

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 28 October 2014, starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Hill	A Knox
T Hill	J Rogerson
B Hilton	R J Thompson
S Hore	A Yearling

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Head of Financial Services, Head of Revenues and Benefits, Senior Accountant.

378 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Alcock, R Elms, K Hind, K Horkin, D T Smith.

379 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2014 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

380 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor J Rogerson declared an interest in Agenda Item 6 – Additional Concurrent Function Grant Requests.

381 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

382 SURVEILLANCE COMMISSIONERS INSPECTION REPORT

Committee received a report about a recent inspection by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners dated 10 August 2014 arising from an inspection carried out on 5 August.

The report gave background information on the way the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) operated in the Ribble Valley. The report reminded Members that RIPA allowed the Council to carry out directed surveillance and/or use covert human intelligence sources lawfully if it is authorised in accordance with the provision of RIPA, it was necessary for the purpose of preventing or detecting crime or disorder, it was proportionate to the aims which it sought to achieve and any authorisation received judicial approval. The Council had been inspected by the Office of Surveillance Commissioners on 5 August and his report was attached to the agenda. Prior to the inspection it was made clear that its main purpose was to review the policies and procedures which the Council had in place to comply with RIPA and the use which the Council makes of its powers.

The Inspector had made two recommendations in his report:

- implement the amendments to the Corporate Policy document as identified in the inspection and set out in paragraph 5 of his report; and
- arrange RIPA training for the Chief Executive and two Directors as soon as possible.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the Inspector's recommendations;
2. approve the amended policy; and
3. approve the amended central record of authorisations.

383 ADDITIONAL CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANT REQUESTS

Further to Minute 250 of Committee dated 9 September 2014 Committee received an update report detailing a further three applications for concurrent function grants from Longridge Town Council and Billington and Langho and Chipping Parish Councils. The total cost of these schemes was £16,130 of which this Council would contribute £4,032.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the allocation of subsequent grants totalling £4,032 for the three Parish and Town Council applications that had been received; and
2. agree to the payment of three grants in a single instalment rather than two instalments as outlined in the grant scheme.

384 REVIEW OF FEES AND CHARGES

The Director of Resources submitted a report which sought approval of proposals to increase the Committee's fees and charges with effect from 1 April 2015. These proposals were the first stage in the review of the Committee's budget for the forthcoming 2015/16 financial year.

Members were informed that in September 2014 the Budget Working Group considered the overall three year budget forecast which highlighted a shortfall of just over £500,000. This forecast had already factored in an overall increase in income on fees and charges of 2%.

The Head of Financial Services then explained the various steps and decisions required in the review process. He also pointed out to Committee that the recommended charges had taken into account an estimated fall in income in relation to meals on wheels due to changes in service provision and no proposal to increase the charge of issuing summonses. Excluding these two income streams subject to Committee agreeing the recommended charges, the budgeted income to be received would be £88,008, the increase in budgeted income would be £2,118 which equated to 2.47% increase.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to the revised fees and charges and approve them for implementation with effect from April 2015.

385 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Committee gave consideration to a comprehensive review of the Council's financial regulations.

The report included as an Appendix a revised set of financial regulations covering all aspects of the Council's financial arrangements and activities. They applied to every Member and Officer of the Council and anyone acting on the Council's behalf. The main change to these regulations was the updating of the section on securities and inventories (section 13) to include further details on the disposal of assets.

*** RESOLVED: That it be a recommendation to Full Council that they accept the revised financial regulations as now set out in the Director of Resources report. ***

386 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

The Head of Revenues and Benefits sought Committee's approval to the writing off of a National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) relating to a commercial business where the company had gone into liquidation. Therefore the Council had been asked to agree to write-off the associated NNDR debt.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £3,212.10 of NNDR debt where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

387 RIBBLE VALLEY COMMUNITY STRATEGY

Committee received a report which provided an update on the development of a Community Strategy for the Ribble Valley and a delivery of partnership priorities.

Members were reminded that widespread consultation had been undertaken over the past 3 months with Members, communities and partners to review the major issues which affect Ribble Valley and prepare the Community Strategy for 2014/19. The next steps were to work with partners to create initiatives to support these priority areas and report back to Members with associated actions plans, outcomes and timescales.

RESOLVED: That

1. Committee endorses the Ribble Valley Community Strategy 2014/19 and actions proposed; and
2. request that the Chief Executive report back to this Committee as programmes and project are developed.

388 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2014/15

The Head of Financial Services presented a report which provided a monitoring report on our treasury management activities for the period 1 April 2014 to

30 September 2014. The report also sought Member approval for the updating of Prudential Indicator definition for long-term investments of over 365 days to reflect our recent shareholding in the Local Government Bonds Agency (Local Capital Finance Company Ltd).

The report also highlighted the following areas:

- Borrowing requirements.
- Temporary investments.
- Local Government Bond Scheme.
- Prudential indicators.
- Approved organisations.
- Recent events.

The Head of Financial Services gave some further background detail in relation to this Council's involvement with the Local Government Bonds Agency.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the amendment to the definition of the Prudential Indicator that shows a maximum long-term (more than 365 days) investment limits of nil, to exclude our recent shareholding in the Local Government Bonds Agency (Local Capital Finance Company Ltd).

389 REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE

Transfer of Funding to Disabled Facilities Grant Budget

The Head of Financial Services referred to a request from Health and Housing Committee to agree to the transfer of capital budget of £63,270 from the Landlord and Tenant Grant Scheme to the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme in the current financial year's capital programme. This request had been submitted by the Chief Executive to the recent Health and Housing Committee.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to the request for the transfer of capital budget of £63,270 from the Landlord and Tenant Grant Scheme to the Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme in the current financial year's capital programme.

390 BUSINESS RATE MEASURES ANNOUNCED IN THE AUTUMN STATEMENT 2013

The Head of Revenue and Benefits presented a report which informed Committee of the impact and take-up of the business rates measures announced in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement of 2013. He highlighted a number of elements including the RPI cap which had benefitted 2,313 ratepayers, the small business rate relief scheme which had benefitted 1,152 ratepayers, the retail relief scheme which had benefitted 304 ratepayers, the payment of rates by instalments which had had a take up of 68 ratepayers and the reduction in business rate appeal backlog which had recently been announced by the Valuation Office Agency.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

391 CALCULATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE 2015/16

Committee were informed of the Council Tax base for the next financial year and how it was calculated.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

392 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a report which covered the following areas:

- a) National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).
- b) Council Tax.
- c) Sundry Debtors.
- d) Housing Benefit performance.
- e) Housing Benefit fraud.
- f) Housing Benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

393 REVENUE MONITORING 2014/15

Committee received on information report setting out the position for the period April to September 2014.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

394 OVERALL REVENUE MONITORING 2014/15

Committee received a report on the revenue budget for the current financial year to the end of September.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

395 CAPITAL MONITORING 2014/15

Committee were provided with information relating to the progress of the approved capital programme for the period April to September 2014 with regards to schemes which came under the responsibility of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

396 OVERALL CAPITAL MONITORING 2014/15

Committee were provided with information relating to the progress of the approved capital programme for the period April to September 2014.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

397 REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME

Committee were reminded of the requirement to review our Members' Allowance Scheme. The last review had commenced in November 2010 and had been

completed in time for the 2011/12 municipal year. The Council were now due to commence the next review in time for the 2015/16 municipal year and therefore needed to appoint an independent panel. Details of the previous panel were provided for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

398 BUDGET WORKING GROUP

The Minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 15 July 2014 were received by Committee.

399 RIBBLE VALLEY ENTERPRISING PEOPLE INITIATIVE

Committee received a report giving details of the culmination of a two year project funded by Lancashire County Council in Ribble Valley to encourage the development of micro-enterprise to support those with a personal budget which were part of a new way of managing care and support called Personalisation and strengthen the individual's role in the community.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

400 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next items of business being exempt information under Categories 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

401 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

The Head of Revenues and Benefits sought Committee's approval to write-off a Council Tax debt relating to an individual. There was one case where the debtor was deceased with insufficient funds in the estate and therefore the debt needed to be written off.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £3,008.24 Council Tax debt where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

402 CYCLING EVENT 2015

The Chief Executive presented his report which referred to the possibility of the Council being involved in a prestigious cycling event in 2015.

Details of likely costs and potential benefits were outlined in this report.

RESOLVED: That

1. Committee agree in principle to proceed with this matter; and
2. delegate further action on the matter to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chairman of this Committee and the Shadow Leader.

The meeting closed at 7.30pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Jane Pearson (414430).