

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 24 January 2017 starting at 6.30pm
Present: Councillor T Hill (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	A Knox
P Elms	G Mirfin
M French	J Rogerson
R Hargreaves	I Sayers
K Hind	D T Smith
S Hore	R J Thompson

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

Also in attendance: Councillor M Fenton.

498 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J Alcock and S Hirst.

499 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 October 2016 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Chief Executive referred to Minute 346 and informed Committee that he would circulate the timetable for the Boundary Commission Parliamentary Boundary Review.

500 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

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

501 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

502 CONCURRENT FUNCTION GRANTS

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to approve the allocation of concurrent function grants for 2016/2017. This grant scheme had been approved a number of years ago by this Committee and gives grant assistance for those Parishes and Town Council who provide services in their areas, which elsewhere are provided by the Borough Council. A revenue budget allocation had been approved of £20,000. Support was set at a rate of 25% of

eligible net revenue expenditure in the previous year, less any grant funding subject to the overall cost to the Borough Council not exceeding £20,000. All Parish Councils had been sent a concurrent function grant application form and an invitation to apply. 22 applications had been received, two of which require further information before Committee approval and relate to Clitheroe Town Council and Sabden Parish Council. The remaining 20 applications totalled £58,036.53 which based on a grant rate of 25% equates to £14,509.16.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the allocation of grants as proposed in the report totally £14,509.16 for 20 Parish and Town Councils.

503 UPDATE ON BUSINESS RATES AND COUNCIL TAX FLOOD RELIEF SCHEME

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Committee about the flood relief schemes that had been approved in January 2016 as a result of the flooding caused by storms in December 2015 and seeking approval from Committee to extend the Council Tax relief scheme. Both of these schemes were limited to a maximum period of 12 months ie 24 December 2016. Business Rates relief had been granted to 32 premises totalling £63,031.46 all of which were now back open and trading. Council Tax relief had been granted to 245 properties totalling £190,523.12, 13 of which had still not been able to return home. As the deadline for the relief to end was approaching, contact had been made with the Department for Communities and Local Government to clarify if they would allow an extension until those households were able to return to their homes. Confirmation had been received that the relief could be extended to 31 March 2017 for those affected. Both the Business Rates and Council Tax relief schemes are fully funded by central government and therefore the only cost to Council Tax payers had been in administration of the scheme.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the revised Council Tax relief scheme as set out in the report and ask officers to submit a combined report to set out all the assistance that had been given including flood relief grants to a future meeting of this Committee.

504 REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/2017

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval of the revised capital programme for the current financial year for this Committee. The original capital programme for 2016/2017 had been approved by Policy and Finance Committee in February 2016 and since then regular reports had been presented to this Committee on progress with the capital programme. The original capital programme consisted of one scheme with a total approved budget of £100,000. However, an additional four schemes from 2015/2016 that had not been completed had been transferred into the 2016/2017 capital programme resulting in an overall approved budget of £272,500. At the end of December 2016 expenditure was £99,040 which is 94.7% of the revised estimate.

The Clitheroe Townscape scheme was on hold and there were no appropriate economic development opportunities in progress currently which were likely to be

funded from the Economic Development Initiatives scheme budget before the year end. It was therefore proposed that the budget on these schemes totalling £155,000 be moved to 2017/2018. The outstanding retention payment on the combined contract for the Council offices reroofing and replacement windows and roof light schemes could not be paid until May 2017, so it was recommended that £12,450 budget on these schemes also be moved to 2017/2018.

There was disappointment expressed that the Clitheroe Townscape scheme budget had not been spent but it was highlighted that LCC who were responsible for footways had changed their plans and that the schemes scheduled to go ahead had not done so.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the revised capital programme for 2016/2017 as set out in the report.

505 CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS

The Director of Resources submitted a report recommending the proposed future five year capital programme for 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 for this Committee. The report reviewed the schemes that were previously approved in the capital programme for the financial years 2017/2018 and 2018/2019 and also any new bids received from Heads of Service for the period 2019/2020 to 2021/2022. Originally there were seven schemes that were already approved for the 2017/2018 to 2018/2019 timeframe. Due to issues that had currently been experienced with the telephone system, it was proposed that this scheme be brought forward into the 2017/2018 financial year.

With regard to new capital bids for the period 2019/2020 to 2021/2022 the Heads of Service had been asked to put forward new bids. Three new bids had been submitted falling in the 2019/2020 financial year totalling £105,000. Committee were asked to consider the new scheme bids and also to put forward any amendments to the bids that they wished to make at this stage. The Director of Resources reminded Members that other Committees had also received similar reports for the new scheme bids and that all bids from Committees would finally be considered alongside each other by the Budget Working Group and Special Policy and Finance Committee.

Committee considered the capital programme and felt that the upgrade to the Civic Suite and the Seating renewal scheme should be brought forward into the 2017/2018 financial year.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the future five year capital programme for 2017/2018 to 2021/2022 as outlined in the report with the amendment that the Civic Suite and Seating renewal schemes be brought forward from 2018/19 to 2017/18; and
2. recommend to Policy and Finance Committee the future five year capital programme for this Committee's services as outlined in the report.

506 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2016/2017

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining a revised revenue budget for 2016/2017 for this Committee. She reminded Members that at this time of year the estimates are revised for the current financial year in order to predict the likely outturn. This also assists in preparing the original estimates for the forthcoming financial year. The 2016/2017 budget had included provision for pay and increases of 1.5%. Pay had been settled at 1% and general inflation was within estimate. As well as using data on past performance there had been detailed discussions with budget holders and Heads of Service on past service provision on future plans which played an integral part in the budget setting process. She informed Committee that the revised budget for 2016/2017 was £70,100 lower than the original estimate and reduced to £14,060 after movements on earmarked reserves. A comparison between the original and revised budgets for each cost centre was included for Committee's information and the significant variances were highlighted.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree the revised revenue estimate for 2016/2017.

507 ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to agree to the draft revenue budget for 2017/2018 for this Committee for consideration at Special Policy and Finance Committee. With regard to the Council's overall financial position, she reminded Members that in September, the updated Council's four year budget forecast had predicted budget gaps of £265k in 2017/2018; £719k in 2018/2019 and £921k in 2019/2020. She also informed Members that in October the Council submitted an efficiency plan to the government in order to secure a multi-year finance settlement and this had been successful. The government had also announced that there would be significant changes to the new homes bonus scheme which would impact on our allocation. The 2017/2018 allocations paid will reduce from 6 years to 5 years, the impact of which would reduce our allocation from £510k to £384k as a result of the new 0.4% growth baseline. The total allocation for next year would now be £1.570k instead of £1.815k and further reductions would be phased in future years. The government had also set out the Referendum criteria for 2017/2018 which allowed a maximum increase in band D Council Tax for Ribble Valley of £5.

From 1 April 2016 we had been a member of the Lancashire Business Rate Pool which means that we will benefit from not having to pay a 50% levy on growth above our business rate baseline. The current estimate of our retained levy will be around £400k. The Budget Working Group would continue to meet over the next weeks and ultimately make recommendations to Special Policy and Finance Committee on 7 February 2017 in order to achieve a balanced budget.

The proposed fees and charges for 2017/2018 had been considered by Committee in October and been incorporated into the service budgets and following a great deal of in-depth service analysis and meetings by the Council's accountants, budget holders, Heads of Service and Management Team the

proposed draft budget was now presented to Members. Estimates had been prepared on current levels of service allowing for pay increases at 1.1% and increases of 1.5% for all other items. The budget for each cost centre within the report was presented individually showing the original estimate, savings, inflation, variations to standard budgeted inflation, unavoidable changes to service costs, support services and capital charges, which then culminated in the draft original estimate for 2017/2018. All cost centres covered by this Committee were presented and comments given on any large variances.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree the revenue original estimate for 2017/2018 and submit this to Special Policy and Finance Committee subject to any further considerations made by the Budget Working Group.

508 LOCAL TAXATION AND COUNCIL TAX WRITE-OFFS

Committee were asked to approve the write-off of National Non-Domestic Rate debts relating to four companies and Council Tax debts relating to one company that had been either dissolved or liquidated. Reasonable steps by various means had been taken to collect these debts.

RESOLVED: that Committee approve the writing off of £20,934.13 NNDR debts and £60 costs and £156.26 Council Tax debts and £60 costs where it had not been possible to collect the amounts due.

509 LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR ENGLAND REVIEW – WARDING PROPOSALS

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the response to the consultation on the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's review of Ribble Valley putting forward warding proposals. The report outlined in detail the proposals that had been put forward by the Boundary Review Working Group that had met several times to discuss the changes required in order to gain electoral quality across the borough.

Councillor Fenton was given permission to speak on this item and informed Committee that having consulted with the local Labour Party; they were in agreement with these proposals which should strengthen the Council's submission. If approved these proposals in respect of ward numbers, boundaries and names would be submitted to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England by the end of January who would consider the Council's submission alongside all other responses received. Recommendations would then be put forward by the LGBCE when there would be a further consultation period.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the submission in respect of ward numbers, boundaries and names as recommended by the working group and outlined in the report.

510 ANNUAL REVIEW OF 2015-2019 CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval of the Council's reviewed Corporate Strategy 2015-2019. The Corporate Strategy sets out the

strategic direction of the Council for the period 2015-2019 providing a focus to ensure that the services we deliver meet the needs of our communities. The review concluded that the Council's priorities and objectives had not changed and therefore no amendments were required to these. One key action regarding the re-development of the Clitheroe Market area had been amended.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the reviewed Corporate Strategy 2015-2019 as outlined in the report.

511 REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE

There were no references from Committee.

512 COUNCIL TAX BASE 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of the Council Tax base for the next financial year 2017/2018. The report outlined the calculation of the Council Tax base which showed an increase of 457 Band D equivalents for the year 2017/2018 to £22,481.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

513 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2016/2017

A report of the Director of Resources was submitted for Committee's information on the Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 December 2016 covering areas such as public Works Loan Board, borrowing requirements, temporary investments, prudential indicators, Local Government Bonds Agency, approved organisations and recent events.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

514 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a report which covered the following areas:

- National Non-Domestic rates
- Council Tax
- Sundry debtors
- Housing benefit and Council Tax support performance
- Housing benefit overpayments

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

515 BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group meetings held on 12 October 2016 and 23 November 2016.

516 MARKET REDEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Market Redevelopment Working Group meetings held on 13 July 2016, 16 September 2016, 19 October 2016, 2 November 2016 and 8 November 2016.

517 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

518 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

519 LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE-OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval to write-off certain National Non-Domestic Rates, Council Tax and Housing Benefits debts relating to individuals where it has not been possible to collect the amounts due.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £4,568.84 of Council Tax debts plus £470 costs; £1,112.54 NNDR and £2,665 of Housing Benefit debts where it had not been possible to collect the amounts due.

520 DECISION OF EMERGENCY COMMITTEE 16 NOVEMBER 2016

The Director of Community Services submitted a report informing Committee on a recent decision of the Emergency Committee with regard to the capital scheme for Ribblesdale Pool refurbishment to allow more extensive works to be carried out. The Emergency Committee had resolved to approve a revised overall budget for the scheme of £277,425 which included a contingency of £20,000. Details were included for Committee's information.

RESOLVED: That the decision of the Emergency Committee be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

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