

Policy Development Scrutiny Committee

Date:	28 February 2013
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes
Committee members:	Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson (Chairman) Councillors Ben Aitken, Frank Andrews, Susan Ashton, David Chedd, Maxine Chew, Simon Cox, John Davies, David Donaldson, Karen Henshaw JP, Edward Nash, Elizabeth Oades, Elaine Silverwood, Richard Redcliffe.
Other Councillors:	Councillors Karen Buckley, Sue Fazackerley, Julie Brickles. Christine Akeroyd, Linda Nulty, Alan Clayton.
Officers:	Allan Oldfield, Paul O'Donoghue, Paul Walker, Tracy Morrison, Clare Platt, Darren Bell, Annie Womack
Members of the Public	None

Public Platform

There were no requests to speak.

1. Declarations of interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and that any other interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct.

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Confirmation of minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Policy Development Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 10 January 2013 as a correct record for signature by the chairman.

3. Substitute members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 25:

There were no substitutions

4. Task & Finish Group Review of Swimming Pools Performance

Councillor Elizabeth Oades, as Chairman of the Task & Finish Group, presented this report to the committee. She explained that the Group had reviewed in detail the financial and operational performance of both Kirkham Pool (in the ownership of Fylde Coast YMCA) and St Annes Pool (operated by Fylde Coast YMCA on behalf of Fylde Borough Council).

The Group had met on three occasions and had heard evidence from representatives of the YMCA, Lancashire Sport and the Amateur Swimming Association. Additionally, they had requested a Swimming Pool Facility Review, which was attached to the report for information, which had highlighted a deficit in swimming provision in the Fylde.

Representatives from Rural Splash, schools and other user groups had given their feedback to the Group, either by attending a meeting or by written contribution, and the children Kirkham and Wesham school had been asked for their views. Overall, the feedback was positive, although there were some issues for disabled users which were mentioned in the report, and users stressed the importance of swimming provision in a relatively accessible location.

Development of other leisure activities alongside the pools had assisted greatly with increasing the customer base and income streams.

St Annes pool was performing to expectations and the Group found no particular issues, although they did require the financial and operational performance to be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

However, it was clear that if the funding from FBC for Kirkham Pool was to end in 2014, then the pool would move from a break-even position to operating at a loss. It was estimated that by 2018 this would trigger the clause of the SLA permitting the YMCA to dispose of the premises.

The Group believed that the council had a strategic responsibility for the provision of swimming in the Fylde and had framed their recommendations for endorsement by the committee accordingly.

Members raised several issues. They confirmed with Cllr Oades that detailed financial information had been provided to the Group which would provide assurance that the council was not investing in a loss-making operation, and that there were adequate development plans in place. Cllr Oades also advised that the YMCA would make application for any future appropriate funding streams which became available.

After the debate, it was RESOLVED:

- (1) That Cabinet consider an extension to the existing SLA with the YMCA in respect of Kirkham swimming pool and recommend to Council an unfunded addition to the Council's Revenue Budget in respect of the subsidy in the sum of £35k per annum (plus an inflationary increase) from 2014/15 for a period of 5 years.
- (2) To recommend to Cabinet that the needs analysis of swimming capacity in the Borough provided by the Amateur Swimming

Association should be used to inform development of the local plan.

- (3) That the comments from the schools and swimming clubs should be brought to the attention of the YMCA through Rural Splash in Kirkham and the quarterly performance meetings at St Anne's swimming pool.

5. Final Report of Task & Finish Group to Consider Consultation on Assets Let at Below Market Value

Gary Sams, Principal Estates Surveyor introduced this report which was to give the recommendations of the reconvened Task and Finish Group, whose remit was to consider consultation responses from bodies affected by the review; to decide whether the concessionary terms in existence are appropriate; and to agree the wording of a policy document defining the criteria under which future requests to occupy council land and building would be assessed.

Councillor Fabian Craig-Wilson, as Chairman of the Task and Finish Group, gave the committee further detail. She explained that the review had been undertaken, not as a cost-cutting exercise, but to ensure that clubs subsidised by the council were giving Council Tax payers value for their money, particularly by way of making their facilities available to, and encouraging use by, members of the public rather than just club members.

The Group had met in December 2012 and January 2013. They had received written and personal representations from each of the four Bowling Clubs under consideration. It was noted that even a modest reduction in support from the council would result in serious financial difficulty for each club. All of the clubs tried to encourage public use, and some were more successful than others. The rural clubs in particular did not have many casual users or tourists wanting to play. Members had agreed that the appropriate Council webpages could be utilised by the clubs to advertise themselves, with the intention of reaching the public and of increasing their footfall.

They had also reviewed written representations from Fairhaven Lawn Tennis Club, who had been granted a 25% reduction in its payment to the council for 2012, and who requested a further reduction for 2013. The Group felt that in view of the financial report provided, and the club's plans to increase membership and use through active marketing, the charge levied should continue to have a 25% reduction for 2013, conditional upon the club making at least once grass court per day, or the equivalent across the total number of courts, available to the public.

The Group had received information relating to the occupation of rooms at Lytham Library by Lytham Heritage Group and Lytham St Annes Civic Society. It was noted that the rooms were of poor quality and had issues of accessibility. The Group took into account the valuable work done for the community by both these groups in putting forward recommended licence fees.

No conclusions had been reached relating to the occupation of Moor Street Offices by Kirkham Town Council, and the committee had suggested that representatives of the Town Council should meet with the Portfolio Holder to find a way forward.

Following the debate it was RESOLVED:

- (1) To recommend that the existing financial support from the Council to bowling clubs remains unchanged, rather than being reduced as was previously approved.
- (2) To recommend that the annual payment made by Fairhaven Lawn Tennis Club for court maintenance is reduced by 25% (a reduction of £1,446.25) in 2013, as it was in 2012, providing at least one grass court, or the equivalent spread across a number of courts, is made available for public use.
- (3) To recommend that the payment made by Lytham Heritage Group for occupation of a room at Lytham Library should remain unchanged at £500 per annum. The Heritage Group should be granted an annually renewable licence and the payment should be index linked.
- (4) To recommend that Lytham St Annes Civic Society should be granted an annually renewable licence for the room they occupy at Lytham Library. The annual licence fee will be £250, subject to an index linked annual review.
- (5) That the draft "Policy on letting assets at under value" should be recommended for adoption so that there will be policy guidelines when future applications are considered.

6. Medium Term Financial Strategy, Including General Fund, Capital Programme and Treasury Management for 2012/13 – 2016/17

The report was introduced by Paul O'Donoghue, the council's Section 151 officer and Head of Finance.

He told members that the report was an update of the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), and was designed to provide a strategic link between available financial resources and the council's corporate priorities, to ensure that a budget is set which is robust and sustainable.

He explained how the MTFS had been developed, taking into account changes to the financial settlement and taking a prudent approach to likely income. In particular he drew members' attention to the detail of the Local Government finance settlement for 2013/14.

He told the committee that key areas of Revenue risk and the Capital risk were highlighted within the report, and then took members through the

Appendices to the report which contained the detailed financial data, including:

The General Fund Budget forecast that the council approved in March 2012.

The General Base Budget Assumptions that were contained within the current forecast, such as pay awards and Council Tax.

All the changes that have happened since March 2012, including items approved by members.

The updated financial forecast which included all those items previously referred to, plus the Cabinet's growth and savings proposals listed in detail in Appendix F.

Councillor Karen Buckley, Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources provided more detail on some specific areas, such as the freeze on Council Tax, and changes to the special expense charges, and the slight reduction to the average Council Tax charge.

She was pleased to report a continued and increasing support to Fylde CAB.

She also spoke about the creation of a Capital Investment Reserve to fund future capital investment and therefore minimise additional borrowing. This would be created by a transfer of £521k from the Comprehensive Spending Review Reserve, and she mentioned the schemes which would be funded from it.

Members spoke about Business Rates Retention. Although some detail had been provided, the arrangements were still emerging and it was felt that councillors needed additional information. It was suggested that a learning hour would be provided.

Other issues raised were a query about special expenses, for which Mr O'Donoghue provided an explanation, and a concern expressed about whether sufficient modelling had been done to limit the erosion of reserves, which had been forecast to decrease over the coming years. Mr O'Donoghue explained that the budget was robust and had taken known and projected factors into account, including the budget rightsizing exercise which had recently been undertaken.

After the debate, the committee RESOLVED:

To note the contents of the Medium Term Financial Strategy and to refer their comments on the budget proposals for consideration as part of the Council budget setting meeting.

© Fylde Borough Council copyright [2013]

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Borough Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication is also available on our website at www.fylde.gov.uk

Any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to us at the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to listening@fylde.gov.u