

Minutes of Health and Housing

Meeting Date: Thursday, 16 January 2025, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor M Hindle (Chairman)

Councillors:

S Atkinson	D O'Rourke
J Atherton	C McFall
T Austin	M Peplow
R Elms	M Robinson
S Farmer	L Street
W Holden	N Stubbs

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Health Services and Strategic Housing Officer

Also in attendance: Councillors S O'Rourke, M Graveston and J Alcock

531 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor R Ray.

532 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 October 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

533 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

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

534 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr T Amin spoke in support of Agenda Item 9 – Clitheroe Cemetery update and request for a denominational burial area. He advocated for the allocation of 60 graves to be reserved for members of the Muslim faith in the current operational part of the cemetery.

535 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Members agreement to a revised revenue budget for 2024/25 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.

It was noted that 4% had been originally allowed for pay and price increases. The pay award for 2024/25 had now been settled and overall the average increase was 4.14% which was slightly higher than the 4% allowed for. General price increases had continued to fall with CPI in the twelve months to November 2024 being 2.6%.

The difference between the Revised and Original Estimate was a decrease in net expenditure of £95,670, or a decrease of £115,820 after allowing for transfers to and from earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree the revenue revised estimate for 2024/25.

536

ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2025/26

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking for Members to agree the draft revenue budget for 2025/26, for consideration at Special Policy and Finance Committee.

Members were reminded that a budget forecast was presented to the Policy and Finance Committee in September 2024. This forecast predicted a budget surplus of £307k in 2025/26 followed by budget gaps of £52k in 2026/27 and £214k in 2027/28, after allowing for the use of general fund balances.

The key updates to the September 2024 forecast were summarised as follows:

- The New Homes Bonus Allocations will continue for one year only and the Rural Services Delivery Grant will no longer continue in 2025/26.
- Revenue support grant (RSG) will increase in line with CPI with no negative RSG.
- Business Rate Pools have been confirmed for 2025/26.
- Business Rates will not be reset for next year but will be reformed thereafter.
- A council tax referendum principle of up to 3% or £5 for district councils.
- Ribble Valley's Core Spending Power will remain at least the same as 2024/25 in cash terms, but this is after assuming that the band D council tax charge is increased by the maximum possible amount i.e. 3%.

When comparing the Provisional Grant Settlement to the latest budget forecast the Council are £161k worse off. This is largely due to the removal of the Rural Services Delivery Grant and the reduction in the New Homes Bonus. The Council will however benefit from the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) grant in 2025/26 if the indicative amount of £561k proves to be accurate.

The difference between the Proposed Original Estimate 2025/26 and Original Estimate 2024/25 was an increase of £121,370, and an increase of £144,950 after allowing for associated movements on earmarked reserves

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the revenue original estimate for 2025/26 and submit this to the Special Policy and Finance Committee.

537

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking approval for the 2024/25 revised estimate for this Committee's capital programme.

Six capital schemes for this Committee's original estimate budget, totalling £3,166,080 were approved by the Policy and Finance Committee and Full Council at their meetings in February 2024 and March 2024 respectively.

At the 2023/24 year end six capital schemes had not been completed. The total unspent budget of £438,160 for these schemes, known as slippage, was moved into the 2024/25 capital programme budget, after approval by this Committee on 6 June 2024.

Furthermore, there have been two transfers between existing schemes with no overall financial impact, and an additional budget for an existing scheme, Disabled Facilities Grants, totalling £85,930.

As a result of the above, the total approved budget for this Committee's capital programme of eight schemes was £3,690,170.

The proposed revised estimate for this Committee's 2024/25 capital programme was £1,972,780 which was a £1,717,390 reduction from the previously approved capital budget. It was recommended that budgets totalling £1,717,390 be moved to the 2025/26 financial year.

It was further noted that at the end of December 2024, £579,691 had been spent or committed. This was 29.4% of the revised capital programme for this Committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the 2024/25 revised estimate of £1,972,780 for this Committee's capital programme, as set out in Annex 1 of the report.
2. Approve the move of the capital scheme budgets shown at paragraph 3.5 of the report from 2024/25 to 2025/26.

538

CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the future capital programme for this Committee, covering the period 2025/26 to 2026/30.

For this Committee there were originally nine schemes approved for the financial years 2025/26 to 2028/29, totalling £1,822,000.

It was noted that the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme is fully funded by Central Government each year. The 2025/26 to 2028/29 Disabled Facilities Grants budgets had been set at indicative amounts which were equal to the current year's funding from Central Government. Should the Central Government funding in any year be higher or lower than budgeted for, then the scheme budget will be adjusted accordingly.

Two new capital bids had been submitted for 2028/29 for Committee to consider, which totalled £443,000. It was noted that £393,000 of this increase relates to the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme bids, which are expected to be fully funded by Central Government each year. Therefore, the net increase requiring funding for these bids, after this government funding, is £50,000.

The Chairman proposed an amendment to the recommendation, to include additional schemes to the capital programmes, namely:

- A sum of £1million to provide further improvements to Clitheroe market.
- A sum of £1million to be allocated to provide for additional affordable housing in the Ribble Valley.

- Encourage the maximum usage of all available funds for Disabled Facilities Grants.

It was further proposed that the spending on all the approved schemes for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30 should take place between 2025/26 – 2027/28.

The proposals were seconded by Councillor T Austin.

Members debated the proposal and Councillor M Graveston was granted permission to speak on the item.

A vote was taken on this as the substantive motion, and it was

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the future capital programme for this Committee's services for onward recommendation to Policy and Finance Committee for the period 2025/26 to 2029/30, based on the proposals included in the report, along with the addition of the following proposals:
 - A bid of £1million to be submitted to Policy & Finance Committee to provide further improvements to Clitheroe market
 - A bid of £1million to be submitted to Policy & Finance Committee for additional affordable housing in the Ribble Valley.
2. Approve the spending on all approved funds and the Landlord Tenant Grants for the period 25/26 to 29/30 between 25/26 and 27/28, and encourage the maximum usage of all available funds for Disabled Facilities Grants within the same time frame.

539

CLITHEROE CEMETERY UPDATE AND A REQUEST FOR A DENOMINATIONAL BURIAL AREA

It is noted that in the meeting this item was considered prior to all other decision items.

The Chief Executive submitted a report to:

- provide Committee with details of the estimated remaining burial space within the operational part of Waddington Road Cemetery, Clitheroe.
- provide Committee with details of the proposal to extend Waddington Road Cemetery, Clitheroe, into the adjoining field.
- asking Committee to consider a request from local residents of the Muslim faith to have a denominational area for Muslim faith burials within Waddington Road Cemetery, Clitheroe.

It was noted that the Waddington Road Cemetery in Clitheroe is the only operational Council owned burial area in the Ribble Valley and is currently designated as non-denominational. The Council estimated that there is currently space within the operational part of the cemetery for 180 burial plots, 90 ashes plots and that it would take approximately 7-8 years to fill these.

In 2011 the Council purchased the field adjoining Waddington Road, Cemetery and obtained outline planning permission for this to be used as a cemetery. To progress the cemetery extension, a 'Reserved Matters' application is to be submitted to the planning department which will include details such as a Ground Water Risk Assessment, a drainage scheme and a plan of the cemetery layout. Significant information will be required to ensure that the environmental risks are examined and that Environment Agency requirements are met.

The request to the Council had been to create a denominational area within the operational part of Waddington Road Cemetery, Clitheroe, exclusively for the burial of local residents of the Muslim faith; up to 60 individual plots had been requested.

It was noted that there are specific requirements for Muslim burials, namely:

- Each individual interred must have their own grave
- Interments must be as quick as possible
- The grave must be dug perpendicular to Qiblah
- The Muslim grave area must be separate from that of other faiths
- Muslim graves must not be walked or driven upon

Members debated the matter. Whilst they agreed that local residents of the Muslim faith should be able to be buried in the Ribble Valley, there were concerns raised with regards to the suitability of the current operational part of the cemetery. In particular, issues such as lack of adequate parking, traffic levels, possible flooding and whether the current site would comply with Sharia Law were discussed.

Councillor M Robinson proposed that approval be granted to allow for denominational grouping within the current operational part of the cemetery and that twenty plots be reserved for members of the Muslim faith. This was seconded by Councillor W Holden. A vote was taken but the motion was not carried.

Councillor S Atkinson made an alternative proposal which was seconded by Councillor R Elms. A vote was taken, and the motion as follows was carried.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Determine that the current operational part of Clitheroe Cemetery should remain strictly non-denominational.
2. Approve the proposed new cemetery extension being a mixture of both denominational and non-denominational burials.
3. Subject to the requisite planning permission being granted, approve the following:
 - a. Up to 60 graves can be reserved for members of the Muslim faith in the new cemetery extension.
 - b. All Muslim graves can be dug perpendicular to Qiblah (facing East) so the head of the interred faces Mecca.
 - c. The boundary to a denominational area for Muslim burials can be separated by a boundary i.e. a pathway / line of shrubs etc.
 - d. Adequate car parking to be provided as part of the scheme.

- e. The new cemetery extension will be completed and open within three years.

Councillor J Alcock left the meeting after this item had been discussed.

540

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS 2024/25

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the membership of the Working Groups under the remit of this Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2024/2025.

Committee had approved the appointment of Members to the Strategic Housing Working Group and the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group for 2024/25 on 6 June 2024. Following political group changes, the revised membership of the Health and Housing Committee based on the new political balance had been confirmed at the meeting of the Full Council 10 December 2024.

Members agreed to continue with five Members on each working group, with the allocations consisting of two Conservatives, one Liberal Democrat, one Labour and one Independent Group Councillor. It was further agreed that Councillor L Street would no longer sit on either working group. Cllr J Atherton would be appointed to the Strategic Housing Working Group and the Labour Group appoint a representative to the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group, the name of which would be confirmed to the Committee Clerk.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Appoint Councillor J Atherton to the Strategic Housing Working Group, with the revised membership as follows:

Strategic Housing Working Group - Councillors M Hindle, S Atkinson, M Robinson, R Ray and J Atherton

2. Appoint Councillor R Ray to the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group, with the revised membership as follows:

Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group – Councillors M Hindle, T Austin, M Robinson, N Stubbs and R Ray.

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MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS

There were no minutes from working groups.

542

REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

543

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

544 CONFIRMATION OF FUNDING FOR HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING
2025/2026

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating update Committee on the announcement of the Homeless and Rough Sleeping grant award for 2025/26 from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and to request approval for proposals to use the grant.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the proposal for a full time Homeless Prevention post to start from 1 April 2025 for 1 year.

545 GRANTS UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report informing Committee of recent approvals for various Disabled Facilities Grants and Landlord Tenant Grants.

546 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE REPORT

Members noted the report submitted by the Director of Economic Development and Planning providing Members with an update on the commuted sum spend in Chatburn and Longridge and the provision of additional affordable housing units.

547 HOMELESS UPDATE REPORT

Members noted the report submitted by the Director of Economic Development and Planning which provided Committee with information about the homeless prevention and relief work carried out in the Housing Service.

The report included details of the number of homeless applications in the third quarter, a snapshot of the number of households in temporary accommodation, and an update on the Ukraine resettlement scheme in the Ribble Valley.

The meeting closed at 8.04 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin 01200 413214 jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk.