



# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 24 January 2022
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Vince Settle (Vice-Chairman)  Councillors Peter Anthony, Peter Collins, Ellie Gaunt, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades (via remote access), David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, John Singleton JP.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Paul O'Donoghue, Ian Curtis (via remote access), Marie Percival, Kathy Winstanley, Ben McCabe, Ross McKelvie, Lyndsey Lacey - Simone.
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Louise Jones - Head of Revenue and Benefits Shared Service.

### 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 no declarations on this occasion.

#### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 22 November 2021 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

#### 3. Substitute Members

The following substitution was reported under Council procedure rule 23 (c):

Councillor Alan Clayton substituted for Councillor Elaine Silverwood.

### Decision Items

#### 4. Covid -19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF)

The Chairman invited Louise Jones, Head of Revenue and Benefits Shared Service to present the report. In doing so, she advised that on 25 March 2021, the Government announced a new COVID-19 Additional Relief Fund (CARF) of £1.5 billion. The fund was made available to support those businesses affected by the COVID-19 outbreak, which are ineligible for existing support linked to business rates.

Members were advised that following announcement of scheme guidance on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021 Fylde Council had received an allocation of £1,250,984. The report set out proposals for the administration of this funding to the 391 (approx.) eligible businesses.

At the conclusion of the presentation the Chairman invited questions. Clarification was sought on the percentage of businesses likely to apply for the relief fund and matters associated with the proposed additional exclusions with particular reference to independent petrol stations and shops within petrol stations.

In addition, information about the upper limit of relief fund given/unspent relief and post assurance checks was sought. Ms Jones addressed these matters.

The importance of promoting / raising awareness of this relief fund was highlighted at the meeting. Ms Jones confirmed that all eligible businesses would be contacted.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to accept the proposed recommendation for the distribution of the funding based on the information contained in the main body of the report.

#### 5. Financial Forecast Update 2021/22 to 2025/26

Further to the November 2021 report, Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer provided members with the latest update of the financial forecast for the Council for the five years 2021/22 to 2025/26. The forecast had been updated to reflect the impact of the (single year) 2022/23 Local Government Finance Settlement, announced on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

It was reported that all of the financial risks as set out in the Financial Forecast update considered by the Committee in November 2021 and Council in December 2021 remain. The changes to the General Fund Revenue Forecast were those arising from the Local Government Finance Settlement, together with some further in-year revenue budget changes.

Mr. O'Donoghue took members through the key points arising from the Finance Settlement namely: a) delays to the Fair Funding Review and the Reform of the Business Rates System, b) confirmation of acceptance of the bid by Lancashire authorities to continue to operate a Business Rate Pooling arrangement for 2022/23, c) confirmation of a single year New Homes Bonus allocation in 2022/23 and an ongoing review of the scheme, d) confirmation of further Government grants (outlined in the report) for 2022/23 and e) confirmation of the 2022/23 General Council Tax Referendum Principles. In addition, the forecast had been updated to reflect the latest estimates of employee costs and the distribution of the New Homes Bonus to town and parish councils and other budget adjustments.

Other continuing financial risks were set out in the report.

In conclusion, members were advised that the 2022/23 Local Government Financial Settlement had not fundamentally changed the general financial standing of Fylde Council. The finances of the Council remain robust, (with a budget surplus in the current year and a budget surplus next year) and the reserves and balances are at healthy levels compared to earlier periods. Members were advised that the financial landscape remains uncertain beyond 2023/24.

Included as appendices to the report were: (a) Forecast approved at Council on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021, (b) Schedule of general assumptions underpinning the financial forecast, (c) Schedule of changes to the forecast, (d) Explanation of changes to the forecast, (e) Updated latest forecast position and (f) New Homes Bonus Grant allocations to town & parish councils 2022/23.

In acknowledging the fact that a single year settlement was quite disappointing, members went on to comment on the report. Reference was made to the historic distribution of the New Homes Bonus grant to Newton with Clifton/Kirkham parish/town councils and the associated policy/reporting arrangements relating to the spend of the allocated grant for each of the parish/town councils.

Following a full discussion, it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the implications of this updated financial forecast, and to also note that this update report will be presented to the Council meeting on 7th February 2022; and
2. To note that following the confirmation of the amount of New Homes Bonus grant to be received for 2022/23, allocations of a proportion of this grant to town and parish councils have been calculated in the total sum of £61,807 in accordance with the decision of the Finance and Democracy Committee on this matter at the meeting of 22nd November 2021.

3. To request that a report be presented to a future meeting of the committee detailing the schemes within the town and parish areas that have benefited from the distribution of the New Homes Bonus grant.

#### 6. Budget Setting - Fees and Charges 2022/23

The Chairman introduced this item. Members were advised that each year, as part of the budget-setting process, the schedule of fees and charges for the coming year (for each of the services that the Council provides) was reviewed by budget-holders prior to that schedule being considered by the relevant Programme Committee and finally being approved at the March Budget Council meeting.

The Committee was advised that each Programme Committee was required to recommend to Council for approval a schedule of fees and charges for those activities within the remit of the Committee.

The proposed schedule of fees and charges (as detailed in Appendix A of the report) for those services within the remit of the committee was considered by members.

A full schedule of proposed fees and charges for all Council services for 2022/23 was made available via a link.

Without further comment, it was RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Council a proposed schedule of fees and charges applicable for 2022/23; and
2. To note that the final fees and charges for 2022/23 will be approved by the Budget Council in March 2022.

#### 7. Lytham Institute - Charity Reporting

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance introduced the report which outlined the information that the corporate trustee (the Council) is required to submit to the Charity Commission regarding Lytham Institute as part of an annual return that all charities are required to make.

Included as appendices to the report were (a) Lytham Institute Trustees Annual Report to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 and (b) Lytham Institute Annual Accounts to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

The Chairman referred to an email that she had received on the matter which related to Appendix A of the report relating to 'achievements and performance' and the promotion of activities within the vacant space at the Institute. It was confirmed that the report was a statement of fact for the period reported. In addition, it was suggested that under the same heading, reference within the table to "Lytham Heritage Group storage" should be amended to read "Lytham Heritage Group archive and displays".

Further to the above, information relating to the eligibility of grants for the Institute (which was addressed on page 39 of the report) and clarification of the Council's ability to appoint local accountants was also sought. Mr O'Donoghue advised the committee that charity accounting was a specialised area but undertook to look into the possibility of instructing Fylde-based accountants for future annual returns. In answer to a question, Mr Curtis advised members that there had been correspondence from the Charity Commission about the proposed updating of the objects clause just before Christmas.

Following detailed discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve the Trustees Annual Report and Annual Accounts for the period to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021 as shown at the appendices to the report for submission to the Charity Commission by the statutory deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 subject to the words "Lytham Heritage Group storage" contained within Appendix 1 of the report being amended to read "Lytham Heritage Group archive and displays".

#### 8. Public Convenience Contract for Cleansing and Maintenance

Further to the decision of the Operational Management Committee held on 9 November 2021 to refer this matter to the Finance and Democracy Committee, Kathy Winstanley (Head of Environmental Services) was invited by the Chairman to introduce the report.

Following the imminent conclusion of a 15-year contract with Danfo, the report set out the latest position regarding the retendering of the public conveniences contract, including the cleansing and maintenance of the existing facilities across the borough. The report also set out proposals for the letting of a further 15-year contract to DANFO and recommended that Full Council approve an unfunded revenue budget increase of £52,543 per annum (plus CPI increases from year 3 onwards) to meet the additional cost of the contract covering the cleansing and maintenance of public conveniences and additional services which include maintenance, inspection of

hydration points (£8,300 per annum) as well as programmed improvements and refurbishments (£33,356 per annum).

Details regarding the procurement method that had been used/details of open tender submissions from two the complaint bids (Danfo and Healthmatic Ltd) and the associated regulations/scoring/evaluation assessment were set out in the report.

At the conclusion of the presentation the Chairman invited questions. These related to the following areas: the locking mechanism proposed within the new toilet facilities with particular reference to the historic misuse and loss of income from the former facilities and ability to use card payments to access within the new facilities. In addition, comments about the proposed charges and the importance attached to visitor experience was also raised. These points were addressed by Mrs Winstanley.

Councillor Buckley then went on to refer to the procurement exercise undertaken and sought further clarification on the procurement process and the Council's ability to allow negotiation with bidders. In response, Mr McCabe indicated that as the contract was subject to the Public Contract Regulations 2015 and that there was no opportunity to allow for negotiation which could be perceived as distorting competition. He added that there are proposals to update the regulations in 2023 which would be likely to allow greater flexibility.

Following full consideration of this matter it was RESOLVED:

1. To note the recommendations of the Operational Management Committee included within the report.
2. To recommend to Full Council awarding the retendered Public Convenience contract for cleansing and maintenance to Danfo UK Ltd for a period of 15 years based on the tender submission and evaluation assessment identifying Danfo as the best value for money option.
3. That Full Council approve an unfunded revenue budget increase of £52,543 per annum (plus CPI increases from year 3 onwards) to meet the additional cost of the contract covering the cleansing and maintenance of public conveniences and additional services which include maintenance, inspection of hydration points (£8,300 per annum) as well as programmed improvements and refurbishments (£33,356 per annum).

#### 9. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Household Support Grant

Further to the request of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee held on 4 January 2022, the Committee's approval was sought for a fully funded revenue budget increase of £150,000 in 2021/22 to be met in full of the government grant funding stream for Household Support Grant as detailed in the report. Spend against the budget had been approved in advance, utilising the Chief Executive's emergency decision-making powers.

It was reported that the grant will help those who need it most and would be distributed through small payments to support vulnerable households in meeting daily costs such as food, clothing and utilities.

Details of the Household Support Scheme was included as an appendix to the report.

Councillor Nulty commented that within the body of the report, reference was made to "supporting households in need of food" and suggested that for completeness, there should be some links to the work that Edyta Paxton (Health and Wellbeing Officer) is doing via the Foodbanks. An undertaking to do this was given at the meeting.

Following a number of members speaking in support of the grant, it was RESOLVED to approve a revenue budget increase of up to £150,000 in 2021/22, fully funded from the government grant funding stream for Household Support Grant.

#### 10. Public Health Update - Lateral Flow Testing and Contact Tracing – Fully Funded Extension

Further to the request of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, the report sought the Committee's approval for a fully funded revenue budget increase of £126,674 in 2021/22 to cover the costs of the Community Lateral Flow Testing program (April – November), to be funded from the Lancashire County Council Lateral Flow fund, claimed from LCC on a monthly basis.

This report also provided members with an update on the Track and Trace (Covid 19 Contact Tracing) programme in Fylde.

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The Chairman asked about the section within the report which referred to the operating costs being initially met from the Community Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) and sought clarification whether the new dedicated fund would allow the COMF money to be freed up. It was confirmed that this was the intention.

Following on from the above, Councillor Buckley asked that a report brought to a future meeting of the committee detailing the spend to date from the various Covid funding streams that had been distributed since the start of the pandemic.

It was RESOLVED:

1. To approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £126,674 in 2021/22 to cover the operational costs of the Community Lateral Flow Testing programme (April – November), to be funded from the Lancashire County Council Lateral Flow fund, claimed from LCC monthly.
2. To note that the extension of the Contact Tracing Scheme running to 31st March 2022 has been funded using the Contain Outbreak Management funding.
3. To request that a report brought to a future meeting of the committee detailing the spend to date from the various Covid funding streams that had been distributed since the start of the pandemic.

### 11. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Changing Futures: Changing Systems to Support Adults Experiencing Multiple Disadvantage

The Chairman introduced the report. In summary, the report detailed a request from the Environment, Health and Housing Committee held on 4 January 2022, for approval of a funding award under the Lancashire Changing Futures Programme to enable the appointment of a Changing Futures Housing Services Officer post within the Housing Services Team and approval of a virement from Homeless Reduction Act initiatives (5270/46712) to supplement additional employee costs.

The report recommended approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase totalling £62,500 funded by monies to be received as part of the Lancashire Changing Futures Programme (2021/22 £5,913, 2022/23 £40,000 and 23/24 £26,587). In addition, it sought to authorise a revenue budget virement from Homeless Reduction Act Grant initiatives (5270/46712) for 2021/22 - £6,462 and 2022/23 - £4,695 to supplement the additional employee costs as detailed within the report.

The committee's attention was drawn to a typographical error contained in recommendation 1 of the report which stated that "through the Lancashire Changing Futures Programme, £40,000 to be received in 22/23" which should read £30,000 to be received in 22/23. The Committee was requested to agree to amending the recommendation accordingly.

The Committee RESOLVED:

1. To approve a fully funded revenue budget increase to enable the appointment of a Changing Futures Housing Services Officer post within the Housing Services Team for 25 months, totalling £62,500, funded by monies to be received as part of the Lancashire Changing Futures Programme (21/22 £5,913 22/23 £30,000 and 23/24 £26,587).
2. To approve a virement from Homeless Reduction Act Grant initiatives (5270/46712) for 21/22 £6,462 and 22/23 £4,965, to supplement additional employee costs.

### 12. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Fylde Council Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025

Further to the request of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee held on the 4<sup>th</sup> January 2022, the report sought approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase to the Repossession Prevention Budget within Housing Services 5270/47106 in 2021/22 in the sum of £22,531 to be met from Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Homeless Prevention Grant (HPG) top up grant funding for 21/22. The funding will be used to support clients within the private rented sector facing repossession due to rent arrears as a result of Covid 19.

The report also sought to provide an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service in December 2021 and progress towards meeting Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.

The Committee RESOLVED:

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1. To note the contents of the report that provided an update on the operation of the homelessness and housing advice service in December 2021 and progress towards meeting Fylde's Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2020-2025.
2. To recommend to Finance and Democracy approval of a fully funded revenue budget increase to the Repossession Prevention Budget within Housing Services 5270/4715 in 2021/22 in the sum of £22,531 to be met from DLUHC Covid 19 rent arrears financial support funding for 2021/22.

### 13. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Green Loop Project

The report detailed a request from Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on 6 January 2022, for a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £26,200 to support the Green Loop Project.

Members were advised that funding had been awarded by Arts Council England to provide support for a series of arts & environment initiatives, within a project entitled 'Green Loop'. Further details were set out in the report.

It was RESOLVED: To approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £26,200 for the year 2022/23 to be met in full, from a grant from the Arts Council England relating to this project.

### 14. In Year Funded Budget Increase - North Beach Windsports Centre

The Chairman invited Marie Percival (Estates and Asset Manager) to introduce the report regarding an in-year funded budget increase for North Beach Windsports Centre.

Members were advised that The Tourism and Leisure Committee at its meeting held on 6 January 2022 sought the approval of the Finance & Democracy Committee for a new fully funded addition to the Council's Capital Programme in 2021/22 in the sum of £200,000 to support the 'North Beach Windsports Centre' scheme. It is intended that this will be met in full from the Capital Investment Reserve. The scheme was unanimously supported by the T&L committee.

The report set out the details of the proposed scheme and the associated funding requirement.

Included as appendices were: (i) Briefing Note (detailing feasibility options), (ii) Architect proposals which included the layout & external design and (iii) a costed proposal.

The Chairman invited questions from the committee. These related to the potential for schools to access the centre for sports development related activities and details of the toilet facilities included within the scheme. Marie Percival addressed these points.

It was RESOLVED: To approve a funded addition to the Council's Capital Programme in 2021/22 in the sum of £200,000 to the 'North Beach Windsports Centre' scheme, to be met from the Capital Investment Reserve.

### 15. Fully Funded Budget Increase - Boating Pool Safety Improvements

The report detailed a request from Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on 6 January 2022, for a fully funded budget increase in the sum of £60,000 to support a Boating Pool Safety Improvements scheme.

Members were advised that the scheme includes a series of measures to safeguard the public in the use of the facility, including the installation of non-slip rubber wetpour surfacing, accessible ramp, traffic barrier fence and a public safety sign.

The Committee was requested to approve a fully funded budget increase to deliver the scheme in line with a specification prepared by officers. The scheme was unanimously supported by the T&L committee.

It was RESOLVED: To approve of a new fully funded addition to the Council's Capital Programme in 2021/22 in the sum of £60,000 to the 'St Annes Paddling Pool (boating pool) - health and safety improvements' scheme, to be met in full from the Capital Investment Reserve.

## Information Items

The following information items were presented to the Committee.

### 16. Domestic Abuse Act 2021 - Funding for Enhanced Support Services

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Further to the report presented to Committee in October 2021 that provided an update on the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and new statutory duties placed on Local Authorities, the information report advised that Fylde Council have been awarded funding for 2021/2022 totalling £33,196, to undertake new Part 4 duties and provide support within their local authority area.

The Chairman drew members attention to the bullet point contained within the summary of the report which referred to the dedicated legal fund which was welcomed.

### 17. Budget Setting - Revenue Budget 2022/23 - First Draft

The information report advised that the first draft of the Revenue Budget for 2022/23 was available for perusal by members. The Committee was advised that the budget had been prepared on a continuation basis and had been updated to reflect all Committee and Council decisions made to date, the outcome of the budget-rightsizing exercise and all virements.

### 18. General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Position as at 30th November 2021

The information report provided an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 with specific reference to those areas under the remit of the Committee.

### 19. Capital Programme Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Position as at 30th November 2021

The information report provided an update on the approved Capital Programme of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021 with specific reference to those schemes under the remit of the Committee.

### 20. Performance Reporting 2020/21

The information report combined details of the key performance outcomes which had not been reported to the committee (due to the pandemic) for the previous financial year end 2020/21 (1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021) and the first six months of the existing financial year end (1st April 2021 to 30th September 2021).

Performance was reported against the targets set and commentary was provided by performance exception. The Committee was advised that due to the ongoing challenges post-covid, target setting would be reviewed in detail at the start of the new financial year 2021/22.

### 21. Corporate Plan Action Update

The information report provided the Committee with the latest progress against the corporate actions relevant to the Committee that are scheduled for completion at the time of the meeting

The Chairman drew the Committee's attention to the Corporate Plan 2020/24 Prioritisation Log (included as a link) in the report. In doing so, she highlighted (within the Finance and Democracy section) a number of areas including: the exploration of income generation opportunities/ maximise return from assets in line with the commercial policy; access to council services through all possible means with particular focus on the most vulnerable and feedback from customers on service delivery to help improve services and suggested that it would be helpful for the committee to receive a report on these matters in due course.

It was RESOLVED that a report on the areas detailed above be presented to a future meeting of the committee.

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