

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.