the Sub-Committee Meeting held on 10 October 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chief Executive referred to Minute 263 – Ribble Valley Homes Proposed Amalgamation and informed Committee that a consultation letter had now been sent out to all tenants.

385 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

386 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed Mr Geoff Carefoot to the meeting to speak on Agenda item 29 – Land at Longridge. Mr Carefoot expressed grave concern that this particular piece of land at Longridge should be sold to the Berry Lane Medical Centre as in his opinion, it belongs to the people of Langridge.

387 SURVEILLANCE COMMISSIONS INSPECTION REPORT DATED 14 AUGUST 2017

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the recommendations of the Officer of Surveillance Commissions Inspection Report that had taken place on 14 August 2017 and seeking approval of the revised policy.

The Inspector had carried out a paper exercise and concluded that a full inspection was not required; however she did make a number of comments and recommendations. These included:

- the requirement to complete a risk assessment prior to the authorisation and re-authorisation of a CHIS be added to the existing RIPA policy; and
- the corporate RIPA policy be further enhanced by the introduction of control measures to ensure that it should become necessary to utilise on-line covert identities/pseudonyms; these be centrally logged and a record made of what research activity is conducted; details of which should be reported.

The policy document had been updated accordingly and was appended for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the Inspectors recommendations; and
2. approve the amended policy with immediate effect.

388 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME (LCTS) 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Members requesting that Committee recommend to Full Council our LCTS Scheme for 2018/2019. It was explained that billing authorities had a duty to agree a scheme by 31 January each year. It was proposed that the Council keep our existing LCTS Scheme which matches our previous Council Tax benefit scheme but with a 12% reduction in entitlement for working age claimants as agreed previously.

However it was further proposed that some minor amendments are made to our scheme concerning maintaining and uprating income disregards, non-dependant deductions, applicable amounts and premiums in line with Housing Benefit as is done each year.

*** RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Full Council the approval of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2018/2019 as set out in the report. ***

389 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval on proposals to increase this Committee's fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2018. These proposals were the first stage in the review of the Committee's budget for the forthcoming 2018/2019 financial year.

The Council's latest budget forecast allows for a 2% increase in the level of income raised from fees and charges and this review aims to increase budgeted income for 2018/2019 by this amount as a minimum. After applying this percentage increase, proposed charges have generally been rounded up or down to minimise any problems with small change which inevitably impacts on the individual percentage rise for each separate charge, particularly when the charge is low.

The key messages from the Budget Working Group to officers and also for Committee to bear in mind when reviewing the fees and charges were:

- any charges should look to meet the costs of providing the services being used;
- as an absolute minimum all fees and charges should be increased by 2%;
- where possible comparisons should be made to the charges made by our neighbours in Lancaster or wider if appropriate;
- a thorough review of services for areas where we are not currently charging should be made and a charge made where appropriate as part of this review innovative ways of charging should be considered.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the level of fees and charges to be levied for this Committee for 2018/2019 as outlined in the report at Annex 1.

390 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

Committee were asked to approve the write-off of certain business rate debts relating to two companies that had been dissolved. Reasonable steps by various means had been taken to collect these debts.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of £2,462.52 NNDR debts and £60 costs where it has not been possible to collect the amounts due.

391 REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a recommendation that Council accept the updated Financial Regulations and Contract Procedure Rules. These are key components of the Council's Constitution and Corporate Governance arrangements and apply to every Member and officer of the Council and anyone acting on the Council's behalf.

The report highlighted the main changes and clarifications that had been made to the Financial Regulations and to the Contract Procedure Rules.

*** RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Full Council the acceptance of the revised Financial Regulations and revised Contract Procedure Rules. ***

392 CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS 2018/2023

The Director of Resources submitted a report recommending the proposed future five year capital programme 2018/2019 to 2022/2023 for this Committee.

For this Committee there were originally 4 schemes approved for the financial years 2018/2019 to 2021/2-22 totalling £91,500. Heads of Service had reviewed these schemes which had resulted in the windows server upgrade scheme being recommended for deletion from the 2018/2019 programme.

Heads of Service had also been requested to put forward new bids for 2022/2023 for this Committee and five new bids had been submitted totalling £473,200. Details of the scheme bids were included for Committee's information.

It was pointed out that other Committees would be receiving similar reports for the new scheme bids and that all these bids would be finally considered alongside each other by the Budget Working Group and Policy and Finance Committee against the limited financial resources that are available to finance the Capital Programme.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the proposed five year Capital Programme for 2018/2019 to 2022/2023; and
2. recommend to Policy and Finance Committee a future five year Capital Programme for this Committee's services.

393 ICT LICENCES AND SOFTWARE

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of two areas of additional revenue expenditure with regard to licenses following the recent ICT infrastructure installation and also software with migration and to seek Member approval for the proposed funding of the same.

Committee were informed of the old infrastructure. Licences were able to be purchased outright; however due to the virtual nature of the environment since installation of the new infrastructure, it was now required that an annual subscription of licences that carry software assurance be bought. As a partial result of this the capital scheme for Windows server upgrade in 2018/2019 for £23,500 was no longer required, however the annual subscription for SQL service licences with software assurance would create a new revenue liability of £3,970 per annum.

Good for Enterprise is the current mobile email solution and approximately 18 months ago Good was purchased by Blackberry. Both product sets have now been integrated which means new support versions of our email platform are required and we need to migrate from Good for Enterprise to Blackberry Unified Enterprise Management. The cost of this work will be £2,550 and would be a one-off cost to the Council. This could be financed from the ICT repairs and renewals earmarked reserve as there were adequate resources available to fund these items.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve a supplementary estimate of £3,970 per annum in respect of the SQL server licences and a one off supplementary estimate of £2,550 in respect of the Blackberry Unified Enterprise Management software and migration; and
2. approve the use of the ICT repairs and renewals earmarked reserve to support in the introduction of the supplementary estimate in full.

BOUNDARY COMMISSION PARLIAMENTARY BOUNDARY REVIEW – REVISED PROPOSALS

The Director of Resources submitted a report regarding the Boundary Commission's review of Parliamentary Constituencies within England. The Boundary Commission had revised the composition of 25 of the 68 constituencies they proposed in September 2016.

After careful consideration they had decided not to make any revisions to the composition of the remaining 43. However in some instances they had revised the proposed names for these constituencies. Under the revised proposals 13 constituencies in the north-west would be the same as they are under the existing arrangements. In Lancashire the Boundary Commission had reconfigured 9 constituencies, one of which also has an alternative name proposed.

The report went on to outline the summary of responses to the initial proposals and the summary of the counter proposals put forward. Minor changes had been made to the proposed Parliamentary boundaries for what had affecting the Ribble Valley area but these were in the area of the South Ribble constituency. They had also suggested that the proposed Clitheroe and Colne constituency would be more appropriately named Pendle and Ribble Valley due to the constituency containing numerous wards from both local authorities.

The report outlined the wards that would make up this constituency and those that would make up the North Lancashire constituency, both of which affected wards within the Ribble Valley.

Members of the public and the Council can have their say by giving the Commission their views on these revised proposals during the 8 week consultation period via the consultation website which closes on 11 December 2017.

Following consideration of all the representations received at this stage final recommendations would be made to the Government and the legislation states that they must do this during September 2018.

RESOLVED: That Committee delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Working Group any further response to the Commission regarding the Parliamentary Boundary Review in respect of the Ribble Valley constituency.

CHANGES TO CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANTS SCHEME

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to agree the revision of the Concurrent Functions Grant Scheme to include the grant previously awarded separately under the Parish Lengthsman Scheme by Planning and Development Committee.

The Concurrent Grant Scheme which was approved a number of years ago by this Committee gives grant assistance for those Parishes and Town Councils who provide services in their areas which elsewhere are provided by the Borough

Council. This support was set at a rate of 25% of eligible net revenue expenditure in the previous year subject to the overall cost to the Borough Council not exceeding £20,000 per annum.

It was now proposed to amalgamate the Concurrent Grant Scheme with the Parish Lengthsman Grant Scheme which has a budget of £10,000 creating a single Concurrent Function Grant pot of £30,000.

It was proposed that applications be invited from all Parishes and once these have been received consideration could be given to the total available funding requested against the total grant pot available. A report would then be brought back to this Committee regarding recommended allocations and how this may impact on the method in which grants are allocated in the current scheme.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the amalgamation of the Concurrent Grant Scheme with the Parish Lengthsman Grant Scheme and that applications be invited from all Parishes and a further report be submitted to this Committee.

396 REFERENCE FROM HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – FIRE PROTECTION MEASURES AT THE JOINERS ARMS, 90 WHALLEY ROAD, CLITHEROE

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a reference from the Health and Housing Committee with regard to a request for a supplementary estimate of £14,500 for fire protection and extractor fans work at 90 Whalley Road, Clitheroe.

Following the sad events at Grenfell Tower and this being the first year where the Council has taken back management of 90 Whalley Road, a fire risk assessment had been undertaken, which had identified that extractor fans were required in 5 of the flats to ensure the newly installed fire detection systems can work efficiently. An estimated total value of the works is £14,500 and it was suggested that this cost be funded from the repairs and maintenance earmarked reserve or the flexible homeless support grant.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the request for the supplementary estimate of £14,500 with the full amount to be financed from the flexible homeless support grant.

397 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Committee on the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge. The report outlined the dates for the Corporate Peer Challenge, the team that would carry out the Corporate Peer Challenge, the interviews and focus groups that have been organised at the request of the Peer team, the documents that had been provided and other arrangements that had been made.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

398

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 to small business, pubs and a discretionary relief scheme.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits provided an update to Committee with regard to progress with applications. The latest position was outlined in that 13 businesses would benefit from supporting small business scheme and these had been paid grant relief totalling £14,485.63. An estimated 53 businesses would benefit from the pub relief scheme and these had been invited to apply for the relief. Relief had currently been granted to 32 businesses totalling £30,246.58. A further 64 businesses were estimated to benefit from the local discretionary relief scheme and again these had been invited to apply. To date 32 businesses had received grant relief totalling £59,248.08.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

399

COUNCIL TAX BASE 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of the Council Tax Base for 2018/2019. A calculation had been carried out across all of the Parishes and had resulted in an overall tax base for 2018/2019 of 22,902 which is an increase of 1.9% on the tax base for 2017/2018 of 22,481.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

400

TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2017/2018

A report of the Director of Resources was submitted for Committee's information on the Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2017 to 30 September 2017, covering such areas as the Public Works Loan Board, borrowing requirements, temporary investments, Prudential indicators, Local Government Bonds Agency and approved organisation and recent event.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

401

REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a 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.

402 REVENUE MONITORING 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information for the first 6 months of this year's revenue budget as far as this Committee was concerned. The report outlined by cost centre and comparison between actual expenditure and the original estimate for the period and highlighted the variations along with the budget holder's comments and agreed action plans.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

403 OVERALL REVENUE MONITORING 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information to consider the position on the revenue budget for the current financial year up to the end of September.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

404 CAPITAL MONITORING 2017/2018

Committee considered a report on the progress of the approved capital programme for the period to the end of September 2017 with regard to schemes which fall under the remit of this Committee.

One of the schemes included in the capital programme was for the Civic Suite upgrade and it was agreed that a task and finish group of 5 Members should be appointed to work with officers on this capital scheme to give their feedback on what was being proposed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

405 OVERALL CAPITAL MONITORING 2017/2018

Committee received an update report on the progress of the overall approved capital programme for the period to the end of September 2017.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

406 BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group meetings held on 17 August 2017 and 27 September 2017.

407 COMMUNICATIONS WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Communications Working Group held on 29 August 2017 and 26 September 2017.

408 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

409 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

That by virtue of the next item 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.

410 LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE-OFFS

Committee considered a report asking them to approve the writing-off of Council Tax debts of £2,426.40 plus £240 costs and Housing Benefit debts of £1,376.94 where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of Council Tax debts of £2,426.40 plus £240 costs and Housing Benefit debts of £1,376.94.

411 SUNDRY DEBTOR WRITE-OFFS

Committee considered a report asking them to approve the writing-off of an outstanding Sundry Debtor invoice relating to an individual totalling £1,499.39.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing-off of a Sundry debt of £1,499.39.

412 LAND BY BERRY LANE MEDICAL CENTRE, LONGRIDGE

The Director of Community Services submitted a report outlining details of a proposal received from Berry Lane Medical Centre, Longridge, to buy a piece of land to enable the centre to be expanded and seeking a Committee decision on the proposal.

Following consideration of this request at both Community Services Committee and Policy and Finance Committee a formal offer had now been received from the practice that equalled the valuation of the District Valuer. It did not however include anything for the reconfiguring of the play area currently situated on this land.

Committee discussed the proposal taking into account the comments made by Mr Carefoot under the public participation item.

RESOLVED: That Committee refuse the request from the Medical Centre to purchase the land from the Council.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

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