

Minutes of Policy and Finance

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 30 March 2021, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Atkinson (Chair)

Councillors:

S Bibby	M Hindle
A Brown	S Hirst
S Carefoot	S Hore
J Clark	A Knox
S Fletcher	D Peat
M French	J Rogerson
J Hill	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services and Director of Economic Development and Planning

1087 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

1088 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE TWO PREVIOUS MEETINGS

The minutes of the meetings held on 19 January and 16 February 2021 respectively were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

1089 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillors S Bibby, S Fletcher, S Hore and A Knox declared an interest in Agenda Item 6 – Voluntary Organisation Grants 2021/22.

Councillors S Fletcher and A Knox declared an interest in Agenda Item 10 - Voluntary Organisation Grant – Citizens Advice Bureau Performance Monitoring Information.

1090 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Ms G McCrum attended the meeting to ask a question about The Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill, which was currently going through Parliament. She asked if the committee felt that the CEEBill offered a valuable framework for the Climate Change Working Group to consider a comprehensive approach for the Ribble Valley and its population, to be planning to be carbon neutral as soon as possible, whilst also meeting the local ecological challenges.

The Chairman thanked Ms. McCrum for her question and assured her that the Council would watch with interest the passage of the CEE Bill through parliament and that the Climate Change Working Group would take into account the provisions of the Bill in assessing the challenges facing the Council.

1091 BUSINESS SUPPORT GRANTS UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating members on the various Business Support Grants that had been awarded since the introduction of the local restrictions due to the Covid pandemic in September of last year; and informing them of the new Restart Grants which would replace the Local Restrictions Support Grants

from 1 April 2021. Consideration on how to utilise the remaining Additional Restrictions Grant funding available was required by committee.

The report outlined the grants paid to the 28 February 2021; the dates for closure of schemes and the Restart grants that would be paid to non-essential retail businesses and qualifying hospitality and retail properties.

Under the discretionary Additional Restrictions Grant scheme, a total of £808,869 had been paid as of 30 March 2021 which equated to 46% of the funding received. The Government had originally stated that the ARG funding could be spent up to March 2022, however, they had recently announced that additional funding would be provided by way of top-ups to local authorities who had spent their original allocation by the end of June 2021.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note the progress made with the allocation of Local Restriction Support Grants, and
2. Delegate to the Director of Resources in consultation with Budget Working Group amendments to the Additional Restriction Grant scheme to utilise the remaining funding to enable the Council to receive further funding from the Government.

(Councillors Bibby, Fletcher, Hore and Knox declared an interest in the next item of business and were put on hold)

1092

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS GRANTS 2021/22

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the recommendations of the voluntary organisation grant working group for their approval.

The working group had met to discuss the 26 applications received; a summary of which were included in the report.

Further information had been sought on three applications before a recommendation could be made. Suicide Awareness Prevention UK was identified as a CIC and therefore did not meet the criteria under this grant scheme .

It was also found that several applications would better fall under the remit of Recreation & Culture grants and it was agreed that the closing dates for both sets of applications should be aligned in future so that applications could be easily transferred for consideration.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the allocation of grants as proposed by the voluntary organisation grant working group as set out in the report with the deletion of Suicide Awareness Prevention UK, totalling £104,297.20

(Councillors Bibby, Fletcher, Hore and A Knox returned into the meeting)

1093

DRAFT CYCLE OF COMMITTEE MEETINGS 2021/22

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the proposed meeting cycle for the forthcoming municipal year 2021/22.

He informed committee that the Annual meeting had been put back a week to 18 May 2021 to accommodate Elections on 6 May 2021.

He also informed committee that the Government had made the decision not to extend the legislation to allow remote meetings beyond 7 May 2021 and that this would have implications for the Annual meeting and full Council meetings going forward as the Council Chamber was not large enough to accommodate the numbers required to attend. Committees would be able to meet and still adhere to regulations from 17 May 2021 assuming that the coronavirus 'road map' continued as outlined by the Prime Minister.

*** RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Recommend to Council the draft meeting cycle for the 2021/22 municipal year as outlined.

1094

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION IN NORTH YORKSHIRE AND CUMBRIA - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the Government's consultation on locally-led proposals to reorganise local government in Cumbria and North Yorkshire for which a response was required by 19 April 2021.

Following the consultation, the Secretary of State would decide, subject to Parliamentary approval, which, if any, proposals would be implemented, with or without modification.

Both of the areas being consulted upon border with Ribblesdale. One of the proposals submitted by Cumbria included taking Lancaster city from the Lancashire County Council area. All proposals included either unitary county councils or groupings of district councils.

It was agreed that a response should be made to the consultation on the proposals for local government reorganisation in our neighbouring county areas.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Respond to the consultation on proposals to reorganise local government in Cumbria and North Yorkshire,
2. Appoint a working group comprising of Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, D Peat and A Knox to consider the Council's response, and
3. Delegate to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chair of this committee the submission of any response agreed by the working group.

1095

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted a report updating committee on the work of the Climate Change working group and seeking financial support for a project.

The Chief Executive reported that the working group were working on developing a Climate Change Strategy for the council for the period 2021 – 2030 to include an action plan to ensure the Council reaches its target of being a carbon neutral borough by 2030.

The first step would be to understand our carbon footprint and One Carbon World had been commissioned to work this out.

He reported upon a funding request received from Ribble Rivers Trust towards a woodland planting scheme that the working group had considered and felt worthy of support for one year.

Members were supportive of the request and asked that feedback be gained on the success of the project.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve a grant of £15,000 for the Ribble Rivers Trust woodland planting project.
2. Agree to utilise £16,500 from the Business Rate Growth Reserve to fund the £15,000 grant to Ribble Rivers Trust and the £1,500 for the commissioning of One Carbon World.

(Councillors Fletcher and A Knox declared an interest in the next item of business and were put on hold)

1096

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANT - CITIZEN'S ADVICE BUREAU PERFORMANCE MONITORING INFORMATION.

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking committee to consider the performance monitoring information provided by the Citizens Advice Bureau for the period October to December 2020, to give approval for the final quarter of their voluntary organisation grant to be paid.

Committee considered the performance information and again observed that there was limited service contact in Longridge, and that it was very Clitheroe-centric. It was felt that more effort should be made to improve their outreach.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the final quarterly payment of £13,125 of voluntary organisation grant to Citizens Advice Bureau, and
2. Ask officers to seek reassurance from CAB that they will extend their services into Longridge.

(Councillors Fletcher and A Knox returned to the meeting)

1097

CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking approval for the Council's Capital and Treasury Management Strategy for the 2021/22 financial year that had been reviewed.

The Strategy reflected the linkage between asset management, the capital programme and our treasury management activities and was intended to set the framework for all aspects of the Council's capital expenditure including planning, management, prioritisation, funding, monitoring and outcomes.

It also provided the policy framework for the engagement of the council with financial markets in order to fund its capital programme, maintain the security of its cash balances and protect them from credit, liquidity and interest rate risk.

Members discussed the issue of supranational bonds and whether these were required by the Council.

*** RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Recommend to Council the Capital and Treasury Management Strategy as outlined with the deletion of the paragraph relating to supranational bonds (page 23 of the Strategy).

1098

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES 2021/22

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking committee to approve and adopt the treasury management policy statement and practices for 2021/22 that had been reviewed.

The document followed the wording recommended by the latest edition of the CIPFA Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross Sectoral Guidance Notes 2017 Edition and the practices were set out in a manner in which the Council would seek to achieve its treasury management policies and objectives, and how it would manage and control those activities.

A number of minor updates were highlighted that had been made to the Schedules within the document.

*** RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Recommend to Council the Treasury Management Policies and Practices 2021/22 as outlined with the deletion of the paragraph relating to supranational bonds and the list of approved investments instruments for the same (pages 21 and 23 of the document).

1099

LOCAL TAXATION WRITE OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking committee's approval to write off Council Tax and Business Rate debts relating to three companies that had been dissolved.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the writing off of £1,611.93 in Council Tax, £17,437.37 in Business Rates and £420.00 costs where it has not been possible to collect the amounts due.

1100

REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

The Director of Resources submitted two reports asking committee to consider recommendations from both Community Services and Health and Housing committees to bring forward previously approved capital schemes onto the 2021/22 financial year, and an approve an additional capital scheme for Health and Housing Committee.

A report was also submitted asking committee to consider the recommendation of Community Services committee to dispose of the King Street toilets site in Longridge.

1101 COMMUNITY SERVICES - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the request from Community Services committee to bring forward the capital scheme for the refurbishment of Bowling Green Café in Castle Grounds to the 2021/22 financial year at a reduced budget of £45,000.

1102 COMMUNITY SERVICES - COUNCIL ASSETS IN LONGRIDGE

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree to the recommendation of Community Services committee to advertise King Street toilet site in Longridge for sale on the open market with the resulting capital receipt to be used to fund a capital programme scheme in Longridge.

1103 HEALTH & HOUSING - JOINERS ARMS ROOF RENEWAL AND RENOVATION WORKS

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the request of Health & Housing committee to bring forward the Joiners Arms Roof Renewal capital scheme to the 2021/22 financial year at the reduced budget of £42,200, and
2. Approve the addition of a new capital scheme for the renovation of flats 1 and 2 at Joiners Arms, with a budget of £13,540 funded from the Flexible Homelessness Support Grant earmarked reserve.

1104 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2021/22

The Director of Resources submitted a report for information on the schemes approved for inclusion in this committee's 2021/22 capital programme. There were four schemes totalling £105,510.

1105 REVENUE MONITORING 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted a report for information on the position for the period April 2020 to February 2021 of this year's revised revenue budget as far as this committee was concerned.

A comparison between actual expenditure and the revised estimate was shown by cost centre and the main variations were highlighted. After allowing for transfers to/from earmarked reserves there was an underspend of £78,526.

1106 OVERALL REVENUE MONITORING 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted a report for information on the overall revenue position for the current financial year up to the end of February 2021.

The full position was shown and any variances above £10,000 were highlighted and reason given. Refuse collection vehicle maintenance costs continued to be an area of concern and had been discussed by the Budget working group who were considering options for taking the issue forward.

1107 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

Committee considered a report for information that covered National non-domestic rates (NNDR); sundry debtors; housing benefit and council tax support performance and housing benefit overpayments.

1108 MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP 28 SEPTEMBER 2020

The minutes of the Budget working group dated 28 September 2020 were submitted for information.

1109 MINUTES OF LONGRIDGE ASSETS WORKING GROUP

The minutes of the Longridge Assets working group dated 3 February 2021 were submitted for information.

1110 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

1111 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

1112 LOCAL TAXATION WRITE OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report seeking committee's approval to write off certain Council Tax debts relating to individuals where the debtors were bankrupt or had passed away.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the writing off of £3,865.35 of Council Tax debts where it has not been possible to collect the amount due.

The meeting closed at 8.00pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Olwen Heap 01200 414408 olwen.heap@ribblevalley.gov.uk.