

MINUTES

Executive Committee

Date:	Monday, 19 February 2024
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Richard Redcliffe (Vice-Chairman) Councillors Chris Dixon, Ellie Gaunt, Gail Goodman JP, Matthew Lee, Michelle Morris, Ed Nash, Jayne Nixon, William Taylor, Tommy Threlfall.
Other Members Present:	Councillors Julie Brickles and John Kirkham
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Mark Evans, Paul O'Donoghue, Charlie Richards, Ian Williamson, Paul Walker, Andrew Loynd and Katharine McDonnell.

Public Platform

Mr Ken Cridland addressed the committee under the public platform provisions. He expressed his concerns over the prevalence of small-scale children's care homes and made a number suggestions of how the recommendations for agenda 8 – In-Depth Scrutiny Review – Use of Residential Premises as Children's Homes, could be strengthened and go further.

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.

2. Substitute Members

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

Councillor Taylor for Councillor Peter Collins

Councillor Goodman for Councillor Armit

3. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 30 January 2024 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

Decision Items

4. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Financial Forecast Update 2023/24 to 2027/28

Councillor Gaunt introduced the draft budget, explaining the factors considered when preparing and updating the budget, and the weighing of those factors, how they may change and what risk that may present to the council.

She spoke about the risks to the council's revenue budget, specifically the uncertainties in local government finance settlements, pay and price inflation pressures, and investment income and borrowing needs.

Councillor Gaunt advised that central government had confirmed the local government finance settlement in December, with Fylde's spending power increasing to 1.8% when all local factors had been considered. She further advised that the New Homes Bonus was retained for 2024/25, as was the business rates retention pool. Both of these significantly supported the revenue budget. She advised that it was proposed to increase council tax by 2.99% or £6.54 on a band D property. She also asked members to note the proposed revisions to the fees and charges.

Councillor Gaunt confirmed that the outturn position was a budgeted surplus of £425k for 23/24 and a budgeted surplus of 375k for 24/25 with deficits forecast for subsequent years.

Councillor Gaunt turned to the proposed capital schemes, of which there were four totalling £278k, and reminded members of several other capital schemes in progress, which taken together, provided an estimated capital spend of £11.13m for 24/25. She highlighted the risks which centred around the complexity of the work, price inflation consideration and a potential need for future external borrowing.

Councillor Gaunt drew members attention to the Reserves and Balances position, explaining that the three largest reserves were the General Fund, the Capital Investment and the Funding Volatility Reserves. She explained that the General Fund supported the day-to-day revenue working of the council, with the Chief Financial Officer recommending a raise in the minimum level of the General Fund reserve to £1m to maintain a stable financial environment. She advised that as at 31 March 2024 the balance on the reserve was expected to be £4.751m.

The Capital Investment Reserve supported the Capital Programme and as of 31 March 2024 the balance was expected to be £4.982m falling to £2.602m on 31 March 2025. The Funding Volatility Reserve was expected to be £4.145m on 31 March 2025. She explained the reserve was there to cushion the impact of future funding reductions and support economic development.

In conclusion, Councillor Gaunt highlighted the policies which provided the framework for managing the council's finances, with the council's approach being to operate within all professional guidelines, have a low-risk appetite and any investments made prudently. She also mentioned the special expenses policy which charged residents within the areas of Lytham, Ansdell and St Annes for those services which were delivered in other areas of the borough by town and parish councils.

She asked that her thanks to Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer and the whole Finance team for their work in preparing the budget report be recorded.

The Committee RESOLVED to

1. Request Council to approve and adopt:

(a) The revised estimates for 2023/24 and the revenue budget for 2024/25 as set out in Appendix E, which includes recommended transfers to the Capital Investment Reserve in 2023/24 and 2024/25 equivalent to the balance of the revenue surplus for those years, currently estimated in total to be £0.595m in 2023/24 and £0.375m in 2024/25;

(b) The budget proposals and changes to reserves and balances as set out in Appendices F & H, to include approval that the council will act as the accountable body for any of the new capital schemes (as indicated) in Appendix F;

(c) The Capital Strategy 2024-28, including prudential indicators and limits, set out in appendix G; which incorporates the Treasury Management Policy, the Capital Programme, the Treasury Management Strategy, the Investment Strategy and the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement;

(d) The updated Useable Reserves & Balances Policy as detailed in Appendix H;

(e) An average Band D Council Tax of £225.43 for 2024/25 (excluding Town and Parish precepts), which is a 2.99% increase from the 2023/24 average Band D charge;

(f) The Special Expenses policy as set out in Appendix I; which includes that:

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- for the purposes of charging special expenses, both the special expense costs and the tax bases relating to the areas of Lytham and St Annes will each be aggregated and the Council Tax charge per property at each band level will be the same across the whole area; and
- the annual special expense charge per property will be set for 2024/25 with a 3.06% increase on the 2023/24 level, that being £83.39 per band D property; and
- the annual borough wide charge per property will be set for 2024/25 with a 3.06% increase on the 2023/24 level, that being £177.75 per band D property; and
- the budget resource to be allocated to delivering concurrent services and chargeable as special expenses for 2024/25 will be set at a sum equivalent to the annual special expense charge per property (band D equivalent) multiplied by the tax base for the special expense area; and

(g) The schedule of fees and charges for 2024/25 as detailed in Appendix J; and

(h) The detailed draft 2024/25 revenue budget which can be found on the council website at the following link: [Finance – Fylde Council](#)

5. 2024/25 Affordable Warmth Grant

Councillor Dixon presented a report detailing the allocation of the affordable warmth grant from Lancashire County Council. He advised that the purpose of the funding was to provide capital measures for home energy improvements to vulnerable residents, where an affordability issue had been identified. The funding aimed to reduce levels of death and illness over the winter months and to improve people's wellbeing. He advised the allocation for 2024/25 was £61,156 for the delivery of an Affordable Warmth Initiatives.

It was RESOLVED to approve an addition to the capital programme in 2024/25 for the sum of £61,156 and authorise drawdown of the expenditure to be fully funded by the affordable warmth Funding to be received from Lancashire County Council.

6. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase – Holiday, Activity and Food Programme (HAF)

Councillor Dixon introduced a report regarding for funding to continue delivery the HAF programme, which delivered a school holiday programme of physical and enrichment activities, together with a healthy meal, for children in receipt of free school meals.

Fylde had been provided with a funded budget allocation of £153,708, to deliver the HAF programme in 2024/2025.

It was RESOLVED to approve a revenue budget increase of £153,708, fully funded from specific HAF grant, for the delivery of the HAF programme in Fylde in 2024/2025.

7. Ballam Road Car Park

Councillor Morris introduced a report outlining the need for additional public car parking within or close to Lytham town centre and the opportunity to bring the Ballam Road car park into the council's paid parking provision. She advised there was currently no provision for motorhomes to park off-street in Lytham and there was now an opportunity to provide some spaces.

The report detailed the forecasted net income from the car park which could be in region of £14k-£29k after annual running costs. Councillor Morris advised that the council was the freeholder of the car park which was currently leased to Atos IT Services UK Limited which provided an annual rental income of £9k. However, the lease was due to expire in July 2024 and it was proposed not to offer a new lease and bring the car park into council control.

After a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED

1. That the council provides 6 months' notice at the earliest opportunity to Atos IT Services UK Limited and does not enter a new lease arrangement for the Ballam Road car park;
2. That pay and display parking facilities are installed on the Ballam Road car park with fee charges to be

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delegated to the Head of Technical Services in consultation with the lead member for operational services; and
3. To authorise the draw down of £30,000 during 2024/25 from the approved 2024/25 capital programme for Car Park Improvements to cover initial costs as set out in Table 2.

8. In-Depth Scrutiny Review – Use of Residential Premises as Children’s Homes

Councillor Dixon presented the outcome and recommendations of the in-depth scrutiny review on the use of residential premises as children’s homes.

In response to some of the points raised during the public platform he advised that the care of vulnerable residents was of concern. Meetings had been held with health and care leaders at Lancashire County Council, with the police at both local and divisional levels, and with the Police Crime Commissioner’s officer to ensure that vulnerable people in our community were cared for. He also stated that there was concern that vulnerable people were being moved into Fylde from too far away, that was exacerbating the problem, there was a need to look after those people too.

Councillor Dixon proposed a further two recommendations, from those printed in the agenda papers, and Councillor Buckley reminded the committee of the recommendations arising from the scrutiny review that would go forward to government.

Councillors Lee, Redcliffe, Nash and Goodman spoke in support of the review.

In response to questions raised by the committee, Paul Walker – Interim Scrutiny Manager advised that evidence had been taken from Lancashire County Council’s Children’s Services, and in terms of capturing the children’s voice, the review had taken evidence from national surveys which showed many of the children in care had concerns about being placed far from their home area. Mr Walker went on to advise that the provision of these small-scale children’s homes was entirely market led and there was no government oversight.

Councillor Buckley commended the Internal Audit Scrutiny Committee for their work on the review, and the officers who had supported the review.

It was RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations to government put forward in the scrutiny review and;

1. To consider the drafting of an advice note to inform and assist applicants, neighbours and other interested parties in the development of, or change of use of an existing building or premises to a children’s home, through the seeking of planning permission or lawful development certificate;
2. To investigate and consider ways in which Fylde Council can assist and promote the work of Lancashire County Council Children’s Services locally in Fylde;
3. To explore an approach in planning policy in line with neighbouring authorities; and
4. To further research the prevalence of anti-social behaviour in relation to the increase of children’s homes in Fylde.

9. Kirkham Futures - Conversion of Former TSB Building – Capital Programme Drawdown

Councillor Buckley introduced a report proposing the drawdown of funds for the conversion of the former girls’ charity school (most recently occupied by TSB bank).

She advised this was one of the key projects to be delivered under the Kirkham Futures Programme, and funded with monies awarded through the Future High Street Fund. She advised there was a small shortfall in the funding for the project and officers had secured permission from the government to transfer underspent funding from the Hillside scheme. The Committee were requested approve the underwriting the shortfall until the funding had been transferred.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOVLED

1. To approve the proposed capital expenditure of £483,882 in respect to the scheme as outlined in this report. This includes expenditure of £50,000 in 2023/2024 and £433,882 in 2024/2025;

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2. To approve the letting of the works contract to Rosslee Construction for £483,882 to carry out the works as outlined within this report;
3. That officers obtain written approval from the Future High Street Fund Team at DLUHC to transfer £45,819 for 2024/2025 in underspent funding from the Hillside Court scheme of the Kirkham Futures programme to the budget provision for Conversion of TSB Building works; and
4. To approve that the Council underwrites a maximum of £45,819 for 2024/2025 financial year (from the capital investment reserve) if approval is not obtained from the Future High Street Fund grant team at DLUHC for the underspend to be transferred from the Hillside Court scheme of the Kirkham Futures programme to the budget provision for Conversion of TSB Building works.

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