

## Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 25 September 2018, starting at 6.30pm  
Present: Councillor K Hind (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S Hirst
S Atkinson	A Knox
R Bennett	G Mirfin
S Bibby	J Rogerson
A Brown	I Sayers
M French	R Swarbrick
T Hill	

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

Also in attendance: Councillors P Elms, M Fenton, S Knox, M Robinson, R Thompson.

### 303 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor DT Smith.

### 304 MINUTES

The minutes of the Sub-Committee meetings held on 23 and 24 April 2018, the minutes of Policy and Finance Committee held on 19 June 2018 and the minutes of the Emergency Committee held on 28 June 2018 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

### 306 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

### 307 REVISITING MEMBER OFFICER PROTOCOL

The Chief Executive submitted a report to take a further look at the Member/Officer Protocol. One of the recommendations of the Peer Challenge Review was that the Council should revisit this Member/Officer Protocol as an opportunity to make suggestions as to how the Protocol could be strengthened or improved.

It was suggested that this Protocol should be reviewed again once the new Council is in place after the Elections in May 2019 and thereafter after every three years.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the above suggested changes be reported to Accounts and Audit Committee.

308 MEMBERS' ALLOWANCE SCHEME – APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT PANEL

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members of the requirement to review the Members' Allowance Scheme and the setting up of an Independent Panel to carry out the review. The Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) 2003 require the Council to establish a scheme of Members' allowances in accordance with these regulations.

The Council is required to agree and publicise its Members' Allowance Scheme each year and have an independent review at least every 4 years. The last review took place in early 2015. The Council in revising the existing scheme must have regard to the recommendations made by the panel.

The report outlined the Independent Panel that was used in 2015 and the Director of Resources indicated it was her intention to approach the same individuals to see if they were available to carry out the review this time.

The panel was expected to meet a number of times and interview a number of existing Members regarding various aspects of the current scheme with the outcome of their review being reported early in the new calendar year ready for the recommendations to be considered and then ultimately approved by Full Council.

The Director of Resources reminded Members that the Council must make the independent remuneration panel's report available for public inspection as well as the approved scheme for Members' allowances by publishing a notice in the local press describing the main features of the scheme and specifying the amounts payable in respect of each allowance mentioned in the scheme.

Members discussed the makeup of the membership of the Independent Panel.

RESOLVED: That an Independent Panel be appointed to commence the review of the Members' Allowance Scheme in time for the 2019/20 municipal year.

309 CAPITAL MONITORING 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report of the progress on the approved 2018/19 capital programme for this Committee for the period to the end of August 2018 and to request approval for additional capital budget on 1 capital scheme.

The total approved budget for this Committee's capital programme of 6 schemes is £242,560. The report outlined the Committee's capital programme budget expenditure to date and variance as at the end of August 2018, along with the full capital programme by scheme showing details, financial information and budget holder comments to date for each scheme. At the end of August 2018 £89,429 had been spent or committed which equalled 36.9% of the annual capital programme budget for this Committee. The main reasons for the underspend on the full year budget were outlined for Committee's information.

The Director of Resources requested approval for an increase of £10,500 budget required for the replacement server for Revenues and Benefits Scheme which could be funded from the Housing Benefits and Local Council Tax Support New Burdens Equipment Reserve.

She informed Committee that the Civic Suite upgrade scheme had been completed; 3 schemes are on track to be completed in the year and officers are aiming to complete the new Council telephone system scheme in the year, dependant on the timescale for the preferred solution. However the lift replacement at the Council Offices scheme would not be completed in the year.

RESOLVED: That Committee approved additional budget of £10,500 for the replacement server for Revenues and Benefits Scheme to funded by amounts already set aside in the Housing Benefits and Local Council Tax Support New Burdens Equipment Reserve.

### 310 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK REVIEW 2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval for the new Performance Management Framework following a review. Performance Management is a way of describing the number of different areas of work and management arrangements that the Council uses to ensure that it achieves what it sets out to do within the resources it has committed. The framework supports a co-ordinated approach with everyone understanding their part in the different processes and actively participating in them. It also provides the basis for ensuring that we understand the various elements which contribute to delivering effective and efficient services that meet the needs of the local community.

The Performance Management Framework links plans and performance outcomes and measures together connecting corporate priorities with the activities and actions of managers and staff at a service team and individual level.

Following the Peer Challenge an action plan was formulated and approved by Committee which included a commitment to reviewing the Council's Performance Management Framework. Various aspects of the framework were highlighted.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the Performance Management Framework as outlined to be reviewed on an annual basis.

### 311 REDEVELOPMENT OF CLITHEROE MARKET SITE – UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating Members on the market area redevelopment project and asking for actions to be agreed in respect of the development scheme for this site.

She reminded Committee that at Policy and Finance Committee on 19 June 2018 Members considered the work done to date by the design team which saw a reduction in the scale of development and consideration of the level of leisure offer within the development and had agreed to:

1. approve the scheme as now proposed in principle for it to move to the next stage;

2. agree that heads of terms, a development agreement and financial appraisal be prepared based upon the scheme as now presented and reported back to this Committee for consideration; and
3. delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of this Committee, a strategy for publicising the scheme as it develops.

Since June 2018, 2 further meetings had been held between Barnfield Construction and Council Officers and whilst both meetings were constructive, no further progress had been made. Concerns had been raised in respect of access to the site and the deliverability of the scheme, along with concerns raised by residents and businesses. The Director of Economic Development and Planning reiterated that the Council was committed to bringing forward a scheme for the redevelopment of the market area which meets the needs of Clitheroe Town Centre, the existing market traders and businesses, the existing visitors and the future potential tenants and visitors to the town centre.

In order to ensure that the right development was secured for the town centre it was recommended that rather than proceed with the actions agreed at the June Committee, officers bring a further report to a subsequent Policy and Finance Committee advising on ways to move forward with the redevelopment of Clitheroe Town Centre.

Councillor Paul Elms was given permission to speak on this item.

Members discussed the scheme and the many reasons it had taken so long to get to this point. It was agreed that the new Director should look at the scheme and the options available to the Council. It was important to keep moving forward and that once a suitable scheme was found that the Council had the courage to go ahead with it.

**RESOLVED:** That Committee agree to a report being brought to a future meeting of this Committee to advise Members on the most appropriate way forward with the redevelopment of the site outlining various options rather than progress with the actions agreed at the June Policy and Finance Committee.

### 312 BUSINESS RATE 75% PILOT

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Members regarding the announcement of the Government's invitation for applications for 75% Business Rate Pilots for 2019/20.

She informed Committee that the deadline for submitting an application was Tuesday, 25 September 2018 so the Emergency Committee had met earlier that morning and supported the recommendation to join a Lancashire bid to become a new 75% Pilot pool.

She informed Committee that the Budget Working Group had also considered in some detail the proposed pilot scheme and supported this Council's participation in the bid. The Director of Resources gave Members a verbal update on the responses from the other Lancashire Authorities and informed them that 15 out of 16 Local Authorities, including fire and rescue, had agreed to participate in the

bid. This had been extremely challenging and was only achieved as a result of some degree of compromise on the various elements of the scheme.

She also informed Committee that a letter would accompany the application requesting that the current Lancashire Business Rate Pool continue in the event that the pilot application was unsuccessful.

As lead Authority for the current pool it was agreed that Ribble Valley Borough Council would also be Lead Authority for the new pilot pool if the application was successful.

RESOLVED: Committee noted the decision taken by the Emergency Committee for Ribble Valley Borough Council to join the pilot bid for Lancashire.

### 313 ATTENDANCE AT LGA CONFERENCE

The Chief Executive submitted a reporting asking Committee to consider a request from the Conservative Group to increase attendance at the Annual Local Government Association Conference.

This is an annual event held over 3 days and provides an opportunity for delegates to engage in a range of sessions on how innovation and good practice can deliver the best local public services for their communities.

Historically the event had been attended by the Leaders of the 2 political groups on the Council, accompanied by the Chief Executive. A request had been made by the Conservative Group to increase the number of attendees at this Conference in order to give the Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group and some Chairmen the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the LGA and issues within Local Government. The estimated cost of attendance was approximately £1,000 per delegate.

Members discussed this request and felt that succession planning was important. However it was also pointed out that the LGA put on lots of other events, some of which are free, that any Councillor can attend.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to increase the number of attendees at next year's LGA Conference to 3 Councillors plus the Chief Executive and that these be the Leaders of the two political groups plus one other.

At this point in the meeting a comfort break was taken 7.45pm to 7.50pm.

### 314 RENTAL OF FORMER PHYSIOTHERAPY CENTRE TO THE FOUNDATION FOR RIBBLE VALLEY FAMILIES

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider giving a 6 months' rent free period to the Foundation for Ribble Valley Families for the use of the former Physiotherapy Centre in Clitheroe.

He reminded Committee at their last meeting they had agreed to rent the above building to the Foundation for Ribble Valley Families with the agreement being for a temporary licence for 28 weeks at £60 per week with the licence then continuing subject to a week's notice either side.

Since then the Conservative Group had advised that they wish the Council to grant a 6 month rent free period to the above charity.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to give the Foundation for Ribble Valley Families a 6 months' rent free period for the former Physiotherapy Centre.

### 315 REPORT FROM SOCIAL MOBILITY WORKING GROUP

The Director of Resources submitted a report presenting findings of the Social Mobility Working Group with some potential actions. Following the publication of the "State of the Nation 2017: Social Mobility in Great Britain Report" in November 2017 questions were asked about Ribble Valley's ranking in the youth area. The borough was ranked 13<sup>th</sup> worst in the cold spots.

The Policy and Finance Committee at their meeting on 20 March 2018 had looked at the results of the report for Ribble Valley and agreed to set up a working group to determine the reasons for the apparent lack of social mobility amongst young people in the Ribble Valley and to provide recommendations for the Council and partners as to how they should tackle the problems going forward.

The group had looked at all sources of evidence and further information available before coming to any conclusions. This included the DWP, CAB, Ribble Valley Foodbank, Lancashire County Council and Local Enterprise Partnership. The group felt the focus should be on young people who are "NEET" (Not in Education, Employment or Training) as well as those who were in employment but not doing any training as these are likely to be on minimum wage and therefore not as socially mobile.

Janet Jackson who works in the LEP Schools Hub came to talk to the working group about what they were doing to increase social mobility and was able to share up to date data on the number of NEETS. She also informed the working group that there was now an enterprise adviser scheme working with 120 schools in Lancashire to match employers with schools to enhance work experience opportunities or careers support.

She also reported upon more than 50 apprenticeships currently available in the borough.

The working group had considered the possible actions that could be taken by the Council and came to the conclusion that the main way was by signposting what is available and in particular using the new Council website to do this.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to the Council taking a more pro-active approach to signposting and encouraging partnerships; and
2. agree that any future State of the Nation: Social Mobility in Great Britain Reports are reported to this Committee in order to monitor the situation and any progress made.

316 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE-OFFS

Committee were asked to approve the write-offs of certain Council Tax and Business Rate debts relating to one case where a company had been dissolved and one case where the company had been liquidated.

Reasonable steps by various means had been taken to collect these debts.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £996.03 Council Tax and £120 costs and £14,641.05 Business Rates and £180 costs where it had not been possible to collect the amounts due.

317 COMMEMORATING THE 100<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMISTICE IN 1918

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee's information on how the Council intend to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Armistice in 1918. The Council had agreed to take part in a National Beacon Lighting Event which would be lit by the Mayor on the Clitheroe Castle curtain wall.

In addition Corporate Management Team had decided to project a poppy on to the surface of the Castle Keep for the week leading up to 11 November 2018.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

318 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on progress made with implementing the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan which was devised to deal with the issues raised by the Peer Challenge Team.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

319 CORPORATE STRATEGY 2017/18 PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of progress made with achieving the Corporate Strategy priorities during 2017/18.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

320 2017/18 YEAR END PERFORMANCE INFORMATION REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the year-end report of 2017/18 that details performance against our Local Performance Indicators.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

321 TIMETABLE FOR BUDGET SETTING

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information of the timetable for setting the 2019/20 budget.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

322 OVERALL CAPITAL MONITORING 2018/19

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information relating to the progress of the Council's approved Capital Programme for the period to the end of August 2018. At the end of August 2018 £907,816 had been spent or committed which equated to 42.9% of the overall Capital Programme for 2018/19.

Four schemes had already been completed and based on a review of progress on each of the remaining 28 schemes at this stage, 16 schemes are currently on track to be completed in year, 6 schemes are in progress but may not be fully completed in year, 1 scheme will not be completed in year, 2 schemes are on hold awaiting developments in other areas before any progress can be made and 3 are ongoing housing grant schemes.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

323 REVENUE OUTTURN 2017/2018

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the outturn for the financial year 2017/18 in respect of the Revenue Budget for this Committee.

There had been a number of variations in both income and expenditure during the year and this had given rise to an overall underspending of £34,679 on the net cost of services. After transfers to and from earmarked reserves the overall underspend is £15,543.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

324 REVENUE MONITORING 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the position April to July 2018 on this year's Revenue Budget as far as this Committee was concerned.

The comparison between actual and budgeted expenditure shows an overspend of £23,249 for the first 4 months of the financial year 2018/19. There is concern around the lower level of income being received and anticipated in respect of the land charge search fees but further review work on the reasons for the fall in search requests/income is also to be carried out by the Legal Section.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

325 OVERALL REVENUE MONITORING 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the overall revenue position for the current financial year up to the end of July 2018. The report showed the overall budget broken down subjectively and monitored against the profiled budget, with any variances highlighted and reasons given.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.



326 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information on the Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2018 to 31 August 2018. The report outlined the following topics:

- Public Works Loan Board;
- borrowing requirements;
- temporary investments;
- Prudential indicators;
- Local Government Bonds Agency;
- approved organisation;
- recent events; and
- exposure to risk.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

327 LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT 2019/2020 – TECHNICAL CONSULTATION PAPER

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Members regarding the recent technical consultation paper on the Local Government Finance Settlement 2019/2020 and to receive the response agreed by the Budget Working Group.

The consultation ran for 8 weeks and closed on Tuesday, 18 September 2018 and as such it was not possible for a response to be agreed by Committee before the deadline. The Budget Working Group however had considered the consultation questions and agreed a response as set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

328 INSURANCE RENEWALS

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the recent procurement exercise for the Council's insurance services. Following discussion with the Director of Resources and the Head of Financial Services the tender submitted by Zurich Municipal for a 5 year term agreement effective from 20 June 2018 had been accepted.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

329 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a report which covered the following:

- National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).
- Council Tax.
- Sundry Debtors.
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax support performance.
- Housing Benefit overpayments.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

330 BUDGET WORKING GROUP

Committee received the minutes of the Budget Working Group meetings held on 28 June 2018 and 8 August 2018.

331 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Committee received reports from Councillor Richard Sherras who had attended the Rural Services Network Conference and from Councillor Jim White giving an update on the Armed Forces Community Covenant.

332 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

333 LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE-OFFS

Committee considered a report asking them to approve writing off of 2 cases where Council Tax debtors have a Debt Relief Order, 2 where they are bankrupt, 1 business rates case where the debtor has passed away and 1 where they have gone bankrupt. There was also 1 case where a housing benefit administration error had occurred and the resulting overpayment had been unable to be recovered.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the writing off of £9,321.78 of Council Tax debts plus £180 costs, £10,628.33 business rates and £1,252.42 of housing benefit debt where it had not been possible to collect the amount due.

334 DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF APPLICATION

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee that a request had been received for discretionary rate relief in respect of 2 Market Place, Clitheroe, BB7 2DA.

The Head of Revenues and Benefits explained the background with regard to this application which had arisen following the delisting of these premises without the owner's knowledge.

RESOLVED: That Committee agree to award discretionary rate relief due to exceptional circumstances for the period 28 July 2017 to 24 January 2018 in the sum of £5,948.91.

The meeting closed at 8.17pm.

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