

Minutes of Economic Development

Meeting Date: Thursday, 25 January 2024, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor D Birtwhistle (Chair)

Councillors:

J Alcock	M Graveston
S Atkinson	J Hill
S Cowman	G McCrum
L Edge	R Ray
R Elms	R Walsh
S Fletcher	A Wilkins-Odudu

In attendance: Director of Economic Development and Planning and Head of Strategic Planning and Housing, and Head of Financial Services.

Also in attendance: Councillor S O'Rourke

637 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

638 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman. The revised minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 were signed by the Chairman.

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

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

640 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

641 REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

The Director of Resources and Deputy Chief Executive submitted a report asking committee to agree a revised revenue budget for 2023/24 for this committee.

Members were reminded that at this time of year the estimates are revised for the current financial year in order to predict the likely outturn. In essence the revised estimate was the Council's latest forecast for the outturn on the current financial year's budget. This also assisted the Council in preparing the original estimates for the coming financial year.

The original budget for 2023/24 included the provision for pay increase at 5% and price increase at 7.5% as it was anticipated inflation would fall during the year.

The pay award for 2023/24 had now been settled at £1,925 per full time employee. Overall the cost of the pay award was 6.5% which was around £170k above the 5% that had been allowed for.

The report noted that significant levels of inflation had been experienced and the revised estimate took into account the levels of inflation experienced so far. A comparison between the revised and original estimates, and detailed analysis of the variances, were included in the report.

The difference between the revised and original estimate was a decrease in net expenditure of £13,770.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Agree the revenue revised estimate for 2023/24.

642

ORIGINAL REVENUE BUDGET 2024/25

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

The forecast in September predicted a budget gap of £877k in 2024/25, £2.261m in 2025/26, and £2.740m in 2026/27. Since the forecast was prepared the Government's Policy Statement on Local Government Finance had been published on 5 December 2023, announcing that all local Councils would receive an increase in Core Spending Power the following year of 3% by continuation of the One-Off Funding Guarantee. Since the forecast was prepared, the Council had seen further cost increases particularly due to inflation and energy costs.

The Policy Statement also announced that:

- New Homes Bonus Allocations would continue for 2024/25
- Rural Services Delivery Grant would continue for 2024/25
- Revenue Support Grant (RSG) would increase in line with CPI with no negative RSG
- Business rates would not be reset and Business Rate Pooling would continue, and
- A Council tax referendum principle of up to 3% or £5 for district councils

The total movement from the original estimate 2023/24 to the original estimate 2024/25 was a reduction in net expenditure of £35,920. Detailed information on the individual budget areas under the Committee were included in the report, along with the movements from the 2023/24 Original Estimate to the draft Original Estimate for 2024/25, with comments on the main variances.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

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

643

REVISED CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2023/24 AND FUTURE CAPITAL PROGRAMME REVIEW AND NEW BIDS

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

One capital scheme totalling £54,750 had been approved by Special Policy and Finance Committee and Full Council in February and March 2023 respectively. The

approved scheme had been moved from the 2022/23 capital programme to the 2023/24 capital programme. There had been no spend on the Economic Development initiatives scheme to date, and it was proposed that the scheme budget of £54,750 be left within the 2023/24 revised capital programme should any opportunities arise before the end of the financial year.

For this Committee there were no previously approved capital schemes for 2024/25 and 2027/28 and no new bids had been submitted for 2028/29.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Approve the 2023/24 revised estimate of £54,750 for this Committee's capital programme.

644

MEMBERSHIP OF WORKING GROUPS

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

Committee had approved the appointment of Members to the Climate Change Working Group for 2023/24 on 15 June 2023. Committee then agreed to amend the membership and add two further Members on 28 September 2023. Following political group changes, the revised membership of the Economic Development Committee based on the new political balance had been confirmed at the meeting of the Full Council 12 December 2023.

There was no longer a Liberal Democrat representative on the Working Group. Members requested that all political groups were represented, and Committee therefore agreed to add Councillor G Hibbert as the Liberal Democrat representative, bringing the Membership of the group to eight Members.

RESOLVED THAT COMMITTEE:

Appoint Councillor G Hibbert to the Climate Change Working Group, with the revised membership as follows:

Climate Change – Councillors S Atkinson, L Edge, J Alcock, S Fletcher, A Wilkins-Odudu, D Birtwhistle, G McCrum, and G Hibbert.

645

CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORTING

The Chief Executive submitted a report informing Committee about year-end reports for 2021/22 and 2022/23 that detailed performance against the Council's local performance indicators.

The report provided an overview of the Council's performance up to 31 March 2023. There was only one key performance indicator (KPI) monitored for Economic Development Committee, which reported CO2 reduction from local authority operations. This could be compared to target as follows:

- the KPI had met target (green) or was on track.

Where performance trend could be compared with previous years:

- Performance had improved

The monitoring report along with narrative on performance and targets was provided in the report.

646 TOURISM UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a general progress information report on tourism activity.

The report provided information for Members on the Visitor Economy in the Ribble Valley, the Ribble Valley Destination Management Plan, funded projects, current marketing and promotional activity, print marketing, the annual photographic competition, the Ribble Valley Tourism Association, and the Tourism Gathering and Stars in Tourism Awards.

At the meeting, Members were provided copies of the annually published Love Ribble Valley magazine.

647 MINUTES OF WORKING GROUPS

There were no minutes from working groups.

648 REPORTS FROM REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports from representatives on outside bodies.

649 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED: 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 1972 the press and public be now excluded from the meeting.

650 BUSINESS SUPPORT FOR NET ZERO TRANSITION AND DECARBONISATION

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted a report updating Committee on the Business Support for New Zero Transition and Decarbonisation Project, which was being funded from the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

The report provided updates on the project actions and events covering quarter one to quarter three.

651 RURAL ENGLAND PROSPERITY FUND (REPF) UPDATE

The Director of Economic Development and Planning submitted an information report on expressions of interest received for the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) grant scheme.

The scheme had opened for expressions of interest forms on 12 September 2023 and would remain open with applications being assessed on an ongoing basis during the funding period. To date fifteen eligible applicants had been invited to complete a full application. Of these, two full applications had been received and considered by Policy and Finance Committee at their meeting of 23 January 2024.

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

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