

Minutes of Economic Development

Meeting Date: Thursday, 17 June 2021, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chair)

Councillors:

D Berryman	S Farmer
D Birtwhistle	S Fletcher
B Buller	M French
S Carefoot	S Hore
J Clark	G Mirfin
L Edge	R Thompson
R Elms	

In attendance: Director of Economic Development and Planning, Head of Leisure and Cultural Services and Senior Accountant

78 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for the meeting were received from Councillor R Bennett.

79 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

80 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests on specific items on the agenda.

81 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

82 CAPITAL OUTTURN 2020/21

The Director of Resources submitted a report outlining the 2020/21 capital outturn for this committee and seeking approval for the slippage of some capital scheme budgets from the 2020/21 financial year to the 2021/22 financial year.

The total approved budget for this committee's capital programme of two schemes was £101,750 of which £66,750 had already been approved to move into the 2021/22 financial year in February 2021 following a review of progress on all schemes.

To date no expenditure had been made on the two remaining schemes and the remaining budget of £35,000 was therefore requested to be moved into the 2021/22 financial year.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the slippage of the following budgets into the 2021/22 capital programme:

- Economic Development Initiatives - £15,000
- Gateway Signs for Whalley, Longridge and Clitheroe - £20,000

WELCOME BACK FUND

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report asking committee to consider suggestions for utilising the recently announced Welcome Back Fund.

Following on from the Government's Reopening High Street Safely Fund in May 2020 where the Council had been awarded £53,771 to enable the high streets to reopen safely, there was now a Welcome Back Fund available, from which the Council had been awarded another £53,771. Combined with the underspend on the first fund this gave the Council a total allocation of £82,084 for helping to boost tourism, improve green spaces and provide more outdoor seating areas, markets and food stall pop-ups.

It was proposed to concentrate spend on the two new strands of activity for which this fund could be used, namely

- Support to promote a safe public environment for a local area's visitor economy, and
- Support local authorities to develop plans for responding to the medium term impact of Covid-19 including trialling new ideas particularly where these relate to the High Street,

and to do this in the three main retail areas of Whalley, Clitheroe and Longridge.

The Director of Economic Development and Planning suggested that the funding be utilised for the following:

- Appointing consultants to develop longer term strategic action plans for the three retail areas which will include engagement with stakeholders to understand any emerging issues and to explore options for pilot projects within the retail areas;
- Design and erect banners, bunting etc to make the retail areas more visually attractive and promote the areas – this would include advertisement material;
- Purchase temporary gazebos/seating – potentially linked to the pilot projects to be explored by the consultants; and
- Procure services of a local artist to beautify high streets possibly linked to themes, such as Christmas decoration, within the high street.

The fund was wholly revenue funding and items were limited to £1000 value. It was also expected that the local authority would engage with local businesses and other relevant stakeholders and it was proposed to do this via the Town/Parish Councils.

The fund introduces a delivery partner option. Any delivery partners would be expected to demonstrate compliance with the funding rules, with non-compliance resulting in denial of funds which had already been defrayed, for which the Borough Council as grant recipients would be the accountable body.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree to the suggested areas of activity as outlined, and
2. Agree that Ribble Valley Borough Council shall be solely responsible for the defrayal of the funding although there will be engagement with the relevant parish/town councils and stakeholders throughout the lifetime of the funding (the funding runs until the end of March 2022).

84 LEVELLING UP FUND

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report for information on the recently announced Levelling Up Fund that was intended to invest in infrastructure that improves everyday life.

She informed committee that after consideration it had been decided to submit a bid for Longridge Town Centre under the regeneration and town centre investment theme of the fund. Officers had worked with Butress Architects who had produced a Strategic Overview document which was circulated. This had been shared with the community of Longridge and two public engagement sessions had been held. The bid had to be submitted by 18 June 2021, and help with the economic case had been sought and procured with the necessary exemption agreement regarding contract procedure rules from the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and Director of Resources.

She informed committee that further information was available that needed to be considered under the Exempt section of the agenda.

85 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

86 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

87 LEVELLING UP FUND

The Director of Economic Development and Planning reported further on details relating to the bid submission for the Levelling Up Fund, in particular regarding the costs, margins and contingencies and the Council's responsibility for meeting any additional costs and underwriting of any funding contributions expected from third parties.

Members were supportive of submitting the bid subject to approval of the Emergency committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree to submit the bid to the Levelling Up Fund based on the cost assumptions as outlined;
2. Agree that the margins and contingencies as set out are acceptable noting that the Council accepts responsibility for meeting any costs over and above the contribution requested, including potential cost overruns and the underwriting of any funding contributions expected from third parties; and
3. Ask the Emergency committee to approve the submission of the bid on 18 June 2021 due to the tight timescales of the submission deadline.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

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