



MINUTES

Finance and Democracy Committee

Date:	Monday, 27 January 2020
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Vince Settle (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Peter Anthony, Peter Collins, Eleanor Gaunt, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades, David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Michael Withers.
Other Councillors Present:	Councillor Sue Fazackerley MBE
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Paul O'Donoghue, Ian Curtis and Katharine McDonnell.
Other Attendees:	Two members of the public were present

Public Platform

There were no speakers on this occasion.

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members. There were none on this occasion.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 17 December 2019 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

There were no substitutions on this occasion.

Decision Items

4. Budget Setting – Fees and Charges 2020/21

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented the the schedule of fees and charges for the coming year for those activities within the remit of the Committee.

He advised that the fees and charges were reviewed each year with consideration given to any changes. He further advised that the level of fees and charges were levied according to the service. For example some

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activities had fee levels set by statute at a prescribed level; some charges were for statutory responsibilities and only eligible costs could be recovered; and other fees and charges were determined by the Council.

Mr Oldfield provided details of proposed changes and increases to the fees and charges, these included lease renewal for Charities and Community Groups; Commercial licence renewals and licence agreements for filming.

It was RESOLVED to:

1. To recommend to Council a proposed schedule of fees and charges applicable for 2020/21; and
2. To note that the final fees and charges for 2020/21 will be approved by the Budget Council in March 2020.

5. Financial Forecast Update (Position as at January 2019)

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the report provided the committee with an update of the financial forecast for the five years 2019/20 to 2023/24. The purpose of the further update to the Financial Forecast was to reflect the impact of the provisional 2020/21 Local Government Finance Settlement, details of which were set out in the report.

Mr O'Donoghue advised that the government had confirmed that it was looking to undertake the delayed Fair Funding Review during 2020 with implementation scheduled to be from April 2021. Consequently the finance settlement for 2020/21 was a single-year only settlement. The Government had also confirmed council tax increase referendum rules, which for 2020/21 was an upper limit of a £5 increase on a Band D property.

He further advised that the continuation of a Lancashire-wide Business Rates Pool was confirmed for 2020/21, albeit based upon 50% retention principles rather than the 75% retention arrangements in place for the current year's pilot.

The provisional settlement from Government confirmed that a review of the New Homes Bonus scheme would be undertaken during the next financial year and that the 2020/21 grant allocation was for one year only.

Mr O'Donoghue advised that a summary of the changes to the financial forecast was provided in Appendices C and D of the report. The Latest General Fund forecast was at Appendix E, with a budgeted £900k transfer to the Capital Investment Reserve for the current year, and a further budgeted transfer of £1.2m in 2020/21.

In response to a question regarding the New Homes Bonus and no indicative funding shown for Towns and Parish Councils for 2021/22, Mr O'Donoghue advised that the funding was currently agreed on an annual basis. He further advised that further clarification, regarding New Homes Bonus, was expected from the Government later in the year. A decision for funding to Towns and Parish Councils would come before committee in November dependent on the information from Government.

In response to a question from the Chairman, Mr O'Donoghue advised that there was currently no intention to borrow in the forthcoming year. Any required funding for capital spend would be funded from cash reserves.

It was RESOLVED to note the implications of the updated financial forecast, and to also note that the update would be presented to the Council meeting on 10 February 2020.

6. Seniority List – Office of the Mayor

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, advised that the Constitution Review Group, established through the Audit and Standards Committee, had requested that consideration be given to the seniority list by the Finance and Democracy Committee, to take into account cumulative service.

She provided an indicative example of how the current seniority list would change if broken service was taken into account. She further advised that if committee were minded to adopt the cumulative service model for the seniority list, that it might be instigated following the 2023 elections in order to give due notice.

The Chairman proposed an amendment to the wording of the current Operation of the Mayoralty for clarity. The amendment was seconded by Councillor Singleton.

Following consideration of the proposal of the Constitution Review Group, it was RESOLVED to

1. to continue the current policy to determine the seniority list; and
2. Amend the working of the Operation of the Mayoralty policy to state “that a councillor should hold the office of the Mayor once only, and after that their name should be removed from the seniority list”.

7. Webcasting

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, provided an update regarding the webcasting arrangements at Council. She advised a trial of developing the in-house expertise had not been successful. The trial concluded that the skill set required was specialised and niche in nature. However it was advised that if the committee were minded to continue with the webcasting of the Council meetings, the cost could be met from existing IT and Governance team budgets on a rolling annual basis.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED that the agreement with Blackpool Council, to provide webcasting for Council meetings, be extended on a rolling annual basis, the funding of which to be provided from within existing approved budgets.

Information Items

The following information items were received and noted by the committee.

8. Budget Setting – Revenue Budget 2020/21 – First Draft

The committee received information regarding the first draft of the revenue budget for 2020/21. The provision of a first draft of the 2020/21 Revenue Budget to the Council’s Programme Committees allowed members of each Programme Committee to review the draft revenue budget for the services within the committee’s terms of reference and to provide any comments or feedback as appropriate to the committee Lead Officer, Service Director or budget holders.

9. Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2019/20 – Position as at 30 November 2019

The committee received information regarding the General Fund Revenue Budget monitoring, position as at 30 November 2019 and specifically for those services under the committee’s remit.

10. Capital Programme Monitoring Report 2019/20 – Position as at 30 November 2019

The committee received information regarding the Capital Programme monitoring, position as at 30 November 2019 and specifically for those schemes under the remit of the committee.

11. Mid Year Performance 2019/20

The committee received details of the key performance outcomes for the first half of the financial year 2019/20.

The committee welcomed the performance above target for the processing of new claims and changes in circumstances for Housing Benefits and Council Tax Reduction. The committee thanked the teams and requested that the current target trajectory be continued.

12. Reports of the Various Outside Bodies

The committee received information reports from member representatives on outside bodies, specifically those under the remit of the committee.

13. The Corporate Plan 2020-24

The committee received information regarding the draft emerging Corporate Plan 2020-24, which outlined the key strategic objectives and aims of the council for that period.

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