

Minutes of Policy and Finance

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 28 March 2023, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Atkinson (Chair)

Councillors:

D Berryman	J Hill
S Bibby	S Hore
A Brown	K Horkin
S Fletcher	R Newmark
M French	D Peat
G Hibbert	

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

851 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors L Edge, M Hindle and R Thompson

852 TO APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY (SPECIAL) AND 24 JANUARY

The minutes of the meetings held on 14 February 2023 and 24 January 2023 were approved as correct records and signed by the Chairman.

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

Councillor S Hore declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 – Voluntary Organisation Grants 2022/23 (Ribble Valley Crossroads Care)

Councillor S Bibby declared an interest in Agenda Item 11 – Voluntary Organisation Grants 2022/23 (Carers Link)

854 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr T Hill, Chairman of Whalley Educational Foundation, spoke on agenda item 10 UK Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically relating to the further development of Whalley Old Grammar School Community Centre.

Ms S Hind, Chairman of Clitheroe Town Team, spoke on agenda item 10 UK Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically relating to Clitheroe projects.

Mr R Stephenson, member of Clitheroe Town Team and Chairman of Primrose Nature Trust, spoke on agenda item 10 UK Shared Prosperity Fund, specifically relating to improving Clitheroe and the Primrose Community Nature Reserve.

855 REVIEW OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS AND CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES

The Director of Resources submitted a report to recommend to Council the acceptance of the reviewed financial regulations and contract procedure rules and the associated changes necessary to the Corporate Debt Write Off Policy.

Members were advised that the key changes are:

- Changes to the procurement processes in respect of numbers of quotes and tendering limits
- Clarifying the insurance levels that should be sought from suppliers when asking for quotations or procuring through tender and offering guidance on additional levels of insurance or cover types that may be relevant depending on the works, goods or services being procured and the potential risks involved.
- Increasing the level of debt write off that needs committee approval from over £1,000 to over £5,000.

The revised Contact Procedure Rules were annexed to the report and Members were informed that the main changes reflect the changes in respect of quote and tender requirements and clarity on insurance levels.

*****RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:**

Recommend to Full Council acceptance of the reviewed Financial Regulations and revised Contract Procedure Rules, together with the associated changes to the Corporate Debt Write Off Policy.

856

TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES

The Director of Resources submitted a report to review, approve and adopt the Treasury Management Policy Statement and Practices for 2023/24.

Members were informed that the Treasury Management Policies and Practices document is reviewed on an annual basis to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) Code. Since March 2022, there have not been any further changes to the CIPFA Treasury Management Code and so the majority of the document remains unchanged.

However, Members were advised that the Council is proposing increases to its counterparty limits to allow greater flexibility in the Council's treasury management operations.

*****RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:**

Recommend to Council the Treasury Management Policies and Practices 2023/24.

857

CAPITAL AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Resources submitted a report to seek Member approval for the Council's Capital and Treasury Management Strategy for the 2023/24 financial year.

It was noted that elements of the document had previously been approved as part of the budget setting process, but they were attached to the report together under a single strategy.

*****RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:**

Recommend to Council the Capital and Treasury Management Strategy as set out in Annex 1 to the report.

858

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2023/24 TO 2027/28

The Director of Resources submitted a report to seek approval of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. The

plan was annexed to the report and it included the implications of the latest budgets for both revenue and capital.

Members were advised that it is a key financial planning document and aims to provide an assurance that the Council's spending plans are affordable over the Medium Term. It is important that it is understood by all members and staff.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Plan for 2023/24 to 2027/28.

859

LOCAL TAXATION WRITE OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report to obtain Committee's approval to write off business rates debts relating to two businesses that had been dissolved.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve writing off a total of £10,666.89 in business rates with £180.00 costs where it has not been possible to collect the amount due.

860

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Director of Economic Planning and Development submitted a report seeking a decision from Members in respect of the use of our UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocations for 2023/24.

Members were informed that the release of the UKSPF payments for the financial years 2023-24 and 2024-2025 is dependent on the submission of a Statement of Grant Usage for 2022-23 and 2023-2024 spend and corresponding reporting and monitoring returns.

Members noted that the Council's calculated 2023/24 fund allocation (including roll over from this year) would be £485,965. The UKSPF Working Group met on 2 March 2023 and their recommendations were:

Project	Capital	Revenue	Total
Castle Street Improvements	£300,000		£300,000
Enhanced website and marketing opportunities		£40,000	£40,000
Clitheroe Market Improvements	£100,000		£100,000
Management and administration		£19,520	£19,520
TOTAL	400,000	£19,520	£459,520

Members were advised that further requests for use of the Council's UKSPF had been received recently, namely for:

- the development of social enterprises among newly arrived refugee women
- creating a Community Space in Barrow
- developing Whalley Old Grammar School Community Centre
- International trade show support for a company based in the Ribble Valley
- 'SAFE' (Safer Access for Everyone) to construct a new, two-lane access road with separate pedestrian access to replace the existing, unmade single track to and from Ribchester Road

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Instruct Officers to commence the projects recommended by the Working Group to utilise the majority of the 2023/24 UK Shared Prosperity Funding allocation, namely:
 - a. Castle Street Improvements.
 - b. Creation of an enhanced website and marketing opportunities.
 - c. Improvements to Clitheroe Market.
2. Instruct the Director of Economic Development and Planning to contact the Parish Councillor involved in the Sports Centre/ Community Park, Whalley project to advise that definitive confirmation that the scheme could be delivered during 2024/25, that sufficient match funding has been secured (including full details of that funding) and full confirmation that all of the required consents have been secured will be required by 31st October 2023. This deadline is specified to enable the Working Group to consider whether any of the 2024/25 funding should be allocated to this project.
3. Refer the new projects listed within Section 5 of the report back to the Working Group for further consideration.

Councillors S Bibby and S Hore left the meeting.

861

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATION GRANTS 2022/23

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to approve the allocation of voluntary organisation grants for 2023/24.

The Director of Resources outlined the Scheme to Committee and the recommendations of the Voluntary Organisation Grants member working group after having considered the applications made.

It was noted that, after considering the applications, the working group made the following specific suggestions:

- a) That recommended payments of grants is subject to the applicants providing any outstanding supporting documentation that is required per the grant scheme criteria;
- b) That Bowland Pennine Mountain Rescue Team be invited to give a presentation to Policy and Finance Committee later on in the financial year concerning how the group has benefitted from the grant funds
- c) That a review is carried out after six months that asks Citizen's Advice Rossendale and Hyndburn to provide some further details as to their face-to-face meetings in the Ribble Valley.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the allocation of grants as proposed by the Voluntary Organisation Grants Working Group as set out in Annex 2 to the Report, totalling £51,750.

Councillors S Bibby and S Hore returned to the meeting.

862

REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEES

- (i) Changing Places Fund Allocation

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a request from Community Services Committee for an additional capital programme scheme and also a supplementary revenue estimate in respect of the Governments' Changing Places Fund.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve a capital programme scheme of £204,000 for the Changing Places toilet schemes at Edisford Riverbank, Ribchester and Clitheroe Castle Field, fully funded from the Government's Changing Places Fund Grant.
2. Approve a supplementary estimate of £18,140 to the revenue budget in respect of running and maintenance costs for the facilities funded from the VAT Shelter Earmarked Reserve in 2023/24 and then be included in the base budget for future years.

(ii) Berry Lane Toilets

The Director of Resources submitted a report to Committee asking them to consider a request from Community Services Committee for an additional capital programme scheme and a supplementary revenue estimate in respect of the provision of Berry Lane Toilets by this Council rather than by Longridge Town Council.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve a capital programme scheme of £45,000 for the Refurbishment of Berry Lane Toilets in a vandal proof design funded from the VAT Shelter Earmarked Reserve.
2. Approve a supplementary estimate of £3,640 to the revenue budget in respect of annual cleaning and repair costs of Berry Lane Toilets funded from the VAT Shelter Earmarked Reserve in 2023/24 and included in the base budget for future years.

863 SOLAR PANELS

The Head of Cultural and Leisure Services submitted a report providing Committee with a proposal for the installation of PV cells (solar panels) on to Council Buildings.

Members were advised that, given that a feasibility study is planned for the pool, it would be sensible to await the outcome of that before deciding on an investment in panels for that building. However it will be investigated whether an installation of panels on that building could be incorporated in to any future development of the facility.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree in principle to the installation of solar panels on the Council Offices and request officers to bring a report to the next meeting with more details including an evaluation of:
 - Site panels only on the south facing roof space.
 - Site panels on all roof space.
2. Approve that the scheme costs be met from the Council's Invest to Save Fund Earmarked Reserve.

3. Request officers to further investigate the installation of solar panels on other Council buildings including Ribblesdale Pool, Salthill Depot and the Platform Gallery.

864

HIS MAJESTY KING CHARLES III CORONATION

The Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider how the Council helps celebrate the King's Coronation.

The report recommended that a grant offer of £250 should be made to each Parish and Town Council to encourage them to organise their own events. However, an amendment was approved to increase this to £500 in line with the grants offered to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

It was further noted that there will be a live screening of the Coronation on Clitheroe Bandstand and that the Council encourages residents having street parties for the occasion. Reference was also made to the Big Help Out on 8 May and the suggestion of making litter picking resources available to Parishes.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree to waive charges for processing street closure orders for Coronation street-parties.
2. Agree grants of £500 to each Parish and Town Council to celebrate the Coronation.
3. Agree to make litter picking equipment available to Parishes to support the Big Help Out.

865

DRAFT MEETING CYCLE 2023 - 24

The Chief Executive submitted a report outlining the proposed meeting cycle for the forthcoming municipal year 2023/24.

He informed Committee that as there are elections in May 2023 for both Borough and Parish Councillors, the date of the Annual meeting has been put back by 2 weeks to allow for the legal requirement of 5 days notice of the meeting to all Councillors.

***RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the draft meeting cycle as set out in Appendix A of the Report for ratification at the Annual Meeting on 23 May 2023.

866

REVENUE MONITORING 2022/23

The Director of Resources submitted an information report advising as to the position for the period April to February 2023 of this year's revised revenue budget as far as this Committee was concerned.

The comparison between actual and budgeted expenditure shows a total underspend of £184,593 to February 2023 of the financial year 2022/23. After allowing for transfers to/from earmarked reserves there is an underspend of £199,830.

£136,351 of the variance is attributable to the Household Support Fund (£69k) and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (£67k) where grant funds were received after the budgets were estimated. It was noted that these variances would largely resolve by the end of the financial-year as the accounts are closed down.

867 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Director of Resources submitted a report to inform Members of the schemes approved for inclusion in this Committee's 2023/24 capital programme.

This Committee has a capital programme for 2023/24 of nine schemes, totalling £522,550. Any slippage on the schemes in the 2022/23 capital programme would be reported to this Committee.

868 LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FUND

The Director of Resources submitted an information report to update Committee on the progress made with the Local Council Tax Support Additional Support Fund for 2023/24.

Committee noted the £55,503 allocation from Government for the Council Tax Support Additional Support Fund 2023/24 and the progress made in reducing the Council Tax bills of eligible households.

869 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

The Director of Resources submitted a report to inform Committee of debts outstanding for business rates, council tax and sundry debtors. The report also updated Committee on benefits performance, including benefits processing times and overpayment recovery.

It was noted the continuing progress that the Council makes in collecting these debts, and the performance of the Housing Benefit Section remains satisfactory.

870 ALTERNATIVE FUNDING SCHEMES FOR THE ENERGY BILLS SUPPORT SCHEME AND THE ALTERNATIVE FUEL PAYMENT UPDATE

The Director of Resources submitted an information report to update Committee about the progress made with the alternative support for household energy bills announced by Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (ESNZ) in December 2022.

871 MINUTES OF BUDGET WORKING GROUP - 19 DECEMBER 2022

The minutes of the Budget Working Group meeting held on 19 December 2022 were submitted for Committee's information.

872 MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS - CCWG

The minutes of the Climate Change Working Group meeting held on 23 November 2022 were submitted for Committee's information.

873 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

874 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

875

LOCAL TAXATION AND HOUSING BENEFITS WRITE OFFS

The Director of Resources submitted a report to obtain Committee's approval to write off certain Council Tax and Housing Benefits debts relating to individuals.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve writing off £3,897.09 of Council Tax debts plus £337.40 costs and £5,247.90 of Housing and Council Tax benefit debts where it has not been possible to collect the amount due.

876

REFERENCE FROM COMMITTEES

(i)

Biofuel for Trial for the Council Vehicle Fleet

The Director of Resources submitted a report asking Committee to consider a request from Community Services Committee for a supplementary revenue estimate in respect of a biofuel trial in respect of a number of vehicles on the Council's fleet.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve a supplementary estimate of £15,000 to the revenue budget in respect of a twelve-week trial of biofuel funded from the VAT Shelter Earmarked Reserve.

The Director of Resources left the meeting

877

SENIOR MANAGEMENT CHANGES

The Chief Executive submitted a report to set out recent staff changes in the senior management positions within the Council and asking Committee to consider amendment to the management structure.

Members were informed that the main issue that has arisen from the recent significant changes in senior management positions is the need for succession planning. Going forward it is intended that a report will be prepared for Personnel Committee on a workforce plan which will include succession planning.

Members were informed that one immediate change that would provide some continuity relates to the role of Chief Executive. The position would be much improved if within the Council's structure there was a formal Deputy Chief Executive. This could be achieved with the Council's Statutory Section 151 Officer, the Director of Resources becoming Deputy Chief Executive alongside the existing duties of the post.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note the significant changes in senior management positions.
2. Agree to amend the Council's structure and add the role of Deputy Chief Executive to the Director of Resources post at the grade set out in the report.
3. Agree that a workforce plan be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.
4. Agree that a policy be put in place confirming that the Deputy Chief Executive is also the Statutory Section 151 Officer and to create a new job description for the Deputy Chief Executive role.

The meeting closed at 8.03 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin 01200 413214 olwen.heap@ribblevalley.gov.uk.