



MINUTES

Finance and Democracy Committee

Date:	Monday, 22 June 2020
Venue:	Via remote access
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Vince Settle (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Eleanor Gaunt, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades, David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, Michael Sayward, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Michael Withers.
Other Councillors Present:	Councillor Brian Gill
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Paul O'Donoghue, Ian Curtis, Paul Walker, Kirstine Riding, Louise Jones (Shared Service), Katharine McDonnell
Other Attendees:	Three members of the public were present

Public Platform

Mr Williamson addressed the committee in regards to agenda item 7, Lytham Hall Driveway Capital Bid. He spoke in support of the request for the bid to resurface the main driveway at Lytham Hall.

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 Michael Sayward declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 as he was a member of Lytham Business Partnership and also had a business in Lytham. He was excluded from the meeting for the duration of the item.

Councillor Elaine Silverwood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in agenda item 6 as a business owner in Kirkham. She was excluded from the meeting for the duration of the item.

Cllr Liz Oades declared a personal interest in agenda item 6 as she had been involved with the bid for the Future High Street Fund for Kirkham.

Cllr Vince Settle declared a personal interest in item 6, as he was a member of St Annes on the Sea Town Council and a member of STEP, the St Annes Enterprise Partnership.

Cllr David O'Rourke declared a personal interest in agenda items 6 and 10 as his partner was a member of STEP (in regards to item 6) and she was also the Council representative on the Lytham Hall Partnership (in respect of item 10).

Councillor Linda Nulty declared a personal interest in agenda item 11 as her husband was a member of the YMCA board.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 17 February 2020 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

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

Councillor Michael Sayward for Councillor Peter Anthony

Decision Items

4. COVID 19 Impact Assessment & Recovery

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive and Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented an initial report which provided an overview of the known and potential impact of the COVID 19 lockdown measures on the services and functions within the remit of the Finance and Democracy Committee. Mr Oldfield advised that the information within the report was based on the data available and government policy in place at the time of drafting the report, plans were being made across the council to revise budget forecasts and business plans in response to the changes brought about by the COVID 19 measures.

In terms of the service areas within the remit of the committee, they were principally support services such as finance, governance and elections. These services had been busier than ever with additional responsibilities, whilst resources had been reduced due to the pandemic. The biggest impact had been additional work, whilst planned process work such as the closure of accounts had been delayed. New initiatives such as the administering of the business grants and new governance working such as the remote meetings, had met that additional resources from other areas of the council had been drafted in to support the service areas.

However, Mr Oldfield advised there was limited financial impact on the service areas due to the pandemic. One of the additional requirements was the requirement to undertake a monthly financial submission to central government on the estimated financial impact on the whole council, a copy of which was before the committee.

Mr O'Donoghue advised that there was a requirement to complete a monthly COVID19 estimated financial impact financial return to MHCLG, and a summary of the most recent return was included as an appendix to the report. The government had also issued additional funding to councils to mitigate lost income and to contribute towards increased costs. To determine the impact of the pandemic the team had looked at previous years' income and had a best estimate of the impact of COVID 19 across the main income headings such as car park income, planning application fee income and trade waste income.

The summary of the estimated impact was detailed in the appendix to the report. The government had awarded an additional £838k of un-ringfenced funding to Fylde Council, however it was not known if there was further funding to come from the Government. The estimated impact of the pandemic on Fylde Council was just over £1m. Mr O'Donoghue cautioned however there were some caveats to the estimated impact as the full impact would only become clear in the fullness of time.

Councillor Singleton offered his thanks to the finance team for all their hard work over the last few months.

The Chairman advised that a questionnaire had gone live for residents to provide feedback regarding the town centres and how the Council could assist the Town Centres recovery.

Following no further comments or questions it was RESOLVED;

1. To note the impact of the COVID 19 measures on functions within the remit of the committee; and
2. To note the current estimate of council wide impact of COVID 19 on finances detailed in Appendix 1 of the report.

5. COVID 19 Council Tax Hardship Fund

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, and Louise Jones, Revenue and Benefits Service, introduced the report in relation to the Council Tax COVID-19 hardship fund 2020 to 2021, which was one of the support measures from central government for vulnerable people and their households.

As the decision made to also allow the newly self-employed to access the fund had been made under delegated officer decision, the report provided an update on the mandatory award of £150 for residents on the Council Tax Reduction Scheme and the new discretionary scheme financed from the fund to support the newly self-employed.

The Chairman advised that for those newly self-employed the scheme had made 14 awards at the maximum £325 payment totalling £4,550. She advised that the scheme was now closed to the newly self-employed but it was for the Committee whether to reopen it or to close the first scheme and retain the funds for the £150 Council Tax Reduction Scheme, keeping it under review.

Ms Jones advised that the £150 Council Tax award needed to be made to all households in receipt of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme throughout 2020/21.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED;

- 1) That whilst recognising the important role of the discretionary Self-Employed Hardship Fund it was determined to formally close the scheme for further applications; and
- 2) That any residual funds from the Council Tax COVID-19 hardship fund 2020 to 2021 were retained in order to make the £150 award to any eligible new accounts during the COVID 19 measures; and
- 3) To keep the matter under review with a report to be brought to a future meeting.

6. COVID 19 Local Authority Grants to Town Centres

The Chairman presented a report proposing an unfunded budget increase of £15,000 to award grants to the largest town centres/high streets. The report outlined proposals to award £5,000 per town centre.

The Committee discussed whether guidelines would be provided to the business groups to assist them in assessing and awarding the bids to the fund. It was confirmed that guidelines would be provided to the business groups and the guidelines would also be shared with the committee.

It was therefore RESOLVED;

1. That the committee approve an unfunded revenue budget increase of £15,000 for the award of a £5,000 COVID-19 recovery grant to each of the three primary town centres (Kirkham, Lytham and St Annes);
2. That the grants are awarded to the local business partnership in each town and expenditure is subject to the guidance set out in the report.

7. Lytham Hall Driveway Capital Bid

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services introduced a report requesting financial assistance to resurface the main driveway at Lytham Hall, which was in poor condition and failing. The request was submitted to the council prior to the budget for 2020/21 being set, but not in good time for proper consideration. Within the bid there were details of the bid, additionally Lytham Hall have undertaken a competitive procurement exercise and the best value for money quote was for £51,500. The Council's Technical Services team would provide technical and contract management support to Lytham Hall, which would provide project assurance to Fylde Council.

Councillor Singleton advised that an internal audit of the project would be undertaken.

In response to a question from committee, Mr Walker advised that payment would only be made once the work had been completed satisfactorily.

It was RESOLVED to approve a funded addition to the Capital Programme in 2020/21 in the sum of £51,500, funded from the Capital Investment Reserve, to provide for a grant to Lytham Hall to fund the resurfacing of the main driveway.

8. Addition to Capital Programme – Housing Needs Assessment

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee to make an addition to the Capital Programme in the sum of £60,000 to undertake a district wide Housing Needs Assessment.

It was RESOLVED to approve an addition to the Capital Programme for 2020/21 in the sum of £60,000 to undertake a district wide Housing Needs Assessment that considers current and future housing need, different types of affordable housing tenures required and the economic needs/income levels the tenures should meet. Funding will be met from s106 developer contributions held by the Council to facilitate the provision of affordable housing in the administrative area of Fylde, to be taken from 12/0717 Moss Farm, Cropper Road, Westby.

9. Fully Funded Increase to Housing Services Budget – Affordable Housing Officer Post

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Environment, Health and Housing Committee to make an addition to the Planning Policy revenue budget in the sum of £30,000 for 2020/21 onwards to finance a new post of an Affordable Housing officer.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded increase to the Planning Policy revenue budget in the sum of £30,000 for 2020/21 onwards, to be met from an equivalent reduction in the Community Grants budget. The additional Planning Services budget would provide for the employment of an Affordable Housing Officer post to develop affordable housing opportunities within both the social and private rented sectors.

10. Addition to the Capital Programme – The Pier – Square Link Enhancement, St Annes

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Planning Committee to make fully funded increase to the St Annes Regeneration Scheme within the Capital Programme for the regeneration of St Annes Road West.

The Chairman suggested that the item be referred to allow for the matter to be considered by the Town Centre Working Group.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED to refer the scheme to the Town Centre Working Group for further consideration, in light of their remit of economic recovery post COVID-19, and for it to be brought back to the appropriate committee for a decision.

11. Unfunded Addition to Revenue Budget – Fylde Coast YMCA

The Committee considered a recommendation of the Tourism and Leisure Committee to make an addition to the Revenue Budget in 2020/21 relating to the pools at St Annes and Kirkham. The YMCA had made a request for financial assistance of £100,000 to ensure the delivery of leisure facilities at St Annes and Kirkham as part of the recovery following the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown.

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, confirmed that the sum under consideration would be ringfenced budget provision for the YMCA pools at St Annes and Kirkham, as and when it was required.

It was RESOLVED;

1. To approve an unfunded addition to the Revenue Budget in 2020/21 in the sum of £100,000; and
2. To note that the Council is to receive an un-ringfenced central government revenue grant to help respond to coronavirus (COVID-19) pressures across all services, the latest notified allocation being in the total sum of £837,772.

INFORMATION ITEMS

12. Parliamentary Election Feedback

The Committee received an information report compiled by the Acting Returning Officer, Tracy Manning regarding a post election review. The review composed of feedback received from candidates, agents and staff following the unscheduled Parliamentary Election held on 12 December 2019.

13. Reports of the Various Outside Bodies

The Committee received the reports of the representatives appointed to Outside Bodies within the remit of the Committee.

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