

Minutes of Policy and Finance

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 20 June 2023, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Atkinson (Chair)

Councillors:

D Birtwhistle	K Horkin
L Edge	L Jameson
S Fletcher	McCrum
M French	R Newmark
G Hibbert	J Rogerson
S Hirst	Wilkins-Odudu
S Hore	

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Community Resources and Head of Legal and Democratic Services

Also in attendance: Councillor K Barnsley

97 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

98 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillor S Bibby.

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

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

100 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

101 BRIEFING ON THE WORK OF THE POLICY & FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive gave a verbal presentation which included the Terms of Reference of the Policy and Finance Committee and an explanation of the remit of the Committee. She also advised members to consider if they need to make any declarations of interest regarding agenda items and where they were unsure to seek advice from the Monitoring Officer prior to a meeting.

102 APPOINTMENT OF WORKING GROUPS

The Chief Executive submitted a report to consider the appointment of members to any working groups under the remit of this committee for the municipal year 2023/24.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the following working groups and their membership under the remit of this committee –

Voluntary Organisation Grants – Councillors R Newmark, L Edge, S Fletcher, A Wilkins-Odudu, D Birtwhistle.

Budget Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, S Hirst, S Fletcher, L Jameson, J Rogerson, G McCrum.

UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, S Fletcher, L Jameson, J Rogerson.

Corporate Strategy Working Group – Councillors S Atkinson, S Hore, K Horkin, S Fletcher, D Birtwhistle, A Wilkins-Odudu, G McCrum.

103

UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating Members in respect of the use of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for 2022/23 and seeking approval for the allocation of funds.

The report noted the allocations for 2022/23 and the indicative allocations for 2023/24 and 2024/25. The Council's Investment Plan had included several projects to deliver in the 2022/23 financial year. The projects for which Committee had agreed on 24 January 2023 were listed in the report along with updates on each scheme.

The allocation for 2022/23 had not been received by the Council until January 2023 and £145,618 of the 2022/23 allocation would be carried forward to the 2023/24 financial year. 81% of the underspend amount had already been committed to projects therefore the remaining £28,018 would be considered by the UKSPF Working Group.

Officers asked Members to consider the recommendations that from the £28,018 underspend, £18,500 be allocated to part fund the drainage works at Mardale Playing Field, and £690 allocated to fund a grant to Whalley Parish Council for the erection of a CCTV camera.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the use of up to £18,500 of the UKSPF 2022/23 underspend (not yet allocated) to part fund the drainage works at Mardale.
2. Approve grant funding to Whalley Parish Council totalling £690 for the erection of a standalone CCTV camera at Whalley CofE Primary School.

104

RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF)

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating members on the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and seeking approval for the suggested grant scheme.

The REPF was complimentary to the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and was a top-up available to eligible local authorities. The report noted the interventions

approved by members on 8 November 2022 which had steered the proposed spend for REPF. The Council had met with REPF Partnership Group and discussed projects which would meet the agreed interventions and funding criteria set out by Central Government.

The Council had submitted an addendum to the UKSPF investment plan which resulted in an award of £433,680 of capital funding to be invested in rural capital projects over the next two financial years.

The proposed full grant criteria, which would be administered by Council Officers, was included in the report.

Members felt that the grant criteria and application process too onerous and that it needed to be considered further by the UKSPF working group.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Refer the REPF capital grant scheme criteria and process to the UK Shared Prosperity (UKSPF) Working Group to consider.

105

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CORPORATE STRATEGY 2023-2027

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider the next steps in the development of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

The Corporate Strategy set out the strategic direction of the Council, and provided a focus to ensure that services met the needs of the community. The 2019-2023 strategy was due a complete review, and a new strategy was required for 2023-2027.

The next steps in the development of the strategy were included in the report and it was recommended that in order to review the Council's priorities a small working group was established, which would be tasked with bringing the new Corporate Strategy 2023-2027 to the scheduled Committee meeting on 7 November 2023.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree the suggested approach to reviewing the Corporate Strategy.
2. Agree a small working group to review the Corporate Strategy, with the membership noted at agenda item 6.

106

INDEPENDENT PANEL REPORT ON REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider the report of the independent remuneration panel on members' allowances following their review of the current scheme, and to make recommendations regarding the new scheme to Full Council.

The Council was required to agree and publicise its members' allowance scheme each year and undertake an independent review at least every 4 years.

The independent panel had conducted interviews with seven Councillors, and reviewed details of members allowances schemes from 11 other Lancashire District Councils. The full report of the panel was included with the report which set out their

findings and full recommendations. The panel had concluded that overall the existing Members' Allowance Scheme was a fair reflection of Councillor duties and responsibilities however, proposed that the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA) be amended to include an allowance for the leader of each political group where the group had a minimum of 5 members or more. The Council's budget for 2023/24 was £262,350 and the proposed recommendations would result in an additional SRA of £6,180 to group leaders.

Committee were asked to consider the recommendations in report in order for the new Member's Allowance scheme to be agreed at the Full Council meeting on 11 July 2023. Once the Council had approved the Scheme it would make arrangements for its publication as set out in the report.

*** RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Agree the Members' Allowance Scheme recommended by the Independent Panel.
2. Recommend to Council the revised Scheme for Members Allowances as set out in the report.
3. Thank the Independent Remuneration Panel for their work in formulating proposals for the revised scheme.

107 CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022/23

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report informing Members of the final capital outturn of the 2022/23 capital programme for this committee.

All schemes in the revised capital programme had been completed in-year with an actual expenditure of £88,859 which was just short of 100% of the revised estimate budget. A number of schemes had been moved to the 2023/24 financial year at the revised estimate and were included in the 2023/24 capital programme.

108 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MONITORING 2023/24

The Director of Resources submitted a monitoring report for information on the treasury management activities for the period 1 April 2023 to 31 May 2023. This included temporary investments, interest on investments, local government bonds agency, borrowing, borrowing requirements, prudential indicators, approved organisations, recent events and exposure to risk.

109 REVENUES AND BENEFITS GENERAL REPORT

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

110 OVERALL CAPITAL OUTTURN 2022/23

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for information providing details of the capital programme outturn for all committees for 2022/23 financial year.

Actual expenditure on the Council's capital programme in 2022/23 was £1,157,457, which was 48.5% of the revised estimate budget. Of the twenty-three schemes in the programme, fifteen had been completed in-year and sixteen had not been completed by year-end including three on-going Housing Grant schemes. Budget slippage had been requested of £1,226,690 on the sixteen schemes not completed.

111 MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS

There were no minutes of working groups.

112 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

113 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next item of business being exempt information under Paragraphs 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.

114 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 4

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report asking committee to consider the Household Support Fund Round 4 (HSF4) and seeking approval for the Council's HSF4 scheme.

The report reminded members of the three previous Household Support Funds which had run from October 2021 to March 2023, where funding had been received via LCC for allocation and award to recipients.

Committee were informed that another extension had been made to the fund running from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024. LCC had confirmed that £240,000 would be allocated to RVBC.

The areas of eligible spend were outlined in respect of this scheme and the proposed ways in which to allocate funds using an application process, which included supermarket vouchers, targeted assistance, debt/financial advice, and an allocation for administration.

Members requested again that the scheme be publicised as widely as possible so that all those eligible could apply. The criteria that those 'in receipt of the cost-of-living payment or winter fuel payment would not be eligible' was discussed and it was felt that this should be discussed with LCC with a view to removing this if possible. The increased household income threshold to £50,000 was also welcomed by Members.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the Council's HSF4 scheme which will consist of:
 - 1.1. A supermarket voucher application scheme initially from 3rd July until 1st September 2023 (with additional application windows funding permitting) with the following criteria/offer:
 - £200 for single households
 - £300 for households with two or more adults residing.
 - £500 for households with children
 - A combined household income threshold of up to £50,000.
 - Agreement for the applicants to have a discussion with our Debt/Cost of Living Advisor in respect of financial matters.
 - 1.2. Targeted assistance to the following groups:
 - Unpaid carers who are disregarded for Council Tax purposes.
 - Care leavers
 - Households who have been in receipt of a disability facility grant since 6 October 2021
 - 1.3. Financial and debt advice provided in house by the appointed Debt/Cost of Living Advisor whilst the funding is available.
 - 1.4. Discuss with LCC the possibility of removing criteria that anyone in receipt of the cost-of-living payment or winter fuel payment will not be eligible.

115

INSURANCE RENEWALS 2023/24

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the results of a recent Insurance Services Tender.

The previous tender for the Council's insurance services was carried out in 2018 and resulted in a five-year contract effective from 20 June 2018 to 19 June 2023. Tenders had been invited in April 2023 using the Crown Commercial Services Framework system and of the 4 eligible companies only 1 submission was received, which was from the existing provider. The approved available budget for insurance services was £221,630 however there was a shortfall against the tender price totalling £35,760.

The report included a summary of the Premium for 2022/23 compared to the latest tender submission, comments on premiums with the measures taken to mitigate potential increases, and claims history analysis.

Members were asked to consider the additional cost above that already budgeted for in 2023/24, which would also have an impact on future years. It was confirmed at the meeting that an extension had been granted on the existing contract until the new contract was agreed.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the award of the contract on the basis that the additional budget of £35,760 will be reflected on services at the time of setting the revised estimate for the year, and that the increased costs will be built into the Council's base budget for future years.

Councillor S Atkinson left the meeting and Councillor S Hore proceeded as Chair in respect of the next agenda item.

116

LAND AT HIGHMOOR PARK, CLITHEROE

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee of the current position in relation to the proposed lease for right of access over Council owned land at Highmoor Park and seeking Members' approval for taking the preparatory steps required pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972.

The Council had acquired the land as part of the requirements of a Section 106 Agreement dated 10 July 1992. The Local Planning Authority had granted outline planning permission for the construction of up to 125 dwellings at a site. In order to facilitate access to the site, the landowner had sought to lease an area of the Council owned land, which Committee had approved subject to the approval of the district valuer and delegated approval of the lease to the Council's Chief Executive.

The report provided details to Members in regards to the proposed transaction and agreement, along with the recommended next steps, and a subsequent report would be brought back to Committee, prior to any decision being made.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note the current position with regard to the terms of the lease, and authorise the Chief Executive to continue to negotiate the lease and associated documents.
2. Approve the taking of preparatory steps required pursuant to the Local Government Act 1972.

Councillor S Atkinson returned to the meeting and resumed the position of Chair.

117

ROEFIELD LEISURE FURTHER LOAN REQUEST

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider a request made by Roefield Leisure for a further loan.

The report explained the details of the current loan arrangement which was agreed by Committee on 8 June 2010. The Council had received a request from Roefield Leisure to consider a new loan, which was included in the report, along with the considerations to be made under the Local Government Act 2003.

Following discussion at the meeting it was felt that up to date detailed financial information was required in order to consider the request further.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Request up to date detailed financial information.
2. Report back to Committee for consideration.

REFERENCES FROM COMMITTEE - MARDALE PLAYING PITCHES

The Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report reference from Community Services Committee to consider a request to fund extra costs following the tendering exercise for the drainage of Mardale playing pitches at Longridge.

The cost arising from the tender exercise was £133,745 however the agreed capital budget was £80,900. In April 2023 Planning and Development Committee agreed to the allocation of £34,711 to the scheme from a s106 agreement at Longridge. The remaining shortfall on the budget for the scheme would be funded by an allocation of £18,500 from the 2022/23 underspend as noted at Agenda item 7.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree the request that additional s106 sum of £34,711 be added to the capital budget for use at Mardale together with £18,500 from the UKSPF

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Rebecca Tait 01200 414408 rebecca.tait@ribblevalley.gov.uk.