

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

HELD 22 OCTOBER 2013

Present: Cllrs: Hirst, Hore, Knox, Rogerson and Thompson, Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services, Head of Financial Services.

1 Apologies

Cllrs: Elms and T Hill

2 Minutes of meeting held on 24 September 2013

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

3 LGA – Financial Sustainability Report for Ribble Valley

3.1 The Director of Resources took members through a report of the LGA covering the financial sustainability of Ribble Valley. The indicators were split between 'present' position and 'future' view.

3.2 It was explained that the LGA had stressed that the financial position of authorities was not as simple as that outlined in the indicators, and that many other factors do come in to play, especially for the 'future' view.

3.3 Whilst caution was needed when viewing the indicators, they did offer very interesting reading

4 Technical Reforms to Council Tax

4.1 The Director of Resources took members through a number of council tax technical reforms that were introduced from 1 April 2013. It was explained that these gave the council extra flexibilities on discounts and exemptions, which if used would feed through into the setting of the council taxbase.

4.2 The new flexibilities and their financial impacts were presented to members, and a detailed discussion took place on their individual impacts and also the interplay between the various flexibilities.

4.3 Members agreed that a report should be prepared for Policy and Finance Committee, recommending that the discount of 50% on long term empty properties is removed from 1 April 2014, and that an empty homes premium of 50% is charged for properties empty for more than 2 years.

4.4 The potential impact on New Homes Bonus receipts was also discussed.

5 Business Rates Update

5.1 The Director of Resources presented a report to members on the latest position on Business Rates and on Small Business Rate Relief.

5.2 Whilst the latest position showed growth for the council on business rates, it was explained that changes involving just a few businesses could potentially have a major impact on the position.

5.3 With regard to Small Business Rates Relief, the council are due to receive funding to reflect the extra cost of extending the scheme, however to date nothing had been received.

6 British Beer and Pub Association (BBPA) Campaign

- 6.1 The Director of Resources presented a report to members explaining the British Beer and Pub Associations campaign around Business Rates, and how the council may be able to offer its support.
- 6.2 The calculation of the rateable value of public houses was explained, being based on historic barrelage. The impact of using historic barrelage for rateable values at a time of decline in the industry had been significant, with a number of businesses closing. This was exacerbated by the postponement of the revaluation from 2015 to 2017.
- 6.3 The three elements of the BBPA campaign around Small Business Rates Relief, Rural Rate Relief and the flexibility for pubs to ask for a revaluation were explained.
- 6.4 It was agreed that the council offer their support to the campaign, and that a letter be drafted to Brandon Lewis requesting a response to a letter that had previously been sent to him on this issue.

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 would be on **Tuesday 26 November 2013 in Committee Room 1 at 4.00pm**
- 8.2 Further meeting dates are:

- **Tuesday 17 December 2013 in Committee Room 1 at 4.00pm**

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

HELD 26 NOVEMBER 2013

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

1 Apologies

Cllrs: Elms and Hore

2 Minutes of meeting held on 22 October 2013

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

2.2 The Director of Resources referred to minute 4.3 on the Technical Reforms to Council Tax and explained that the Head of Revenues and Benefits would be writing to those persons affected. It was also mentioned that Full Council would be approving the changes on 10 December.

3 New Capital Programme Bids: 2014/15 to 2016/17

3.1 The Head of Financial Services took members through a report on the bids that had been put forward for capital schemes by Heads of Service. It was explained that bids for 2014 to 2016 had previously been sought last year, and an approved programme was now in place for these years.

3.2 However, it was explained that there had been a large number of new bids put forward for this same period (45% of new schemes by value).

3.3 The previously agreed categories of capital spend and the recommended funding methods for each category were discussed, and it was explained that the full list of bids submitted were not affordable to take forward.

3.4 Members were asked to consider the proposals, and whether there were any other schemes that they considered needed to be put forward.

3.5 The funding changes around Disabled Facility Grants was also discussed. Members felt that it was important that strong representation was made to Lancashire County Council with regard to the changes.

3.6 It was suggested by members that the capital bids should be reconsidered once further details of the grant settlement were known.

4 Any Other Business

4.1 The date of the Autumn Statement and the uncertainty of when the grant settlement would be were discussed

5 Date and Time of Next Meeting

5.1 The next meeting would be on **Tuesday 17 December 2013 in Committee Room 1 at 4.00pm**