

## Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 26 January 2010 starting at 6.30pm  
Present: Councillor E M H Ranson (Chairman)

Councillors:

D Eccleston	J Rogerson (6.50pm)
K Hind (6.45pm)	D Smith
J Holgate	J S Sutcliffe
S Hirst	R J Thompson
S Hore	N Walsh
A Knox	

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

### 745 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors R Croasdale and R Sherras.

### 746 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2009 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### 747 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Ranson declared an interest in the agenda item on Roefield.

### 748 REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/2010 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMME 2010/2015

The Director of Resources submitted her report on the revised programme for the current year and also the future five-year capital programme for this Committee.

She commented that unfinished schemes for 2008/2009 had totalled £1,610,320 and had been added to the original programme and was shown as slippage.

Each scheme had been discussed in some detail with budget holders and revised the programme had been revised to reflect likely expenditure this year.

Members were reminded of the joint decision with Roefield Leisure Centre, which had been made in December to no longer continue with the Roefield extension and changing room/scheme. However, the Council intended to refurbish the football changing rooms at Edisford and hoped to be able to complete these by the start of the next football season. The changes that had been made to the programme to reflect this decision were highlighted to Members, including £215,000 for the Council's Edisford football changing rooms, which represented the original amount included in the five-year capital programme for this scheme.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the revised capital programme for 2009/2010 as set out in Appendix 1; and
2. approve the five-year programme for 2010/2011 to 2014/2015;

749

#### REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2009/2010 AND ORIGINAL ESTIMATE 2010/2011

The Director of Resources asked Committee to agree a revised revenue budget for 2009/2010 together with a draft revenue budget for 2010/2011 for submission to the Special Policy and Finance Committee on 9 February 2010.

In preparing the budget, Committee considered the following matters:

- The current year's revenue budget.
- The draft budget for 2010/2011.
- Fees and charges.

The Director of Resources then highlighted a number of areas where overspends and underspends had been incurred, in particular in relation to the lower than expected wage negotiations and a number of other areas which had resulted in a revised budget of almost £60,000 lower than the original estimate. Reasons were given for this difference between original and revised estimates.

Members then discussed the 2010/2011 draft revenue budget. The Director of Resources' three year forecast had been submitted to this Committee in September and had suggested that next year's base budget would be approximately £7,720,000. The forecast indicated that savings of £246,210 would be required to produce an affordable budget. However, the real budgetary problems were likely to be in future years when it was almost certain there would be severe reductions in public sector funding.

Members then proceeded to go through the itemised budget for this Committee in some detail.

The Chairman asked Members in particular to look at the cost of each section of the Council, including support services, when considering the finalised budgets. Committee also considered a review of its fees and charges. Comparisons had been made with charges levied by neighbouring authorities and also the private sector. Service managers had also been asked to examine their services for any areas where charges could be applied where none was currently being charged.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the revised revenue budget for 2009/2010;
2. approve the proposed fees and charges as set out in the report; and
3. agree the revenue budget for 2010/2011 to submit to the Special Policy and Finance Committee meeting on 9 February 2010.

## FREEDOM OF THE BOROUGH

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the granting of the Freedom of the Borough of Ribble Valley to the Duke of Lancaster's regiment. He commented that the Freedom of the Borough was the highest honour that the Council could bestow on any citizen or body. He gave details of Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972 which allowed the Council to confer freedom of entry upon service units which had rendered conspicuous service and had close links with the borough.

The report traced the history of the regiment which had been formed in July 2006 and he also referred to a recent visit to the regiment by Council Members to the barracks in Fulwood, where it had been made clear by their commanding officer that the freedom would be graciously received if the Council chose to honour the regiment in this way.

The freedom of entry had its roots deep within the history of local government and is an example of the power and influence of the old boroughs in the past. Permission to enter conferred upon individual regiments the right to march through the borough with due ceremony, drums beating, bands playing and banners flying in recognition of the confidence, trust and friendship existing between citizens and troops.

Members were asked to consider conferring this honour, which could be done by a resolution passed by not less than two thirds of the Council's Members voting upon the issue. If such a resolution was passed by Council in March, further consideration would be required as to the means of presenting this award to the Duke of Lancaster's regiment.

RESOLVED: That Committee recommend to Full Council that the freedom of the borough of Ribble Valley be granted to the Duke of Lancaster's regiment.

## PENNINE LANCASHIRE – INTENSIVE BUSINESS START-UP PROGRAMME – COLLABORATION AGREEMENT

The Director of Development Services presented a detailed report to Committee confirming the Council's agreement to the intensive business start-up programme. The report gave considerable detail on the new business start-up programme for the region. It would provide an intensive and specialist support service for people from target groups/areas considering setting up businesses in the northwest. Details were given of the key client base, which would be those demographic groups which were underperforming in terms of enterprise. Each local authority would be allocated a certain amount of funding through the project based on three criteria:

- Number of target groups in the local authority area.
- Net enterprise gap which looked at the shortfall in business density in the area compared to the England average and what funding was already available to the area.
- Deprivation. This took into account the percentage of super output areas in each district in the lowest 15% nationally which was then weighted to local authority population.

He further commented that Planning and Development Committee had agreed to take part in the project and to commit £5,000 from the regeneration budget to support a co-funding arrangement.

The delivery partner selected was made up of a consortium of the enterprise agencies that had previously operated in the Pennine Lancashire area, who would now operate as a single body to deliver the service.

He commented on a number of matters that had been the subject of ongoing discussions in relation to formal agreements necessary between the partner bodies, namely each of the partner local authorities, Blackburn with Darwen as accountable body and the North West Development Agency as the principal funding body.

He pointed out that the main provisions were contained in clauses 5.4 and 5.5 which provided for each authority to indemnify the accountable body in the circumstances outlined in the collaboration and grant funding agreement.

RESOLVED: That Committee confirm the Council's participation in the project and authorise the Chief Executive to sign any necessary agreements.

752 MOBILE OFFICE/ALLPAY UPDATE

The Director of Resources reported on the progress made with the introduction of Allpay. This had been completed on schedule on 1 November 2009 and during November and December, customers who came to the mobile/Longridge office had been informed of the changes and encouraged to request an Allpay card. As of 12 January 2010, 343 cards had been issued and staff at the mobile/Longridge office had had a very positive response from customers.

In Longridge where the Council were currently only open for one full day and two half days, there were now four outlets, some of which offered a 24 hour seven day a week service. As at 12 January 2010, 210 payments had been made through Allpay totalling £17,415.28. At the same time payments at the mobile/Longridge office have declined by almost 300 transactions in December in comparison with November 2009. Details were also given about the staff redeployment issues.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

753 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2009/2010

The Director of Resources presented her report which provided Committee with a monitoring report on the Council's treasury management activities for the period 1 April 2009 to 30 December 2009. She commented on the exceptionally low interest rates over that period. These low interest rates had no immediate effect on the interest payable on the Council's long-term loan debt from the public works loan board, which was mainly at fixed interest rates. However, it had resulted in a dramatic decrease in income earned from the Council's temporary investments.

The report dealt with the following main aspects:

- Borrowing requirements.
- Investments.
- Prudential indicators.
- Approved organisations.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. accept the monitoring report; and
2. approve the changes to our list of approved organisations for investment as per paragraph 7.10 of the report to include Santander UK plc to the list approved and to change Northern Rock plc to Northern Rock (Asset Management) plc.

754 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

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

- National non-domestic rate (NNDR).
- Council Tax.
- Sundry debtors.
- Housing benefit – performance.
- Housing benefits – right benefit and right time indicators 2009/2010.
- Housing benefit fraud.
- Housing benefit over payments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

755 PLACE JOINT COMMITTEE

Committee received the minutes of the PLACE Joint Committee held on 26 November 2009.

756 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next items of business being exempt information under Category 7 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

757 PURCHASE OF LAND FOR CLITHEROE CEMETERY – UPDATE

The Director of Development Services updated Committee in relation to his previous report to Committee on 22 September which sought to provide the necessary capital funding for the purchase of additional land for Clitheroe Cemetery, Waddington Road, Clitheroe. He commented that since his last report there had been the following developments.

1. The geological survey of the adjacent land had been undertaken with an initial report which had identified nothing of concern with the land being similar to the existing cemetery and was therefore suitable to proceed with purchase.

2. In addition, a detailed scheme for the site infrastructure had been prepared and costed by the Director of Community Services. In this process a number of options were considered with the best option being taken forward for detailed estimates.
3. Due to the length of carriageway required to make the first phase of the extension available, ground conditions required more substantial foundations for the carriageway and strengthening enforcement to the culvert to carry a highway, the total capital budget of £90,000 would be required to implement this scheme and associated works. Members then welcomed this report and supported the purchase proposed.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the content of the report;
2. approve in principle the extension of the cemetery as outlined in the report; and
3. approve the financial provision in the 2010/2015 five year capital programme of
  - i) £75,000 for the purchase of land in 2010/2011.
  - ii) £5,500 for the compulsory purchase of the additional entrance land identified in the report in 2010/2011.
  - iii) £90,000 for the provision of infrastructure to the initial section of the cemetery extension to be developed in 2011/2012.

758

#### BARROW BUSINESS PARK

The Director of Development Services gave Committee a detailed report on joint work with the County Council (Lancashire County Developments Ltd) to develop land for economic development at Barrow Business Park.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the scope and progress of the project so far and support the continued joint working with Lancashire County Developments Ltd confirming the role of LCDL in leading negotiations on current site options;
2. instruct the Director of Development Services to continue dialogue with the Pennine Lancashire Partnership to secure financial support for the scheme as outlined including the submission of a bid as appropriate to the NWDA; and
3. instruct the Director of Development Services to seek the views of the Asset Management Group and to undertake the necessary investigations into delivery options as indicated in paragraphs 3.5 and 3.7 of this report keeping the Committee informed of progress on the site.

759 SALE OF TOILET BUILDING REAR OF 38-40 KING STREET, WHALLEY

The Chief Executive presented a report which updated Committee and informed Members of the potential sale of the redundant facility. The site had been valued by the District Valuer on 29 September 2009 and had concluded that the market value of the property was £25,000.

Subsequently, a formal offer had been received from Sabden and Whalley Medical Group for £25,000 for the freehold land and building.

RESOLVED: That Committee accept the offer from Sabden and Whalley Medical Group.

760 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES/COUNCIL TAX WRITE OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted her report seeking Committee's approval to write off certain national non-domestic rates (NNDR) and Council Tax debts where the whereabouts of the debtor was unknown or they were in respect of bankrupt persons.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £16,769.43 of NNDR debts and £8,959.69 of Council Tax debts where the debtors whereabouts were unknown.

761 MINUTES OF THE BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 13 October and the 9 December 2009.

(Councillor E M H Ranson declared an interest in the next item of business and left the meeting.) (Councillor Hirst acted as the Chair for this item.)

762 ROEFIELD EXTENSION AND EDISFORD CHANGING ROOMS – UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on the retendering exercise, which had culminated in the total cost of the project still being in excess of the original budget. Discussions had then taken place with Roefield on how these costs could be apportioned but it became evident that neither party could afford the joint scheme in the present uncertain financial climate. A meeting had taken place with representatives of Roefield on 16 December when it was agreed to abandon the joint scheme. Details were given of the incurred consultancy costs and how these could be funded and shared between the Borough Council and Roefield. Details were also given on how both Roefield and the Council would proceed with lesser elements of the original joint scheme in relation to a smaller extension for Roefield and the refurbishment of the existing changing rooms for the Borough Council.

RESOLVED: That Committee confirm that the joint scheme is abandoned and continue to explore the feasibility of the refurbishment of the football changing rooms in time for the beginning of the next football season (2010/2011).

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).