

Minutes of Community Services

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 9 January 2024, starting at 6.35 pm
Present: Councillor R Newmark (Chair)

Councillors:

J Alcock	D O'Rourke
J Atherton	M Peplow
K Barnsley	M Robinson
S Brunskill	G Scott
R Corney	K Spencer
S Cowman	L Street

In attendance: Head of Engineering Services, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and Senior Accountant

Also in attendance: Councillors T Austin, M Graveston, S O'Rourke

533 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillors S Atkinson and L Jameson.

534 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 October were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the addition of information at minute number 376 that the Community Orchard location had been clarified with the Parish Council.

535 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON-REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable and non-registrable interests.

536 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Chairman welcomed Stephen Burke who spoke in respect of agenda item 10 - Original Revenue Budget 2024/25, agenda item 11 – Revised Capital Programme 2023/24, and agenda item 12 – Capital Programme Review and New Bids 2024/25 to 2028/29, on the subject of Clitheroe Castle and Clitheroe Conservation Area.

537 HYDROTREATED VEGETABLE OIL (HVO) FEASIBILITY RESULTS

The Director of Community Services submitted a report to update Committee on the trial use of Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) in refuse vehicles, and consider whether a recommendation should be made to Policy and Finance Committee to switch all qualifying vehicles to HVO at a cost of £100k per annum for revenue and a one-off installation of £15k.

In September 2021 the Council had adopted the Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy 2021 – 2030 under which the Council's ambition was to become carbon neutral by 2030. The Council's vehicle fleet was the largest single contributor to the Authority's carbon emissions. It was reported that HVO fuel could result in 90% reductions in CO2 emissions and was the best opportunity for the Council to make the greatest reduction in CO2 emissions.

On 14 March 2023 Committee had agreed a twelve-week trial of Biofuel for some of the Council's vehicle fleet. Any refuse collection vehicle (RCV) that was 'Euro 6 Complaint' could run on HVO, without any modifications. Ten of the current fleet of RCV's were Euro 6 compliant, two were not. The trial had been undertaken using one RCV, without any vehicle issues and fuel consumption remained similar to diesel. Consultation had also taken place with other Authorities that had switched to HVO and there had been no reported issues. The existing diesel tank at the depot could be converted to HVO, with the provision of a smaller diesel tank for remaining diesel vehicles, at a cost of £15k. The use of HVO as a vehicle fuel would also increase the annual fuel budget at the depot by 42% to £97,966.

Members discussed the proposal at length. Concerns were raised regarding the emissions resulting from the production and transport of the HVO. It was stated that some HVO contained palm oil and Members were opposed to use a product should it contain palm oil. It was suggested that should the Council adopt the use of HVO that it be spot checked and independently tested to ensure it was in fact a renewable and sustainable product.

Concerns were raised around the unknown future costs of the HVO. Officers confirmed that the HVO would be from a certified source, however, Members queried if specific certification assurances could be obtained. It was also suggested that the Council confer with as many other authorities as possible in order to obtain feedback on their use of HVO.

The Council's representative on the Lancashire Waste Partnership addressed the meeting and updated members regarding a recent meeting he had attended.

Committee requested more detailed information and reassurance around the source and sustainability of the product before reaching a decision, especially due to the high additional revenue costs.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Request further information and defer to a future Committee for the information to be considered.

538

TOGETHER AN ACTIVE FUTURE AGREEMENT

The Director of Community Services submitted a report seeking Committee approval for the Together an Active Future (TaAF) agreement with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, who were the accountable body with Sport England for the funding which the Pennine Lancashire area received.

An update on the work and proposed future work with TaAF had been provided to Committee in October 2023. A standard agreement for TaAF funding was in place with Blackburn with Darwen Council for all East Pennine districts including Ribble Valley. It was proposed that the second phase of TaAF (Accelerator Phase) was covered through a variation to the agreement. The work was fully funded through Sport England and a summary of the expected spend agreed with Sport England was included in the report along with the deed of variation for agreement by Committee.

The programme included the appointment of an additional member of staff to co-ordinate the community and partner engagement to address long-term health issues and oversee other aspects of the accelerator programme. There would also be a

series of partner agreements with local delivery partners in the Borough which would in large co-ordinate activities in villages, for example, the Active Village theme.

Members welcomed the project and supported the agreement.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the Council entering into the deed of variation for phase 2 accelerator as outlined in the report.

539

ARTS COUNCIL GRANT REQUEST

The Director of Community Services submitted a report seeking Committee approval for the Council to submit a bid to Arts Council England (ACE), for the funding of an Arts Strategy for the Borough.

The Council provided grants to art bodies for a range of arts initiatives, as well as providing the Platform Gallery, which was an important venue for many local artists to show their works there and at the Clitheroe Castle Museum. It was suggested that a place-based strategy for Arts be developed, which was in line with what ACE were seeking to support, and would help the arts sector in the Borough, potentially leading to further funding being attracted into the area.

There was synergy between this proposal and the work already being done under the Together an Active Future (TaAF) banner. The proposed approach and initial actions were outlined in the report. The two-year project would require a total budget of £60,000 over the two years, and it was proposed that £5,500 of the Arts Development budget from this year 2023/24 and next year 2024/25 was included with the application as match funding.

Members supported the bid and spoke about the importance of the arts in the Borough. The success of Council run events such as the food festival were noted, and it was suggested that a similar approach be applied to arts events to increase tourism. Members wished to use their experience and knowledge in this area to be more involved in the development of the Arts Strategy. It was suggested a Working Group for the Arts and Arts Strategy be proposed.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the proposal to make a funding bid to ACE, as outlined in the report
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Community Services to submit the bid and enter into any subsequent agreement with ACE on behalf of the Council.
3. Propose a Working Group for the Arts and Arts Strategy, with details to be brought back to the next meeting.

540

CAR PARKING UPDATE

The Director of Community Services submitted a report updating Committee on current car parking arrangements and agree proposals for Electric Vehicle (EV) charging.

The report noted that Pay and Display machines worked in all car parks when using cash. Transaction information was downloaded over the mobile network, therefore in

areas of poor connectivity, such as Dunsop Bridge, debit card transactions were not possible, and part of the machine had to be removed in order to download transaction information. The Council were continuing to look for solutions to the Dunsop Bridge connectivity issue and a number of options were being explored to improve mobile and internet connectivity.

Electric vehicles were now integral to the Government's policies for climate change and transport. The provision of EV charging in the area was poor, particularly in rural areas. The Council's Corporate Strategy 2019-2023 gave an undertaking to introduce electrical charging points on Council owned car parks. Following the RVBC EV Charge Point Feasibility Report 2023, 4 car parks had been identified as the most suitable for the installation of EV charging, based on the existing, available, local power supplies and communication (mobile and broadband), located at:

- Slaidburn
- Sabden
- Ribchester
- Chipping

Dunsop Bridge was not suitable due to poor mobile connectivity, however discussions were ongoing with suppliers to find a solution.

£50,000 of UKSPF funding had been allocated to the installation of EV charging facilities on rural car parks.

The current car parking order did not make separate provision for EV charging spaces. The Council had made a strong commitment to Climate Change and wished to promote the use of electric vehicles where possible. It was considered that providing cost effective charging was a benefit to users and that further subsidy of car park charging was not necessary. In addition, enforcing a variation in car parking fees for EV's would be problematic, in that the vehicle would actually need to be charging for the subsidy to apply, which could lead to confusion and tickets being issued as a result.

There was discussion at the meeting, and it was suggested that parking charges should not apply when a car is charging, due to the low charging rate (7kw/h). It was noted that the Council did not receive any payment for the charging of a vehicle, only the parking fee, and that the low rate was a supply issue. It was noted that some non-EV users block charging spaces, therefore charging for all parking spaces regardless of the type of vehicle was a way to deter non-EV vehicles from parking in charging spaces, which may be essential to EV users. It was also felt unfair to incentivise EV users when many road users struggle to afford the cost of motoring.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Note the contents of the report and agree that standard car parking charges will apply to EV charging bays.

REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the revised revenue budget for 2023/24 for this Committee. Members were reminded that at this time of year the estimates are revised for the current financial year in order to predict the likely outturn. In essence the revised estimate was the Council's latest forecast for the outturn on the current financial year's budget. This also assisted the Council in preparing the original estimates for the coming financial year.

The original budget for 2022/23 included provision for pay increase at 5% and price increase at 7.5% as it was anticipated inflation would fall during the year.

The pay award for 2023/24 had now been settled at £1,925 per full time employee. Overall the cost of the pay award was 6.5% which was around £170k above the 5% that had been allowed for.

The report noted that significant levels of inflation had been experienced and the revised estimate took into account the levels of inflation experienced so far. A comparison between the revised and original estimates, and detailed analysis of the variances, were included in the report.

The difference between the revised and original estimate was a decrease in net expenditure of £823,010 or a decrease in net expenditure of £784,210 after allowing for movements in earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agreed the revenue revised estimate for 2023/24.

542

ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to agree the draft revenue budget for 2024/25 for this Committee for consideration at the Special Policy and Finance Committee.

The forecast in September predicted a budget gap of £877k in 2024/25, £2.261m in 2025/26 and £2,740m in 2026/27. Since the forecast was prepared the Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Finance had been published on 5 December 2023, announcing that all local Councils would receive an increase in Core Spending Power the following year of 3% by continuation of the One-Off Funding Guarantee. Since the forecast was prepared, the Council had seen further cost increases particularly due to inflation and energy costs.

The difference between the original estimate of 2023/24 and the adjusted estimate of 2022/23 was a further increase in net expenditure of £705,710 after allowing for transfers from earmarked reserves. This meant that the total movement from the true Original Estimate of 2022/23 to the Original Estimate of 2023/24 was £1,130,340 or £1,101,220 after movements in earmarked reserves. The Policy Statement also announced that:

- New Homes Bonus Allocations would continue for 2024/25
- Rural Services Delivery Grant would continue for 2024/25
- Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would increase in line with CPI with no negative RSG
- Business rates would not be reset and Business Rate Pooling would continue
- A Council tax referendum principle of up to 3% or £5 for district councils

Detailed information on the individual budget areas under the Committee were included in the report, along with the movements from the 2023/24 Original Estimate to the draft Original Estimate for 2024/25, with comments on the main variances.

Members thanked Officers for the detailed report.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the revenue Original Estimate for 2024/25 and submit this to the Special Policy and Finance Committee.

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Committee's approval of the revised estimate for this Committee's capital programme for the current financial year.

Fourteen capital schemes for this Committee's original estimate budget, totalling £1,095,750, were approved by the Policy and Finance Committee and Full Council at their meetings in February 2023 and March 2023 respectively. Furthermore, two new schemes had been approved for 2023/24, along with additional budget for an existing scheme, and one scheme had been brought forward from the 2024/25 capital programme to the 2023/24 programme.

Six capital schemes had not been completed by 31 March 2023 and had some unspent budget available at that date. The total unspent budget of £53,950 on those schemes, known as slippage, was moved into the 2023/24 capital programme budget, after approval by this Committee in May 2023.

The proposed revised estimate for this Committee's 2023/24 capital programme was £960,410, which was a £510,800 reduction from the previously approved capital budget.

It was recommended that budgets totalling £440,170 on five schemes were moved to the 2024/25 financial year.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approved the 2023/24 revised estimate of £960,410 for this Committee's capital programme, as set out in the Annex to the report.
2. Approved the move of the following capital scheme budgets from 2023/24 to 2024/25:
 - Castle Keep Lime Repointing Works and Repairs, £301,770
 - Edisford Playing Pitches Drainage Works, £10,900.
 - LDASR: Longridge Depot 'Ambulance Shed' Refurbishment, £47,000.
 - Replacement of Refuse Iveco Tipper (PO60 AYK), £46,000
 - Replacement of High Top Transit Van PJ63 WUC, £34,500.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS 2024/25 TO 2028/29

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report asking Members to consider the proposed future capital programme for this Committee, covering the period 2024/25 to 2028/29.

For this committee there had originally been 33 schemes approved for the financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28, totalling £3,254,840. One scheme, totalling £19,300 in respect of a Replacement Drain Jetter had already been brought forward into the 2023/24 financial year and completed in that year due to the urgency.

New capital bids had been put forward for 2028/29 for Committee to consider. For this committee there had been 19 new bids totalling £1,800,060.

The proposed amendments to the previously approved capital programme would increase the capital programme by £3,320. If all new bids were approved this would increase the proposed capital programme by a further £1,800,060.

If all amendments and bids were to be approved, this would result in a proposed capital programme for 2024/25 to 2028/29 for this Committee, comprising of forty-eight schemes (three were rolling programme schemes) totalling £5,038,920.

It was noted at the meeting that the Council had received correspondence confirming the amount the Council would receive to fund food waste collections. Further details were awaited from LCC however it was anticipated that collections would be introduced in April 2026 for residential waste, and April 2025 for commercial waste. A report would be brought to a future Committee.

Flooding in Ribchester was raised as an issue and the suggestion of a hydrology study as a capital bid. Members understood that a hydrology study had been completed for the whole of Lancashire some years ago, therefore this would be investigated in the first instance.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the future capital programme for this Committee's services for onward recommendation to Policy and Finance Committee for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29, based on the proposals included in the report.

545

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider the membership of the Working Groups under the remit of this Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

Committee had approved the appointment of Members to the Grants Working Group and Car Parking Working Group for 2023/24 on 30 May 2023. Following political group changes, the revised membership of the Community Services Committee based on the new political balance had been confirmed at the meeting of the Full Council 12 December 2023.

The Grants Working Group had not been affected and the membership therefore remained unchanged. Members appointed Councillor D O'Rourke as a replacement member to the Car Parking Working Group as Councillor S O'Rourke was no longer a member of the Committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note that the membership of the Grants Working Group remains unchanged as follows:

Grants – Councillors R Newmark, J Alcock, M Robinson, K Barnsley and L Street

2. Appoint Councillor D O'Rourke to the Car Parking Working Group, with the revised membership as follows:

Car Parking – Councillors R Newmark, S Atkinson, D O'Rourke, L Jameson and J Atherton

The Director of Community Services submitted a report providing Committee with an update on the progress of the playing pitch strategy (PPS) work which the Council had commissioned.

The Council had jointly procured a PPS with Pendle Borough Council. The production of a PPS was an important milestone for the Council and the various sports clubs and organisations involved in outdoor sport in the Borough. Once completed the final document would be provided to Committee and incorporated into the Local Plan. The full report would not be available until the Spring once the winter assessment had been carried out.

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee about year-end reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23 that detailed performance against the Council's local performance indicators.

The report provided an overview of the Council's performance up to 31 March 2023. Analysis showed that of the 8 key performance indicators (KPIs) that could be compared to target:

- 25% (2) of the KPIs met target (green) or were on track.
- 12.5% (1) of the KPIs were close to target (amber) where delivery was on track and was being managed.
- 62.5% (5) of the KPIs were either awaiting data, data was unavailable, or a target had not been set.

Of the 8 KPIs where performance trend could be compared over the years:

- 25% (2) of the KPIs had improved
- 12.5% (1) of the KPIs had worsened, which was in the report.
- 62.5% (5) of the KPIs were either awaiting data, data was unavailable, or a target had not been set, therefore performance could not be compared.

The full monitoring report along with narrative on performance and targets was provided in the report.

The Director of Community Services submitted a report for information giving an update on waste regulations, Clitheroe Castle keep, Ribblesdale Pool, The Brian Holden Playing Pitches at Mardale, Sabden public toilets, Longridge public toilets, play areas, and climate change.

There were no minutes from working groups.

550 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

551 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Paragraphs 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

552 CASTLE MUSEUM REVIEW

The Director of Community Services submitted a report providing Committee with an update on the management of Clitheroe Museum and the Atrium Café.

Since re-opening in 2009, the Council owned museum had been managed by the Lancashire County Museum Service under a contract with the Council, for which they received £162,520 per year. The current contract was due to end on 31 March 2024. The Atrium Café did not form part of the agreement with LCC and had been subject to separate agreements with independent providers, the most recent of which had ended following the pandemic and the café had since remained closed. The bowling green café was let under a contract for the previous two summers.

Under the terms of the agreement with Lancashire County Council, the collection was maintained by them on the Council's behalf along with various other services which ensured that the museum achieved and maintained its accredited status, namely:

- Conservation services
- Curatorial services
- Collection management and documentation
- Technical support and services
- Collection care and collection management training

The Council had been in discussions with Lancashire County Council regarding the management of the museum once the existing contract expired on 31 March 2024. LCC had indicated that they were willing to continue with the management of the museum subject to a contractual amendment. LCC had informed officers that the operation of the museum was currently subsidised by LCC and proposed a full cost recovery model which would increase the amount paid by the Council.

LCC put forward 3 options as set out in the Annex to the report;

- Option 1 based on the current opening hours of 35 hours per week (20 hours in winter) at an extra cost of £88,458 per annum
- Option 2 based on opening hours of 20 hours per week with an extra annual cost of £52,796
- Option 3 based on opening hours of 16 hours per week at an extra annual cost of £33,870.

The operational costs of the facilities such as repairs, maintenance, business rates, and utilities, would all continue to be met by the Council. Income from the museum would continue to be shared with LCC.

The report set out the options beyond the end of the current management agreement however, to enable time for Officers to fully examine the options and for Committee to make an informed decision, LCC had agreed to extend the current agreement for up

to six months at no additional cost. However it was explained that this would require reduced opening hours of 4 days rather than the current 7 days.

Members were asked to consider the temporary extension offer. If this option was chosen, a further report would then be brought to Committee with a full appraisal of the options for the future management of the museum.

Members discussed the options put forward in the report and also the LCC options attached at Annex 1. They made suggestions in regard to the Atrium.

Committee were minded to agree with Option 1 put forward by LCC to continue with the museum's current arrangements and opening hours subject to a referral to Policy and Finance Committee to approve the extra cost of £88,458.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the offer by Lancashire County Council to continue with the current arrangement for the museum to be open for 35 hours per week (20 hours per week in winter) subject to referring the extra cost of £88,458 per annum to Policy and Finance Committee for approval.

The meeting closed at 9.12 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Rebecca Hodgson rebecca.hodgson@ribblevalley.gov.uk.