

Minutes of Policy and Finance

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 18 June 2024, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Atkinson (Chair)

Councillors:

K Barnsley	S Hore
S Bibby	L Jameson
D Birtwhistle	R Newmark
M Graveston	S O'Rourke
J Hill	M Peplow
M Hindle	J Rogerson
S Hirst	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources & Temp P/T Chief Executive, Director of Economic Development and Planning, and Head of Legal and Democratic Services

107 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor K Horkin.

108 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 April 2024 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Councillor M Hindle declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 – UKSPF as a Trustee of Whalley Education Foundation.

Councillor S Hirst declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 – REPF as a Trustee of Salesbury Memorial Hall.

Councillor J Rogerson declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 – UKSPF as a Member of Longridge Town Council.

Councillor S Bibby declared an interest in Agenda Item 18 – REPF as the Ward Representative for Wilpshire and Ramsgreave.

110 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

111 UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating members in respect of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund and seeking approval for some of the use of the Council's UKSPF allocation.

The report listed the schemes for which the UKSPF had been spent or earmarked to, and the amounts allocated within each financial year were as follows:

- Year 1 (2022/23) allocation £238,805
- Year 2 (2023/24) allocation £477,610
- Year 3 (2024/25) allocation £1,251,339

The report noted that communication from the DHLUC Levelling Up team provided assurance that the UKSPF initial year 3 payment would be made in early July and that UKSPF delivery could continue without disruption. The report reminded Members of the requirement to spend UKSPF funding by the end of March 2025. The Director of Economic Development and Planning provided updates on the schemes with significant allocations which had not yet commenced and would be kept under close review. Based on the spend and commitments to date, approximately £550,500 was yet to be allocated to projects

The UKSPF Working Group had met on 13 May 2024 and the report listed the new schemes which had been discussed. Further schemes were also suggested in order to ensure the allocation was fully spent.

Committee discussed the ongoing schemes in detail. Members supported the design proposal for Towneley Gardens Event Space and were informed that the plans would be subject to consultation over the summer with a final design anticipated in autumn. The increased allocation to the Clitheroe Market scheme was supported along with the retention of the stone setts. Members discussed the plans to minimise the disruption to trading as much as possible. Stallholders would continue to be updated and the Council would know more once the contractors were appointed. Following the works, vehicle access onto the marketplace would still need to be kept to a minimum.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the use of £10,000 of the Longridge Event Space allocation to procure the services of DK Design Associates LTD to re-design the space at Towneley Gardens.
2. Agree to increasing the UKSPF allocation to the market to £250,000 to undertake the improvement works to Clitheroe market set out at paragraph 4.14 which will include retaining the casual stalls in the centre of the bullring which are well used and maintaining access.
3. Agree that the stone setts at the centre of the bullring should be retained.
4. Direct the Director of Economic Development and Planning to procure the improvement works to the market to be undertaken in the autumn 2024 (subject to contractor availability).
5. Note the new schemes at section 5 of the report which are not recommended for approval at this stage.

Agree that the Committee would like Officers to explore the suggested further projects within section 6 of the report.

HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 5

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating Committee on the Household Support Fund Round 5 (HSF5) and seeking approval for utilising the remaining funding.

The report detailed the key changes from the previous versions of the fund, as confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). The Council would receive £116,379 for HSF5, with the funding subject to specific requirements within the grant agreement. Committee were updated that all the 214 households who were eligible as part of HSF4 had been invited to reapply. This could equate to a total of £57,400. To date, 86 applications had been received and 84 vouchers issued totalling £21,900, with the remaining households issued with reminders.

Furthermore, it was recommended that an identical scheme as the HSF4 application process was opened to remaining residents in the Borough, who did not receive a voucher as part of HSF4. Households in the Borough who were struggling financially and had a combined household income of less than £50,000 per year would be able to apply for a food voucher.

As per the previous scheme it was suggested that households who had been in receipt of Cost-of-Living Payments would be ineligible to apply. This was on the basis that households in the Borough who received certain means-tested benefits, including Universal Credit, had received other funding over the past 2 years.

LCC had confirmed that 10% of the funding should be used for assistance and advice services, such as assistance with forms and advice on applications to ensure that residents received the right financial assistance. Unlike some authorities, RVBC managed and administered applications in-house and already provided advice and assistance. Given the limited amount of funding and time constraints it was proposed that the required form filling and advice elements of the fund would also be administered in-house.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the creation of an application process for the remaining HSF5 funding as per the HSF4 scheme (the applications will remain open subject to sufficient funding noting the deadline date of 30th September).
2. Confirm that households who either received a voucher from the HSF4 funding round or the 214 households invited to apply initially from HSF5 will not be eligible for this new HSF5 funding round.
3. Approve the administration of the required 10% form filling/advice element of the grant.

CAPITAL OUTTURN 2023/24

The Director of Resources & Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a report informing Members of the final capital outturn of the 2023/24 capital programme for this committee and to seek Member approval for the slippage of some capital scheme budgets from the 2023/24 financial year to the 2024/25 financial year.

Of the ten schemes in the Committee's capital programme four were completed in-year. Actual expenditure on the Committee's capital programme was £122,659 which was 35.4% of the revised estimate budget. Six schemes were not completed in-year,

therefore slippage totalling £224,200 from the 2023/24 to the 2024/25 financial year was requested.

Actual expenditure on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital scheme was £508,656 which was 91.2% of the revised estimate budget. Of the seven UKSPF capital schemes in the capital programmes four were completed in-year. The remaining three schemes were not completed in-year and some earlier than planned spend on one scheme. Slippage totalling £48,970 from the 2023/24 financial year into the 2024/25 financial year was requested.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve slippage of £224,200 on the Policy and Finance Committee capital schemes listed at paragraph 3.6.
2. Approve slippage of £48,970 on the UK Shared Prosperity Fund capital schemes listed at paragraph 4.5.

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PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

The Director of Resources and Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a report informing Members of the requirement to produce a Productivity Plan.

The Government had announced the requirement for all Councils to produce productivity plans alongside the publication of the Local Government Financial Settlement. A letter from the Minister for Local Government was included in the report which set out what the plans should include. Despite the forthcoming election on 4 July 2024, DHLUC had stated that the deadline of 19 July 2024 remained for Councils to return their productivity plans. Given the timing it was proposed that the Budget Working Group consider the draft plan before submission to the Government.

Members discussed the proposal and put forward suggestions. It was noted that the plan would not be extensive and the Council already had many measures in place. A Budget Working Group meeting would be arranged as soon as possible following the election.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Delegate approval and submission of the Productivity Plan to the Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Budget Working Group.

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APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

The Chief Executive submitted a report to consider the appointment of members to any working groups under the remit of this committee for the municipal year 2024/25.

The report also noted the need to determine how to progress the recruitment of the next Chief Executive, and recommended that a Sub-Committee be created, subject to Full Council approval.

***RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the continuance of the following working groups under the remit of this committee and decide upon their membership:

Voluntary Organisation Grants – Councillors R Newmark, S Bibby, S O'Rourke, M Graveston, and D Birtwhistle.

Budget Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, S Hirst, L Jameson, J Rogerson, S O'Rourke, and M Peplow.

UKSPF Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, L Jameson, J Rogerson, and M Peplow.

2. Approve and recommend to Council the creation of a Sub-Committee to progress the recruitment of the next Chief Executive as set out in the report, with the membership consisting of Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, L Jameson, and J Hill.

116 OVERALL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2023/24

The Director of Resources & Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a report for information providing details of the capital programme outturn for all committees for 2023/24 financial year.

Actual expenditure on the Council's capital programme in 2023/24 was £2,068,212, which was 64.8% of the revised estimate budget. Of the forty schemes in the programme, seventeen had been completed and twenty-three had not been completed in-year. Of the seven UKSPF capital schemes, four were completed and three were not completed in-year. There was also some spend on one scheme that was budgeted for in 2024/25 resulting in some negative slippage. Budget slippage had been requested of £1,074,300 into 2024/25 on the twenty-seven total schemes not completed.

117 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

The Director of Resources and Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a report for information on debts outstanding for business rates, council tax and sundry debtors. It also updated members on benefits performance, including benefits processing times and overpayment recovery.

118 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2024/25

The Director of Resources and Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a monitoring report for information on the treasury management activities for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 May 2024. This included temporary investments, interest on investments, local government bonds agency, borrowing, borrowing requirements, prudential indicators, approved organisations, recent events and exposure to risk.

119 ARMED FORCES COVENANT UPDATE

The Chief Executive submitted a report for information updating Committee in regard to the Council's work in order to comply with the Armed Forces Covenant pledges.

Thirty-six public facing and office-based staff from a range of departments had undertaken training in matters relating to the Armed Forces Community. The Council had been awarded the Bronze Award from the Defence Employer Recognition

Scheme (ERS). Armed Forces events that the Council had attended or supported were also noted for Committees information.

120 REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

- (i) Reference from Community Services Committee - Contemporary Arts Exhibition Grant Request

RESOLVED: The Director of Resources and Temp P/T Chief Executive submitted a report to consider a request from Community Services Committee for a supplementary estimate of £3,525 to the Arts Development grants budget in order to be able to provide additional grant funding towards the Clitheroe Contemporary Arts Festival 2024.

Community Services Committee had approved the recommendation at their meeting of 28 May 2024.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve a revenue supplementary estimate of £3,525 in the 2024/25 in order to be able to provide additional grant funding towards the Clitheroe Contemporary Arts Festival 2024, to be funded from the VAT Shelter Earmarked Reserve.

121 MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP 22 FEBRUARY 2024

The minutes of the Budget Working Group held on 22 February 2024 were submitted for Committee's information.

122 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

123 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

124 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF)

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for Committee to consider full applications into the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant scheme.

At the previous Committee meeting on 9 April 2024, Committee allocated a total of £300,825 grant funding from the REPF. A further £50,000 had been ringfenced for electric vehicle charging points on the Council's car parks, bringing the total committed amount to £350,825. There was remaining £82,855 unallocated REPF amount. The report noted that all funding must be defrayed by 31 March 2025.

The UKSPF working group had met on 13 May 2024 and discussed potential options to ensure all the funding was defrayed by 31 March 2025. It was suggested to allow

two applications per parish instead of the existing one per parish criteria. This would allow existing applications from Hurst Green Football Club and Sabden Village Hall to be reconsidered. Along with a request for additional funding from Rimington Recreation Association this would leave a remaining unallocated REPF balance of £20,587. Details of the project applications were provided for Committees consideration.

The report also updated Committee that Wiswell Parish Council had submitted an amended application requesting a change in the use for some of the funding previously approved by Committee on 9 April 2024.

An additional three expressions of interest had also been received since the last Committee meeting of which two had been invited to submit a full application. Officers had received enquiries from potential further applicants and had also contacted previous applicants who may be eligible to apply should Committee approve the change to the criteria.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Broaden the Rural England Prosperity Fund criteria to allow two applications per parish area.
2. Approve the following schemes supported from the Council's REPF allocation:

	Applicant	Scheme	Grant Funding
1.	Sabden Village Hall	Creation of green carpark and installation of EV charging points	£12,268
2.	Hurst Green Football Club	Solar panels	£35,000
3.	Rimington Recreation Association	Remove existing surface and relay with new tournament MF surface.	Approve an additional £15,000 grant funding bringing the total grant amount to £37,740.

3. Approve the change of project of grant funding for Wiswell Parish Council.

Councillor S Atkinson left the meeting in respect of the next agenda item, as a former Trustee for of Clitheroe Grammar School Foundation.

Vice-Chairman Councillor Simon Hore chaired the meeting for the next agenda item.

LAND AT HIGHMOOR PARK, CLITHEROE

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the current position in relation to the proposed lease for the right of access over land at Highmoor Park.

Committee had considered the land at its meeting of 20 June 2023, following which the District Valuer had been instructed to carry out an updated valuation to include a

10-year option agreement. The report noted the District Valuer had provided a draft report on 12 April 2024. Clarification was required from the land developer to enable the report to be finalised and a response had been received on 14 May 2024. The final report was awaited.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Note the current position with regard to the terms of the lease and authorise the Chief Executive to continue negotiation of the lease and associated documents.

Vice-Chairman Councillor S Hore closed the meeting at 7.49 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Rebecca Hodgson 01200 414408 rebecca.hodgson@ribblevalley.gov.uk.