

MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP MEETING

HELD 22 MARCH 2021

Present: S Atkinson (Chair), A Brown, S Fletcher, S Hirst, A Knox, D Peat, J Rogerson, Chief Executive, Director of Resources, Director of Community Services, Director of Economic Development and Planning, Head of Financial Services, Head of Revenues and Benefits.

1 Apologies

- 1.1 Cllr S Hore

2 Minutes of meeting held on 1 February 2021

- 2.1 Members approved the minutes of the last meeting of the Budget Working Group.

3 Overall Revenue Budget Monitoring 2020/21

- 3.1 The Head of Financial Services took members through a report on the overall budget monitoring position for the period to the end of February 2021. This was reported on a subjective basis across all committees, and it was explained that more detailed monitoring information was being reported to the service committee meetings.
- 3.2 A number of variances were discussed, but particular attention was brought to the overspend on refuse collection vehicle maintenance, which continued to be an area of concern.
- 3.3 There was a discussion on the issues raised within the report and around a number of possible ways forward to address the issue.
- 3.4 It was agreed that there should be an external review of the costs of the service. It was also agreed that costs should be sought for a 'fully inclusive' maintenance contract. Findings would initially be reported back to the Budget Working Group.

4 Business Support Grants Update

- 4.1 The Director of Resources gave an update on the various Business Support Grants awarded since the introduction of the local restrictions due to the Covid pandemic in September last year.
- 4.2 The report showed grants paid to date under the LRSG schemes. It was explained that the schemes would close on 31 March except for:
- Local Restrictions Support Grant (Closed) for the period 16 February 2021 – 31 March 2021 will close on 31 May 2021
 - Closed Business Lockdown Payment will close on 30 April 2021.
- 4.3 The report went on to describe the new Restart Grants and the applicable payments by business type.
- 4.4 An update was also provided on the Additional Restriction Grant (ARG) Scheme and there was a discussion regarding the next steps with regard to the ARG scheme. Members were also updated on the potential for further funding being available.
- 4.5 Members noted the progress made with the allocation of LRSG grants and following discussions on next steps it was agreed officers should produce a proposed scheme for ARG and bring this back to a future Budget Working Group Meeting.

5 New Homes Bonus Consultation

- 5.1 Members were taken through a report on the New Homes Bonus Consultation. The consultation was seeking views on the future of the New Homes Bonus from 2022/23 onwards. The closing date for the consultation was 7 April 2021.

- 5.2 Background to the New Homes Bonus scheme was provided, including details of the funding received by this council under the scheme and how such funds had been used to date.
- 5.3 A draft response from the District Council Network was included with the report and a number of key considerations for any response from this council were also flagged to Members.
- 5.4 There was a discussion on the consultation and a number of suggestions for inclusion in the response were made.

6 Local Council Tax Support Scheme

- 6.1 The Director of Resources took Members through a report on the Local Council Tax Support Scheme, providing background to the history of the scheme and also outlining the current scheme that was in place.
- 6.2 A comparison was provided to the schemes in place at other Lancashire councils. It was noted that the scheme for 2021/22 had already been agreed, but it was highlighted that should the scheme be changed for 2022/23 then the consultation process could take some time to undertake.
- 6.3 The costs of the current scheme were explained, as was the impact on the precepting bodies.
- 6.4 It was agreed that there would need to be future discussions on any proposals for change to the scheme for 2022/23.

7 Any Other Business

- 7.1 There were no other items of business.

8 Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was agreed that a further meeting would be arranged in April.