

Minutes of Health and Housing

Meeting Date: Thursday, 18 January 2024, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Alcock	R Ray (arrived at 6:45pm)
J Atherton	M Robinson
S Atkinson	C McFall
I Brown	L Street
R Corney	N Stubbs
S Farmer	A Wilkins-Odudu

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive, Head of Environmental Health Services, Strategic Housing Officer and Head of Strategic Planning and Housing

585 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors T Austin and D O'Rourke

586 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

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

588 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

589 PRESENTATION FROM NHS LSCFT ON THE NEW MENTAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The presentation was postponed and will take place at a future Committee.

590 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking Members agreement to a revised revenue budget for 2023/24 for this Committee.

Members were reminded that the original estimate for the current financial year was set in March 2023 but there could be numerous variations to the budget as the year progressed, particularly through the budget monitoring process. At this time of year, the Council revise the estimates for the current financial year to predict the likely outturn.

It was noted that 5% had been originally allowed for pay increases and 7.5% for price increases. The pay award for 2023/24 had now been settled and the overall cost for the Council was 6.5%, which was approximately £170,000 above what had been allowed for. The changes to the level in inflation had also been taken into account.

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive summarised some of the substantial movements for members' information. She also highlighted an error at paragraph 5.1 of the report and confirmed that it should have read that there was a net decrease in support services recharges amounting to £74,940.

Members were advised that the difference between the Original Estimate and the Revised Estimate was a decrease in expenditure of £453,440, or £246,100 after allowing for transfers to and from earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree the revenue revised estimate for 2023/24.

591

ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking for Members to agree the draft revenue budget for 2024/25, for consideration at Special Policy and Finance Committee.

Members were reminded that a budget forecast was presented to the Policy and Finance Committee in September 2023. This forecast predicted budget gaps of £877k in 2024/25, £2.261m in 2025/26 and £2.740m in 2026/27, after allowing for the use of general fund balances. The biggest factors affecting our forecast then were:

- Threat of losing New Homes Bonus.
- Assumption that the 'One-off Funding Guarantee' was indeed a one-off for 2023/24.
- What level interest rates and inflation would be over the life of the forecast.

The key updates to the September 2023 forecast were summarised as follows:

- The continuation of the 'One-off Funding Guarantee' where required
- The New Homes Bonus and the Rural Delivery Grant will both continue for 2024/25
- The Revenue Support Grant will increase in line with CPI with no negative RSG
- Business rates will not be reset and Business Rate Pooling will continue
- A council tax referendum principle of up to 3% or £5 for district councils
- Ribble Valley's Core Spending Power is set to increase by 4.7%

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive highlighted some of the main variations to net expenditure for this Committee.

The total movement from the Original Estimate in 2023/24 to the Original Estimate 2024/25 was a decrease of £37,850, or an increase of £31,350 after movements to and from earmarked reserves.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the revenue original estimate for 2024/25 and submit this to the Special Policy and Finance Committee.

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report seeking approval for the 2023/24 revised estimate for this Committee's capital programme.

Seven capital schemes for this Committee's original estimate budget, totalling £2,860,440 were approved by the Policy and Finance Committee and Full Council at their meetings in February 2023 and March 2023 respectively. Furthermore, an additional budget of £34,290 was approved for an existing scheme due to additional government funding being received (Disabled Facility Grants).

Seven capital schemes had not been completed by 21 March 2023. The total unspent budget of £1,006,190 for these schemes, known as slippage, was moved into the 2023/24 capital programme budget, after approval by this Committee on 8 June 2023.

The proposed revised estimate for this Committee's 2023/24 capital programme was £1,243,830, which was a £2,657,090 reduction from the previously approved capital budget. It was recommended that budgets totalling £2,652,580 on five schemes be moved to the 2024/25 financial year.

It was further noted that at the end of December 2023, £533,787 had been spent or committed. This was 42.9% of the revised capital programme for this Committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the 2023/24 revised estimate of £1,243,830 for this Committee's capital programme, as set out in Annex 1 of the report.
2. Approve the move of the following capital scheme budgets from 2023/24 to 2024/25:
 - Affordable Housing – Longridge, £1,625,950
 - Disabled Facilities Grants, £517,430
 - Assisted Purchase Scheme, £297,130
 - Landlord/Tenant Grants, £112,490
 - Temporary Housing Scheme, £99,580

CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report asking Committee to consider the future capital programme for this Committee, covering the period 2024/25 to 2028/29.

For this Committee there were originally nine schemes approved for the financial years 2024/25 to 2027/28, totalling £1,842,500. No changes to the existing capital programme 2024/25 to 2027/28 were proposed.

It was noted that the Disabled Facilities Grants scheme was fully funded by Central Government each year. The 2024/25 and 2027/28 Disabled Facilities Grants budgets have been set at indicative amounts which are equal to the current year's funding from Central Government. Should the Central Government funding in any year be higher or lower than budgeted for, then the scheme budget will be adjusted accordingly.

New capital bids had been put forward for 2028/29 for Committee to consider. For this Committee there had been four new bids totalling £893,000. £393,000 of this total is

expected to be funded by Central Government. As such, the total additional funding needed to support these new bids would be £500,000.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the future capital programme for this Committee's services for onward recommendation to Policy and Finance Committee for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29, based on the proposals included in the report.

594

REVIEW OF THE AFFORDABLE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY AND A CHOICE BASE LETTING SYSTEM

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report seeking approval to the suggested amendments to the Council's Affordable Housing Allocation Policy (Allocation Policy) and to consider suggestions made by the Strategic Housing Working Group in respect of moving to a Choice Base Letting (CBL) System for the allocation of available properties to people on the waiting list.

The Housing Strategy Officer outlined the importance of the allocation policy from both a strategic and operational level and summarised the proposed changes with reference to the following key issues:

- To include a requirement to evidence housing need
- To add further clarity to the local connection definition
- An update to the eligibility criteria to include immigration advice and armed forces connections
- Amendment to the medical points to ensure that they are awarded to reflect where housing is impacting on health.
- To update the number of points given for those who are homeless

It was noted that in the proposed Allocation Policy, where there is 'racial or homophobic harassment', this would constitute a case which would require allocation outside of the Council's normal policy and procedure. It was felt that this was somewhat limited in scope and should be widened to include just the term 'harassment'.

It was proposed that the Council would write to all those currently on the housing waiting list outlining the proposed changes, and there will be a six-week consultation process.

Consideration was also given to exploring whether to introduce a Choice Based Lettings Scheme (CBL). The Housing Strategy Officer gave an overview of how it would work in practice and outlined the advantages and costs implications of the system. Members were in favour of Officers giving further consideration to the CBL Scheme.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Approve the proposed changes to the Allocation Policy for a 6-week consultation as set out in the report and its appendix.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to make any other minor editorial amendments to the document prior to publishing the document for consultation.

3. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to explore options for a Ribble Valley CBL system including engagement with partners with a full detailed report brought back to this Committee.

595

AFFORDABLE WARMTH GRANT APPLICATION

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report requesting Committee's approval of the details of the Affordable Warmth grant scheme in Ribble Valley.

The Lancashire County Council grant offer for Ribble Valley is £46,488 for addressing affordable warmth in the borough in 2023/24.

The proposal was noted to have three elements:

- To offer servicing, repairs, and replacement boilers for eligible households.
- To purchase oil filled heaters and dehumidifiers in the event of any emergency weather conditions or on a needs basis. These will be loaned to households.
- To partner with the Home Improvement Agency to be able to offer home energy assessments to vulnerable households that have been identified as living in a cold home and to provide advice and measures to improve the energy efficiency of the home up to a maximum of £2000 per property.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Endorse the details of the Affordable Warmth Scheme for Ribble Valley 2023/24 as set out in the report.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to apply to LCC for the affordable warmth funds to finance grants under the Ribble Valley Affordable Warmth Scheme 2023/24.

596

LANCASHIRE FORCED MIGRATION STRATEGY

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report seeking Committee's approval for Ribble Valley Borough Council's inclusion in the Lancashire Forced Migration Strategy and to commit to supporting the objectives and the approach contained therein.

It was noted that refugee integration is co-ordinated by Lancashire County Council on behalf of 12 district authorities and two unitary authorities. All 15 Councils work in partnership to deliver 10 active migration schemes in total.

The Chief Executive advised that the Strategy had been raised at the Lancashire Leaders meeting prior to Christmas 2023. Consultation with Housing Officers had not taken place at that time and so the relevant Local Authorities were going to take time to consider the strategy further. It was also noted that originally the strategy had provided for each district agreeing to accommodate three households but this had been changed to include a 'minimum' of three households. Concerns were raised with this terminology.

The Housing Strategy Officer gave clarification as to the proposal and confirmed that LCC is seeking to lease properties and Ribble Valley Borough Council are being asked to inspect and approve the properties as being suitable.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Confirm agreement for Ribble Valley to be part of the Lancashire wide approach to Forced Migration Strategy including the following, subject to a suitable agreement with LCC:
 - a. 5% of the Council's 2022/23 Asylum Dispersal money to be provided as part of the County wide pooled fund.
 - b. Accommodate three households in Ribble Valley. The level of demand will be kept under review and reported to Committee.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to approve suitable properties to be used to house refugee and asylum seeker in Ribble Valley.

597

MARKET TRADER SELECTION PROCESS FOR VACANT CABINS - POINT BASED SYSTEM

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking for Committee to review and agree the new points based system used for selecting traders/businesses for market cabins when they become vacant.

It had previously been agreed at a meeting of this Committee on 23 March 2023 that the market cabin waiting list would be retired and that Council officers would manage the vacant cabins as they saw fit, with the suggestion of a points-based system for future applications.

The Head of Environmental Health advised that a points-based system had been designed which takes into account the following:

- Whether the trader/business is a like for like replacement
- The uniqueness of the business/trade
- The locality of the business/trader
- Whether the infrastructure is essential to the business operation
- Employment of local residents
- Whether the trader/business has operated on the market for over one year.

He then updated Members on the successful use of the system to select a trader for a cabin that had become vacant in October 2023.

Some concerns were raised as to the length of time taken for traders to take occupation of a vacant cabin and it was agreed that time limits should be imposed, unless there was a valid reason given for a delay.

There was further discussion regarding the justification for awarding more points to a business that was like for like with the previous vacated cabin business. Ultimately it was felt that there should remain a level of discretion for Council officers.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the points-based system used for selecting traders for market cabins, which is to include the following:

- The Council will retain an element of discretion in terms of awarding points for an applicant's business type.
- From the time of a cabin being offered to a trader, there will be a time limit of 2 weeks, unless a good reason is provided, for them to take occupation of the stall.

598

FOOD SAMPLING POLICY

The Chief Executive submitted a report seeking for Committee to review and agree the new 'Ribble Valley Borough Council – Food Sampling Policy'. The Council is required to prepare and publish such a policy and to make it available to businesses and consumers in accordance with the Food Standards Agency Food Law Code of Practice and Food Law Practice Guidance.

Local Authorities have a duty to ensure food meets legally prescribed standards and sampling is a means of monitoring compliance.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the Ribble Valley Borough Council Food Sampling Policy.

599

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS

The Chief Executive submitted a report for Committee to consider the membership of the Working Groups under the remit of this Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2023/24.

Committee had approved the appointment of Members to the Strategic Housing Working Group and Health & Wellbeing Partnership for 2023/24 on 8 June 2023.

Following political group changes, the revised membership of the Health & Housing Committee based on the new political balance had been confirmed at the meeting of the Full Council 12 December 2023. The Strategic Housing Working Group had not been affected and the membership therefore remained unchanged. Members appointed Councillor J Alcock as a replacement member to the Health & Wellbeing Partnership as Councillor R Elms was no longer a member of the Committee.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note that the membership of the Strategic Housing Working Group remains unchanged as follows:
Strategic Housing Working Group - Councillors S Hirst, S Atkinson, M Robinson, R Ray and J Atherton
2. Appoint Councillor J Alcock to the Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group, with the revised membership as follows:
Health and Wellbeing Partnership Working Group – Councillors S Hirst, J Alcock, M Robinson, R Ray and I Brown.

600

HOMELESSNESS AND REFUGEE UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report providing Committee with information about the level of homelessness and refugees in the

Borough. The report provided details of the number of homeless applications in the third quarter, a snapshot of the number of households in temporary accommodation, details of the home for Ukraine scheme and the Afghan resettlement scheme.

601 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee about year-end reports for 2021/2022 and 2022/2023 that detail performance against our local performance indicators.

The report provided an overview of the Council's performance up to 31 March 2023. Analysis showed that of the 23 Health and Housing key performance indicators (KPIs) they can be compared to target as follows:

- 30.5% (7) of the KPIs met target and or were on track.
- 17% (4) of the KPIs close to target where delivery was on track and was currently being managed.
- 13% (3) of the KPIs missed target where performance was or was likely to be off track.
- 9% (2) of the KPIs provide data only.
- 30.5% (7) of the KPIs are either awaiting data, data is unavailable, or a target has not been set.

Of the 23 Health and Housing KPIs reported to Committee, 10 relate to Regeneration and Housing, and 13 to Environmental Health.

Of the 23 KPIs where performance trend can be compared over the year:

- 39% (9) of the KPIs had improved
- 13% (3) of the KPIs stayed the same or there was no change
- 17% (4) of the KPIs have worsened
- 31% (7) of the KPIs cannot be compared to the previous year

602 MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS

Members noted the minutes of the Strategic Housing Working Group on 29 November 2023

603 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

Committee noted the report of Councillor T Austin in relation to the Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committees he attended on 25 October 2023 and 4 December 2023 and the meeting of the Health Scrutiny Steering Group.

604 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: That by virtue of the next items of business being exempt information under Paragraphs 1 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

605 ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL FOR COMMITMENT OF THE COMMUTED SUMS

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report providing an alternative option for the commuted sum monies that were collected from land at Chatburn Old Road, Chatburn; land at East of Clitheroe Road, Barrow; and land at Church Raike, Chipping.

At a meeting of this Committee in October 2023 a proposal was agreed to deliver an Assisted Purchase Scheme (formerly referred to as Equity Share) across the whole of the Ribble Valley, offering a loan towards the purchase of market properties. However, this was subject to obtaining legal advice as to whether the Council could properly exercise its powers in this manner.

It was noted that there were two issues with regard to the proposed scheme, namely the Financial Conduct Regulatory Position and the powers available to the Council. The legal advice concluded that it would not be possible for the Council to operate an Equity Share Scheme as originally proposed.

Members were advised of the potential option of using a form of shared ownership lease as an alternative mechanism for securing an equity stake in the purchase property. Details were provided as to how this could work and potential advantages and areas of concern. It was felt that this option would need further consideration.

However, if a shared ownership model was not a suitable option, approval was also sought to use the commuted sum monies to purchase additional affordable housing units

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Authorise the Director of Economic Development and Planning to carry out further appraisal of the Share Ownership Lease Scheme; In the event that such a scheme appears suitable for the Borough a further detailed report will be brought back to Committee.
2. In the event that a Share Ownership Lease Scheme is identified as not being suitable for the Borough Committee approval is sought to
 - a. Approve the purchase of properties to be used as affordable rent properties in line with the recommendations in the report.
 - b. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning in consultation with the Chair of Health and Housing, to negotiate and purchase specific properties in line with the recommendations in the report.
 - c. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to consider options for the use of the Chipping commuted sum money with a report brought back to this Committee.

606

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and to seek approval for use of part of the Council's new burdens funding in respect of domestic violence.

After previously receiving conflicting information from LCC, clarification had now been sought and it had been agreed that Ribble Valley Borough Council's current dispersed units of temporary accommodation could be appropriate for victims of domestic abuse and their dependants.

It was noted that the homelessness guidance identifies that housing authorities must undertake an assessment in relation to applicants who are eligible and homeless, or threatened with homelessness. The guidance also deals with the issue of training and professional development with regards to domestic abuse. Basic training had

been provided to the Council's housing team but in order for full risk assessments to be undertaken, more detailed knowledge, training and experience would be required. Options were outlined for how the New Burdens funding could be utilised to obtain the necessary knowledge and it was recommended that HARV be commissioned to provide a part-time duty worker. It was noted that HARV had been assisting the Council by offering support on an interim basis since December 2023.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

1. Note LCCs confirmation of the provision of support for victims of domestic abuse accommodation in the Council's dispersed units of temporary accommodation and provide support to people/ families housed temporarily elsewhere on a community outreach basis.
2. Note the interim arrangements put in place with HARV to provide support to victims of domestic abuse for January 2024
3. Agree to an exemption to the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to commission HARV directly for domestic abuse support services and not seek further quotes for the service.
4. Agree to utilising part of the Council's New Burdens funding to commission HARV to undertake assessments of victims of domestic abuse to enable suitable accommodation to be identified including accessing refuge accommodation where required. This would be provided whilst there is sufficient New Burdens funding available to resource this service.
5. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Planning to enter into a service level agreement with HARV for the provision of the above services.

607

GRANTS UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report informing Committee of recent approvals for various Disabled Facilities Grants and Landlord Tenant Grants.

The meeting closed at 7.57 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin jenny.martin@ribblevalley.gov.uk.