



MINUTES

Finance and Democracy Committee

Date:	Tuesday, 25 November 2019
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Vince Settle (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Peter Anthony, Peter Collins, Eleanor Gaunt, Gavin Harrison, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Ray Thomas, Michael Withers.
Other Councillors Present:	Councillor Sue Fazackerley MBE
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Paul O'Donoghue, Tracy Manning, and Tara Walsh. Louise Jones, Blackpool and Fylde Shared Revenues and Benefits Service.
Other Attendees:	One member of the public was 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.

Councillor John Singleton declared an interest in personal interest in item 7- New Homes Bonus: Provision of Grants to Town and Parish Councils 2020/21.

Councillor Elaine Silverwood declared a prejudicial interest in item 11 – Kirkham: Future High Street Fund. She left the room during the discussion and voting on the item.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

It was RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 23 September 2019 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Gavin Harrison for Councillor David O'Rourke

Councillor Ray Thomas for Councillor Richard Redcliffe

Decision Items

4. Financial Forecast Update (Including Revenue, Capital and Treasury Management) 2019/20 to 2023/24

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented an update of the Financial Forecast for the Council for the five years 2019/20 to 2023/24. He advised that the report included the changes arising since the Budget had been set by Council on 5th March 2019. Furthermore, the report set out the purpose and background to the financial forecast and took account of the latest reserve and balances position, revenue and capital spending forecasts and treasury management issues. It also identified and updated the financial risks and challenges facing the Council.

Mr O'Donoghue highlighted a number of decisions that had been made since the Budget Council meeting, including the membership of the Lancashire Business Rate Pool for 2020/21, income from the sale of sand, and the budget right-sizing exercise and further transfers to ear-marked reserves. These had all been highlighted within the report.

In conclusion it was confirmed that the financial position of the Council remains robust. Members should, however, continue to be cognisant of the risks that are detailed within this in order to maintain a sustainable financial position for the Council.

Following on from the presentation, the Chairman invited questions from the committee. These related to: the NNDR collection fund deficit, the council becoming debt free, earmarked reserves, and new homes bonus. These were addressed by Mr O'Donoghue. A question was also asked about the level of reserves over the period. Mr O'Donoghue advised that this information would be circulated to the Committee members after the meeting.

Following a full discussion, the committee AGREED to:

1. Note the implications of this updated financial forecast.
2. Thank the finance team for their continuing hard work in preparing the financial forecast report.

5. Parish Council Election Recharges/ Local Election Feedback

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, presented a report which outlined the feedback received following the newly piloted parish council election recharges. The Town and Parish Councils had given positive feedback about the new charging methodology. The Elections Team also found it straightforward in terms of calculating the amounts to be re-charged.

Ms Manning went to inform that the local elections were an overall success, but as with any electoral event, there is always room for improvements. In light of this following the 2019 local elections, feedback had been sought from a number of sources, including candidates and their agents together with internal and external staff. Feedback had been generally positive with a few suggested areas for improvements for the 2023 local elections and where adjustments could be made within the confines of the law these would be implemented.

During the discussion of this item, members asked officers to ensure that similar arrangements be put in place to collate feedback following the Parliamentary Elections due to take place on Thursday, 12 December 2019.

Following discussion, it was unanimously RESOLVED to;

1. Continue to use the new methodology for calculating recharges for parish council elections
2. To recharge the cost of unscheduled Parish and Town Council By-elections in full
3. To action proposed recommendations for improvement for the next scheduled local elections in 2023

6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2020/21

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented details regarding the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2020/21. In doing so, he advised that the scheme was reviewed annually and that the existing scheme was embedded and working well and as in previous years included a Hardship Relief Fund. Consequently it was recommended in the report that scheme should continue next year on the same basis as the current year. He also advised that the major preceptors had been consulted, with each supporting the Council's proposed scheme.

Mr O'Donoghue reminded members of their need to have due regard to the Equality Analysis, as detailed in the papers, in consideration of the scheme.

A question was asked about the number of CTRS overpayments there had been in the period. Louise Jones, Benefits Manager for the Shared Service, advised that these figures would be circulated to the Committee members after the meeting.

With no further comment or questions, it was RESOLVED to;

1. Recommend to Council the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2020/21 as set out in section 3 of the report;
2. Recommend to Council the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2020/21 to provide additional support for claimants in exceptional circumstances;
3. Recommend that Council approve, as necessary, that the financial implications are reflected in the Council's Revenue Budget and Financial forecast for 2020/21 onwards; and
4. Authorise the Director of Resources to make any necessary final amendments to the scheme arising from changes in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's guidance or elsewhere and to bring any such changes to the next full Council meeting for approval.

7. New Homes Bonus: Provision of Grants To Town and Parish Councils 2020/21

Paul O'Donoghue introduced a report that provided a review of the effectiveness of the policy on the provision of grants to town and parish councils, approved in December 2017. In doing so, he explained that the purpose of the policy was to provide the framework for a system of grant support to town and parish areas which had experienced above-average growth in housing numbers.

It was proposed that the scheme would continue for the 2020/21 financial year on similar terms to those for 2019/20. The total grant funding to be distributed for 2020/21 would again be a figure equivalent to 5% of the latest estimate of the total New Homes Bonus income receivable by Fylde Council for that year i.e. a sum of £75,500 in 2020/21.

Grants would only be issued following receipt of a statement outlining how the grant would be used and must be in compliance with the approved scheme requirements as set out in the policy. Proposed grant allocations for 2020/21 were set out in the table at Appendix B of the report.

A question was asked in relation to the criteria for the use of the grants. This was addressed by Mr O'Donoghue and in doing so, members were directed to page 44 of the report which outlined the approved criteria as extracted from the new homes bonus allocation policy.

The Committee RESOLVED approve a funded revenue budget increase for 2020/21 in the sum of £75,500 for the provision of grants to town and parish councils to reflect housing growth, funded by a proportion of the

overall New Homes Bonus grant that is received by Fylde Council from central government, the individual allocations being as set out at Appendix B to the report.

8. Community Housing Fund Phase 2 - Lindsay Court

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented a report requesting the committee to consider the recommendation made by the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, at the meeting held on 5 November 2019, following consideration of the Community Housing Fund Project. The Environment Health and Housing Committee resolved to recommend that the Finance and Democracy Committee approve a fully-funded revenue budget increase in the total sum of £20,500 for 2019/20 to be funded by a proportion of the remaining Community Housing Fund grant. This would enable the Lindsay Court Housing project to progress to Phase 2a as detailed within the report, leaving a balance of £241,000.

Mr Oldfield went on to explain that the funding would support the appointment of professional partners; Cass Associates and for Housing to carry out extensive feasibility work, with a view to find a workable solution for the regeneration of the site.

Details with regard to the project were included as background papers to the report. Similar documents were also provided to Environment and Housing Committee also as

A question was asked in relation the outcome of the remaining balance of the grant and if it would be used to fund other schemes. Mr Oldfield answered this question in part and further informed that he would seek advice from the Housing Team on this matter and then provide a full response to committee after the meeting.

Following a full debate, it was RESOLVED to approve a fully-funded revenue budget increase in the total sum of £20,500 for 2019/20 to be funded by a proportion of the remaining Community Housing Fund grant, to enable the Lindsay Court Housing project to progress to Phase 2a as detailed within the report, leaving a balance of £241,000.

9. Fylde Sand Dunes Improvement Scheme

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented a report requesting the committee to consider the proposal made by the Tourism and Leisure Committee, at its meeting held on 4 November 2019, following consideration of the Fylde Sand Dunes Improvement Scheme. The Tourism and Leisure Committee resolved to seek the approval of the Finance and Democracy Committee for a fully-funded addition to the Capital Programme for 2019/20 in the sum of £52,000, and approval for the Council to act as the accountable body for the Fylde Sand Dunes improvement scheme.

Mr Oldfield provided an overview of the background to the scheme together with the associated aims and objectives/funding arrangements. He went on to report that the open space improvement scheme comprised three elements covering the Fylde Sand Dunes Site of Special Scientific Interest/Local Nature Reserve which included: dune re-profiling and stabilisation works; design and installation of new dune signage and the design and installation of attractive dune entrance features.

Included as appendices to the report were: details of the signage and access control design proposals and information on the dune re-profiling and stabilisation works profile plans.

The recommendation highlighted in the report had been revision and these revisions were provided to members prior to the committee meeting. Copies were made available at the meeting. Mr Oldfield explained that the addition provided further clarity on the recommendations put forward to committee and covered the position taken should the LEF funding not be successful.

Following a full discussion, the committee AGREED:

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1. To approve that the Council act as the accountable body for the Fylde Sand Dunes Improvement Scheme up to a maximum total sum of £52,000;
2. To approve an initial fully-funded addition to the Capital Programme for 2019/20 in the sum of £25,000 in respect of the Fylde Sand Dunes Improvement Scheme to be met from Section 106 contributions received for this purpose, and
3. To approve an additional £27,000 fully-funded addition to Fylde Sand Dunes Improvement Scheme within the approved Capital Programme in the event that the grant application for £27,000 to the Lancashire Environment Fund as detailed within the report is approved, and to note that if the grant application is unsuccessful consideration will be given to fund the shortfall from the Capital Investment Reserve as set out in the report.

10. Splash Park Toilet Facilities

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented a request made by the Operational Management Committee, at its meeting held on 12 November 2019, following consideration of the Splash Park toilet facilities and perimeter fencing. The Operational Management Committee resolved to request that the Finance and Democracy Committee approve an addition to the Capital Programme for 2019/20 in the sum of £185,000 in relation to the provision of toilet facilities and perimeter fencing at the Splash Park facility. The scheme would replace an existing scheme within the approved Capital Programme, of the same amount, in relation to the provision of toilet facilities at North Beach Car Park.

Following on from the presentation, the Chairman invited questions from the committee. These related to: procurement and the contract procedure rules, income from the toilet facilities at the Splash Park and details of the service arrangements with Danfo. These were addressed by Mr Oldfield in full.

The Committee AGREED to approve an addition to the Capital Programme for 2019/20 in the sum of £185,000 in relation to the provision of toilet facilities and perimeter fencing at the Splash Park facility, that scheme replacing the existing scheme within the approved Capital Programme for 2019/20, in the same amount, in relation to the provision of toilet facilities at North Beach Car Park, with funding for the new scheme being by way of a virement in the sum of £185,000 from the previously-approved scheme for the provision of toilet facilities at North Beach Car Park.

11. Kirkham: Future High Street Fund

(Having declared a prejudicial interest in this item, Councillor Silverwood left the meeting for the discussion and voting on the item).

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive Officer, introduced a request made by the Planning Committee to approve an addition to the Capital Programme in the total sum of £150,000 (£75,000 in 2019/20 and £75,000 in 2020/21) in respect of the Kirkham Future High Street Fund Scheme, to be met in full by a central government grant for this purpose.

Following discussion, the Committee AGREED:

1. To approve an addition to the Capital Programme in the total sum of £150,000 (£75,000 in 2019/20 and £75,000 in 2020/21) in respect of the Kirkham Future High Street Fund Scheme, to be met in full by a central government grant for this purpose. The initial £75,000 has been confirmed, with the second allocation of £75,000 expected to be confirmed in early 2020. If the second allocation is not granted the value of the capital scheme will be reduced to the value of the initial allocation, such that only expenditure that will be met by the total grant allocation will be committed.
2. That consideration be given by the Planning Committee to submit a bid in second round of the Future High Street Fund for St Annes Town Centre.

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