

## Minutes of Economic Development Committee

Meeting Date: Thursday, 1 February 2018, starting at 6.30pm  
Present: Councillor R Swarbrick (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Atkinson	M Fenton
S Bibby	K Hind
I Brown	S Hirst
P Dowson	J Holgate
P Elms	I Sayers
R Elms	R Thompson

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Head of Cultural and Leisure Services, Head of Regeneration and Housing and Regeneration Policy Officer.

Also in attendance: Councillor R Sherras.

### 576 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor J Rogerson.

### 577 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2017 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing referred to Minute 448 regarding the Christian Heritage Retreat Centre at Stonyhurst College and informed Committee that they had offered to attend the next meeting to give an update on their scheme.

### 578 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

Councillor S Atkinson declared an interest in Agenda item 13 as a Trustee of Clitheroe Royal Grammar School.

### 579 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

### 580 REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS 2018/19 TO 2022/23

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking Committee's approval of the Revised Capital Programme for the current financial year for this Committee and the outcome from the review of the Five Year Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23.

As this Committee was not established until after the 2017/18 Original Capital Programme was set, no new capital schemes were planned for this Committee. However one scheme totalling £100,000, Economic Development Initiatives, was transferred to this Committee from Policy and Finance Committee because the nature of the scheme is in line with this Committee's objectives. Consequently the 2017 total budget approved for this Committee is made up of one scheme with a total budget of £100,000.

Having discussed the scheme progress with the Head of Regeneration and Housing there had been no spend on the scheme in year with costs for support work being charged to Revenue Budgets rather than Capital. It was therefore recommended that the 2017/18 revised estimate is reduced to nil and the £100,000 budget be moved to 2018/19.

No new bids had been identified for this Committee for the Capital Programme 2018/19 to 2022/23, however this may change as the Committee becomes more established and will be kept under review.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the 2017/18 Revised Estimate of nil and transfer the £100,000 budget to 2018/19 for this Committee's Capital Programme; and
2. confirm to Policy and Finance Committee no new 2018/19 to 2022/23 Capital Programme Schemes for this Committee at this stage.

#### 581 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2017/18

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the Revised Revenue Budget for 2017/18 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 coming financial year.

In 2017/18 original budget had included provision for pay increases at 1.1% and price increases at 1.5% as well as using data on past performance there have 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 2017/18 showed an increase in net expenditure of £19,350 more than the original estimate, after allowing for transfers to and from earmarked reserves. A comparison between the Original and Revised Budgets for the 3 cost centres was included for Committee's information and significant variances were highlighted.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree the Revised Revenue Estimate for 2017/18.

#### 582 ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2018/19

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to agree the draft Revenue Budget for 2018/19 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 2017 the updated Council's 4 year budget forecast had predicted budget gaps of £774,000 in 2018/19; £956,000 in 2019/20 and £1,139,000 in 2020/21.

She also informed Members that in October 2016 the Council had submitted an Efficiency Plan to the Government in order to secure a multi-finance settlement and that this had again been successful. The Government had announced that there would be no changes to the New Homes Bonus (other than those already announced) and had also agreed to a new Lancashire Business Rate Pool.

The Budget Working Group had been undertaking detailed reviews over the past few months of the various funding streams of the Council and would ultimately make recommendations to Special Policy and Finance Committee on 6 February 2018 in order to achieve a balanced budget.

The proposed fees and charges for 2018/19 had been considered by Committee in October and had been incorporated into the service budgets. Following in depth service analysis and meetings between accountants, budget holders, Head 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 2%. Each cost centre within the report was presented individually showing the original estimate, savings, inflation, variation to the standard budgeted inflation, unavoidable changes to service cost, support services and capital charges, which then culminated in the draft Original Estimate for 2018/19. Three cost centres were presented for this Committee and comments given on any large variances.

The draft budget was also summarised in 2 ways; one over the cost of the service provided by the Committee (objective) and the other over the type of expenditure and income (subjective).

The net expenditure for this Committee is estimated to increase by £55,630 after allowing for associated movements on earmarked reserves. The main reason for this net increase was regard to the new Director of Planning and Economic Development.

**RESOLVED:** That Committee agree the revenue Original Estimate for 2018/19 and submit this to Special Policy and Finance Committee.

**583 RAIL SERVICES IN RIBBLE VALLEY**

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and expressed the view that extending a rail service to Hellifield was very much in the balance and that there was much more to be gained by extending it the other way towards Manchester Airport.

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the Council's response to the proposed closure by Lancashire County Council of the Clitheroe Rail Interchange and also to set out possible next steps in investigating

developing rail services to Yorkshire and enhancing current services to Blackburn and Manchester.

Lancashire County Council currently supports the provision of travel information and train tickets through its interchange facility based at Clitheroe Rail Station and due to wider budgetary issues it can no longer support this facility and the staff who provide the service.

A report was recently taken to Lancashire County Council Cabinet proposing its closure and announcing a public consultation be held on the proposal before any final decisions are taken. Officers were currently investigating possible ways to retain this service which would then be fed into a detailed consultation response.

With regard to the new services towards Hellifield, Ribble Valley Borough Council Officers have held initial discussions with the rail specialists based at Lancashire County Council to better understand the issues involved in developing future rail services from Clitheroe towards Hellifield and then to Leeds and Lancaster, including building new rail stations at Chatburn, Gisburn and elsewhere and some associated parking.

The economics of developing services along this section of line were investigated in some detail within research associated with the new rail franchise let to Northern Rail and the advice is that this research found such services would not be economic and therefore such provision was not included within the franchise. Currently budgetary constraints at LCC also make it extremely unlikely that they would be able to offer any financial support to such a standalone project.

Before any approaches to Northern Rail or any other bodies could be made an initial business case would need to be put together which would require specialist consultancy input.

With regard to the enhanced services to Blackburn and Manchester, it was found that rail traffic towards Blackburn and the wider areas from and to Clitheroe was healthy and had recovered from delays in recent years associated with improvement works on the line between Blackburn and Bolton which had enabled regular half hourly services from Blackburn to Manchester to be established after several years of detailed work.

Initial discussions indicated that there may be more support for an extension of the current half hourly Blackburn to Manchester service through to Clitheroe, with possible additions of late services to allow Ribble Valley users to use public transport to access late night events in Manchester.

The issues of ticketless travel on Ribble Valley trains leading to revenue losses and an under-reporting of actual patronage figures was also discussed. It is thought that with the new franchise would come new technology including ticket vending machines and online and mobile phone apps which would make it more difficult to avoid payment, in addition to the current guard staff and regular revenue protection blockages and automated gates at many stations.

Committee discussed the 3 issues outlined in this report in some detail and felt it was important to enhance any rail connections possible which would enable more people to travel into the Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman to respond to the Lancashire County Council consultation regarding the interchange issue;
2. approve officers meeting with Lancashire County Council rail specialists and representatives of Northern Rail with regard to the proposed enhanced services towards Hellifield and Blackburn/Manchester, and that a Member briefing be arranged;
3. ask the Chairman and Leader of the Council to seek a meeting with the Secretary of State for Transport with regard to the issue of services to Hellifield;
4. ask officers to seek the support for these projects from our neighbouring authorities Craven, Pendle, Lancaster and LCC; and
5. ask the MP to raise these issues in the House of Commons.

584

#### ECONOMIC EVIDENCE BASE

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the proposal to undertake an initial refresh of the Council's Economic Evidence Base.

The Council holds and can access a range of information to inform its work in relation to Economic Development using a number of sources. The Council first commissioned a broad report jointly funded by the Council, Lancashire County Council and the Ribble Valley Strategic Partnership entitled "Ribble Valley Employment Land and Retail Study 2008". This provided a combined assessment of a number of issues including the need for a review of the supply and demand for employment land and premises with a retail health check of each of the main centres and was intended to provide a baseline for economic projects and to inform the Core Strategy. This work was refreshed as part of the Core Strategy Evidence Base in 2013.

All of these areas of evidence are now considered to be in need of updating and will be key to progressing both Economic Development functions and the review of the Local Plan.

It was proposed that a business survey element be undertaken by Infusion, our research and consultation partner and part of our partner agreement.

Committee were also asked to consider the commissioning of a baseline evidence report which would provide a current overview of the local economy, help identify key sectors where interventions can help drive economic growth and through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, identify areas of activity which the Council consider undertaking direct intervention in a focussed way including partnership working or areas where further lobbying may be necessary to secure a strong and sustainable local economy that takes best advantage of the opportunities available.

It is proposed that bids be invited to prepare a report that identifies and provides an overview of the strategic economic context baseline, including a review of relevant policies and strategies that impact upon Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to the commission of an initial Economic Appraisal and that a business survey be undertaken by Infusion; and
2. the Chief Executive be asked to prepare an appropriate brief for the appraisal consistent with the matters set out in the report.

585 BROADBAND UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information giving an update on broadband services and future opportunities for further rollout in the Ribble Valley.

Members were reminded that officers from Lancashire County Council had attended the last meeting in November to provide an update on the works being carried out in Lancashire and had given some statistics with regard to commercial and public investment in the Ribble Valley and the number of premises that had been broadband enabled.

They also gave details about the initial contract and the extension programme that was currently taking place, as well as the future programme with the aspiration of 100% broadband in Lancashire.

The Council would continue to lobby for broadband issues to be included as part of the Lancashire Growth Programme and support be offered to existing businesses who require a better broadband connection with which to run their businesses.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted

586 BOUNDARY SIGNS

The Director of Community Services submitted a report giving Members and update on the cost of providing large information signs on the borough's boundaries.

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and expressed a desire for a proper Welcome to the Ribble Valley sign on the A59 coming from Skipton.

The cost per sign is around £2,000 to install plus artwork; this is for a sign at 1.5m x 2m located on special posts which deform in the event of being hit by a vehicle. The actual cost would depend on the artwork used.

In principle the Highway Authority at Lancashire County Council are agreeable to such signs being erected providing they are for 450mm away from the edge of the carriageway. These are large signs and would look out of place on anything

other than main arterial roads ie the A59, however one could be located on the southern boundary and the other on the north welcoming people to the Ribble Valley.

The challenge would be choosing an image which captures what the area has to offer.

Committee discussed this item in some detail and felt that the addition of extra signs would be useful but that we would need to think carefully about what was on them and the impact this would have when people see them erected.

RESOLVED: That Committee ask officers to carry out a census of current boundary and tourism signs to inform a future plan and strategy.

#### 587 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies.

#### 588 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the fact that the following items of business be an Exempt Information under Category 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

#### 589 EMPLOYMENT LAND PORTFOLIO – DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY

The Chief Executive submitted a report updating Members on employment land and development activity within the borough and its contribution towards the continuing economic growth of the area. A number of developments are taking place within the borough that contributes to local employment and economic growth. Development is now underway on some of these sites and examples of these were details within the draft portfolio for Members' information. This would be reviewed and updated regularly.

The Council were also currently engaged in ongoing discussions with developers regarding delivery of developments and with a number of further potential developments for business growth which were currently in the planning pipeline. Regular contact and discussions take place between the Council's Regeneration Section with both business and developers in connection with these.

Reference was also made to the latest edition of the 2018 Tourism Guide.

RESOLVED: That Committee note the contents of the Business and Employment Development Sites Portfolio.

The meeting closed at 7.47pm.

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