

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

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Dear Councillor

The next meeting of the **POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE** is at **6.30pm on TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012** in the **TOWN HALL, CHURCH STREET, CLITHEROE.**

I do hope you can be there.

Yours sincerely

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

To: Committee Members (copy for information to all other members of the Council)
Directors
Press

AGENDA

Part 1 – items of business to be discussed in public

1. Apologies for absence.
- ✓ 2. Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2012 – copy enclosed.
3. Declarations of Interest (if any).
4. Public Participation (if any).

DECISION ITEMS

- ✓ 5. Economic Strategy – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 6. Local Government Resource Review – Proposals for Business Rates Retention – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 7. Village Amenity Grants – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 8. Localisation of Council Tax Benefits – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.

- ✓ 9. Community Food Growing – report of Chief Executive – copy closed.
- ✓ 10. Budget Forecast 2012/2013 to 2015/2016 – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 11. Review of the Council's Complaints Procedure – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 12. National Non-Domestic Rates Write-offs – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- 13. References from Committees (if any).

INFORMATION ITEMS

- 14. Amendments to Regulatory Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) – report of Chief Executive – report to follow.
- ✓ 15. Community Safety Partnership – Update – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 16. Revenues and Benefits General Report – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 17. Timetable for Budget Setting – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 18. Insurance Renewals 2012/2013 – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 19. Minutes of Budget Working Group held 16 January 2012 and 19 June 2012 – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 20. Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies (if any).

Part II - items of business **not** to be discussed in public

- ✓ 21. Land for Industrial Development – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 22. National Non Domestic Rates and Council Tax Write Offs – report of Director of Resources – copy enclosed.
- ✓ 23. Clitheroe Food Festival – report of Chief Executive – copy enclosed.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 25TH SEPTEMBER 2012

title: RIBBLE VALLEY ECONOMIC STRATEGY REVIEW 2012

submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE

principal author: CRAIG MATTHEWS

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To receive an update on the Ribble Valley Economic Strategy.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

- Council Ambitions - In addition to Ribble Valley Borough Council striving to meet its three ambitions, it also recognises the importance of securing a diverse, sustainable economic base for the Borough. The work of the regeneration section seeks to promote this.
- Community Objectives – The issues highlighted in this report will contribute to objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.
- Corporate Priorities - Delivery of services to all
- Other Considerations - None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 It was reported to the RVBC Policy & Finance Committee on 27th March 2012 that, as a result of changes in Government policy, and the delivery of economic development, regeneration and business support, the original Ribble Valley Economic Strategy, which sets out the economic aims and objectives for the area over a 5-year period (2009 – 2014) would be reviewed. The Strategy and its actions contained a significant number of references to various structures and programmes which were either in the process of transition or would no longer exist in the future, and a review was necessary to bind together these new structures and approach to economic development in the Borough to reflect these important changes.

2.2 The Council formally adopted the original Economic Strategy in 2009, setting out the economic aims and objectives for the area over a 5-year period, and aims around 5 thematic areas of activity to guide the council in setting its own activities and resources, as well as providing a framework for partnership working, and supporting and influencing the strategies, priorities and the resource allocation of others operating in the field of economic development across Ribble Valley and the wider area.

3 INFORMATION

3.1 The draft Economic Strategy (Review 2012) document has been attached as an appendix to this report for members of the Policy & Finance Committee, and a reference copy has been placed in the members room or can be viewed on the

Council's website. In particular, members' attention is drawn to the Action Plans that are detailed within the document from pages 19 through to 25, which identify specific areas of activity to support the economic aims and objectives as well as the principal economic vision to sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley as specified within the Council's Corporate Strategy. These actions define what will be done to assist the Borough towards realising its economic vision and to aid long-term economic prosperity. Also, a summary of the key thematic areas within the document are as follows: -

- 3.2 **Regeneration & Economic Development** - maximising the areas potential to generate initiatives, projects and attract resources in line with community needs. Encourage and engage both people and businesses for collective community action.
- 3.3 **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment.
- 3.4 **Infrastructure & Communications** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access, appropriate business sites and premises.
- 3.5 **Image, Marketing & Promotion** – maintaining and enhancing the perception and image of the area; inspiring and encouraging people to invest in and visit Ribble Valley whether for business or pleasure.
- 3.6 **Employment & Skills** - ensuring with partners in the public and private sectors that a diversity of training and educational opportunities are available to people and businesses to ensure a healthy labour market.
- 3.7 The Economic Strategy was broadly welcomed and following consultations with local businesses and private sector stakeholders, in particular representation from the business groups and Chambers of Trade in Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley respectively. Also, in order to reinforce common understanding and to encourage views, an economic strategy forum meeting was held as an opportunity to address current economic issues with a broad mix of business representation from across the Borough, welcoming the overall aims of the Strategy, and supportive of the issues identified and the actions proposed.
- 3.8 Finally, you agreed at your last meeting to establish an Economy Working Group, consisting of Cllrs. Ranson, Hirst, Hore, Mirfin, Horkin, Rogerson and Yearling, to further support and monitor delivery of the economic objectives and activities detailed within the Strategy, as well as address issues in relation to the Ribble Valley economy. A draft copy of the terms of reference for the group is attached at annex A of this report.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
 - Resources – None at present, however some projects may be identified as the Strategy progresses and in such matters, a report will be presented to the Policy & Finance Committee.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal - None

- Political – None
- Reputation - The matters covered in this report link with the Council's objectives of a sustainable economy and thriving market towns.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Agree the Draft Strategy Review and its Action Plans.

5.2 Agree the terms of reference for the Economy Working Group set up to support and monitor activities that contribute toward a successful Ribble Valley economy.

CRAIG MATTHEWS
REGENERATION OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS: -

1. Ribble Valley Economic Strategy 2009 – 2014

For further information please ask for Craig Matthews, extension 4531.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
ECONOMY WORKING GROUP
TERMS OF REFERENCE
STRUCTURE AND REPORTING

- The group will be known as the Economic Working Group of the Policy & Finance Committee
- The Chair of the Policy & Finance Committee will chair the group.
- The minutes of any meetings will be reported to the Policy & Finance Committee.
- The meeting dates will be reactive to provide a policy steer and to respond flexibly to economic development and regeneration issues as they arise.

AIMS

- The aim of the sub-group is to aid the delivery of regeneration and economic development activities in the borough.
- To ensure the supply of employment land provision in the area meets with the identified business, economic and employment growth needs.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote understanding of general economic needs of the Borough and to advise the Council's Policy & Finance Committee as appropriate.
- To support delivery of the Economic Strategy objectives 2008-2012 as agreed by the Policy & Finance Committee.
- To ensure members are aware of economic development activities and to provide an opportunity for member guidance on economic issues within the Borough.
- To provide an informed response to affordable housing development proposals in the borough to aid delivery.
- To work in partnership with our preferred registered providers and the Homes and Communities Agency to deliver the most needed housing in the right location.
- To ensure the needs of the business community in Ribble Valley are addressed.

Ribble Valley

Economic Strategy 2009 – 2014

REVIEW 2012

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Executive Summary

Background

The Ribble Valley Economic Strategy is a means of providing clarity and detail on the Council's local economic aims and objectives as well as the actions to deliver on economic well being in Ribble Valley. It guides the council in setting its own service plans and resources, as well as providing a framework for partnership working, supporting and influencing the strategies, priorities and the resource allocation of others operating in the field of economic development across Ribble Valley and the wider area.

The Council formally adopted the original Economic Strategy in 2009. Much has changed since this time, whilst the consequences of the economic downturn in global markets were beginning to take effect in the UK, and the election of a new Government in 2010 has since brought around new changes in policy regarding the delivery of economic development, regeneration and business support. The original Strategy and its actions contained a significant number of references to various structures and programmes, which have since changed and therefore this document has been reviewed for 2012 so that it's content and various strands of activity take account of these changes, to bind together these new structures and approach to economic development.

The Economic Vision

- **TO SUSTAIN A STRONG AND PROSPEROUS RIBBLE VALLEY**

The key economic objective of the Council is to ensure that Ribble Valley remains a strong and prosperous area, and the Economic Strategy provides a focus so that the services we and our partners deliver meet the needs of our economic aims.

The main aim of the Strategy is to support and develop an economically sustainable area where investment is encouraged, skills are developed and new and existing businesses are supported. Through the work areas described in this Strategy, we aim to be recognised as a highly entrepreneurial and enterprising Borough that seeks to enhance and maintain vibrant local communities whilst promoting the protection of the environment. The document sets out desired outcomes around 5 key themes and strategic aims, each with a series of related objectives. Through a range of actions it defines how these objectives will be tackled to enable the Borough to realise its economic potential and to ensure long term economic prosperity.

Thematic Areas

The strategy sets out five thematic areas of activity. These are:

- **Regeneration & Economic Development** - maximising the areas potential for economic growth and innovation, and to generate initiatives, projects and resources in line with needs. Encourage and engage both people and businesses for collective action.
- **Business Support & Development** – addressing issues that facilitate healthy business performance, encouraging business start-ups, business growth and inward investment
- **Infrastructure & Services** - providing the necessary 'physical environment' in areas such as land for employment growth, appropriate business sites and premises, transport, affordable housing, ICT & 'broadband' access,
- **Image, Marketing & Promotion** – maintaining and enhancing the perception and image of the area; inspiring and encouraging people to invest in and visit Ribble Valley whether for business or pleasure.
- **Employment & Skills** - ensuring with partners in the public and private sectors that a diversity of training and educational opportunities are available to people and businesses to ensure a healthy labour market.

Ribble Valley in Profile

Ribble Valley is a predominantly rural Borough located in the heart of Lancashire and with an area of 585 square kilometres is the largest district in the County of Lancashire. The main commercial centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley are attractive market towns, which have retained much of their historic character, and are surrounded by miles of unspoilt countryside. Against this backdrop is a thriving and entrepreneurial business community of established local firms, predominantly small companies and rural industries.

Ribble Valley's strengths are in its low unemployment rates, high quality natural environment and successful businesses. Whilst the area has seen strong economic and job growth over the last decade – one of the highest in the UK – the area has also seen increasing levels of new housing and commuting out of the area for work. In the future the vision is to build on the indigenous strengths and assets of the Borough to maintain a strong and healthy economy, which contributes to the overall prosperity of the sub-region and region. One which; exhibits the right conditions in terms of infrastructure, services and environment to support its own businesses and to attract other successful businesses. A Borough, that enables enterprise to flourish, is environmentally conscious and has sustainable communities with sufficient jobs of a range and quality to better meet local needs, whilst maintaining its highly valued rural character.



This sparsely populated Borough enjoys a spectacular natural environment, much of which is included in the Bowland Forest Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This natural environment obviously means that agriculture and tourism have played a significant part in the shaping of Ribble Valley's economy. Market Towns such as Clitheroe & Longridge provide two distinct focal points surrounded by attractive countryside - all of which provide important assets for the economic and social well being of the area. Over seventy percent of the Borough is in the Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a clear reflection of the landscape quality of the area.

The Borough has a population of around 57,800, with Clitheroe, the main administrative centre having 15,026 inhabitants. Clitheroe lies at the heart of the Borough whilst Longridge, the other main town, lies in the west. Longridge has a population of approximately 8,240. The remainder of the area is mainly rural with a number of villages ranging in size from large villages such as Whalley, Sabden and Chatburn through to small hamlets such as Great Mitton and Paythorne.

The Borough has transport links to both the M6 & M65 motorways and the A59 crosses through Ribble Valley. The rail network also has links to the West Coast mainline at Preston, and links to other major UK networks via Manchester. Also, International Airports are located at Manchester and Leeds/Bradford. This network will serve a strong role for the Borough in many ways, not only for attracting businesses and tourists to the area, but also ensuring the area is accessible to both the wider labour market and local resident population.

In Lancashire, Ribble Valley is the only district that has recorded significant employment growth in the east of the county with Ribble Valley's enterprise survival rates are also higher than national averages. With a higher level of businesses surviving after 5 years in excess of the national average. Key priority areas for Ribble Valley Borough Council include working towards a higher wage economy and ensuring quality affordable housing for our workforce.

The following statistics provided baseline information for the original Economic Strategy in 2009 on a range of factors which impact on the economic, social and environmental well being of the Borough.

Key Facts – Population: -

- Ribble Valley has a resident population of 58,000. The 3 main settlements are Clitheroe (15,026) Longridge (8,240) and Whalley (4,078)
- Ribble Valley has one of the sparsest population densities of any local authority in England with only 102 people per square km compared to an average 487 people per square km across the whole of the North West.
- Ribble Valley has a higher than average older population - 17.8% of the Borough's population are aged 65 and over. The borough has a low number of young people (31%) when compared with England (37%).
- The working age population of Ribble Valley is 34,600 (60.3% of the total population), which is similar to the North West (61.5%) and Great Britain (62%).
- It is predicted the population of Ribble Valley will increase to nearly 70,000 by 2028 (office for National Statistics).

Key Facts – Employment: -

- There are 24,100 employee jobs in Ribble Valley
- There is a higher rate of self-employment in Ribble Valley 18.9% compared to the North West figure of 7.8% and Great Britain 9.0%.
- Around 12,320 local residents travel outside of the Borough to work
- Unemployment in Ribble Valley is significantly below average.
- In 2007 there were 2,720 VAT registered businesses in Ribble Valley a total stock growth of 22%.
- Around a quarter of the working population are employed in manufacturing industries.

Key Facts - The Visitor Economy: -

- Recent years there has been a growth in visitor numbers to around 2 million people year.
- The majority of tourism businesses in Ribble Valley are small rural operations. Many are sole traders and over 50% of the accommodation stock consists of operations with three bedrooms or less and are considered 'micro' businesses.
- The revenue brought into Ribble Valley by visitors annually is estimated to be over £100 Million.
- A Visitor Information Centre is based in Clitheroe, funded and managed by Ribble Valley Borough Council. There are also a number of other facilities around the Borough providing visitor and tourism information services.

Key Facts – The Housing Market: -

- In Ribble Valley there were 22,210 households in 2001, 92% of which are privately owned. 6.2% of housing stock are second homes - for Lancashire, the ratio is 2%
- During July to September 2008, the average price of a house in Ribble Valley was £193,813. Average household incomes were £26,657, giving a household income: house price ratio of 1:7, for Lancashire, as a whole the ratio is 1:6.
- The proximity of Ribble Valley increases pressure on housing as the area is within commuting distance of urban employment areas.
- When comparing average house prices with average incomes, housing is much less affordable to local residents than the average for the County and region.
- There is a lack of supply of 'move on' properties (3-4 bedrooms). This has a knock on effect on first time buyers, as properties are not re-entering the market.
- Increasing numbers of private sector rental accommodation.

Key Facts - Health and Quality of Life: -

- 7.9% of people indicated that they were in poor general health, compared with a figure of 11% for the North West.
- Ribble Valley has a 17.1% of the resident population with limiting long-term illness. This is considerably lower than the North West with 20.7%.
- Ribble Valley Primary Care Trust has the highest proportion of people who maintain a healthy weight.
- Ribble Valley has the low proportion of people living a sedentary lifestyle and a high proportion of people doing the recommended levels of exercise. Within Lancashire, Ribble Valley has one of the lowest levels of smokers.
- Life expectancy in Ribble Valley is 81.2 for females and 78.4 for males, compared with 80.6 for females and 76.1 for males living in England and Wales.

To further aid and understand the economic position, the table on page 7 presents a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis for the Borough to capture the picture of Ribble Valley.

SWOT ANALYSIS: -

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Image and perception of Ribble Valley • Low Unemployment • High Quality Natural Environment • Pleasant area to live with high Quality of Life and environmental character • Culture of Enterprise & Entrepreneurship • Established events and attractions • Rising population • Location advantages & external transport links; road (M6, M65 & A59) & rail • Low levels of unemployment & deprivation • Strong agricultural sector & resilient manufacturing & retail sector • High educational attainment and skill levels within resident population • Good business formation & self employment rates & high levels of entrepreneurship • Market towns & rural centres established in their roles • Dedicated town partnerships & Chambers of Trade • Strong employment growth & business formation in recent years • Unique heritage and environmental assets of regional significance (Clitheroe, Longridge, Whalley, Forest of Bowland AONB etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High housing cost • Limited amount of employment land • Hidden low wage economy in certain sectors • Small & sparse population • Lack of all weather attractions • Poor rural transport and utilities infrastructure in some areas • No established further & Higher Education Providers/Facilities • Over representation in declining economic sectors • Borough wide under-representation in 15-29 age group and generally aging population • High and increasing levels of in & out commuting (net out commuter) & worsening self-containment rate • Shallow knowledge economy & low representation of growth sectors • Low inward investment profile & limited recent success • Areas of rural disadvantage, service loss and isolation • Poor public transport provision & reliance on private transport to access employment / training • Some key sectors seen as low skill / low wage employers • Transport / Traffic constraints affecting viability of economic centres • Need for improvement to rail links
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Natural Environment • Location and accessibility to M6, M65 & A59 affording good east/west and north/south connectivity • Access to ICT Broadband Infrastructure • Vocational training opportunities (Aspire Project) • Tap and grow the volume & value of the tourism sector, particularly over night stays • Retain commuters & stem worsening self containment rate • Increase Borough's share of regional inward investment success • Potential of A59 corridor for employment development • Ability to support and build strong partnerships & collaborative working • Growth potential of existing businesses & their loyalty to area • New mechanisms, funding & legislative changes (RDPE) to support economic development • Changes in the delivery of business support (NW Business Link & business support simplification) • Corporate track record in e-Government & potential lead on ICT infrastructure / e business • Opportunities afforded by Local Development Framework • Opportunity to harness skills, knowledge & entrepreneurial potential of resident population • Opportunities afforded by environmental character & quality to grow tourism product 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perception of an affluent area • Lack of Government & European Funding Streams • Insufficient employment land to meet future potential needs • Housing affordability and the lack of affordable housing • Tight labour supply & perceived skills shortages / gaps (particularly lower level occupations) • Potential loss of existing firms seeking expansion • Perceived / actual mismatch of labour supply & demand • Continuing cost and competitive pressures facing traditional sectors (agric / manufacturing.) • Continuing competitive pressures facing High Streets, particularly the independent retail sector • Continuing loss of employment land to alternate uses • Low commercial vacancy rates & comparative high costs of commercial development • Short timescale of public funding creates lack of continuity of delivery programmes • Short timescale of public funding creates lack of continuity of delivery programmes • Economic growth potentially constrained by planning policies • Exodus of talented young people

Regeneration & Economic Development

Strategic Objective

- **To identify & develop initiatives that will encourage the long-term physical and social regeneration of Ribble Valley**



A dynamic local enterprise culture is vital for the long-term competitiveness and overall success of any local economy. The prosperity of the economy in the Ribble Valley is demonstrated by having the second highest growth in business start-ups in Lancashire over the last ten years. However, there is a need to ensure that opportunities are available for businesses to continue to develop in the area. There is a need to continue to market and regenerate our market towns and villages as places to do business and to ensure that there is employment land available for development.

The issues of public transport particularly and accessibility to isolated villages are part of a perceived need for a more flexible approach and a more accessible service. Without economic prosperity, many other problems e.g. health, housing, crime, access to services are all much harder to address. This fact also reflects the current issues within the economy of Ribble Valley. Whilst the general perception from outside the area is that of a relatively affluent Borough with low levels of unemployment, the reality is that many individual and households in Ribble Valley experience lower levels of income than that of the UK average. This can create a risk of a two-track economy in the Borough, where higher income households reinforce the perception of affluence overshadowing the need to address the needs of those on lower incomes.

Regeneration should be seen a supporting activity as part of a package of economic development activity. Developing a framework for the integrated social and economic development of Ribble Valley is an underlying principle of this Economic Strategy. If we are to achieve and sustain economic well being in Ribble Valley it will be necessary not only to provide the relevant physical infrastructure, but also to develop the 'human capital' within Ribble Valley to ensure that our population are sufficiently informed and skilled to be able to participate in local economic development and regeneration activities. The need to identify and develop projects and initiatives are recognised as a priority that cuts across this Economic Strategy.

The original Economic Strategy in 2009 identified the main regeneration and economic development issues as follows:

- The need to develop and progress geographical and thematic priorities for action
- The need to link Ribble Valley's economic needs to local and national priorities
- The need to retain and enhance local services to local people and businesses
- Benefits of partnership working locally, sub-regionally and regionally
- Identify, constantly monitor and pursue opportunities in line with Ribble Valley's economic needs
- Maximising opportunities for further development appropriate to needs

Partnership Working

Government in April agreed the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership (LEP). The LEP is a wholly owned company limited by guarantee of Lancashire County Council, comprising of 16 Directors with 11 from the private sector.

Edwin Booth is currently the Chairman of the LEP Board. The remaining Directors are drawn from local government and university sectors.

The key purpose of the LEP is to provide the business-led leadership and single economic voice needed to enable Lancashire to compete in the market place for new jobs and investment. The LEP Board considered an independent report from Professor Michael Parkinson of Liverpool John Moores University on the development of an agreed set of strategic economic priorities for the LEP.

Key Service Centres

Clitheroe

Clitheroe plays an essential part in the rural economy of Ribble Valley and there is a continuing need to ensure the economic health and vibrancy of Clitheroe as a key Market Town and service centre, helping our rural businesses and communities remain healthy, economically and socially. A town centre masterplan has been developed to address the key issues, needs, actions and aspiration towards maintaining and strengthening essential role of Clitheroe in the economy of the Borough as a service and retail centre for its residents and the wider rural community.

It is important that Clitheroe does not stand still and that the town and surrounding communities evolve and adapt to the changing patterns of work, culture and social activity whilst maintaining and enhancing its cultural, heritage and environmental assets. The need to maintain Clitheroe, as a thriving economic centre will be a key factor in the future economic success of Ribble Valley. A culture of independent and individual shops, restaurants, cafés, adequate car parking and efficient local transport provision and access will be essential in this process.

Ribble Valley Borough Council and Lancashire County Developments Ltd, the economic development arm of the County Council, will begin work on a Clitheroe Town Centre Masterplan during 2009. The purpose of the study is to provide a clear Development Strategy and Implementation Plan to enable partners to support the promotion and revitalisation of the Town Centre, helping it to fulfil its potential as an attractive, vibrant and successful Town Centre. The Masterplan will equip partners with practical and robust project plans with options to help create a new and thriving market place and provide retail units appropriate to modern retailer requirements.

Longridge

Longridge is the second largest settlement within the Ribble Valley and has a long history of social and industrial change over the last 200 years. Located to the west of the Borough with transport links to the M6 motorway, Longridge first became recognised as a market town at the end of the 18th Century when the town became a focal point for the local farming community. The town expanded rapidly during the following century due to the large demand for labour to work in the quarries and cotton weaving mills, which emerged around this time, and the town continued to act as shopping and service centre for the surrounding villages, in particular those of Chipping and Ribchester, but also those of neighbouring villages over the district boundary within the City of Preston.

The traditional industries quarrying and cotton weaving which once supported its growth have since disappeared and today Longridge has become known for its busy town centre supported by an increasing number of independent shops and businesses. This, along with its neighbouring villages such as Ribchester, Knowle Green and Chipping, represent an area of unique heritage and environmental assets of regional significance. Longridge itself has seen a sustained growth in population in recent years and plays a continued role as key local service centre. Recent progress has seen the development at Longridge Civic Hall including new sporting facilities and the opening Willows Park Children's Centre serving the town and its neighbouring villages.

Longridge also plays an essential part in the rural economy of Ribble Valley and there will be a continuing need to work hard in partnership to deliver an ongoing programme of regeneration in Longridge as a key Market Town and service centre, helping our rural businesses and communities remain healthy, economically and socially. It is therefore vital that the town considers its future role and sustainability and the Longridge Action Plan will be developed in partnership that will address the key issues, needs, actions and aspiration.

towards maintaining and strengthening the essential role of Longridge in the economy of the Borough as a service and retail centre for its residents and the wider rural community.

Whalley

Whalley is a large village on the banks of the River Calder. The parish consists of the old village, which emerged as early as the 600's, that has grown from a traditional village centre with a large estate of new properties on the site of the former hospital just out of the centre. The population of Whalley has increased dramatically in the last 15 years – by well over 30 percent.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Progress priorities for in the major service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge & Whalley in line with their individual Action Plans, working in partnership with Parish & Town Councils and local business groups.
- Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements through the Community and Parish Planning process.
- Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing economic development information between Ribble Valley partners.
- Ensure, through effective representation, that local and national policy makers are aware of the issues facing Ribble Valley
- Ensure that the 'rural' case for funding assistance from National, Regional, Sub Regional and European sources has a high profile
- Maximise funding opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the area
- Engage with the Ribble Valley LSP steering group to take forward the Ribble Valley Community Strategy
- Work towards developing a higher wage economy

Business Support & Development

Strategic Objective

- **To work in partnership to provide support for existing and new businesses in Ribble Valley**



Ribble Valley has a strong level of business start-ups that has seen the second highest growth of all Lancashire districts over the last ten years. Sustainable development is a priority and to support this we need to help businesses strive for continuous improvement and economic growth. Sustainable development is a priority and can be assisted by providing consistent and effective business support services.

For tourism related businesses, quality is a key success factor. Improvements in facilities and quality standards within the industry are important in order to improve business performance and increase market share.

Business growth is also reliant upon possessing a varied workforce with a wide range of skills and abilities. Business development related issues, aims and activities are therefore also addressed in the Employment & Skills and Regeneration & Economic Development sections of this document.

The main business development issues identified are:

- A confusing network and a lack of awareness of organisations supporting businesses

- Inward Investment competition in other areas.
- High growth potential around A59 corridor
- Opportunity for expansion in key growth sectors such as tourism, food and drink, creative and cultural industries, digital industries, financial and professional services, sport and textiles
- A predominantly seasonal visitor economy with few opportunities for adverse or wet weather activities.

Business Support

Following Government changes regarding the delivery of business support, a new national Business Link service has now been established as new arrangements for business support in Lancashire and the UK. Business Link has been the primary agency for business support within the region and as the main gateway for access to information on the various business support programmes.

This new Business Link service includes: -

- An updated national Business Link website www.businesslink.gov.uk
- A new National Contact Centre due to come online during October 2011
- Business Coaching for Growth designed to accelerate business growth due to commence January 2012
- A national mentoring network.
- Department for Work & Pensions support for unemployed individuals looking to start a business.

Most recently, as part of these new delivery arrangements Business Link nationally has now launched two new services to help anyone looking to start up, improve and grow their business.

- My New Business - provides people in the stages of starting their business with what they need to know to get off the ground and plan for future success
- Growth and Improvement Service - provides guidance for people to get more out of their business, such as generating more sales, increasing profits, and saving time and money

Business Investment

Inward investment activity in the UK operates in a highly competitive market. Both Ribble Valley and Lancashire require a number of issues to be addressed in order for this to be developed and to attract significant inward investment in the future. Opportunities for further inward investment are also dependant on a ready supply of suitable employment land within the Borough. Also, Ribble Valley does not have the labour supply to service large scale inward investment prospects.

Research and evidence indicates that local company expansion projects and increased business start-up rates are the major vehicles for future job creation in the Borough. However, consideration will need to be given to develop effective measures that can seek to attract appropriate inward investment that can minimise the over reliance on specific employment sectors and help address issues around economic change.

The inward investment market is very competitive and smaller than in the past, however, opportunities will be sought that will highlight the key assets, due to Ribble Valley's geographical location.



Key Growth Sectors

It is recognised that it is sensible to develop an economy with a broad portfolio of employment sectors whilst capitalising upon Ribble Valley's key skills and strengths. With this in mind it is necessary to target inward investment efforts at sectors providing well-paid, quality employment opportunities, which will link in with the 'High Growth' aspirations of the UK Government. These will include businesses allied to the high quality environment including Environmental Management, Sport and Leisure and Food and Drink. In addition, lifestyle and office based activities including Arts, Crafts and Creative Industries, ICT, Financial and Professional services, would be appropriate.



Employer Relations

There is a need for greater contact to strengthen relationships with businesses in Ribble Valley to understand their needs. Workforce development is a major issue for business growth, which is reflected in the links noted between these sections. Recent research undertaken by the Learning & Skills Council indicates that there has been a decline in employer training in recent years. The need to develop further leadership, management and regeneration skills throughout Ribble Valley is also a focus of the wider strategy. As part of the business support package in Ribble Valley actions will be created that will strengthen the ongoing relationships and engagement of local businesses.



Tourism & The Visitor Economy

Tourism plays an important role in the economy of Ribble Valley. Positive features include Tourism Marketing & Events activity in Ribble Valley and an extensive provision of visitor information.

In recent years, achievements have been the encouragement and formulation of sustainable tourism activities that lead towards tourism development that respect the area's environmental assets; working in partnership with a range of agencies to develop, fund and market sustainable tourism initiatives; improving the quality of the promotional literature produced by the service, and taking advantage of joint promotional activities; maintaining the Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in a town centre location; supplementing the tourist information centre with a series of tourist information points in businesses and attractions in other settlements in the area and supporting the development of Ribble Valley Tourism Association.



sourced produce.

Clitheroe Castle is a significant tourism attraction and a key heritage asset in Ribble Valley.

Ribble Valley has a range of accommodation available to the visitor. Many of the operators are very small businesses and should be encouraged to participate in quality grading schemes. Visitor expectations are constantly rising and the tourism offer must meet demands for quality and service. This applies to the attractions, retail businesses and the restaurant or cafe (food & drink sector) offering locally

There is a lack of wet weather attraction provision, the opportunity for which needs to be addressed either by expanding appropriate existing attractions or encouraging new visitor attractions to the area. A gap analysis is required in order to encourage new investment within hotel accommodation, self-catering, conference venues, eating out and visitor attractions, including Ribble Valley's cultural and heritage tourism offering as appropriate.

Business tourism could be an important opportunity in developing out of season business in the Borough, such as those facilities. Developing this market will contribute to increased occupancy levels over the traditional 'low' season, hence improving job quality, business sustainability and increasing the economic impact of tourism throughout the year. Appropriate research will be undertaken that will identify whether there is scope for growing this market in Ribble Valley.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Maintain and enhance business advice and support services in Ribble Valley
- Promote a sustainable approach to business development in Ribble Valley
- Increase the profile of business support and advice services through improved promotion throughout the area using appropriate media
- Monitor incentives and schemes of support and assistance to businesses in Ribble Valley
- Seek measures towards accommodating appropriate and potential inward investment to the area
- Encourage continuous improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hospitality and accommodation industry and at visitor attractions
- Identify key areas with greatest potential to develop the leisure and cultural economy, such as walking paths, cycle routes and equestrian trails and improve the access and infrastructure at these sites

Infrastructure & Services

Strategic Objective

- **To strive for a high quality, modern and integrated infrastructure, maintaining and improving the public realm, appropriate and affordable housing, transport infrastructure and technology for the benefit of Ribble Valley business, residents & visitors without compromising the quality of the existing natural and built environment**

Infrastructure

Infrastructure refers to the physical components considered essential to the smooth running of the economy. However, there is a need to ensure that opportunities are available for businesses to continue to develop in the area. There is a need to continue to market and regenerate our market towns and villages as places to do business and to ensure that there is employment land available for development. We will continue to work with Lancashire County Council and others providers to improve the local infrastructure

The issues of public transport particularly and accessibility to isolated villages are part of a perceived need for a more flexible approach and a more accessible service.

Without economic prosperity, many other problems e.g. health, housing, crime, access to services are all much harder to address. The supply of human capital is considered in the 'Employment & Skills' section.

The main infrastructure issues identified are:

- Lack of availability of employment land for new & future investment.

- Inadequate supply of appropriate business premises accommodation
- Opportunity to further enhance and reinforce public realm
- Provision and enhancement of a quality visitor services
- Poor internal transport systems in some areas
- Good external transport networks within ½ - 1 hour
- ICT Broadband access and mobile communications need addressing as an opportunity to attract businesses

An effective transport system is essential to the efficient smooth running of the local economy to facilitate the transport of both goods and people. However, the demands of business and commerce need to be met in a sustainable manner if Ribble Valley's quality environment is to be retained. The expansion of Ribble Valley's road and rail network is constrained by the restrictions of the Bowland Forest AONB status. The enhancement and promotion of existing excellent road and rail networks should continue.

Whilst statutory responsibility for transport delivery lies with the Lancashire County Council, all those with an interest in the maintenance of effective transport links will be encouraged to ensure effective transport connectivity and access in Ribble Valley. Whilst external communication links are a positive asset to the area, the internal infrastructure is lacking, most greatly in the more rural, sparsely populated areas.

ICT

The use of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) for business purposes overcomes physical barriers and should be encouraged as a means of revolutionising communication between Ribble Valley's small and medium businesses, our communities and the market place. The case for improved access to Broadband in Ribble Valley highlighting the long-term benefits towards the economic development of rural areas. The availability of ICT acts as an attraction for inward investment and business growth in e-commerce, media and cultural sectors. 'Connected Lancashire' and the development of the Destination Management IT system are also key ICT projects within Lancashire.

Land and Premises for Business Development



The availability of suitable sites and premises is essential to allow the natural growth of local businesses and attracting new ones. Existing Business Parks in Ribble Valley can help to create business opportunities to address this. However, extra-ordinary costs can be incurred in developing employment sites in rural areas. The ability of the current utilities infrastructure in Ribble Valley to support any future development will need to be assessed in partnership with the agencies responsible for water, electricity and gas.

Barrow Brook Business Park will ensure that land sales and development proposals contribute towards the development of a higher wage economy in Ribble Valley. The need for a study into potential employment sites with access to the A59 corridor highlights the potential for business growth in the South of the Borough.

The current Local Plan identifies employment land, which has not been developed for employment purposes, where the owners have chosen not to develop the land. The Local Development Framework will establish a framework for local communities to identify appropriate local land and buildings for economic use.

Ribble Valley's high quality environment provides an ideal location for many office, crafts and cultural based businesses. In order to allow the expansion of Ribble Valley's economy in particular in business services, further office accommodation will need to be provided either by new build or converted space including potential uses in redundant farm buildings.

In particular, it has been identified that there is strong potential for business development on the A59 corridor. The identification, and future provision of suitable land for future employment and business development around the A59 corridor will assist in this.

Housing

Affordable housing is one of the crucial issues that influences the economic and social strength of rural communities, and is a major contributor to long-term community sustainability. There is a shortage of affordable housing in rural areas throughout the UK and Ribble Valley is no exception. This impacts on the opportunities and choices for all rural people. Without a range of suitable properties within our towns and villages it is difficult to encourage sustainable communities and maintain a vibrant, living countryside.



The development and maintenance of decent, affordable housing and related services in Ribble Valley is therefore a priority to meet the needs of local people and support economic and community development. Priority areas include ensuring planning policies meet the needs of local people and working with other agencies to develop options for low cost home ownership. In addition further work needs to be undertaken across the County to coordinate research and disseminate information about housing needs.

The high demand for housing in the borough had an impact on the availability of affordable homes. Most recent official figures available show that the price of houses in the Ribble Valley was continuing to rise at a greater rate than that of the North West. In addition to this the Ribble Valley has the lowest social stock provision in Lancashire.

Significant housing growth in the last 10 years, including major developments at the former Brockhall, Ribchester and Calderstones Hospital sites has assisted in addressing this situation, however, the area continues to attract new residents, as a result of its attractive rural environment, high quality of life and 'adequate' transport links to other parts of Lancashire and the North West.

The high demand for housing has had a major impact on the availability of affordable housing and employment opportunities. The new regional plan for the North West has set an increased level of housing for the area that will effectively double the amount of development in Ribble Valley over the next 10 years.

Public Realm

Public Realm includes all aspects of the environment that contribute to the experience of a place or location. This includes the quality of parks, roads and transport, public facilities, signage and information, litter management, safety issues and the general quality of the street scene overall.

Whilst local authorities have responsibilities for delivery, 'public realm' forms an important part of the tourism product and the visitor economy. For example: good quality facilities can lead to increases in tourism related



economic activity. This theme is also an important aspect of attracting inward investment and reinvestment in existing businesses. Maintaining and improving the public realm is an important part of maintaining quality of life for residents.

England's Tourism management organisations have developed a national benchmarking scheme to enable visitor destinations to measure and compare their performance. The benchmarking measures visitors and resident's opinions and levels of satisfaction. The visitor survey focuses on accommodation, shops, venues, tourist information, parking, signage and public conveniences, whilst the residents' survey focuses on transport, parking, shops, local facilities, toilets and accessibility. The results of the surveys are collated and reports produced to enable participating destinations to compare themselves with similar visitor destinations. The aim is to encourage continuous improvements and monitor performance against similar destinations nationwide.

Further measures will be taken to identify the kinds of improvements to public space, which will most enhance the role of Clitheroe as a local service town and a visitor destination. Funding to make improvements will be sought from a range of sources.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Promote external transport networks e.g. regional, national links and encourage potential enhancement schemes to support this

Encourage the improvement of local **transport** provision

- Seek improvements to ICT and Broadband access across the whole community
- Identify demand for business accommodation and sites across Ribble Valley
- Develop and redevelop, through appropriate programmes, key employment sites and premises in major service centres, including the stimulation and investment in tourism projects
- Review the provision of tourism signage within the Borough
- Constantly seek measures to enhance the public realm in Ribble Valley
- Influence housing policy to meet the needs of economic and community development

Image, Marketing & Promotion

Strategic Objective

- **To constantly and consistently raise the profile and perceptions of Ribble Valley, strengthening awareness of the benefits of the area in terms of quality of life as a place to live, visit, work and do business**

In addition to tourism marketing and promotion, there is a need to constantly market and promote the facilities and services available in Ribble Valley to businesses, residents as well as visitors. These groups are diverse and will therefore have differing needs and aspirations. This being so, it may at times be necessary to employ different approaches to marketing and promotion.

The main marketing and promotion issues identified are:

- Need to raise the profile of Ribble Valley, sub-regionally, regionally and nationally
- Low awareness of economic development and business support services
- Need to research and identify customer needs internally and externally



Area Promotion and Profile Raising

There is a strong need to reinforce Ribble Valley's profile and economic needs. Consultation with businesses often indicates a lack of awareness and confusion about support services in the region. The quality lifestyle and the quality natural environment enjoyed by both businesses and residents are clearly identified as strengths in the SWOT analysis and therefore offering an opportunity to exploit. Additionally, there are many strong elements, which can be used to promote and market Ribble Valley, for example the M6, M65 and A59 transport links. We must therefore consistently raise the benefits and overall profile of the Ribble Valley message to the media.

The Borough Council will continue strong relationships with its key partners to ensure the area maintains a strong profile for potential new business investment and the visitor economy.

Tourism Promotion



Ribble Valley is recognised as a distinctive hallmark that draws visitors to Lancashire. A major strand of marketing is the promotion of Ribble Valley as a visitor and holiday destination. Key influencing factors include components of the holiday product such as the natural environment, Market Towns and villages, individual attractions, and outdoor activities. Essential to this are strong sub-brand or brands for the Borough and to ensure that all tourism publications are appropriate to business and visitor needs. Accommodation, built visitor attractions and cultural and heritage sites have the potential for further development through this activity area.

Develop and Promote Sustainable Tourism Practices

Sustainable tourism development meets the needs of the present without compromising the abilities of future generations to meet their own needs. Sustainable tourism activities should provide visitors with the opportunity to enjoy a quality experience without damaging the environment or creating excessive pollution. Activities in this area include the promotion of training schemes for operators and working with conservation organisations on specific projects and by encouraging tourism operators to work in a sustainable manner.



Delivery of Visitor Information

The Tourist Information Centre in Clitheroe is a recognised part of the tourism product. The centre is used both in the planning process in advance of a trip to Ribble Valley and as a first point of contact for many visitors. The face-to-face contact is highly valued. The Centre also makes a strong contribution to the local community, the economy and to the health of the area as a key point of access to local information and services.

The use of ICT in visitor information provision is changing rapidly. Ribble Valley supports a 'Destination Management System' which links us directly via the web to all participating tourism operators in the Borough, improving the quality of visitor information and improving e commerce for the hospitality trade. There are opportunities to develop the system further and there may be cost saving and revenue generating opportunities from this information system in the future. It may also be beneficial, where appropriate, to channel information through those of our partners that can contribute to providing information in an efficient and cost effective way.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Raise awareness of the importance of economic development and tourism to the local economy

- Continue to strengthen our work with tourism and economic development partners to raise the profile of Ribble Valley
- Maximise the spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout the Borough
- Develop, promote and encourage sustainable tourism practices
- Maintain an effective, quality visitor information facility through Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre and associated services in other key facilities
- Develop and promote customised branding for Ribble Valley

Employment & Skills

Strategic Objective

- **Encourage and develop educational attainment and a skilled labour market in Ribble Valley for the benefit of existing and new employers**

Skills and Employment

Ensuring an available workforce with the skills needed by local employers and being able to offer and attract quality employment opportunities issues which impact across all areas of this strategy. Ribble Valley schools persistently recorded one of the highest A-C grade GCSE pass rates in England.

The main skills and employment issues identified are:

- Lack of data to clearly identify training and development issues facing Ribble Valley employers
- The need to undertake research into skills gaps and skills needs
- Lack of skills identified in growth sectors such as culture and creative industries, leisure and sport
- Lack of career development opportunities
- Lack of training opportunities in outlying areas of Ribble Valley
- Decline in workforce development by employers
- Attraction and retention of young people



To address the skills and employment issues we need to explore innovative ways in which to co-ordinate effort between key agencies charged with the task of delivering these services. The delivery of a wider range of skills and an increase in the skill levels attained by the existing and future workforce is essential for the future development and growth of Ribble Valley's economy. There is a need to increase responsiveness to employer need, raise adult skills levels and improve the quality, diversity and accessibility of learning and skills provision throughout Ribble Valley.

Labour Market and Skills

A lack of readily available labour with the relevant skills levels can constrain business growth, particularly in culture, media and sports occupations, administrative occupations and corporate management. We will work with partners to identify training issues facing Ribble Valley employers and seek to address gaps in training provision through the development of appropriate providers. The attraction and retention of young people, in particular graduates, is a concern to many employers. The lack of Higher Education (HE)/Further Education (FE) provision in the Borough is a contributory factor, also preventing Ribble Valley from capitalising on the

growth of the knowledge economy. The proposals for a university for Pennine Lancashire are welcomed. However, it is essential that strong links and provision will available people in Ribble Valley.

Certain business sectors are increasingly recruiting staff from outside the county. This practice highlights a number of issues that need to be addressed. This situation directly impacts upon the local housing market and the labour market, suppressing wage levels. However, we need to acknowledge that this is not a new phenomenon. Further research needs to be conducted to investigate the extent of this trend and the implications for the future Ribble Valley economy. There is a lack of information, advice and training opportunities in smaller settlements and outlying areas. In addition, the appropriateness of adult education and other training provision to local employment needs and opportunities needs to be addressed.

More opportunities to develop vocational training opportunities in Ribble Valley will need to be established to ensure local businesses and people have access to good quality, convenient and cost effective learning opportunities. A wider variety of vocational courses need to be made available if Ribble Valley's economy is to diversify from agriculture and tourism related employment.

Enhance Career and Employment Opportunities

The Ribble Valley economy is providing jobs at a higher level than necessary to sustain its resident workforce. Consequently, the labour market is very tight and this has implications for new housing provision and transport improvements. However, this does not appear to be bidding up wages and low pay and seasonality remain issues. Recent evidence does not support the view that low skill levels are a particular characteristic of the Ribble Valley labour market.



The economy is broadly successful and generates high employment, especially self-employment, negligible unemployment and low economic inactivity. This high level of self-employment must not be taken for granted. The promotion of enterprise and entrepreneurship remains a priority, in particular the need to develop and sustain an entrepreneurial culture within schools and local community organisations.

Strong links are to be developed between post 14 education, work-based training, further education, higher education and employment to ensure an effective match between skills and job opportunities.

Priority aims and objectives:

- Identify employer and employee skills needs
- Supporting partnership working to provide solutions to skills issues identified
- Ensure that learning opportunities are addressing the needs of Ribble Valley businesses
- To provide learning opportunities as locally as possible
- To encourage the development of a comprehensive vocational learning centre in Ribble Valley
- Promote and develop learning activities that support lifelong learning
- Reduce seasonality of tourism related jobs
- Seek measures to encourage the knowledge economy in Ribble Valley

This Section: Action Plan Summaries: -

- Regeneration & Economic Development
- Business Support & Development
- Infrastructure & Communications
- Image, Marketing & Promotion
- Employment & Skills

Regeneration & Economic Development

- ***To identify & develop initiatives that will encourage the long-term physical and social regeneration of Ribble Valley, maximising on and seeking appropriate funding where possible***

Key Activities Action Plan

Ref code	Activities	Other Information
Refresh priorities for action in key town / service centres		
ED1	Work in partnership and consult with the private sector to review ideas and priorities for action in key service centres.	Ongoing Consultation
Support regeneration activities in smaller settlements across Ribble Valley		
ED2	Support a range of projects in smaller settlements throughout Ribble Valley	Projects supported and implemented
Strengthen and develop communication mechanisms for sharing information between Ribble Valley businesses & partners		
ED3	Develop communication mechanisms for sharing information and best practice between Ribble Valley businesses.	Ribble Valley Business Network Ribble Valley Economic Forum

Ensure that policy makers are aware of the issues facing Ribble Valley		
ED4	Engage with policy formers in the region to highlight the needs of Ribble Valley	Regular meetings
Ensure that the 'rural' case for funding assistance has a high profile		
ED5	Highlight the regeneration needs of Ribble Valley and promote to key partners	Establish a Rural Growth Network Group and develop activities
Maximise funding opportunities as appropriate to the needs of the area		
ED6	Collate socio-economic research to establish the current economic status of the area, assist in identifying targets and priorities for future regeneration activities and to enable effective monitoring of regeneration activities.	Ongoing research programme established
Work towards developing a higher wage economy		
ED7	Seek measures to attract inward investment and business start-ups in growth sectors	Direct marketing of business opportunities

Business Support & Growth

- ***To work in partnership at local, sub-regional and regional level to provide the best possible support for existing and new businesses in Ribble Valley***

Key Activities Action Plan

Ref code	Activities	Other Information
Assess and enhance co-ordination of business advice and support services in Ribble Valley		
BD1	Working with partners, review / clarify the role of business support in line with recent changes in national and local business support and service delivery,	Production of a Business Support Guide and other support information, and marketing activities.
BD2	Through existing business partnerships, networks and Business Organisations and Groups, develop effective and appropriate networks to link local businesses and business support agencies together.	Business networks established & developed

BD3	Provide information accessible business support advice and training provision in service centres of Clitheroe and Longridge and occasional outreach to smaller settlements as appropriate.	Business support, advice & information provision established
Promote a sustainable approach to business development in Ribble Valley		
BD4	Reassess supply chain initiatives in key growth sectors in particular: Tourism, Food and drink.	Supply chain networks established and enhanced
BD5	Develop incentives for business and staff development	Project activity
BD6	Encourage local businesses to develop and improve responsible trading practices through participation in activities such as environment best practice and corporate social responsibility	Business events held
BD7	Develop and maintain effective relationships with key local employers.	Business visits
BD8	Encourage improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hotel and accommodation industry through appropriate programmes.	Partnership working

Increase the profile of business support and advice services through improved promotion throughout Ribble Valley		
BD9	Enhance links / information on business support through the RVBC Website	Website
BD10	Identify business sectors with growth potential, high wages. In particular: Tourism, Food and Drink, ICT, Creative and Cultural industries, Financial and professional services, Environmental management, Sport and Leisure	Identify target business clusters and skills gaps
BD11	Prepare a marketing campaign on Ribble Valley to promote opportunities for inward investment looking at light industrial & office premises, targeting higher wage sectors.	Marketing campaign undertaken
BD13	Consider possibilities to develop business conferencing and residential conference market in Ribble Valley.	
Monitor incentives and schemes of support and assistance (including financial support) to businesses in Ribble Valley		
BD14	Promote Local Action Group (LAG) and Local Rural Development Strategy (LDS), in order to deliver a range of EU-funded measures under the the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE)	RDPE programme activity

Enhance activity towards accommodating appropriate and potential inward investment to the area		
BD15	Develop the growth potential of businesses established around the A59 corridor through promotion of appropriate sites	Establish an A59 Action Plan
BD16	Research specific local recruitment problems to better understand the barriers faced by businesses in recruiting people, particularly from within rural communities	Research undertaken
Encourage continuous improvements in facilities and quality standards within the hospitality and accommodation industry and at visitor attractions		
BD17	To feed into other appropriate economic strategies for the region that will have relevance and benefit to the economy of Ribble Valley	Partnership working
Identify key areas with greatest potential to develop the leisure and cultural economy, such as walking paths, cycle routes and equestrian trails and improve the access and infrastructure at these sites		
BD18	To support the marketing and promotion of Ribble Valley to visitors and businesses, through the work of the tourism division, events and activities investment support.	Marketing activity

Infrastructure & Environment

- ***To strive for a high quality, modern and integrated infrastructure, maintaining and improving the public realm, appropriate and affordable housing, transport infrastructure and technology for the benefit of Ribble Valley business, residents & visitors without compromising the quality of the existing natural and built environment***

Key Activities Action Plan

Ref code	Activities	Other Information
Promote external transport networks encourage potential enhancement schemes to support this		
I1	Identify areas worst affected by inadequate transport networks and poor public transport service provision.	Research programme conducted

Encourage the improvement of local transport provision		
I2	Lobby for improved transport services and links to major service and employment centres including established tourist attractions.	Ongoing activity
I3	Review current parking provision and assess its suitability for the visitor market and its economic impact on businesses.	Research
Seek improvements to ICT and Broadband access across the whole community		
I4	Support the development and improvement of ICT & Broadband connectivity and use.	Research
Identify demand for business accommodation and sites across Ribble Valley		
	Following BE group study maintain strong ongoing relationships with businesses with expansion needs	Business consultations
Seek to develop key employment sites and premises in major service centres, including the stimulation and investment in tourism projects		
I5	Identify and prepare a strategy for relevant employment sites and set out a programme to address their development potential.	A59 corridor strategy
Influence housing policy to meet the needs of economic and community development		
I6	Monitor the characteristics of Ribble Valley's housing market and its implications for the future development of Ribble Valley's rural economy.	Ribble Valley Housing Strategy
Review the provision of tourism signage within the Borough		
I7	Undertake an audit of key visitor attractions in Ribble Valley and assess appropriate signage	Audits
Constantly seek measures to enhance the public realm in Ribble Valley		
I8	Identify general and area-specific priorities for action in respect of improving public realm provision.	Establish & initiate public realm enhancement schemes
I9	Seek to improve the public realm of the key service centres of Clitheroe, Longridge and Whalley through town centre enhancement initiatives.	Action plan and consultation programme

Image, Marketing & Promotion

- ***To constantly and consistently raise the profile and perceptions of Ribble Valley, strengthening awareness of the benefits of the area in terms of quality of life as a place to live, visit, work and do business***

Key Activities Action Plan

Ref code	Activities	Other Information
Raise awareness of the importance of economic development and tourism to the local economy		
IMP1	Assess visitor perception research to ascertain most effective means of marketing communication.	Research & Consultation
Continue to strengthen work with tourism and economic development partners to raise the profile of Ribble Valley		
IMP2	Work in partnership with L&BTB	Ongoing partnership working
IMP3	Develop marketing activities that incorporate all aspects of Economic Development and Tourism promotion in Ribble Valley.	Marketing plan
Maximise the spread the economic benefits of tourism throughout the Borough		
IMP4	Investigate and assess area-specific need for marketing strategies in Ribble Valley	Area specific activities
Develop, promote and encourage sustainable tourism practices		
IMP5	Encourage businesses to participate in environmental management schemes	Business contacts
IMP6	Enhance tourism information service to address visitor and local needs.	Monitoring and evaluation
Maintain an effective, quality visitor information facility through Clitheroe Tourist Information Centre and associated services in other key facilities		
IMP7	Ensure visitor information is available in key sites throughout the Borough	Audit undertaken

Employment & Skills

- **Encourage and develop educational attainment and a skilled labour market in Ribble Valley for the benefit of existing and new employers.**

Key Activities Action Plan

Ref code	Activities	Other Information
Identify employer and employee skills needs		
ES1	Consult with businesses in Ribble Valley to identify skills gaps, skills needs, learning and training provision.	Business consultation on skills needs
Support partnership working to provide solutions to skills issues identified		
ES2	Lobby for enhanced training provision for businesses and individuals in Ribble Valley.	Lobbying activity
To ensure that learning opportunities are addressing the needs of Ribble Valley businesses		
ES3	Monitor & support, through appropriate incentives, local training providers for key employment sectors.	RDPE grant scheme
To encourage learning opportunities as locally as possible		
ES4	Encourage the development of learning facilities in Ribble Valley.	Increased learning provision for job creation / workforce development
Promote and develop learning activities that support lifelong learning		
ES5	Encourage and promote an entrepreneurial culture within schools and local community organisations.	Projects implemented i.e. Young Enterprise and Lancashire Education Business Partnership.



RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No 6

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCE REVIEW – PROPOSALS FOR
BUSINESS RATE RETENTION
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: JANE PEARSON

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform members of the proposals for business rate retention and confirm the response submitted on behalf of this Council to the consultation regarding these reforms.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- The reforms to business rates will change how local government is funded from central government. The impact of the changes will determine the Council's future funding base and thus how much money is available to fund our services.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Government consulted last year on the outline of the business rate retention scheme, including 8 technical papers covering the various elements included. The response to this consultation was published in December 2011.

2.2 Following this the Local Government Finance Bill was introduced. Further proposals from Government have been issued in the form of two statements of intent and other documentation on 17 May 2012.

2.3 This consultation, which runs to 251 pages and asks 83 questions, regards a range of detailed and technical issues covering the transition from the current formula grant system to the initial implementation of the business rate retention scheme from April 2013.

2.4 A local authority's start-up funding allocation will comprise its *baseline funding level* and its *Revenue Support Grant for 2013/14*. The purpose of this in theory is to provide each local authority with a stable starting point at the outset of the scheme.

3 ESTABLISHING THE START-UP BASELINE FUNDING

3.1 The Government have promised a stable transition to the new system with baseline funding being largely based upon 2012/13 Formula Grant but adjusted for overall reductions in spending control totals for 2013/14 and 2014/15 in line with the Government's deficit reduction programme.

3.2 Last year the Government consulted on changes to Formula Grant methodology. Some of these changes have now been included in the proposed calculations for start-up baseline funding and are subject to final consultation.

3.3 These proposed changes are very important as once established the new baseline funding levels will be fixed until 2020.

3.4 The **main** changes being proposed are:

- Concessionary travel – changes to use modelled boarding data
- Rural Services – increasing the weighting for super sparsity from 2:1 to 3:1

- Rural Services – increasing the sparsity top-ups
 - Relative Needs and Relative Resources – proposals to restore the level of relative resource amount in 2013/14 to that for 2010/11.
 - Rolling in to the business rates system a number of previously separate grants including council tax freeze grant, council tax support grant and homeless prevention grant
 - New Homes Bonus - £2billion will be removed from the start-up funding allocation to fund the New Homes Bonus in each of 7 years.
 - Population Data – use of the interim 2011-based sub-national population projections in calculation start-up funding allocations
- 3.5 Based on the exemplifications Ribble Valley will benefit from these changes substantially. We would, based on 2012/13 Formula Grant, gain around £469k pre damping. The change which benefits us mostly being the increases in sparsity weighting and top-ups. This is obviously welcomed by all the SPARSE authorities. Overall this means around £127m a year pre-damping will move from urban to predominately rural areas. This follows many years of lobbying by the SPARSE group on behalf of rural authorities which may have finally paid off if we can ensure that these changes are accepted in the final settlement.
- 3.6 However, post damping, the potential increase in our funding is significantly eroded. Instead of gaining around £469k we would only gain £143k, a reduction via damping of 70%. Worse still the 2013/14 spending totals will bring down funding to a level below 2012/13 funding so even though we are better off in cash terms we may end up in a worse position than this year.
- 3.7 I have attended a meeting recently with other SPARSE authorities where it was stressed that all rural authorities must respond positively to these changes and also urge the Government not to erode these increases via the proposed damping mechanism.
- 3.8 The SPARSE group will be writing to all MP's with rural constituencies setting out the position for their area, together with some urban comparators. We must support this campaign as strongly as we can.
- 3.9 This is particularly important as once set the methodology will be frozen until 2020/21

4 DESIGN OF THE SCHEME

- 4.1 The Government's calculations at national level of the "notional gross yield" will ultimately be used in determining individual authority business rates baselines. The notional gross yield is an estimate of the amount of business rates that English local authorities will collect in 2013.
- 4.2 The notional gross yield will be adjusted to take account of a variety of issues that would otherwise not be reflected in the estimate, such as cost of and losses in collection. The effect of these adjustments produces the estimated business rates aggregate for England.
- 4.3 The local share (50%) of the estimated business rates aggregate is then shared out between all billing authorities in England on the basis of each authority's proportionate share. Broadly speaking this is a percentage figure that represents an authority's contribution to the national business rates total (subject to certain adjustments which are detailed in the paper). The proportionate share is calculated as an average over a five year period from 2007/8 to 2011/12. This period covers a full business rates revaluation cycle. Our share of this total could be referred to as our *rates target*

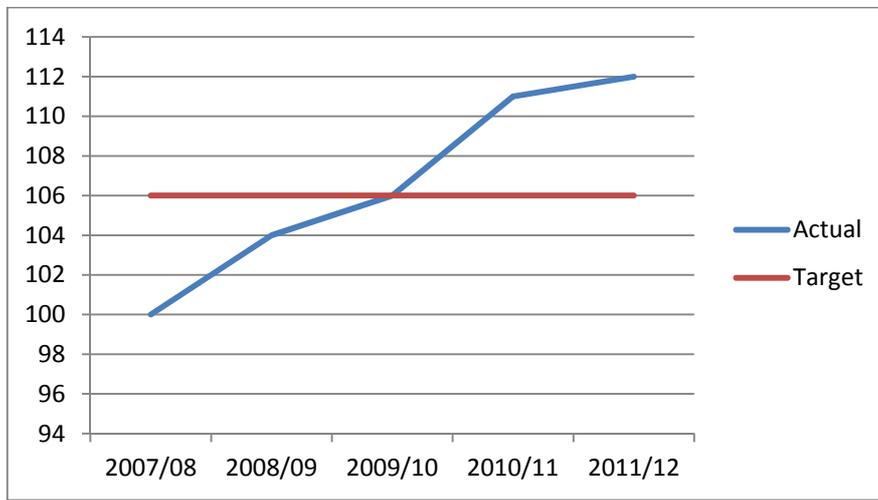
4.4 This starting point is extremely important as our future allocation will be measured against this benchmark.

4.5 The 50% local share is distributed as follows in two tier areas:

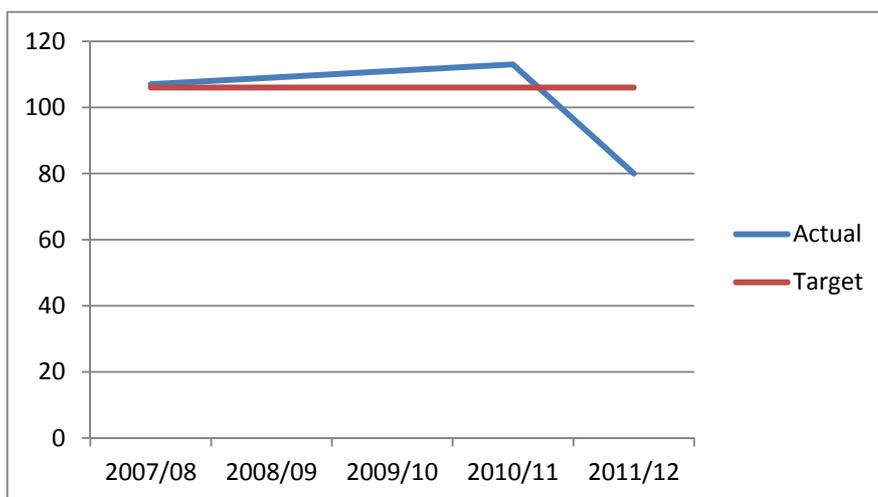
- 40% to lower tier authorities ie districts
- 9% to upper tier authorities ie county councils
- 1% to fire authorities
- Police excluded

4.6 The Government have said they will not reset the rates targets therefore if a major business were to close down in this five year period this would mean the local authority would be potentially significantly below their baseline at the outset of the new system and would not therefore benefit from growth.

4.7 A good starting point would be:



4.8 A bad starting point would be:



5 TARIFFS AND TOP-UP's

- 5.1 Each local authority will have a *funding target* i.e. a baseline funding level at the start of the system. This *funding target* is compared with what an authority might raise through business rates.
- 5.2 If the authority will raise *more* than their funding target at the outset then they pay the difference over to the Government as a *tariff*
- 5.3 If however the authority will raise *less* than their funding target at the outset then they will receive a *top-up* from the Government.
- 5.4 Any growth above the RPI will be shared between the Government, the precepting authorities and ourselves but will be subject to a levy. For Top-up authorities the Levy is zero. For tariff authorities the levy is calculated as:
 - $1 - (\text{funding target} / \text{rates target})$

The following is a Shire District example of a Tariff calculation:

- £25m area rates, £2m funding target
- Shire district share is $40\% \times £25\text{m} = £10\text{m}$
- Tariff is $£10\text{m} - £2\text{m} = £8\text{m}$
- Levy is $1 - (2 / 10) = 80\%$

In this example if the District raised an extra £1m in Business Rates 50% would go to Government, 9% to the County Council and 1% to the Fire Authority and our 40% would be reduced by 80% to allow us only £80,000 extra.

- 5.5 Authorities not meeting their rates target will bear their full percentage of any losses (e.g. 40% for districts) until they hit their safety net which could be perhaps 10% of their funding target. Below this level there would be no further losses.

6 THE SAFETY NET

- 6.1 The business rates retention scheme will include a safety net to protect local authorities from significant negative shocks to their income by guaranteeing that no authority will see its income from business rates fall beyond a set percentage of its baseline funding level.
- 6.2 The safety net will be funded by a levy on the disproportionate benefits to baseline funding levels that some authorities will experience as a result of business rates growth, caused by the uneven distribution of business rates bases and the different baseline spending level of local authorities.

7 RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The deadline for the consultation exercise is Monday 24 September 2012. Given this is the day before your meeting it will not be possible for committee to agree the Council's response, I therefore propose to go through our answers to the various questions with the Budget Working Group prior to the deadline.

8 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 Consider this very important consultation on our future Government funding.

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF57-12/JP/AC
14 September 2012

BACKGROUND PAPERS

24 September 2012

brrtechnicalconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

CLG BUSINESS RATES RETENTION: TECHNICAL CONSULTATION: RESPONSE

Ribble Valley Borough Council is a member of SPARSE-Rural and fully endorses its response to the Section 2, Chapter 5 and related issues of the Consultation.

We will be responding to all of the other consultation questions via the Consultation Response Template.

Ribble Valley should benefit by the exemplified consultation proposals relating to rural services by £470,000 per annum pre-damping but is set to lose **70%** of that through damping. The other methodological changes seem to worsen that position yet further.

In accepting that the formulae to date needs to be corrected so that there is proper recognition therein of the additional costs of delivering services in rural areas the Government is, in effect, also accepting that rural areas have been chronically underfunded for more than a decade. The Government's recognition that the formulae has, mainly through the exercise of past ministerial judgments, evolved in a way which is so inequitable is welcomed.

However, to now seek to include some recognition of that but to propose an outcome through which **70%** of that recognition is lost to damping as being the baseline for the new Business Rates Retention scheme is grossly unfair. For the proposed (partial) re-balancing to be restricted to the favour of authorities who have for very many years been receiving a disproportionately larger share of the overall resources for local government services is perverse. The fact that the baseline is then intended to be frozen until 2020 adds insult to injury. The Government must find a way of allowing the pre-damped gains for rural areas to continue through in cash terms to the end of the formula calculations. The flexibility the Government has on the distribution of RSG is the perfect vehicle to phase-in the necessary additional support to rural authorities in a transparent, straight-forward and sustainable way without causing sudden reductions to others' funding.

We support fully the SPARSE-Rural response on the issue of the proposed 32% reduction in the Fixed Costs Allowance and the proposed changes to damping blocks – neither of which has been exemplified.

The historic under funding of rural areas means that the range and level of services provided in rural areas was much lower than in urban areas before the introduction of the austerity measures, despite rural residents paying more in Council Tax. The impact of the austerity measure has therefore been much greater in rural areas.

This is not just a part of a normal grant/settlement period. It is a change to a completely new means of funding local government services with an intended freeze to 2020 of the baseline once set.

We note that the Government has sought to close the unreasonable gap between average amount per head of population between people living in urban areas and people living in rural areas but that it then fails to follow that through by introducing damping and other measures which effectively widen most of that gap back again. We are of the opinion that the gap needs to be closed in cash terms still further and not reversed back.

We are also concerned that the variance in spending power per head of population between urban and rural areas could widen even more as a result of the introduction of the intended Business Rate Retention scheme and the New Homes Bonus arrangements the consequences of which are extremely difficult to predict but which appear likely to be beneficial urban areas far more than rural. That situation will require very careful monitoring.

Ribble Valley Borough Council therefore feel the Government must use its discretion to vary the damping proposal (or apply some other measures to ensure that the intended gains for rural areas are delivered in cash terms and ensure a fair share of available resources goes to rural areas post damping as a means of (partial) rectification of past and present unfairness in the formulae, which Ministers have now acknowledged.

Jane Pearson
Director of Resources
On behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council

Technical Consultation on Business Rates Retention

July 2012

Response Form

The Government would like your views on whether you agree with the options presented in the Technical Consultation on Business Rates Retention. This paper was published on the 17 July 2012, and can be found at the following address:

<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/brr/sumcon/index.htm>

For convenience, this preformatted response form contains all the questions in the main consultation document. Please click on the relevant check boxes to activate the 'X' that will indicate your preference. Space is available after each question if you wish to include any additional comments to support your choice. There is no limit on the size of these spaces and the boxes will resize themselves. We also welcome any additional comments and alternative proposals, and these can be made in the section available at the end.

All responses, whether using this preformatted response form, or otherwise should reach us by **5pm on 24th September 2012**.

We particularly welcome responses submitted electronically. Please e-mail responses to BRRtechnicalconsultation@communities.gsi.gov.uk

If you are not able to respond by e-mail, please post your response to

Andrew Lock
Settlement Distribution and Policy Team
Communities and Local Government
Zone 5/J2
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Alternatively, they may be faxed to 0303 4443294.

Confidentiality

All information in responses, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure under freedom of information legislation. If a correspondent requests confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed and will only be possible if considered appropriate under the legislation. Any such request should explain why confidentiality is necessary. Any automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not be considered as such a request unless you specifically include a request, with an explanation, in the main text of your response.

I would like my response to remain confidential (please cross)

Please say why in the box below.

--

Business Rates Retention Consultation Response

Name

Mrs Jane Pearson

Position

Director of Resources

Organisation

Ribble Valley Borough Council

Address

Council Offices, Church Walk, Clitheroe. Lancs. BB7 2RA

E-mail

jane.pearson@ribblevalley.gov.uk

Section 2 – Establishing the start up funding allocation and baseline funding levels

Chapter 3: Local Government Spending Control Total

Q1: Do you agree with the methodology set out above for calculating the local government spending control total?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

No clear path from the Spending Review outcome to these proposals has been provided. Further, the £250m in the existing settlement for New Homes Bonus appears to have been lost.

There is also no rationale given for the set of RNF figures provided. Some services have increases then sharp falls, others the reverse. In particular we cannot understand why the fixed costs allowance – of great importance to many small rural authorities – should have been cut by 32% over the period.

Q2: Do you agree with the methodology set out above for calculating Revenue Support Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

The decision to include assumed rates growth from the Spending Review funding levels is completely unacceptable, coming as it does on top of the largest cuts in the entire public sector.

Chapter 4: Concessionary Travel

Q3: Do you agree with the proposed approach of updating the Concessionary Travel Relative Needs Formula to use modelled boardings data?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

We have no strong views but what is proposed seems more equitable

Q4: Or, do you think it would be preferable to keep using the existing formula?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

See above

Chapter 5: Rural Services

Q5: Do you agree that we should increase the population sparsity weighting of super-sparse to sparse areas from 2:1 to 3:1 for non-police services?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Agree – we welcome the acceptance that the cost of providing services in rural areas has been underfunded in the past and support this measure that better reflects our needs.

Q6: Do you agree that we should double the existing Older People's Personal Social Services (PSS) sparsity adjustment from 0.43% to 0.86%?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

See separate response

Q7: Do you agree that the proportion of the Relative Needs Formula accounted for by the population sparsity indicator under the District Level Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services block should be increased from 3.7% to 5.5%?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

See separate response

Q8: Should the County level Environmental, Protective and Cultural Services indicator be reinstated at 1.25%?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

See separate response

Q9: Do you agree that we should introduce a Fire & Rescue sparsity adjustment at 1%?

Agree X
Disagree

Any further comments

See separate response

Chapter 6: Taking account of Relative Needs and Relative Resources

Q10: Do you agree that we should restore the level of the Relative Resource Amount in 2013-14 to that for 2010-11?

Agree

Disagree x

Any further comments

Q11: Do you agree that we should compensate for restoring the level of the Relative Resource Amount in 2013-14 to that for 2010-11 by increasing the level of the Central Allocation only?

Agree

Disagree x

Any further comments

Chapter 7: Grants Rolled In Using Tailored Distributions

Q12: Do you agree that we should continue to distribute funding for the Grants Rolled In Using Tailored Distributions according to the methodology used in 2012-13?

Agree x

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 8: Transfers and Adjustments

Q13: Do you agree that the October 2012 pupil census should be used in the final settlement for removing these services?

Agree x

Disagree

Any further comments

Q14: If not, what methodology would you prefer to use?

Preference

Q15: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for removing funding for the education services currently in the Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q16: If not, what methodology would you prefer to use?

Preference

Q17: Do you agree that funding for Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant should be removed after floor damping?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q18: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in the 2011-12 Council Tax Freeze Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q19: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in the Council Tax Support Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q20: Do you agree with the proposed approach to continue to apply a damping floor to Early Intervention Grant allocations after the removal of the 2 year old funding and the top slice?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q21: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in the Early Intervention Grant excluding funding for free early education for two years olds?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q22: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in Greater London Authority General Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q23: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in a proportion of the Greater London Authority Transport Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

We have no strong views regarding this

Q24: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in Homelessness Prevention Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q25: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in a proportion of the Lead Local Flood Authorities Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q26: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for rolling in the Department of Health Learning Disability and Health Reform Grant?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 9: Population Data

Q27: Do you agree that the preferred population measure to use is the Interim 2011-based sub-national population projections?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q28: Do you agree with the hierarchy of alternative datasets which would be used if there are problems with availability of any of the data?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 10: Taxbase data

Q29: Do you agree that we should use aim to use the council tax base projections as the council tax base measure in order to be consistent with our proposed approach to the population?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q30: Do you agree that we should switch to the November 2012 council tax base data should population estimates have to be used?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 11: Other Data Indicators

Q31: Do you agree that we should use data from the Inter-Departmental Business Register in the Log of Weighted Bars indicator?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 12: Distribution of Revenue Support Grant

Q32: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for distributing Revenue Support Grant in 2014-15 by scaling the 2013-14 authority-level allocations of Revenue Support Grant to the level of the 2014-15 control total for services funded through the rates retention system?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

Rural authorities have been under-funded for many years, as the Government recognises with its proposals for rural services in the consultation. Yet we face receiving just a fraction of this money before the system is frozen until 2020. The flexibility the Government has on the distribution of RSG is the perfect vehicle to phase-in the necessary additional support to rural authorities in a transparent, straight-forward and sustainable way without causing sudden reductions to others' funding.

Chapter 13: Floor Damping

Q33: Do you agree with the proposed approach for calculating floor damping in 2013-14?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

This change appears unnecessary and has not been exemplified. Nobody knows who might gain or lose, or why.

Q34: Do you agree with the proposed approach for allocating floor damping bands in 2013-14?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

We believe that the latest data should be used wherever possible.

Q35: Do you agree with the proposed approach to splitting 2012-13 formula grant between the service tiers?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

This is hopelessly and unnecessarily complex.

Q36: If not, what methodology do you think we should use?

Preference

Retain the existing system.

Chapter 14: New Homes Bonus

Q37: Do you agree that the funding for capitalisation and the safety net should be held back from the surplus New Homes Bonus funding rather than as a separate top-slice?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

There should be a separate top-slice for capitalisation and the safety net

Q38: Do you agree that the remaining funding should be distributed back to local authorities prorata to the *start-up funding allocation*?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

.

Chapter 15: Police Funding

Q39: Do you agree with the proposal for setting out the method of calculation of the 2013-14 formula grant element of police funding allocations in a separate document?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q40: Do you agree with the proposed methodology for funding local policing bodies in 2014-15?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

Section 3 – Setting up the business rates retention system

Chapter 2: Determining the estimated business rates aggregate

Q41: Do you agree with our proposal not to adjust the estimated business rates aggregate (England) to take into account transitional arrangements?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q42: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the estimated business rates aggregate (England) to take into account small business rate relief?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q43: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust estimated business rates aggregate (England) to take into account mandatory reliefs in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q44: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the estimated business rates aggregate (England) to take into account discretionary reliefs in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q45: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the notional gross yield figure to take account of Enterprise Zones, New Development Deals and renewable energy schemes in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

We have serious concerns, however, about the redistribution to certain urban areas that arises from top-slicing funding for New Development Deals. Government should not be using local authorities to insure itself against losses in some areas, especially while offering no upside to authorities should the NDDs prove successful.

Q46: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the notional gross yield figure to take account of costs and losses in collection in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q47: Do you agree with our proposal not to adjust the *estimated business rates aggregate (England)* to reflect the deferral scheme?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q48: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the *estimated business rates aggregate (England)* to take into account losses on appeal in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 3: Determining proportionate shares

Q49: Do you agree with our proposal to determine billing authorities' average contribution to the rating pool using *NDR3* forms between 2007-08 and 2011-12 (subject to a number of adjustments)?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Agree – however we have concerns that authorities with a large recent closure will probably be on the safety net for the whole seven years with no realistic prospect of improvement.

Q50: Do you agree with our proposal to adjust the incomes for 2007-08 to 2009-10 using a local revaluation factor calculated using the methodology set out?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q51: Do you agree with our proposal not to make an adjustment in the five year average for inflation?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

It is easy and sounder to average the percentage shares so that each year is equally important; by excluding inflation the most recent year carries most weight.

Q52: Do you agree with our proposal to make an adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum in respect of the transitional arrangements in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q53: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum for either mandatory rate relief, or for the small business rate relief scheme when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q54: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum for reductions for empty property rates when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q55: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum for discretionary rate relief when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q56: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum for costs of collection when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q57: Do you agree with our proposal to make an adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum in respect of losses in collection in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q58: Do you agree with our proposal to make an adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum in respect of deferral in this way?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q59: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum charges on property when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q60: Do you agree with our proposal not to make a further adjustment to the contribution to the pool sum for prior year adjustments and interest on repayments when calculating the proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 4: Major precepting authority shares

Q61: Do you agree with our proposal to confirm the county share at 20% - less the percentage share that will be paid to single purpose fire authorities where the county does not carry out that function?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

The 80% share to shire districts appears generous and appears to avoid distortions with NHB. In practice, however, the huge levy on shire districts' gains completely undermines these principles while imposing a large penalty on their losses between the rates target and the safety net. Indeed shire counties will receive a larger share of growth than shire districts in many cases. Our **strongly held** view is that a fundamental re-think on this issue is required.

Q62: Do you agree with our proposal to set the single purpose fire authority share at 2%?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

This is the appropriate share, though the case for fire authorities' inclusion in the scheme is not at all convincing.

Q63: Do you agree that county councils carrying our fire and rescue functions should receive the full 20% county share?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

See Q61 above; we agree that there should be consistency in the funding of fire services wherever possible, however.

Chapter 5: Treatment of City Offset and the City Premium

Q64: Do you agree with the Government's proposal to reflect the current arrangements for the City Offset by making an adjustment to the City of London's individual authority business rate baseline?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

The City Offset is an unnecessary anachronism which should be abolished immediately.

Q65: Do you agree with the proposal to take account of the City Offset when calculating proportionate shares?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

See Q64.

Q66: Do you agree with the proposal to calculate the City of London's levy ratio by using its revised individual authority business rate baseline?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

See Q64.

Q67: Do you agree with the proposal to calculate the City of London's eligibility for the safety net by using its business rates income after the deduction of the City Offset?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

See Q64.

Q68: Do you agree that the City Premium should be disregarded in the definition of business rates income used in the rates retention scheme?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Section 4 – The operation of the rates retention scheme

Chapter 2: Information Requirements

Q69: Do you agree with our proposals for information requirements before the start of the financial year?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q70: Do you agree with our proposals for information requirements at the end of the financial year?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 3: Schedules of Payment

Q71: Do you agree with our proposals for the way in which a schedule of payment will operate for billing authorities?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q72: Do you agree with our proposals for the way in which a schedule of payment will operate for major precepting authorities?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q73: Do you agree with our proposals for the way in which a schedule of payment will operate between billing and relevant major precepting authorities?

Agree X
Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 5: Collection and general funds

Q74: Do you agree with our proposals for the operation of the *collection fund*?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q75: And do you agree that the reconciliation payment due in respect of *transitional protection payments*, should be built in to the calculation of collection fund surpluses & deficits only once, when outturn figures are available?

Agree x
Disagree

Any further comments

Q76: Do you agree with our description of the way in which the general fund will operate?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Chapter 6: The safety net and the levy

Q77: Bearing in mind the need to balance protection, incentive and affordability, and the associated impact on the amount of contingency that will need to be held back, in the early years where, within the range 7.5% - 10%, should the safety net threshold be set?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

Q78: Bearing in mind the need to balance protection, incentive and affordability, and the associated impact on the amount of contingency that will need to be held back, do you agree with the Government's proposal to set the levy ratio at 1:1?

Agree

Disagree

Any further comments

The huge percentage levies on shire districts arising from this proposal make little sense arithmetically, act against the incentive aims of the scheme, and ensure that housing developments will always be given priority. If the Government is serious about providing real incentives for authorities to promote growth, rather than simply being the lucky beneficiaries of growth that would occur anyway, this issue must be tackled.

Further, a 1:1 levy is hugely flawed in investment terms. If two authorities invest exactly the same sum to produce exactly the same increase in rates they ought logically to receive exactly the same reward. Under this proposal, the reward could be anywhere between 5% and 50% of the extra rates, the result of arithmetic convenience for DCLG rather than real-world operations.

Q79: Do you agree with the approach set out in paragraphs [16 to 19] for defining a billing authority's net retained rates income for the purposes of the levy and safety net calculations?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

We are worried that a major lost appeal could put a smaller authority on the safety net until the next reset, thereby effectively removing it from the scheme, for no fault of its own. Some over-ride for such an eventuality is surely important.

Q80: Do you agree with the approach set out in paragraphs [20 to 22] for defining a major precepting authority's net retained rates income for the purposes of the levy and safety net calculations?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

Q81: Do you agree with the approach set out in paragraphs [23 to 28] for safety net calculations and payments?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

The system needs to be much more responsive to losses between the submissions of NNDR1 and NNDR3 returns. A major closure could effectively bankrupt an authority otherwise.

Q82: Do you agree with the approach set out in paragraphs [29 to 32] for levy calculations and payments?

Agree
Disagree

Any further comments

See Q78

Section 5: Reconciliation payments in respect of financial year 2012/13

Q83: Do you agree with our proposals for closing the 2012-13 national non domestic rating account?

Agree X
Disagree

Any further comments

Any Other Comments

Do you have any alternative proposals?

Do you have any other comments?

It was originally proposed that local authorities would be allowed to retain the business rates arising as a result of new developments and that the major share of this extra income would be given to the authorities responsible for planning decisions. In two tier areas this is district councils who have a major role to play in the economic growth of their area. It is disappointing therefore that the technical workings of this very complex regime seem to have lost the original intention of the Government which was to provide a real incentive to encourage growth in the local economy. We would ask you to look again at the way the levy in particular works to avoid what we are sure is the unintended consequences of what is proposed.

Thank you for completing this response form.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: VILLAGE AMENITIES GRANT FUND
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To approve the allocation of grants totalling £98,734 to enhance village amenities throughout Ribble Valley.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:
 - Community Objectives – To protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At your meeting on 12 June 2012 you agreed the conditions, procedures and timescales for the allocation of the second round of village amenity grants. The total funding allocated was £100,000 from Council Tax Income on Second Homes/Performance Reward Grant monies.
- 2.2 Whilst it was originally envisaged that a panel of officers and members should consider all applications and be responsible for approving grant offers the Director of Resources reported to your August meeting that this Committee would formally approve all applications after considering the recommendations of the Corporate Management Team (CMT) and officers.

3 GRANT APPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The invitation to bid was widely circulated and 49 organisations applied for a grant before the deadline of 31 July 2012, the total amount requested being £306,884.
- 3.2 CMT together with the Council's Partnership Officer and Regeneration Officer met on 22 August 2012 and considered each application on the criteria approved. 19 applications totalling £98,734 were recommended to receive a grant. A summary of the recommended projects are attached in Appendix 1.
- 3.3 All other grant applications are summarised in Appendix 2.

4 TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF THE GRANT OFFERS

- 4.1 The Grant Offer letters will be sent out and signed acceptance of the terms laid out in the letter will be requested.

- 4.2 Letters will be sent to unsuccessful applicants offering encouragement to keep working on the project, ongoing support and an explanation of why their application was unsuccessful on this occasion.
- 4.3 The scheme must be completed to the satisfaction of the council and grants will only be released on demonstration that the contractors/suppliers have been paid.
- 4.4 The projects' progress and evidence of matched funding will be monitored on a regular basis and reported back to this committee every three months.

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The budget provision for these village amenity grants is £100,000. This amount has been allocated from the Council Tax Income on Second Homes/ Performance Reward Grant Monies.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
- Political – None.
- Reputation – The grants will be an important contribution to the well-being of the communities.
- Equality & Diversity – None .

6 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

6.1 Approve the recommended grant allocations as set out in Appendix 1.

DAVID INGHAM
PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1 Recommended Village Amenities Grant Projects

For further information please ask for David Ingham, extension 4549.

REF: DI/POLICY & FINANCE/250912

APPENDIX 1

Ribble Valley Village Amenities Grant – 2012

RECOMMENDED PROJECTS SUMMARY

Project	Location	Description	Funding Requested	Total Project Cost	Recommended Funding
New Entrance	Bashall Eaves	Install a new entrance and doorway at Bashall Eaves Hall to improve access for community	£5,600	£6,600	£5,600
Car Park	Balderstone	Provision of a community car park at St Leonards Church, Balderstone	£10,000	£90,000	£2,500
Jubilee Wood	Dinckley	Planting of a wood and providing benches by Dinckley Bridge	£2,000	£3,000	£1,000
Audio Visual System	Knowle Green	Upgrade the facilities of Knowle Green village hall to encourage increased use by community	£2,000	£2,470	£500
Pavilion	Grindleton	Development of second phase of building on first floor of Grindleton pavilion	£10,000	£39,900	£10,000
Kitchen	Dunsop Bridge	Replace existing kitchen in Dunsop Village Hall	£7,234	£7,234	£7,234
Projector	Slaidburn	Purchase of projector for use in Slaidburn village hall	£949	£949	£500
Replacement Lighting	Read	The lights at Read United Reformed Church, used for many community activities, are no longer manufactured so replacement lighting is required	£1,900	£2,500	£1,900
Insulation of Roof Space	Wilpshire	Provide insulation for roof space and secondary double glazing for Wilpshire Methodist Church Hall which will increase community activities and reduce heating costs	£10,000	£10,000	£5,000
Restoration of Retaining Wall	Bolton by Bowland	Restoration of Kirk Beck retaining wall adjoining Bolton by Bowland Village Hall which otherwise is in danger of being imminently flooded by the river	£10,000	£16,700	£7,500
Feasibility Study	Salesbury	Update of report undertaken in 2010 on feasibility to refurbish or rebuild Salesbury Memorial Hall	£500	£600	£500
Insulation and Refurbishment of Hall	Gisburn	Reduce energy usage at Gisburn Festival Hall by improving insulation of the building and thereby encouraging more community activities	£10,000	£12,100	£10,000
Improved Insulation	Newton in Bowland	Reduce energy usage at Newton in Bowland Village Hall and making the hall a more acceptable venue	£10,000	£18,000	£10,000

Project	Location	Description	Funding Requested	Total Project Cost	Recommended Funding
Little Green Bus	Ribble Valley	Purchase a new(er) minibus for the Ribble Valley community and save on maintenance costs	£10,000	£25,000	£2,500
Multi Use Games Area & Shelter	Whalley	Create a floodlit MUGA surface and Youth Shelter on the Queen Elizabeth 2 Playing Fields as a resource for young people	£10,000	£132,900	£10,000
Kitchen & Toilets	Ribchester	Provide new toilet facilities and kitchen in the Ribchester Village Hall to improve facilities and encourage more community events	£10,000	£27,000	£10,000
Civic Hall	Longridge	Improvements to the Longridge Civic Hall including modernising toilets, making the hall safer and more attractive to new community users	£10,000	£10,000	£2,500
Roof and Lighting	Pendleton	Repair and insulate roof and replace lighting to make Pendleton Village Hall a more energy efficient and warmer community space and thereby encourage more use of the hall	£10,000	£12,900	£10,000
Community Access to Defibrillator	Chipping	Pilot of rural scheme to put a defibrillator in a secure cabinet in community areas throughout Ribble Valley, the first being outside Chipping Hall and available to the villagers and those on the adjacent playing fields and recreational area	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
		TOTAL RECOMMENDED	£131,683	£418,453	£98,734

APPENDIX 2

Ribble Valley Village Amenities Grant – 2012

SUMMARY OF OTHER PROJECTS SUBMITTED

Project	Location	Description	Funding Requested	Total Project Cost
Urban Art	Ribble Valley	Production of quality art work by young people in urban art spaces	£6,550	£6,550
Damp Treatment	Downham	Eradication of damp to inside wall in corner of Downham village hall	£10,000	£14,700
Score Box	Chatburn	Replacement of scorebox at Chatburn cricket club	£2,362	£2,362
Festival	Read	Upgrade the St John's Church with a public address and audio visual system and run a community festival in December 2012	£4,990	£9,980
Goal Posts & Nets	Gisburn	Provision of goals and nets for Gisburn Recreation Ground	£500	£700
Mower, Roller and Liner	Read	Purchase of mower, roller and white liner for Read United Football Club	£2,500	£3,000
Draining Playing Field	Waddington	Improve the drainage of Waddington playing field to allow increased use by community	£10,000	£37,600
Bench	Chatburn	Replacement of a bench on Chatburn playing field	£300	£400
Plaques	Chipping	Provision of two plaques to give information on John Brabins Almshouses and Towns Hall in Chipping	£500	£670
Dance	Ribble Valley	Provide an opportunity for a block of eight week dance sessions in Chipping, Sabden, Slaidburn, Langho and Longridge	£1,500	£1,500
Outdoor Recreation	Sawley	Provide new equipment and facilities at Sawley Play Area	£5,691	£5,691
Changing Room	Longridge	Provision of new changing rooms for Longridge Cricket Club and toilets for public use	£10,000	£250,000
Art Project	Ribble Valley	Introduce a programme of art and craft based workshops and events in accessible locations with assisted transport	£8,200	£9,000
Chairs & Tables	Mellor Brook	Provide stackable chairs and tables for Mellor Brook Hall to create more community space	£5,125	£6,100
Improvement of Playing Fields	Chipping	Improvement of the playing fields around Chipping Village Hall specifically to level ground and improve drainage on football pitches	£10,000	£160,000

Project	Location	Description	Funding Requested	Total Project Cost
Meeting Place for Vulnerable People	Ribble Valley	Provide a weekly meeting place to support a specific group of Ribble Valley vulnerable people for two years	£1,500	£1,500
Seating Area	Barrow	Provide a seating area on the soon to be refurbished Barrow playing field adjoining the new housing development resulting in the provision of a focal point for village residents and visitors.	£10,000	£78,000
Improve Toilet Facilities	West Bradford	Improve and increase toilet facilities at West Bradford Village Hall to enhance opportunities for larger functions	£10,000	£15,200
Access for Disabled	Rimington	Build a ramp to allow access for Disabled Christian Fellowship meetings at Salem Congregational Chapel, Rimington	£3,000	£3,200
Wall around Village Green	Chipping	Repair and renovate wall around Chipping Village Green	£1,518	£1,518
New Footpath	Read	Create a footpath around Read playground to improve access and maintenance	£585	£585
Showfield Improvement	Longridge	Level areas, improve drainage and road ways on Goosnargh & Longridge Showfield to allow more frequent and efficient usage of the site	£10,000	£20,000
Main Roof	Clitheroe	Repair to the main hall roof of St Mary's Centre, Clitheroe to prevent further damage and allow continued use as community hub	£10,000	£24,700
Play Area	Ribchester	Refurbishment of supporting timber stanchions, safety surface and swing seats on Ribchester Play Area to maintain safety of equipment	£9,680	£9,680
Seating	Ribchester	Provide seats within Ribchester Millenium Sculpture Garden	£5,500	£5,500
Fire Alarm	Clitheroe	Install a fire alarm system to make United Reformed Church, Clitheroe a safer place for wider community use	£10,000	£15,000
Community Function Room	Read	Remodelling of existing clubhouse at Read Cricket Club to allow more use by the community	£10,000	£100,000
Community Centre	Whalley	Provide resources for a community centre to be located in the Stable Trading Whalley Centre	£8,000	£8,000
Disabled Persons' Toilet Facilities	Waddington	Provide toilet facilities for disabled persons in the community hall attached to Waddington Methodist Church	£3,500	£9,000
Bus Shelter	Sawley	Provide a bus shelter on the A59 to allow Sawley residents to take shelter	£3,700	£3,700
		Total (Others)	£175,201	£803,837

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No 8

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: JANE PEARSON

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform members of the latest position with the localisation of council tax support (CTS).

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- The council have to decide upon a scheme of local support for council tax. In doing so consideration will need to be given to the amount of support for all groups of residents

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At your last meeting on 7 August 2012 you considered the options for the Council to form the basis of a draft scheme for council tax support to consult on. You agreed to delegate to myself in consultation with the Budget Working Group the Draft Scheme for Local Council Tax Support and the scheme of public consultation.

2.2 The Budget Working Group at its meeting on 9 August 2012 agreed our draft scheme as a basis for public consultation.

3 OUR PROPOSED SCHEME

Principle 1:

The income raised from the existing council tax on second homes should be used to subsidise the council tax support scheme thus contributing to those Ribble Valley residents who are vulnerable and/or in receipt of low incomes. **We propose to use approximately £120,000 to part fund the shortfall in funding.** We have suggested this would be our share of the second home council tax income and also that of the major precepting authorities.

Principle 2:

All working age claimants should pay something. At present, claimants in receipt of income support, job seekers allowance (income based) and employment support allowance (income related) and other claimants not receiving these but with an income below the required level for their basic living needs, generally receive 100 per cent council tax benefit and therefore pay no council tax.

We suggest that local support for council tax for all working age claimants is reduced by 12 per cent.

Principle 3:

The most vulnerable claimants should be protected. The proposed CTS scheme affords additional protection to vulnerable groups because of the way the default scheme is organised. This is in the main by using higher applicable amounts (basic living needs as determined by the Government) and part of their income may be disregarded (e.g. disability living allowance). We propose to leave these additional applicable amounts and income disregards unchanged.

4 CONSULTATION

- 4.1 We launched our consultation on the draft scheme on 1 September 2012. This will run until 31 October 2012. The new Council Tax Support Scheme must be approved by 31st January 2013 and be implemented by 1st April 2013 in time for the new Council Tax year.
- 4.2 We have utilised the services of the joint consultancy team CRACS whom we support with other Pennine Lancashire authorities. They have been extremely helpful and have assisted us in launching our [online questionnaire](#) which can also be found on our own website. They are also printing and distributing our hard copy questionnaire which will shortly be sent to all existing benefit customers and also to a cross section of council tax payers within the Ribble Valley. The team will also analyse all responses on our behalf.
- 4.3 Three documents have been produced along with the questionnaire to explain in more detail our draft scheme. These are:
- [Foreword by Leader of the Council](#) – **Annex 1**
 - [Our draft Scheme in detail](#) – **Annex 2**
 - [Why we are suggesting our draft scheme](#) – **Annex 3**
- 4.4 We also propose to hold a drop in information session in our Council Chamber on Wednesday 3 October 2012 regarding the changes to which all residents will be welcome to attend. Staff will be on hand to answer any questions regarding our proposals. Councillors will also be very welcome to attend.

5 ADDITIONAL SOFTWARE COSTS

- 5.1 We have been informed by our software supplier – Northgate Public Services, that a new calculation module for Council Tax Reduction will be required for our revenues and benefits software system. This was estimated to cost between £50,000 and £70,000 per customer. Northgate have now confirmed in writing the final costs – **Annex 4**. This will be £65,000 per customer, with a £2,500 discount for those issuing a purchase order before 31 October 2012.
- 5.2 This is a significant cost however one which is necessary to enable us to administer council tax support. We received a grant of £84,000 from the Government to meet additional costs arising from the localisation of council tax support earlier this year. This cost would clearly fall under this remit and therefore if approved the purchase would be funded from this grant.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT

- 6.1 Committee endorse the approach taken to our consultation on the localisation of council tax support.
- 6.2 Approve the purchase of the new Northgate council tax reduction module for our revenues and benefits software system.

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF58-12/JP/AC
17 September 2012

BACKGROUND PAPERS

LETTER FROM LEADER OF THE COUNCIL REGARDING CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT



BOROUGH COUNCIL

Dear Resident,

In Ribble Valley, there are currently around 2,700 households who rely on Council Tax Benefit to help them pay their Council Tax because they are on a low income. Council Tax Benefit is a national scheme, which has, until now, been fully funded by the Department of Work and Pensions at no cost to the Council, but from 1st April 2013, this will change.

From April, the Government has decided that it wants all Councils to develop their own local support schemes to replace Council Tax Benefit. The difficulty is that they want us to do this with significantly less money. This means that as a Council we have to try to design a fair and accessible alternative Council Tax Benefit scheme with **approximately £228,000 less grant** per year. This is equivalent to a cut in funding of around 10%.

However, under the new localised schemes, the Government have decided that pensioners who make up around 60% of our current claimants will remain protected from any changes. This means that they will receive the same amount of help as now. Whilst we fully support this decision, it means that the **remaining 40% of claimants of working age will need to pay more** (half of whom currently pay nothing). Put simply, if we decide to pass on the £228,000 cut in full to them alone, this would result in reductions in their existing Council Tax benefit entitlement in the region of 25%. This means that a working age claimant living in a Band A property would have to find £247 more per year.

This is a very serious issue for a Council representing the interests of all its communities in what are very tough economic times. As a result, we have had some difficult decisions to make to devise a new system suitable for consultation that achieves the savings required. At the same time, we must consider the significantly reduced funding for Local Government and attempt to minimise the impact on those most in need in our communities.

The new Council Tax Support Scheme we are proposing to introduce is explained in this document and we want to know what you think about our plans. In summary, we have attempted to spread the burden of this cut by **utilising council tax income we collect from second homes**. We propose to use this money to alleviate the burden on the most vulnerable in the Ribble Valley. This will meet half of the savings required. Regrettably, in order to meet the remaining shortfall we have been left with no alternative but to propose that all low income working age claimants currently on Council Tax Benefit **will have their support reduced by 12%** to fund the services they receive. It will mean that the burden is shared equally as explained later in this document. We wish we did not have to do this but faced with these challenging financial times for the Council, we have very few options.

LETTER FROM LEADER OF THE COUNCIL REGARDING CHANGES TO COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

This is where I need your help. We have not made a decision on the final scheme that will be adopted. As such, we are planning to consult widely about these changes between 1 September 2012 and 31 October 2012 to help shape the final local Council Tax Support scheme that we must approve by January 2013 at the very latest. You can find out more about what we are proposing and how it may affect you in the documents.

Whatever changes we are forced to introduce, I want to assure you that as a Council we remain committed to helping you in these difficult times by seeking to help you improve your skills, help you get back into work and help you make your money go further.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at ctax@ribblevalley.gov.uk or by telephone 01200 425111.



Cllr Michael Ranson
Leader, Ribble Valley Borough Council



Adopting a Local Council Tax Support Scheme in the Ribble Valley

This scheme, referred to as council tax support (CTS), is set out as a number of proposals that are dependent on:

1. The outcome of the consultation on this scheme;
2. The passing of the Local Government Finance Bill and subsequent secondary legislation;
3. The bringing into force of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and any secondary legislation.

Adoption of a Scheme

The Government's Statement of Intent set out that "It will be up to the billing authority to adopt a scheme formally through their internal decision-making processes".

The proposed amendment to section 67 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 in Part 2 of Schedule 4 to the Local Government Finance Bill has the effect that the function of making/revising a council tax reduction scheme has to be carried out by the authority as a whole.

A Full Council decision to adopt a local scheme needs to be made by 31st January. The Council proposes to agree a scheme on 18 December 2012.

Draft Regulations - Default Scheme & Prescribed Requirements

The Government has issued two key sets of draft regulations, the Default Scheme and the Prescribed Requirements scheme, which were published on 16th July 2012 and can be accessed via:

(<http://www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/localgovernmentfinance/counciltax/counciltaxsupport/>)

The Government has issued the Default Scheme regulations to provide a legal backstop in the event that any authority has not put a scheme in place by 31 January 2013.

The draft regulations set out how the default scheme will provide for reductions for Universal Credit claimants. As the Council is not proposing to make any amendment to the existing regulations it is the Council's intention to apply these rules to the scheme to be adopted. At the end of the entitlement calculation, an "as yet to be agreed" deduction will be made. On conclusion of the consultation process these changes will formally be approved, adopted and a scheme published and notified.

The Prescribed Requirements regulations set out requirements for local schemes. These relate to people of pension-credit age (Schedules 1-6); and make people who are treated as not being

OUR DRAFT SCHEME IN DETAIL

resident in Great Britain ineligible for support; they also provide for a number of straightforward administrative elements (Schedules 7-8). These are still being developed by Government and again will be adopted in their current or modified form at the end of the consultation period.

Proposed Ribble Valley Borough Council Tax Support Scheme

Clearly the local scheme cannot be introduced without working age benefit customers paying more Council Tax than they currently do (as we have to protect benefit payments to pensioners). As a result, the Council's proposed scheme is as follows;

Key changes from Council Tax Benefit

Pension age customers (i.e. a person who has attained the qualifying age for State Pension Credit)

- Will move to the new national scheme and will receive the same level of support as they currently do

Working age customers

- The scheme will be based on existing rules of Council Tax Benefit but the final award will be reduced by 12%.
- Customers receiving Council Tax Benefit on 31 March 2013 will be transferred onto the new scheme from 1 April 2013 without the need for a new application and will be assessed in line with the new scheme.
- An application will be required for all new claims from the 1st April 2013. An appropriate means of application will be decided by the Council and may be revised as required.
- If a customer disagrees with a decision about their Council Tax Support, the Council again will reconsider any initial request for the decision to be looked at. If the customer still disagrees with this outcome, they may then appeal to an independent tribunal.

Government is clear that there will be a single appeals process for unresolved disputes on claims for council tax support, by a body that is independent of the local authority. It is likely that it will be the responsibility of the Valuation Tribunal and the Ministry of Justice to enable members of the First-tier Tribunal to sit as members of the Valuation Tribunal for England when requested to do so by the President of the Valuation Tribunal for England, so that their expertise can be used when deciding appeals on decisions made in relation to council tax reduction schemes.

- For new and existing awards the Council may implement a review process. Awards may be reviewed in a time period to be determined by the authority and failure of the claimant to fulfil any request during a review of their award may result in the termination of that award.

OUR DRAFT SCHEME IN DETAIL

- Any figures set out in the scheme may be updated, to take effect on 1st April each year following the commencement of the scheme, by the consumer price index, retail price index rate of inflation set out in the preceding September, or by another rate determined with reference to provisions made for housing benefit and universal credit or as decided by the authority.
- Apart from where legally required, advice of any award granted, removed or revised will be by an adjustment to the council tax bill and the bill itself will be the formal notification. The Council may reserve the right to include additional notifications.
- Consideration will be given as to how further notifications of an award or non-award of council tax support will be made under the new scheme.
- Any overpayment will be rectified by the amount being clawed back by an adjustment to the council tax bill.
- The Council will take proactive action to prevent, detect and act appropriately where fraudulent activity is undertaken to claim Council Tax Support incorrectly or payments are not paid in accordance with the Statutory Instalment Scheme adopted.

These rules and expectations will be considered once again at the end of the consultation period and prior to adoption of any scheme to reflect any comments or suggestions received.



Introduction

The Government has announced that Council Tax Benefit will be replaced by Local Schemes of Council Tax Support from April 2013. In future the Government will meet only 90% of the cost of Council Tax Support and they have stated that pensioners must be protected from any changes.

Reduction in Funding

The reduction in funding will be shared out amongst all the authorities that make up the overall council tax charge in Ribble Valley. The approximate savings that each local authority needs to make is shown in the table below:

	Share of Council Tax %	Savings required
Lancashire County Council	75	171,000
Lancashire Police Authority	10	22,800
Lancashire Fire Authority	4	9,120
Ribble Valley (incl parishes)	11	25,080
Total	100	228,000

The Government have said that it is up to local authorities to design their own local Council Tax Support scheme. This means that Councils must decide how to meet this shortfall, ie whether to pass on the cut in benefits to claimants or fund this from other sources.

For example if we wanted our new Council Tax Support Scheme to be the same as the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme then each of the authorities shown in the table above would have to find the amounts given by some other method. This could be either increasing the Council Tax, reductions in services, increasing income from users of Council services, use of new powers to reduce Council Tax discounts on certain properties or a combination of any of these.

Consultation

We must consult with our residents and interested groups to find out their views about our draft proposals before deciding our final scheme.

Our Proposals

Because pensioners must be protected and in Ribble Valley almost 60% of our claimants are pensioners, if the Council were to pass on the cut in full, this would roughly mean our remaining benefit claimants would see a reduction in their Council Tax Support of around 25%. We feel this is too high and therefore do not propose to pass on the full cut to our claimants.

Instead we propose to pass on roughly half of the cut to our working age claimants and meet the rest of the shortfall by using council tax income we currently raise from second homes in the Ribble Valley. Presently this income is given to the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership to spend in our area in line with local priorities; however this arrangement comes to an end on 31 March 2013.

We propose that Ribble Valley's scheme will have the following principles:

1. The new Council Tax Support scheme will be calculated in the same way as Council Tax Benefit

We propose to use the same calculation method which takes into account the particular needs of some households, eg disabled, carers, and families with children. Those claimants and their families with particular needs can have higher levels of weekly income and still be entitled to Council Tax Benefit. This would continue under the proposed Council Tax Support Scheme.

2. Half of the cut in funding Council Tax Support will be met from council tax income on second homes
3. The final benefit award will be reduced by 12% for all claimants of working age

'Working age' means those claimants who are between school leaving age and state pension credit age.

This means for example that a couple living in a Band A property on full benefit, ie those who currently have no Council Tax to pay, would start to pay around £2 per week Council Tax.

How might you be affected by the proposals?



Case 1 Couple of Pensioner Age

William and Sarah are a couple both in their 70's who live in a Band B property. They currently claim Council Tax Benefit and have been awarded £20.85 per week based on means testing their income from state pensions, William's works pension and Sarah's savings. Their Council Tax charge is £29.85 per week so they so they have £9.00 per week to pay.

What the proposals mean for William and Sarah

When Local Support for Council Tax is introduced they will now receive a bill, which will say they get a discount rather than benefit but the amount they have to pay will not change i.e. £9.00 per week.



Case 2 Single Pensioner

Janet is 67 and she has recently moved to live in a sheltered housing flat that is in Band A. She finished work a few years ago but was always in low paid jobs so was not able to save for her retirement. She receives Pension Credit Guaranteed Credit and therefore she currently does not have any Council Tax to pay.

What the proposals mean for Janet

Under the new system she will still have nothing to pay but her bill will show the reduction as a discount rather than benefit.



Case 3 Couple of working age in low paid work

David and Victoria live with their 3 children in a band D property. Victoria stays at home as two of the children have not started school yet and David works for a local firm on the minimum wage, which is topped up with tax credits and child benefit. Their Council Tax is £28.49 per week and they currently get £13.49 in benefit, reducing the amount that they have to pay to £15.00 per week.

What the proposals mean for David and Victoria

They will automatically be assessed for local support for Council Tax and may have to pay more in future. If we decide to reduce their support by 12% they will pay an extra £1.62 per week for their Council Tax.



Case 4 Single parent of working age not in work

Patricia lives in a Band A property with her two children and receives Income Support. Her Council Tax is £14.25 per week and she currently gets full Council Tax Benefit.

What the proposals mean for Patricia

She will be automatically assessed for local support for Council Tax and may have to pay a contribution in future. As per the Council's proposals her entitlement would reduce by 12% which would mean she would have to pay £1.71 towards her Council Tax



Case 5 Single disabled customer

Mark lives alone in a band A property and currently gets Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance from the Department of Work and Pensions. His weekly Council Tax charge is £14.25 but he receives Council Tax Benefit of £12.15 per week reducing the amount he has to pay to £2.10 each week.

What the proposals mean for Mark

He will be automatically assessed for local support for Council Tax and will have to pay an extra £1.46 per week towards his Council Tax

Mark Edmondson
Ribble Valley Borough Council
Council Offices
Church Walk
Clitheroe
Lancashire
BB7 2RA

Northgate Public Services
Queens Court
Wilmslow Road
Alderley Edge
Cheshire SK9 7RR

T 01625 587111
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www.northgate-is.com/publicservices

17/09/12

Dear Mark

Council Tax Reduction (CTR)

In Information Bulletin 978, we indicated an estimated figure of between £50,000 and £75,000 per Customer would be needed to cover development and delivery of CTR over the next 2 years.

The past few months have provided further clarity on which to base our estimates. There still remains the prospect of additional work and rework as the legislators move towards final regulations.

As previously advised we are, in agreement with the User Group, developing a completely new calculation module for Council Tax Reduction. We investigated the option of upgrading the current Housing Benefits (HB) & Council Tax Benefits (CTB) calculation routines and determined that a new module would be appropriate as both HB and CTB are expected to decline over the next few years. A new module allows for a robust foundation for CTR as we move forward and new requirements evolve. It also means that in the early stages of the CTR implementation the risk of de-stabilising HB and CTB is minimised. Although the calculation is separate to HB and CTB, this will be completely seamless to end-users, for example calling a claim calculation will only be required once – there will be no requirement for double-keying of data. The new modules have been designed to be sufficiently flexible for the differing requirements of England, Scotland, and Wales.

Following discussion and agreement with the User Group Executive, Northgate will charge a licence of £65,000 (plus vat) per customer for CTR. The same rate will apply in England, Scotland & Wales for all Customers who currently use our Northgate CTB module. It is Northgate's intention to adopt the same pricing policy for England, Scotland & Wales.

The Northgate budget for the work already completed and expected to continue into 2013/14 is 10,500 days work. This includes:

- Customer and government(s) engagement
- Analysis, development, and testing
- Delivery, enhanced support, documentation, and webex training sessions

The CTR module payment can be further broken down as follows:

- 2012 - £40,000
- 2013 - £25,000

This proposal is based on a flat rate per customer which reflects the preferred method used by central government on recent projects funded under the basis of new burdens.

We are pleased to advise you that the licence will attract no additional Support & Maintenance charge. Support and Maintenance for CTR will be subsumed within existing Benefits support arrangements; as the CTR caseload increases and schemes in use increase, CTB usage will decline (albeit aspects of the scheme may be retained for pensioner protection etc. in England for example). Individual support and maintenance payments for CTB will be unaffected by the introduction of CTR and the eventual demise of CTB.

We are asking all CTB customers to sign up for CTR in line with the first software deliverable in the 6.6.1 release in October (scheduled 19th October). Release 6.6.1 functionality will include the facilities to calculate CTR based on your chosen scheme(s). We will be asking Customers to make a payment of £20,000 no later than 31st October 2012 to cover the first tranche of development. However to ensure timely delivery of licence keys for the 6.6.1 software being issued on October 19th, we request you make the payment as early as possible.

Payment of the remaining licences will be requested in line with the delivery plan outlined in Information Bulletin 960:

- 6.7 (Dec 2012) - £10,000
- 6.7.1 (Mar 2013) - £10,000
- 6.8 (July 2013) - £12,500
- 6.8.1 (October 2013) - £12,500

The User Group Executive requested the payment profile be reflective of the work to date and the anticipated schedule of work over the next 2 years, our expectation is that 60% of the work will be completed this year, so we have therefore placed £25,000 of the overall charge in the 2013/14 year.

The User Group Executive further asked Northgate to consider a discount in the £65,000 charge should an authority wish to pay the full amount in advance. We have agreed to this request and can confirm a reduction of £2,500 (i.e. new charge of £62,500) will apply for any authority making the full payment by 31st October 2012. This reduction represents a 7.5% annualised discount.

Please find attached a Quote Form, should you wish to receive the licences for CTR, please send a Purchase Order by 31st October 2012 to enquiries@northgate-is.com to cover the £65,000 licence fees plus vat, which will be invoiced in accordance with the above profile.

However, if you wish to pay the amount upfront, in one lump sum to take advantage of the discount of £2,500, please advise on your Purchase Order that this is the case and make your Purchase Order out for £62,500 plus vat and send to enquiries@northgate-is.com by 31st October 2012, in which case an invoice for the full amount of £62,500 will be sent.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel Blair

Head of Product Management & Innovation

E nigel.blair@northgate-is.com

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: PERFORMANCE REWARD GRANT - COMMUNITY FOOD GROWING
submitted by: MARSHAL SCOTT – CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: DAVID INGHAM – PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 This report invites committee to consider and ratify the final allocation of funding to schemes within the Community Food Growing project, one of the projects funded by the Performance Reward Grant of 2010/11 as outlined and agreed at the Policy & Finance Committee meeting of 23 March 2010 and updated at successive meetings.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- The corporate ambitions of the council are closely linked with those of the Ribble Valley Partnership and the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS). The projects funded from the Performance Reward Grant (PRG) contribute to the achievement of the objectives contained within the SCS and its associated action plans.
- Community Objectives – The Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) and its associated action plans form the basis of the sense of place and common vision of the communities in the Ribble Valley. The projects are predominantly from the community.
- Corporate Priorities – In its role as community leader the Council has been instrumental in developing and shaping the SCS. The PRG funded projects are all consistent with the SCS.
- Other Considerations – None

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Community Food Growing Project in Ribble Valley was developed after an extensive consultation with Ribble Valley Parish Councils and Community Groups.

2.2 The objective was to provide new community food growing sites in Ribble Valley and food growing sites on primary school and senior school sites in the district.

2.3 There have been issues that have delayed the project and this document outlines its status and proposes a conclusion to this phase of the scheme.

2.4 The Ribble Valley Community Food Growing project will develop and share the good work started in many of the schools. There is a willingness to develop the sustainable living ethos but it is not part of the curriculum as yet. The project along with its partners and volunteers has generated a considerable amount of interest in food growing and

sustainable living but is important not to extend the funding option beyond March 2013 so that the unused resources can be reallocated.

- 2.5 The Borough Council has a role in supporting sustainable living in the district and supporting the community partnerships that deliver this project.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Not surprisingly many of the primary schools in Ribble Valley have already embarked on achieving eco-school status and are developing the spare land that surrounds the schools, particularly in the rural villages, for community food growing projects and gardening clubs. The schools listed in Appendix 1 have applied for resources, which can be sourced locally, under the scheme.

Total Proposed for Allocation £6,120

- 3.2 Senior Schools Food Growing Sites have been identified at the following schools: St Augustine's propose to create a fenced area adjacent to the school for their food-growing site and St Cecilia and Longridge High, who share adjacent playing fields, have identified an area between the two schools. Bowland High has a food-growing site but the school would like to expand this and Clitheroe Grammar have also designed a site. It is anticipated that the High schools will be able to bring some match funding to the project. The plans and specific requirements are being finalised for each site and formal requests for funding to the Council have been produced. It is proposed that each site be offered £5,000 (£2,000 to Bowland High) payable when the schemes have been completed with a final cut off date of claiming funds by March 2013.

Total Proposed for Allocation £17,000 (£5,000 to Longridge, St Augustine and CRGS, £2,000 to Bowland High)

- 3.3 There is a perceived shortage of allotments in Ribble Valley and many of our parishes have received an expression of interest from local residents and have gone as far as organising initial meetings and identifying potential sites for land share. These meetings have resulted in a plan to produce four new sites in Ribble Valley: Gisburn, Sabden, Whalley and Calderstones. Unfortunately the offer of the sites at Gisburn, Sabden and Calderstones has been subsequently withdrawn and the Whalley group has still to be organised. The other groups are looking for alternative sites and this committee will be asked for ratification of any proposed schemes prior to their implementation.

Total Proposed for Allocation £15,000 as contingency until March 2013 for the organisations at Gisburn, Sabden and Calderstones should they find alternative sites.

- 3.4 This project review is important as it outlines the approach taken to allocate the funds made available from the Performance Reward Grant monies to Community Food Growing.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – The allocation and monitoring of the PRG budget require a degree of staff time. None of the proposed expenditure requires the use of currently unallocated RVBC budgets.

- Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Policy and Finance Committee has the role of ratifying the recommendations on the spending on the remainder of the allocated PRG funds.
- Reputation – The Council is a key member of the Ribble Valley Partnership and its association with these projects will enhance the Council's reputation.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Agree the approach set out in the report and approve the remaining allocations concerning projects, which would be in receipt of funds from the Performance Reward Grant.

DAVID INGHAM
PARTNERSHIP OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Appendix 1

For further information please ask for David Ingham, extension 4549

REF: DI/250912/P&F

APPENDIX 1

Primary Schools	Application for funds
Barnacre Road Primary School, Longridge	6 Raised beds 1.2m x 0.9m £480 Polytunnel 15'x 8' £500 Shed 6'x 4' £200, Compost Bins £150, Wormery £110 Total £1440.00
Bolton-by-Bowland C E Primary School	Greenhouse £860 Greenhouse £860.00
Gisburn Primary School	Polytunnel 15'x 8' £500, 4 Raised Beds 12'x 4' £140.00, 2 Compost Bins £150, Fruit Bushes – Total £790.00
Grindleton C E Primary School	Fencing around raised beds and fruit trees/bushes Total £840.00
Sabden County Primary School	Polytunnel 12'x 6' £300, raised Beds £120, Water Butt £42 Trough Planters £128 Shed 6'x 4' £200 Total £790.00
St Michael & St John's R C Primary School, Clitheroe	Polytunnel 15'x 8' £500, Shed 6'x 4' £200 Total £700.00
Thorneyholme RC Primary School Dunsop Bridge	Polytunnel 15'x 8' £500, Shed 6'x 4' £200 Total £700.00
Total Allocated	£6,120.00

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 10

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
 title: BUDGET FORECAST 2012/13 TO 2015/16
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: JANE PEARSON

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the Council's latest budget forecast and decide what action needs to be considered to meet the financial challenges that lie ahead.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The budget forecast is an important tool which gives an early indication of any potential budgetary problems and also informs our Medium Term Financial Strategy accordingly.
- 2.2 It is inevitable that we need to continue to scrutinise closely our financial position in the coming months in order to best place us to face the continuing challenges that lie ahead. Therefore we will continue holding frequent Budget Working Group meetings and also produce overall budget monitoring reports for members on a regular basis.
- 2.3 In July the Government began consultation on the detail of how the Business Rates Retentions Scheme will work including consultation on the baseline funding for each local authority. This on-going consultation makes it extremely difficult to calculate Government funding with any degree of accuracy.
- 2.4 We therefore are in a position where we can only speculate the level of Government funding we can expect to receive next year. Our estimate 2013/14 baseline funding is shown below with a comparison of recent years Formula Grant to show the extent of our funding cuts.

Formula Grant/Baseline Funding				
	2010/11 £000	2011/12 £000	2012/13 £000	2013/14 £000
Formula Grant	-4,141	-3,237	-2,902	
Baseline Funding				-2,758

- 2.5 The latest budget forecast (as is usually the case) is based on many assumptions. Many of these are very difficult to predict going forward, perhaps more than ever before.
- 2.6 We have made several changes since the previous budget forecast was prepared. These are set out in the following sections in detail below.

3 PUBLIC SECTOR PAY AND PRICE INFLATION

- 3.1 The Government announced in the emergency budget that there would be pay freezes for public sector workers for the 2 years commencing 2011/12 .You may

recall that there was no pay increase for Council staff in 2010/11, 2011/12 and the employers confirmed earlier this year no increase in 2012/13. The employers side suggest that there may well be an offer made for 2013/14 and we are assuming any increase will be no higher than 2.5%. The contingency of £75,000 set aside for any potential pay award in 2012/13 will not be required.

- 3.2 Despite the on-going downturn in the economy and sluggish recovery, inflation has remained a stubborn persistent problem albeit slightly better than this time last year. The rate of Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation rose to 2.6%, from 2.4% in July, according to figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The RPI measure increased to 3.2% from 2.8%.
- 3.3 The Bank of England's target rate for CPI is 2%, and it expects inflation to return to target in the medium term.
- 3.4 Even so considerable uncertainty surrounds the inflation outlook and much depends on the Euro, economic growth and movements in commodity prices which can be highly volatile.
- 3.5 In our budget forecast we have allowed 2.5% for price increases for each year, the same as the allowance for pay mentioned earlier.

4 LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT FUNDING

- 4.1 In addition to formula grant we currently only receive the following grants:
 - New Homes Bonus
 - Council Tax Freeze Grant
 - Local Services Support Grant - Homelessness
- 4.2 The New Homes Bonus Scheme commenced in April 2011, and will match fund the additional council tax raised for new homes and properties brought back into use, with an additional amount for affordable homes, for a six year period.
- 4.3 We will be notified of our allocation for New Homes Bonus grant at the time of the confirmation of the Local Government Finance Settlement (probably December). This will be based on the annual movement in our taxbase up to October 2012. Based on the movement in our council tax base up to August we **could** expect to receive an extra £230,000 over and above the £60,000 we currently have allocated to support our revenue budget.
- 4.4 The Council Tax Freeze Grant in 2011/12 was promised for a four year period. From next year this will be 'rolled up' into our baseline funding together with Homelessness Grant and Council Tax Support Grant. The Council Tax Freeze Grant in 2012/13 however was for one year only. We've had no indication of any suggestion that there will be a freeze grant in the future.

5 COUNCIL TAX

- 5.1 For estimate purposes we have assumed a 2.5% increase in our council tax each year for the next 3 years. Based on our current tax base a 1% increase in our council tax raises approximately £31,500.

6 INTEREST RATES

6.1 The continuing weak economic growth in the UK and concerns about the strength of the global economic recovery and the problems with the Euro means that the base rate remains at a record low of 0.5%. Any increase in rates is still seen by many as too risky given the fragile state of the economy.

6.2 We have currently allowed £30,000 interest receipts for both the current year and 2013/14. We estimate that interest rates should start to increase in 2014/15 as the economy recovers. We have therefore brought in £50,000 for interest in 2014/15 and £75,000 the year after. Whether this is achievable will depend upon the speed of any economic recovery.

7 COMMENTS ON THE LATEST FORECAST

7.1 It is important that members are aware of the assumptions made in the new updated forecast as used as a basis for the above scenarios.

7.2 The latest forecast assumes the following:

i) Savings brought in to the 2012/13 budget are achieved and continue

Two particularly significant consultation papers have been issued recently which will have far reaching implications on our finances.

The developing proposal to retain business rates will replace our current formula grant funding which is our main income stream from the Government. We will be 'locked in' to a baseline funding position and therefore future business rate income depends on the level this baseline is set at. At this stage we have brought in the latest exemplifications in our government funding for 2013/14 and assumed a cash freeze thereafter. This may be over optimistic.

The localisation of council tax benefit and the requirement to have our own local scheme which reduces costs by 10% at the same time as protecting pensioners and vulnerable groups will have far reaching consequences. This will be extremely challenging. We are currently consulting on our proposed scheme that will reduce benefit entitlement by 12% for working age claimants. This together with council tax income from second homes should meet the reduction in government support, providing the council tax can be collected.

ii) Use of balances of £100,000 over the next three years taking us to £1,295,640 General Fund Balances by 31 March 2016.

iii) Interest Receipts and Interest Savings can no longer be relied upon as a significant contribution to the Council's expenditure. The forecast shows a minimal level of receipts over the next 3 years but rising to £75,000 by 2015/16.

iv) A small increase in the council taxbase over the future four year period. As stated before, based on current trends it is unwise to predict an increasing taxbase. However, as we potentially come out of the recession we would expect the number of new house builds to increase significantly. We continue to receive significant numbers of large planning applications. Looking at the very latest figures I predict a 0.5% increase in the tax base for next year and 0.75% thereafter. Again much will depend upon the economic recovery and successful planning applications turning

into actual developments. The taxbase has also been adjusted for the impact of council tax support.

- v) Council Tax Deficit – I have allowed for a council tax deficit over the next four years based on current deficits experienced by districts. The impact of the new council tax support scheme could well make this much worse.
- vi) Business Rate Collection – We have assumed no additional funding from the collection of business rates. The system as proposed provides very little real incentive for billing authorities to increase their business rate income. However there is a very considerable downside if business rate income was to fall below our initial business rate baseline target.

8 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 Until the final outcome of the consultation process is announced for business rates retention we cannot predict with any certainty the funding we can expect to receive in the future from the Government.
- 8.2 We know our updated Budget Forecast, based on all the assumptions mentioned above, shows that savings in the region of £420k by 2015/16 are needed from our base budget to ensure we are financial stable in the future. As mentioned earlier forecasting the budget is probably more difficult this year than ever before because of all the uncertainties.
- 8.3 The Budget Working Group will be considering the Budget Forecast at their meeting on 24 September 2012. I will report to you any recommendations they make at your meeting.

9 RECOMMENDATION

- 9.1 Consider the Budget Forecast.

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
PF59-12/JP/AC
14 SEPTEMBER 2012

Latest Budget Forecast - Sept 2012									
Assuming inflation pay & prices 2.5% and Baseline Funding as per exemplification									
		2012/13 OE		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
		£		£		£		£	
Net Expenditure		6,274,100		6,414,450		6,605,000		6,800,000	
Interest Receipts		-30,000		-30,000		-50,000		-75,000	
Reserves		-36,175		-36,175		-36,175		-36,175	
C Tax Freeze concession		-78,910							
Use of New Homes Bonus		-60,000		-60,000		-60,000		-60,000	
Use of Balances		-20,733		-100,000		-100,000		-100,000	
Reductions in Expenditure Required		0		-201,279		-278,058		-430,186	
Budget Requirement		6,048,282		5,986,996		6,080,767		6,098,639	
Govt Funding		2,901,686		2,757,500		2,757,500	cash free	2,678,840	cash free
C Tax Freeze concession		0		0		0		0	
Coll Fund Deficit		-9,643		-10,000		-10,000		-10,000	
Precept		3,156,239		3,239,496		3,333,267		3,429,799	
Tax Base		22,434	act	22,464	0.50%	22,551	0.75%	22,638	0.75%
Band D Ctax	+2.5%	140.69	ctax free	144.21	2.5%	147.81	2.5%	151.51	2.5%
Effect of above on General Fund Balances									
General Fund Balances		2012/13		2013/14		2014/15		2015/16	
		£		£		£		£	
Brought Forward		1,616,373		1,595,640		1,495,640		1,395,640	
Used		-20,733		-100,000		-100,000		-100,000	
Carried Forward		1,595,640		1,495,640		1,395,640		1,295,640	

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
 title: REVIEW OF COUNCIL COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 principal author: BILL ALKER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To put arrangements in place to carry out a review of the Council's complaints procedure.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Community Objectives – }
- Corporate Priorities – } The Council aims to be a well-managed Council, the
Complaints Procedure supports that objective.
- Other Considerations – }

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council's complaints procedure was last reviewed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 30 November 2012. A copy of the report to Committee is attached as Appendix 1. Attached as Appendix 2 is a copy of the Council's complaints form and as Appendix 3 a complaints leaflet, both of the latter documents as amended after consideration by Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

2.2 The terms of reference of Policy and Finance Committee includes a power to exercise all powers, duties and functions of the Council except those which are delegated to any other Committee. The Complaints Procedure does not appear to be included specifically in the Terms of Reference of any Committee.

2.3 The Council receives numerous enquiries about the services it provides, these are usually resolved by the relevant member of staff or service manager, however, on average about 12 complaints are dealt with through the Council's complaints procedure each year.

3 ISSUES

3.1 The Council's complaints procedure relates to service issues, ie is separate from the Code of Conduct based procedure. The procedure is set out in the leaflet attached as Appendix 3. The current procedure would benefit from a review to ensure it is still fit for purpose and to address concerns which have been identified by staff, including investigating officers and staff who have been the subject of a complaint, and by Members who have been involved with the second stage of the procedure.

3.2 As both Members and officers have direct experience of the procedure, it is proposed that a working group, comprising of three Members with support from the Council's Complaints Officer and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be convened to

carry out the review. The proposed terms of reference of the working group will be as follows.

- To review the Council's complaints procedure and make recommendations to the Policy and Finance Committee.
- The review to encompass the procedure for lodging a complaint
- Vetting and rejecting complaints
- Investigation of complaints
- The hearing
- Notification.

In addition, the working group could be asked to clarify the powers that are available to the investigating officer and to the panel.

All the above to be formulated after considering best practice in other authorities and the advice of the Ombudsman.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- Resources – N/A.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – N/A.
- Political – N/A.
- Reputation – An improved Complaints Procedure should contribute to enhancing the Council's reputation.
- Equality & Diversity – N/A.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Approve the proposal to review the current complaints procedure.

5.2 Nominate Members to form part of the working group.

5.3 Agree the terms of reference.

BILL ALKER
COMPLAINTS OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF:BA/EL/250912/P&F

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL DECISION
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 12

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES WRITE OFFS
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: MARK EDMONDSON

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To obtain Committee's approval to write off certain National Non-Domestic Rate debts relating to companies.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

❖ ***Council Ambitions/Community Objectives/Corporate Priorities***

Without the revenue collected from rates, council tax and sundry debtors we would be unable to meet the Council's ambitions, objectives and priorities.

2 BACKGROUND

NNDR

2.1 No specific statute exists to give guidance on the circumstances under which debts, in general, can be written off other than the statute of limitations. Any debt for which recovery action has not been taken within six years still remains but legal action cannot be taken.

2.2 As a matter of law, we are under an obligation to take reasonable steps to collect business rate debts.

2.3 We do this by various means, including summonses, distraint of goods, bankruptcy, winding up and committal warrants. However, there are some cases where debtors simply leave their property with arrears and where we have no forwarding address, or are declared bankrupt, are deceased with insufficient funds in the estate or cease trading.

2.4 The onset of the recession has seen more companies get into financial difficulties. Companies that get into the most financial difficulties have to take the administration/receivership options if they are unable to agree terms with their creditors.

3 CURRENT POSITION

3.1 There are now a number of cases where the company has been dissolved or gone into administration therefore we need to write off some NNDR debts.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Where NNDR debts are written off these costs are met from the national non domestic rate pool and do not fall directly on local council tax payers.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

- 5.1 Approve writing off £42,083.04 of NNDR debts where it has not been possible to collect the amounts due.

REVENUES AND BENEFITS MANAGER

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF52-12/ME/AC
11 September 2012

Background papers: None

For further information please ask for Mark Edmondson ext 4504

Policy and Finance Committee

Write Offs - NNDR

Year	Name	Property	Amount £
DISSOLVED			
Dissolution is the last stage of liquidation, the process by which a company (or part of a company) is brought to an end, and the assets and property of the company redistributed.			
2010/11	Local Food 2 U Ltd	Unit 34 Time Technology Park, Blackburn Road, Simonstone	1,357.67
2011/12			2,802.13
			4,159.80
2011/12	Reclaim Credit Ltd	Unit 13 Time Technology Park, Blackburn Road, Simonstone	2,142.45
TOTAL NNDR			6,302.25

Year	Name	Property	Amount £
ADMINISTRATION			
An administration order is a process designed to protect limited companies from their creditors while a debt restructuring plan is carried out and presented to creditors and courts. It is unlikely that in this case that, as an unsecured creditor, we will receive any funds, but if we do an adjustment will be made to the amount written off.			
2011/12	Thornber Home and Leisure Ltd	Greenacre Street, Clitheroe	23,862.98
2012/13			11,917.81
TOTAL NNDR			35,780.79

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

DECISION

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE – GARAGES AT RIDDINGS LANE,
WHALLEY
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To consider a request from Health and Housing Committee to agree to demolish Council owned garages at Riddings Lane, Whalley and also agree a supplementary estimate to add to this year's Revenue Budget.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Service committees manage their services within the budgets agreed at the beginning of the financial year. The Revenue Budget was approved by Special Policy and Finance Committee on 7 February 2012 and by Full Council on 6 March 2012.

2.2 Any revenue expenditure over and above what has already been approved must be agreed by this Committee.

3 HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE 20 SEPTEMBER 2012

3.1 Health and Housing Committee considered a report submitted by the Chief Executive (attached at Annex 1) which gave details of the current position regarding the state of repair of the garages at Riddings Lane, Whalley.

3.2 In summary the estimated costs of demolishing the garages would be £5,000 and a further £18,500 to rebuild the 14 garages.

3.3 Health and Housing Committee considered the report and agreed to go ahead with the demolition of the garages but not rebuild them. The demolition cost of £5,000 which is below the limit for capitalisation could be funded from the Repair and Maintenance Reserve Fund.

4. RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

4.1 Agree to the request for a supplementary estimate of £5,000 for the demolition of the Riddings Lane Garages.

LAWSON ODDIE
HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

JANE PEARSON
DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF60-12/LO/AC
21 September 2012

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Annual Budget 2012/13 – Report to Full Council 6 March 2012

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 20th September 2012
title: Report On The Garages At Riddings Lane, Whalley
submitted by: John Heap, Director of Community Services
principal author: Tim Lynas, Principal Surveyor

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To outline the condition of the garages at Riddings Lane, Whalley.
- 1.2 To seek approval from the Committee for the demolition and replacement of the garages.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
 - **Council Ambitions** - The garages enable the Council to meet the needs of local residents.
 - **Community Objectives** - The garage sites reduce the volume of on street parking.
 - **Corporate Priorities** - None.
 - **Other Considerations** - None.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The site is located at the end of a residential street off Riddings Lane, Whalley. The units comprise of two blocks of single story garage structures, namely block A (garages 1 - 9) and block B (garages 10 - 14).
- 2.2 The frames are precast reinforced concrete with plastisol coated 'up and over' doors, and profiled asbestos sheet roof coverings. There is a tarmac hard-standing area between the buildings.
- 2.3 While the freehold title is owned by the Council, Ribble Valley Homes manage the day to day running of the sites, including the collection of the rent which is divided between the parties.
- 2.4 In recent years the number of complaints about the condition of the garages has increased, in particular those where water ingress through the roof is occurring.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Overall the garages are in a poor condition. The notable defects include damaged asbestos sheet roof coverings, spalling concrete, steelwork corrosion, and peeling plastisol coatings. In addition the tarmac surface has broken up and contains significant pot holes.
- 3.2 The repair of the garages has been explored however they appear to be beyond economic repair. On this basis their replacement has been further investigated.

3.3 The lowest tender price for the renewal of the garages is for £18,500 excluding VAT and a provisional £5,000 figure for the demolition and disposal of the existing structures and associated materials.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – There is currently no budget provision for replacement of any of the garages that formerly were part of the housing revenue account. As this liability transferred to the general fund as a result of housing stock transfer it would be appropriate to fund this cost from the vat shelter receipts subject to approval by Policy and Finance Committee
- **Technical, Environmental and Legal** – The council have a legal duty to manage their properties, and in particular any hazardous materials contained within them. This work will help to meet these obligations.
- **Political** – None.
- **Reputation** – None.

5 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

5.1 Approve the demolition of the existing garages, and the construction of the new garage units.

JOHN C HEAP
DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

TIM LYNAS
PRINCIPAL SURVEYOR

For further information, please ask for Tim Lynas tel. 01200 413212

**RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
REPORT TO POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: TUESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: RIBBLE VALLEY COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP - UPDATE
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: BILL ALKER – COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of various initiatives which Ribble Valley Community Safety Partnership is wholly or in part responsible for.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions - }
 - Community Objectives - }
 - Corporate Priorities - }
 - Other Considerations - }
- The Council has, as one of its key ambitions, "making peoples lives safer and healthier". By initiating these early intervention tactics via our partners we hope that this ambition will be achieved.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Ribble Valley Community Safety Partnership was formed in 1998 to bring different agencies together to help combat crime and disorder.

2.2 The key agencies involved in the Ribble Valley Community Safety Partnership are:

- Ribble Valley Borough Council;
- Lancashire County Council;
- Police;
- Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services;
- Probation Service; and
- NHS East Lancashire.

2.3 Over the 14 years of existence the Community Safety Partnership has been responsible for a number of successful initiatives as listed below:

- Providing a skate park for Longridge.
- Friday night sports and football leagues.
- Providing training for door staff for licensed premises.
- Plastic glasses for licensed premises.
- Numerous awareness raising campaigns (alternate, show DV the red card etc).
- One-to-one mentoring scheme with young people.

2.4 During the period from 2006/07 to 2007/12 reported crime had reduced from 2,449 to 1,583 incidents a year. This is a reduction of over 35%.

- 2.5 Whilst the Community Safety Partnership does not claim primary responsibility for this decrease it can claim to have had an impact at the fringes by changing people's behaviour.
- 2.6 We have been informed by the Judicial Office that the Senior Presiding Judge has decided that it is inappropriate for Magistrates to either be members of Community Safety Partnership or to fulfil an administrative support function for a CSP as part of their employment or other activity.
- 2.7 We are currently seeking clarification on how this will affect Councillor Jan Alcock who chairs the CSP and is a Magistrate on the Blackburn Bench. A verbal update will be given at the meeting.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 There are a number of current initiatives which Committee should be aware of.
- 3.2 Castle Grounds Project – Operates every Friday evening in Clitheroe and targets young people in the Clitheroe Castle grounds, offering them an alternative to underage drinking and drug taking.
- 3.3 That “offer” is worked in conjunction with Clitheroe Youth and Community Centre and has a “menu” which includes sports, cookery, IT skills, DJ'ing etc.
- 3.4 Community Alcohol Network – Also targets underage drinking but in a more impactful way. Teams of Special Constables and Trading Standards Officers target known hotspots in Clitheroe and Whalley.
- 3.5 Any young people found to be drinking underage or taking drugs or smoking illicit tobacco will be taken to a place of safety and parents contacted to call and collect their children.
- 3.6 Follow up education with parents is undertaken to address the reasons why young people were allowed to drink underage in the first place.
- 3.7 Results so far have been very encouraging. There have been interventions with a high success rate.
- 3.8 Renewal of alcohol signs – Ribble Valley has 7 designated public place orders which came into force between 2002 and 2006. The signage has recently been renewed and replaced for the following parts of the borough:
- Clitheroe Town Centre.
 - Longridge Town Centre.
 - Whalley.
 - Read.
 - Sabden.
 - Simonstone.
 - Chatburn.
 - Billington.
 - Langho.
 - Clitheroe (Henthorn and Low Moor).
 - Wilpshire.

- 3.9 Wasted Lives Campaign – This is a campaign being run by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Services and is aimed at educating young drivers on safer driving, speed, awareness of other road users etc.
- 3.10 The Campaign has targeted schools, youth clubs and apprentices and has the full support of the Community Safety Partnership.
- 3.11 Smart Water and Farm Watch – In an effort to provided some protection and reassurance to rural communities the Community Safety Partnership has worked alongside the Police and Ward Councillor Rosie Elms to provide smart water liquid to rural homes, farms and businesses.
- 3.12 Smart water is a product which gives a unique series of microdots when smeared onto a property which needs to be protected. This can then help trace goods which may have been stolen and is a valuable tool in tracking stolen goods.
- 3.13 Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) – Elections for the new post of Police and Crime Commissioner will take place on 15 November and this casts some doubt as to the future direction of individual Community Safety Partnerships.
- 3.14 Funding for CSP's has dramatically reduced over recent years and it is anticipated that the new PCC will expect greater value for money from initiatives together with sustainable solutions.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications:
- Resources – None.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – None.
 - Political – None.
 - Reputation – The Council's reputation as one of the safest places in England depends to a certain extent on a successful Community Safety Partnership.
 - Equality & Diversity – No implications identified.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Ribble Valley Community Safety Partnership brings together the number of partner agencies specifically to help reduce crime and disorder and has operated for the past 14 years.
- 5.2 There have been a number of successful initiatives which have either been led or supported by the Community Safety Partnership (see paragraph 2.3 above).
- 5.3 Whilst funding still exists the Community Safety Partnership has taken the decision to use its limited resources to support a number of initiatives during 2012/13 (see paragraphs 3.2 to 3.12).
- 5.4 Whilst it would be wrong to claim reductions in crime were only down to Community Safety Partnership involvement it is also fair to point out that a number of interventions have kept crime figures down.

5.5 Good partnership working has been crucial in a number of those successful initiatives.

BILL ALKER
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Various report to Ribble Valley Community Safety Partnership.

For further information please ask for Bill Alker, extension 4412.

REF: BA/CMS/POLICY & FINANCE/250912

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 16

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
 title: REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT
 submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
 principal author: MARK EDMONDSON

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform committee of debts outstanding for business rates, council tax and sundry debtors. Also to update committee on benefits performance, including benefits fraud investigations, prosecutions and sanctions.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions/Community Objectives/Corporate Priorities

Without the revenue collected from rates, council tax and sundry debtors we would be unable to meet the Council's ambitions, objectives and priorities.

2 NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES (NNDR)

2.1 The following is a collection statement to 12 September 2012:

	£000	£000	2012/13 % to 12 Sept	2011/12 % to 12 Sept
Balance Outstanding 1 April 2012		475		
NNDR amounts due	16,473			
Plus costs	5			
Transitional surcharge	47			
Write ons	7			
	16,532			
Less				
- Transitional relief	-303			
- Exemptions	-361			
- Charity, Rural, Former Agricultural Discretionary Relief	-964			
- Small Business Rate Relief	-1,584			
- Write offs	-31			
- Interest Due	-2			
	-3,245	13,287		
Total amount to recover		13,762		
Less cash received to 12 September		-6,864	49.9	47.4
Amount Outstanding		6,898	50.1	52.6

NB The figures included in the table include not only those charges for 2012/13 but also those relating to previous years, but we are required to report to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) our in year collection rate. This figure is published and is used to compare our performance with other local authorities. On this measure our current in year collection rate at 31 August 2012 is 50.5% compared with 48.1% at 31 August 2011.

3 COUNCIL TAX

3.1 The following is a collection statement for Council Tax to 12 September 2012:

	£000	£000	2012/13 % to 12 Sept	2011/12 % to 12 Sept
Balance Outstanding 1 April 2012		420		
Council Tax amounts due	37,211			
Plus costs	45			
Transitional relief	2			
Write ons	3			
	37,261			
Less - Exemptions	-974			
- Discounts	-2,879			
- Disabled banding reduction	-41			
- Council Tax Benefit	-2,263			
- Write offs	-5			
	-6,162	31,099		
Total amount to recover		31,519		
Less cash received to 12 Sept		-15,618	49.6	49.7
Amount Outstanding		15,901	50.4	50.3

NB The figures included in the table include not only those charges for 2012/13 but also those relating to previous years, but we are required to report our in year collection rate to the DCLG. This figure is published by them and is used to compare our performance against other local authorities. On this measure our current in year collection rate for 2012/13 at 31 August 2012 is 49.5% compared to 49.5% at 31 August 2011.

4 SUNDRY DEBTORS

4.1 A summary of the sundry debtors account at 13 September 2012 is:

	£000	£000	%
Amount Outstanding 1 April 2012		308	
Invoices Raised	884		
Plus costs	1		
	885		
Less write offs	1	884	
Total amount to recover		1,192	
Less cash received to 13 September 2012		653	54.78
Amount outstanding		539	

Aged Debtors	000s	%
< 30 days	176	32.65
30 - 59 days	58	10.76
60 - 89 days	12	2.23
90 - 119 days	8	1.48
120 – 149 days	15	2.78
150+ days	270	50.10
	539	100

5 HOUSING BENEFIT PERFORMANCE

- 5.1 The main indicators for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit performance are the National Indicators for Right Benefit and Right Time. The benefit section also report on Local Performance Indicators that have been set within the department for benefit fraud and overpayments.
- 5.2 The Department for Work and Pensions does not require Local Authorities (LA's) to report on any other Performance Measures but encourages them to monitor their own performance locally.
- 5.3 We obviously consider it very important to monitor benefit fraud and also overpayment data.

Housing Benefit Right Time Indicator 2012/2013

1 April 2012 – 30 June 2012

The right time indicator measures the time taken to process HB/CTB new claims and change events; this includes changes in circumstances, interventions, fraud referrals and prints generated by the benefit department.

Target for year	Actual Performance	Average Performance
10 days	13.75 days	20 days per IRRV

New claims performance

1 April 2012 – 30 June 2012

Target for year	Actual Performance	Top grade 4 for all LA's 2007/08
20 days	22.5 days	Under 30 days

6 HOUSING BENEFIT FRAUD

6.1 The following is a summary of fraud investigations for the period 1 April 2012 to 30 June 2012.

Completed fraud investigations	
1 April 2012 – 30 June 2012	49

Average caseload (YTD)	
2012/2013	2,878

Number of investigations per 1,000 caseload		
2012/2013	49/2,878	17.03

Number of Housing/Council Tax Benefit prosecutions and sanctions per 1,000 caseload

2012/2013	
Cautions	0
Administrative penalties	0
Successful prosecutions	0
Total	0

Average caseload (YTD)	
2012/2013	2,878

Number of prosecutions/sanctions per 1,000 caseload		
2012/2013	0/2,878	0

7 HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENTS

7.1 Unfortunately, the benefit department cannot report the performance for the period 1 April 2012 to 30 June 2012 due to software problems.

8 CONCLUSION

8.1 Note the continuing progress that we make in collecting these debts, and the performance of our Housing Benefit Section remains satisfactory.

HEAD OF REVENUES AND BENEFITS

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF56-12/ME/AC
13 September 2012

BACKGROUND PAPERS – None

For further information please ask for Mark Edmondson extension 4504.

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL INFORMATION
REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No 17

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: TIMETABLE FOR BUDGET SETTING
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: LAWSON ODDIE

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform you of the timetable for setting the 2013/14 budget.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 Part of our Corporate Governance arrangements is to set out clearly to both officers and members the Council's budget timetable.

3 BUDGET TIMETABLE

3.1 Attached at Annex 1 is a comprehensive timetable covering the main elements of the Council's budget setting progress together with key dates and responsibilities. As members will see from the timetable at Annex 1, part of the process is already underway.

3.2 Public services continue to face uncertain times with regard to how they are funded and the services that they actually provide. As opposed to last year, the council does not have any clear indications of what the provisional finance settlement for 2013/14 is likely to be. The provisional settlement announcement will not be made until around early December 2012, and will not be confirmed until early February 2013.

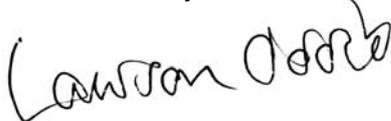
3.2 The timetable includes what are foreseen as being the most important tasks ahead. As the budget setting process proceeds the timetable will be reviewed and updated for any items which may have an impact on progress.

3.3 The timetable will be circulated to Heads of Service and the Corporate Management Team.

4 CONCLUSION

4.1 The timetable has been set for the forthcoming budget setting period

4.2 You will see this timetable is considerably detailed and clearly indicates who is responsible for which actions. We have used our experience from last year's budget setting process to inform this year's deadlines. Again we intend to monitor when we actually achieve each individual task in order to inform future timetables.



HEAD OF FINANCIAL SERVICES

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF51-12/LO/AC
10 September 2012

Annex 1

Budget Timetable 2013/14		Who?	When?
Task			
1	Send out % time allocation sheets to service managers for purpose of calculating departmental recharges	Accountants	Monday 10 September 2012
2	Budget Working Group Meeting: Fees and Charges Review considered by Budget Working Group	Budget Working Group	Monday 17 September 2012
3	Consideration of Budget Forecast up to 2016/17	Policy and Finance Committee	Tuesday 25 September 2012
4	Completion of Recharge time allocation sheets	Heads of Service/individual members of staff	Friday 28 September 2012
5	Review of Fees and Charges	Accountants / Accounting Technician / Heads of Service	September to November 2012
6	Budget Working Group meeting: Consider capital programme	Budget Working Group	Monday 8 October 2012
7	Consultation Closing date: Council tax base and funding for local precepting authorities	Director of Resources Head of Revenues and Benefits Head of Financial Services	Tuesday 9 October 2012

Budget Timetable 2013/14		Who?	When?
	Task		
8	Finalise Revised Capital Programme for 2012/13	Head of Financial Services/All Heads of Service	Tuesday 16 October 2012
9	Calculate Capital Charges	Senior Accountant (TH)	Tuesday 16 October 2012
10	Calculation of Taxbase for council tax setting purposes for 2012/13	Head of Financial Services/ Head of Revenues and Benefits	Wednesday 31 October 2012
11	Consideration of Fees and Charges Report by Committees: Community Services Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 26 October 2012. Distribution Monday 29 October 2012)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Tuesday 6 November 2012
12	Consideration of Fees and Charges Report by Committees: Planning and Development Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 26 October 2012. Distribution Monday 29 October 2012)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Thursday 8 November 2012
13	Send out Precept Letters to Parish Councils	Accounting Technician	Friday 9 November 2012
14	Final Calculations of all Recharges	Accountants	Monday 12 November 2012

Budget Timetable 2013/14		Who?	When?
	Task		
15	Consideration of Fees and Charges Report by Committees: Policy and Finance Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 9 November 2012. Distribution Monday 12 November 2012)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Tuesday 20 November 2012
16	Consider final Scheme for Local Council Tax Support and impact on taxbase	Director of Resources Head of Revenues and Benefits	End November
17	Consideration of Fees and Charges Report by Committees: Health and Housing Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 16 November 2012. Distribution Monday 19 November 2012)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Thursday 29 November 2012
18	Proposed Budget Working Group meeting: Consider final Scheme for Local Council Tax Support	Budget Working Group	Monday 3 December 2012
19	Anticipated announcement of Provisional Settlement information from DCLG (including New Homes Bonus)	DCLG	Early December 2012
20	Assess implications of Settlement for RVBC	Director of Resources/Head of Financial Services	Early December 2012
21	Director of Resources to agree taxbase with Chairman & Shadow Chairman of Policy and Finance Committee	Director of Resources	Early December 2012

Budget Timetable 2013/14			
	Task	Who?	When?
22	CMT to consider the budget position that will be reported to service committees – prior to Budget Working Group	CMT	Wednesday 12 December 2012
23	Budget Reports for All Committees completed and passed to Director of Resources and Head of Financial Services	All Accountants/Head of Financial services/Director of Resources	Friday 14 December 2012
24	Approve final Scheme for Local Council Tax Support Full Council <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 7 December 2012. Distribution Monday 10 December 2012)</u>	Full Council	Tuesday 18 December 2012
25	Calculate Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit and apportion between Precepting Authorities	Head of Financial Services	Mid December 2012
26	Deadline for receipt of parish precept letters	Accounting Technician	Wednesday 2 January 2013
27	Notify Lancashire County Council, Police and Fire Authorities of Collection Fund Surplus/Deficit and Taxbase	Head of Financial Services	Mid January 2013
28	Consideration of Budget Reports by Committees: Community Services Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 21 December 2012. Distribution Monday 7 January 2013)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Tuesday 15 January 2013
29	Proposed Budget Working Group <i>Revenue Budget and Capital Programme</i>	Budget Working Group	Wednesday 16 January 2013

Budget Timetable 2013/14			
	Task	Who?	When?
30	Consideration of Budget Reports by Committees: Planning & Development Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 21 December 2012. Distribution Monday 7 January 2013)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Thursday 17 January 2013
31	Proposed Special CMT to review budgets	CMT	Monday 21 January 2013
32	Consideration of Budget Reports by Committees: Health & Housing Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 11 January 2013. Distribution Monday 14 January 2013)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Thursday 24 January 2013
33	Consideration of Budget Reports by Committees: Policy & Finance Committee <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 18 January 2013. Distribution Monday 21 January 2013)</u>	Service Committees	Meeting Date: Tuesday 29 January 2013
34	Deadline for making a Scheme for Local Council Tax Support	Director of Resources Head of Revenues and Benefits Members	Thursday 31 January 2013
35	Settlement Debate in Parliament	Central Government	Early February 2013

Budget Timetable 2013/14		Who?	When?
	Task		
36	Meeting of Special Policy and Finance Committee to approve budget and recommend Council Tax to Full Council <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 1 February 2013. Distribution Monday 4 February 2013)</u>	Director of Resources/Head of Financial Services	Meeting Date: Tuesday 12 February 2013
37	Provision of Financial Information for Council Tax Leaflet	Head of Financial Services/ Head of Revenues and Benefits	Mid February 2013
38	Set up meeting with Industrialists to consider budget	PA to Director of Resources	Mid February 2013
39	Receipt of Precept Letters from Major Precepting Authorities	Head of Financial Services	Friday 1 March 2013
40	Full Council to agree Budget and set Council Tax <u>(Date to Printing: Friday 22 February 2013. Distribution Monday 25 February 2013)</u>	Members	Meeting Date: Tuesday 5 March 2013
41	Inform Heads of Service of agreed Budget	Director of Resources, Head of Financial Services & CMT	Mid March 2013
42	Entering of Approved Budget onto Financials system	All Accountants	February/March 2013
43	Production of Budget Book	Head of Financial Services	Mid March 2013

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

INFORMATION

Agenda Item No 18

meeting date: 25 SEPTEMBER 2012
title: INSURANCE RENEWALS 2012/13
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES
principal author: MICK AINSCOW

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To inform Committee of the insurance renewals for the period 20 June 2012 to 19 June 2013.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions/Community Objectives

None directly. However, in accordance with the Council's risk management policy it is essential that all our functions and services be adequately insured.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 A tendering exercise was carried out in 2006, resulting in Zurich Municipal being appointed as our insurers on a five year long-term agreement effective from 20 June 2006. The agreement also gave us the option to extend for a further two years i.e. until 20 June 2013, should terms be favourable.

2.2 During 2010 we received notification from the Lancashire Procurement Hub (LPH) of which the Council are members – saying that they were looking to get involved in a national procurement project for insurances services. We provided details of our insurance spend, excess levels, claims experience, etc to the LPH and considerable progress was made on the project. In early 2011 we were advised that one of the companies involved in the project was closing and that the project would be delayed by approx 6 months before any further progress could be made.

2.3 Given that the renewal date for our insurers was June 2011, the envisaged 6 month delay in the collaborative project would take us past that date and we therefore needed to make alternative provision for our insurances.

2.4 A report was presented to Policy and Finance Committee on 29 March 2011 and members resolved to agree to an extension of the current contract for a further 1 or 2 years depending on the terms offered. At the end of this period it was resolved that a full tendering exercise be carried out via the LPH.

2.5 Following discussions with our insurers, the existing agreement was extended for a further two years until 19 June 2013.

3 RENEWALS

3.1 Renewal terms for 2012/13 are as follows:

Policy	Premium		Increase/ Decrease £	%	Notes
	2011/2012 £	2012/13 £			
Material Damage (Fire)	12,014	12,422	408	3.4	
Terrorism	2,235	2,287	52	2.3	
Business Interruption	2,281	2,389	108	4.7	
Theft	1,133	1,359	226	19.9	¹
Money	604	588	-16	2.6	
All Risks	7,412	7,222	-190	2.6	
Public Liability	27,500	27,300	-200	0.7	
Professional Negligence	689	689	-	-	
Officials Indemnity	1,610	1,568	-42	2.6	
Employers Liability	15,903	15,900	-3	0.1	
Libel and Slander	493	493	-	-	
Motor	41,858	37,314	-4,544	10.8	²
Engineering	3,702	4,502	800	21.6	³
Fidelity Guarantee	1,236	1,203	-33	2.7	
Land Charges	1,849	1,805	-44	2.4	
Personal Accident	792	778	-14	1.8	
Public Health Act	330	321	-9	2.7	
Computers	1,622	2,325	703	43.3	⁴
	123,263	120,465	-2,798	2.2	

Notes

- ¹ Increase in number and value of mechanics own tools covered at Salthill Depot.
- ² Reduction in vehicle numbers – both leased cars and general.
- ³ Increase nationally in premium for engineering (lifts, boilers, etc.) cover.
- ⁴ Increase in equipment covered (servers and network equipment now added).

4 ISSUES

- 4.1 The total cost of premiums for 2012/13 has fallen by £2,798 (2.2%) on the previous year's figure.
- 4.2 Our overall claims experience continues to be very good with a fall in the number of claims submitted in 2011/12 compared to previous years.

Claims experience over the last 5 years is as follows:

2007/08	22				
2008/09	19				
2009/10	24				
2010/11	17				
2011/12	16				
		Liability	Motor	Property	Total
Claims outstanding 20.06.11		2	9	2	13
Claims during year		4	11	1	16
Settled during year		4	11	1	16
Claims outstanding 19.06.12		2	9	2	13

5 RISK ASSESSMENT

5.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications.

- Resources – cost to the council in defending any legal action as a result of a lack of insurance cover and cost of any premium increases as a result of poor claims history.
- Technical, Environmental and Legal – the Council are legally bound to ensure adequate insurance arrangements are maintained in certain areas, e.g. employers' liability.
- Political – no implications identified.
- Reputation – if the Council failed to comply with legislation or failed to adequately insure it would reflect badly on our reputation.

6 RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE

6.1 Note the renewal of the Council's insurances for 2012/13.

PRINCIPAL AUDITOR

DIRECTOR OF RESOURCES

PF54-12/MA/AC
12 September 2012

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

For further information please ask for Mick Ainscow, extension 4540

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

HELD 16 JANUARY 2012

Present: Cllrs: Ranson, T Hill, Hirst, Rogerson, Sherras, Thompson, Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services, Head of Financial Services.

1 Apologies

1 Cllr: Knox

2 Minutes of Budget Working Group 19 December 2011

2.1 The Director of Resources made reference to the successful appeal on the impact of property re-bandings on the New Homes Bonus

2.2 Members approved the minutes of the last meeting of the Budget Working Group.

3 Capital Programme 2012/15

3.1 The Director of Resources presented a report to members on the proposed capital programme for the 2012/15 period. It was highlighted that CMT had met to discuss the bids that had previously been put forward.

3.2 Of the bids put forward four of the schemes had been removed from the programme, as they were either below the de minimis for capitalisation or required further investigation. Additionally the Disabled Facilities Grants and Landlord Tenants Grants had been reduced due to the level of budget that was to be moved from the 2011/12 programme to the 2012/13 programme and the difficulties experienced in expending the schemes.

3.3 Budget Working Group agreed with the proposed reduced capital programme and the proposals for financing the programme and also agreed that earmarked reserves should be reviewed in order to identify any balances that may be transferred to the capital reserve.

4 Revenue Budget Update

4.1 The Director of Resources took members through the latest position for the 2012/13 revenue budget. A number of proposals had been made within the report for members to consider for inclusion. A discussion took place on the proposals that were shown within the report together with other suggestions and it was agreed that a proposed budget for Special Policy and Finance Committee include amongst other items

- Council Tax Freeze
- Town centre car park charges freeze (up to 2 hours)
- The release of £36K post LSVT reserve (pension costs) in 2012/13 followed by the release of the remainder over the following 11 years
- Top the planning reserve back up to £150K
- Replenish capital fund to minimum level of £300K

5 Consultation with Representatives of Business Ratepayers

5.1 Consultation with ratepayers was discussed and it was agreed to arrange the meeting in the same format as previous years.

6 Any Other Business

- 6.1 Members were informed that consultation papers on the County budget had been received. It was agreed that these would be circulated by email for members to feedback any comments back to the Director of Resources for a Council response.

7 Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 7.1 No further meeting dates were agreed. It was decided that should a further meeting be needed prior to the Special Policy and Finance Committee meeting, this would be arranged by the Director of Resources and Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader.

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

HELD 19 JUNE 2012

Present: Cllrs: Ranson, T Hill, Hirst, Rogerson, Sherras, Thompson, Knox Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services, Head of Financial Services.

1 Apologies

1 Cllr: Rogerson

2 Minutes of Budget Working Group 16 January 2012

2.1 Members approved the minutes of the last meeting of the Budget Working Group.

3 Business Rates Issues

3.1 The Director of Resources presented a report to members on the current difficulties that the council was facing with regard to Business Rates administration and collection, and the impact this could have on Council finances with the proposals regarding the local retention of Business Rates.

3.2 The business rates pooling arrangements were outlined and also current issues around specific property types were discussed. Issues around empty properties were discussed and it was suggested that this should be raised with the Local Government Association (LGA) and the District Council Network (DCN).

3.3 Cllr Ranson asked the Director of Resources to prepare a number of questions that he and the Chief Executive could raise at the forthcoming LGA conference on any issues that the council had in this area.

3.4 The bad debts liability was discussed together with pooling arrangements and it was agreed that the council was not in a position where it wished to enter into any pooling arrangement.

4 Localisation of Council Tax Support

4.1 The Director of Resources took members through a report on the next steps to be taken on the forthcoming changes to council tax support, some of the issues of which had previously been reported to Policy and Finance Committee.

4.2 The Director of Resources highlighted that a steer from members was needed on the vulnerable groups that they wished to protect under any new arrangements. A discussion took place on the various groups that could be impacted upon and the issues that they may face. Members requested further information of the impact on each group.

4.3 Consultation arrangements were outlined to members and it was explained that precepting bodies had to be consulted prior to the general public. The timetable for the consultation was also discussed. It was agreed that scheme proposals would be brought to the next meeting of the budget working group.

5 Revenue Outturn 2011/12

- 5.1 The Director of Resources presented a report on the revenue outturn for the year ending 31 March 2012. It was outlined that the Statement of Accounts would be presented in the coming weeks to the Accounts and Audit Committee.
- 5.2 The main high level variations across all committees were highlighted and it was explained that more detailed reports would be sent to service committee in the next cycle of meetings.
- 5.3 The impact of the outturn on the general fund balance was discussed, with £168,000 being added to general fund balances. Earmarked reserves were also discussed. The deficit on the collection fund was also discussed together with the mechanics of the collection fund itself.

6 Overall Capital Outturn 2011/12

- 6.1 A report was presented to members on the outturn on the capital programme for 2011/12, which outlined the summary position for all committees and the position on individual schemes.
- 6.2 Slippage on schemes was discussed, which would be sent to service committees for approval in the next cycle of meetings.
- 6.3 A summary of the capital resources at the end of the financial year was reviewed and discussed.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 There were no additional items of business

8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

- 8.1 The next meeting was agreed as Monday 16 July 2012 at 4pm