

Minutes of Policy & Finance Committee

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 18 June 2019, starting at 6.00pm
Present: Councillor S Atkinson (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Bibby	M Hindle
A Brown	S Hirst
S Carefoot (6.10pm)	S Hore
J Clark	D Peat
S Fletcher	J Rogerson
M French	R Thompson
J Hill	

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

Also in attendance: Councillors B Buller, G Mirfin, S O'Rourke and R Sherras.

85 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillor A Knox.

86 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2019 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

87 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST

Councillor S Fletcher declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 11, Voluntary Organisations Grants – Citizens Advice Bureau Performance Monitoring Information.

88 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

89 BRIEFING ON THE WORK OF POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Director of Resources informed Committee and in particular new Councillors of several details relating to the way Committee meetings work. This included the Lead Officer and Committee Clerk for this Committee, which officers would usually attend, some rules about how the Committee is conducted and information about declarations of interest.

She also gave a resume of the service areas covered under the remit of this Committee and pointed out to Councillors that Policy and Finance Committee has a dual role in that it is a Committee in its own right but also has responsibility for overall budget setting for the Council.

90 APPOINTMENT TO WORKING GROUPS 2019/2020

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to appoint Members to any working groups under the remit of the Policy and Finance Committee and their membership. Committee were reminded that working groups are set up by the parent Committee to aid them in reaching decisions on specific aspects of their remit. The working groups under the remit of this Committee were highlighted and the officers recommended which ones they felt should be re-established at this time.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the continuance of the Budget Working Group and the Voluntary Organisation Grants Working Group with their membership as follows:

- Budget Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, S Hirst, A Brown, D Peat, J Rogerson, A Knox and S Fletcher.
- Voluntary Organisation Grants – Councillors S Atkinson, A Brown, S Hore and J Hill.

91 CAPITAL OUTTURN 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report reviewing the final outturn of the 2018/2019 Capital Programme for this Committee and seeking Member approval for the slippage of some capital scheme budgets from the 2018/2019 financial year to the 2019/2020 financial year.

Committee were reminded that a total approved budget for this capital programme of six schemes was £253,060 which was revised to £161,730 in January 2019. During the financial year Committee had received reports monitoring the progress of the schemes within the programme. Two of the six schemes in the revised estimate capital programme had been completed in-year and an element of the lift replacement at the Council offices scheme had also been completed in-year. Actual expenditure on this Committee's capital programme was £100,797 which was 62.3% of the revised estimate budget.

The report went on to highlight the three schemes that had not been completed and a request was made for £60,950 of slippage be transferred into the 2019/2020 financial year.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the slippage of the following budgets into the 2019/2020 capital programme:

- Queensway Garages – replace roof covering and repairs - £1,830
- Financial system upgrade - £14,120
- New Council telephone system - £45,000

92

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2019/21

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating Members on communication activities and achievements and asking for approval of the Council's Communications Strategy 2019/2021. The Council is required to produce a Communication Strategy as part of its governance statement and by doing so demonstrates its commitment to clear and consistent communication that meets the needs of residents and stakeholders.

The strategy included in the report outlined how Ribble Valley Borough Council would manage communications and inform stakeholders about its policies, activities and events. Its purpose was to establish and maintain effective channels of communication and promote a positive image of the borough. It was based on the latest communications best practice and place branding guidance and outlined who the Council communicates with, what is communicated, how we communicate as well as how success is measured.

The Council issues around 100 press releases a year that enjoy a significant take-up in the local press resulting in largely positive coverage. It also produces a twice yearly newspaper.

It was suggested by Committee that the MP and Government Office should be included in the list of who the Council communicates with.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the Ribble Valley Borough Council's Communications Strategy 2019/2021.

93

280 BUS ROUTE TO SKIPTON

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report asking Committee to consider the provision of a one-off grant payment to Lancashire County Council to support the continuation of the 280 bus service between Clitheroe and Preston and Clitheroe to Skipton.

The Chief Executive informed Committee that public transport subsidies are not a district council function and that these matters fall into the responsibilities of Lancashire County Council as the public transport authority. However, the availability of public transport cross-cuts a number of key areas relevant to the roles and responsibilities of the Borough Council.

Prior to April 2016 the local bus service linking Preston, Clitheroe and Skipton via Mellor Brook, Whalley, Chatburn, Gisburn and Barnoldswick was operated by Transdev on behalf of the County Council as part of the tendered bus service network. The service operated every hour during Monday to Saturday daytime and every 2 hours on Sunday daytime. At the time the County Council significantly reduced its financial support for tendered bus services across the whole county, the Rotala Preston Bus made the decision to operate the service on a commercial basis. The service is used by a number of students living in Lancashire accessing Clitheroe Royal Grammar School, Preston Cardinal Newman College and Skipton Craven College. Rotala notified the County

Council that from 16 June 2019 the company would withdraw the entire service as it was not commercially viable for them to run it.

The County Council had sought to identify alternative operators to run the service in place of Rotala, however no operators had come forward. The County Council has had a bid to operate the service under an alternative model which would provide service to the route but would require subsidy in order to operate. This proposal would see the route between Clitheroe and Preston operated as a commercial route with the stage between Clitheroe to Skipton being subsidised. Lancashire County Council had approached Ribble Valley Borough Council to assist in supporting this route for its first year together with Pendle Borough Council. The request for support of £10,000 for the first year of operation which would enable the operator to develop the business and move towards it being a commercially sustainable route. The offer to consider assisting the County Council in funding the route was therefore proposed on the basis that it was only for the first year of operation, a position which had been acknowledged by the County Council.

This route provides a vital lifeline for many Ribble Valley residents who live along the A59 and the Chairman and Chief Executive had agreed to inform the County Council that in principle and subject to this Committee's agreement, support of £10,000 would be provided.

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and urged Committee to support the request from the County Council. He also highlighted concerns about what happens after the 12 month period has passed.

Councillor Mirfin was given permission to speak on this item and also reiterated how important this bus service was for the residents of Ribble Valley and again urged support for this bus route.

Committee felt it was essential to keep this bus route running but also felt that it highlights the problems with strategic transport throughout the Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree to the request from Lancashire County Council to provide financial support of £10,000 as a one-off payment to the operation of the 280 Preston to Skipton service for a period of 12 months only and that the cost be funded from the Council's voluntary organisation grants budget in 2019/2020 and 2020/2021; and
2. ask the Chief Executive to write to the government urging them to support rural bus routes.

94

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2019-2023

The Director of Resources submitted a report suggesting recommended next steps in the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2019-2023.

The Council's Corporate Strategy document sets out the strategic direction of the Council providing a focus to ensure that the services we deliver meet the needs of our communities. The 2015-2019 strategy had a four year scope and was reviewed annually to ensure that it continued to reflect the changes to the priorities that occurred over time. This strategy was now due for a complete review following the local elections which took place in May 2019.

It was highlighted that the strategy should contain high level corporate priorities supported by key objectives, actions and key measures of success.

It was suggested that in order to review the Council's objectives a small working group be established consisting of three Conservative Councillors and one Liberal Democrat tasked with bringing a new Corporate Strategy to the next meeting in September for approval.

Several Members commented on the contents of the Corporate Strategy and in particular requested that factors around ecology and the Council being a facilitator and the ageing population of Ribble Valley be included in the new strategy.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. agree the suggested approach to reviewing the Corporate Strategy; and
2. establish a small working group to review the Corporate Strategy comprising of Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, M Hindle and A Knox.

Councillor S Fletcher declared an interest in the next item of business and left the meeting.

95 VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANTS – CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU PERFORMANCE MONITORING INFORMATION

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to receive and consider the performance monitoring information provided by the Ribble Valley Citizens Advice Bureau for the quarter ending March 2019 and to consider whether to approve payment for the next quarterly instalment of the voluntary organisation grant to the Citizens Advice Bureau.

The Director of Resources reminded Committee that at their last meeting when grants to voluntary organisations were approved, concern was expressed by Members that the proposed allocation for the Citizens Advice Bureau dominated the grants to be awarded representing approximately 50% of the total budget available. Although it was recognised that the Citizens Advice Bureau had an important role to play it was also felt that the Council should receive regular updates on their work with measurable targets in order for the Council to be sure that the grant was well spent.

The manager of the Citizens Advice Bureau had supplied monitoring information for the latest quarter available up to the end of March 2019 which was included for Committee's information.

Although there was support for the Citizens Advice Bureau there was still some concern about the issues dealt with by the Citizens Advice Bureau and the fact that there is no longer any service in Longridge or outreach facilities in the Parishes. It was requested that in future the information provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau should include where the clients are from.

RESOLVED: That Committee approve the payment of the voluntary organisation grant for the second quarter to the Citizens Advice Bureau of £13,125.

Councillor S Fletcher returned to the meeting.

96 REPORTS ON REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES 2019/2020

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Members of the outside bodies that are under the remit of the Policy and Finance Committee and their membership and to consider issues with regards to the Citizens Advice Bureau and Ribble Valley Community Transport.

He informed Committee that communication had been received from the Manager of the Ribble Valley Citizens' Advice Bureau informing the Council that two of the three Councillors nominated had declined to take their positions up. This was because the position had to be that of a Trustee on the Board and not just as a representative of the Council. The Manager had confirmed that according to their governance they had to be Trustees.

Communication had also been received from the Manager of Little Green Bus on behalf of Lancashire Community Transport informing the Council that a nominated representative was not required as they nominate and recruit their own board members.

Committee discussed the issue with various representatives on outside bodies that are expected to become Trustees and not just observers on behalf of the Borough Council. Several Councillors saw this as a conflict of interest as a Borough Councillor. It was suggested that a review of all the outside bodies on which Borough Councillors were representatives should take place before the next annual meeting of the Council in 2020.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. note the outside bodies under the remit of this Committee and their membership;
2. delete Lancashire Community Transport from the list of representatives on outside bodies;
3. recommend that Council makes a formal approach to the Citizens' Advice Bureau to request that Borough Councillors be allowed as observers rather than Trustees; and
4. ask officers to carry out a review of all outside bodies before the annual meeting in May 2020.

97

REFERENCE FROM HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE – REQUEST FOR APPROVAL TO PURCHASE PROPERTIES IN LONGRIDGE USING COMMUTED SUM MONIES

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a request from Health and Housing Committee to agree to the approval of additional revenue budget of £234,000 in 2019/20 for the purchase of properties in Longridge for affordable housing.

Health and Housing Committee had considered a report submitted by the Director of Economic Development and Planning which gave details of a request for additional capital budget of £234,000 for 2019/20 in respect of the purchase of properties in Longridge for affordable housing. The cost of the capital scheme would be met from commuted sum monies already held by the Council from a development at Barnacre Road, Longridge. At its meeting Health and Housing Committee had approved the request and the resolution of the meeting was outlined for Committee's information.

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and referred to the report submitted to the Health and Housing Committee. He expressed concern that villages weren't able to get commuted sums and were therefore not able to purchase properties for affordable housing in the parishes.

RESOLVED: That Committee

1. approve the request for the additional capital scheme budget of £234,000;
2. approve the use of commuted sum monies to fund the additional capital scheme budget approval; and
3. await with interest the report to Health and Housing Committee about how the scheme may be extended to villages in the borough and the future strategy of the scheme.

98

OVERALL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2018-2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report for Committee's information with details of the Capital Programme outturn for all Committees for 2018/19 financial year.

Actual expenditure on the Council's Capital Programme in 2018/19 was £1,276,243 which was 56.7% of the revised estimate budget.

Of the 31 schemes in the revised Capital Programme, 19 had been completed; 8 were in progress at year end and would be completed in 2019/20; 3 were housing grant schemes, of which there were underspends and these grant schemes would continue in 2019/20; 1 scheme had been deleted from the Capital Programme and budget slippage into 2019/20 had been requested on 11 schemes not completed in year, totalling £678,270.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

99 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.

A brief explanation was given on some of these issues, specifically for the new Councillors on the Committee.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

100 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 2018/2019

The Director of Resources submitted a report informing Committee of the 2018/19 Treasury Management operations. It is a requirement of this policy that Committee receives an annual report on the Council's Treasury Management activities that took place during the preceding financial year.

The report outlined the interest rates, borrowing requirements, investments, Prudential indicators and the Local Government Bonds Agency.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

101 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING

The Director of Resources submitted a report providing Committee with a monitoring report on Treasury Management activities for the period 1 April 2019 to 30 April 2019. The report outlined the following topics:

- Public Works Loan Board.
- Borrowing requirements.
- Temporary investments.
- Prudential indicators.
- Approved organisations.
- Recent events.
- Exposure to risk.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

102 CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE – ACTION PLAN 6 MONTHLY 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.

Committee were also informed that the Peer Challenge Team would be on site in September 2019 to carry out their follow up review. The revisit would be carried out over 2 days and would be scoped later this month but it was likely that the team would be looking at the implementation of their recommendations.

Councillor Sherras was given permission to speak on this item and referred to one of the issues raised by the Peer Challenge Team with regard to the reliance of some service areas on paper copies of documents and files and the need for a review of its use of ICT.

Councillor Mirfin was also given permission to speak on this item and highlighted the usefulness of a good Intranet system.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

103 COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for Committee's information with an update on the actions of the Community Safety Partnership.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 7.57pm.

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