

# MINUTES

## Executive Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday, 30 January 2024
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Richard Redcliffe (Vice-Chairman)  Councillors Tim Armit, Chris Dixon, Joanne Gardner, Ellie Gaunt, Gail Goodman, Matthew Lee, Michelle Morris, Ed Nash, Jayne Nixon, Tommy Threlfall.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Paul O’Donoghue and Katharine McDonnell. Louise Jones, Graham Ruse and David Holmes (Shared Service)

### 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.

Councillors Armit and Nixon declared pecuniary interests in item 4, Council Tax Reduction Scheme 20245/25. They both left the room for the duration of the item.

Councillors Goodman and Morris declared personal interests in agenda item 7, Citizens Advice Fylde (CA Fylde) – Service Level Agreement. The nature of the interest being that they were both Fylde Council appointed representatives to Citizens Advice Fylde.

Councillor Gardner declared a personal interest in item 9, Lytham Institute. The nature of the interest being that she was a member of the Lytham St Annes Civic Society.

### 2. Substitute Members

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

Councillor Joanne Gardner substituted for Councillor Karen Henshaw JP

Councillor Gail Goodman substituted for Councillor Peter Collins

### 3. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting held on 5 December 2023 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

Decision Items

4. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

Councillor Gaunt introduced the report which set out the proposals in respect of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25. She explained details of the scheme which assists people who are on low incomes or claiming certain benefits to pay some of their council tax bills. The scheme proposed that the reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants was again a 22.7% reduction.

She advised that the costs of the scheme meant that it would be broadly self funding, in that the level of support offered was in line with the level of grant funding offered by the government. The scheme proposed meant that the level of support provided in 2023/24 was retained for the 2024/25 CTRS.

Councillor Gaunt advised that the consultation responses from the preceptors had been supportive of the proposed scheme.

She concluded by advising that it was further proposed that the scheme for 2024/25 would continue to provide for an additional discretionary award which may also be granted in accordance with S13A (1) (a) or S13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

In response to questions, Louise Jones, Head of the Shared Revenues and Benefits Service, advised that the data sharing agreement with the Department of Work and Pensions was essential to ensuring that eligible working age claimants and pension age claimants were reached. She further advised that those in receipt of disability related benefits were eligible for CTR, but it was important to note that their disability income was always disregarded when determining a payment.

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, in response to a question from committee, advised that the scheme was monitored throughout the year, tracking actual payments made against projected payments. If there was significant differences this would be reflected in the following years scheme. It was advised that the scheme could not be changed during the year.

Having due regard to the Equality Analysis as detailed in section 5 of this report the Committee RESOLVED to:

1. Recommend to Council the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2024/25 as set out in section 3 of this report;
2. Recommend to Council the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2024/25 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 2024/25 onwards; and
4. Authorise the Deputy Chief Executive to make any necessary final amendments to the scheme arising from changes in Government guidance or elsewhere and to bring any such changes to the next full Council meeting for approval.

(Councillors Nixon and Armit left the room for the duration of the item).

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

Councillor Gaunt introduced the update of the financial forecast for the council for the five years 2023/24 to 2027/28.

She advised there was a forecast surplus of £425k for 2023/24 and a surplus of £266k for 2024/25, with sizeable deficits thereafter. These forecasts were with assumed increases of 2.99% per annum to council tax. Other updates to the forecast included the inclusion of a forecasted increased income from fees and charges taking effect from 2024/25, and favourable movements in investment interest receipts.

She explained that the main purpose of the updated forecast was to reflect the impact of the provisional 2024/25 Local Government Finance Settlement, details of which were announced on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023. However it was a single year settlement and assumptions beyond this current year were difficult to forecast as a result.

In responses to questions from committee, Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the New Homes Bonus (NHB) calculation assumed a growth rate of 0.4% in the tax base. Any growth over the baseline resulted in a NHB payment. The town and parish councils received a share of the NHB funding on the same basis, so if there had been a growth over the 0.4% baseline in their area for that particular year. He further advised there were broad

Minutes – Executive Committee – 30 January 2024

guidelines for how the funds were expected to be spent. The money could be accumulated for a number of years, but the town and parishes had to provide a return to demonstrate how the funding was spent.

The Committee RESOLVED to note the implications of the updated financial forecast, and also noted that the update report would be presented to the Council meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024.

#### 6. Improvements to Childrens' Play Areas 2023/24

This item had been withdrawn from the agenda and would be considered at a future meeting.

#### 7. Citizens Advice Fylde – Service Level Agreement

Councillor Gaunt introduced a report regarding the new Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Fylde Citizens Advice Bureau. She explained that Fylde Council was the main funder of Citizens' Advice Fylde (CA Fylde) and grant provision was included within the base budget to support its operations. The grant for 2023/24 had been £102,082.

The current SLA was due to expire on 31 March 2024, and therefore a determination as the future funding package needed to be made. The council had utilised its Internal Audit providers, Mersey Audit, to assist in the process of developing the new SLA.

On the basis of the evidence gathered by Mersey Audit and that Fylde Citizens Advice had accrued useable, un-ringfenced reserves of £50k, it was recommended to cap the funding at £102, 082 for the next two years and the amount for 2026/27 be considered at the appropriate time based on the availability of un-ringfenced reserves and the monitoring of performance objectives as defined in the SLA.

It was proposed that a new set of performance metrics were agreed with Citizens Advice Fylde in the next twelve months.

In response to questions, Tracy Manning, Deputy Chief Executive advised that Citizens Advice Fylde were open to discussing revised performance metrics, however they would prefer these to align as far as possible with what information they already collated, both locally and nationally.

It was RESOLVED

1. To grant a three-year Service Level Agreement to Citizens Advice Fylde from 1 April 2024, in the sum of £102,082 per annum in 2024/25 and 2025/26, with the operating deficits arising being met from accrued un-ringfenced reserves, with this being kept under regular review at performance monitoring meetings, with a set of new performance metrics to be agreed in the next 12 months; and
2. That the grant provision for 2026/27 be brought forward for review at the Leadership Board (Budget Setting) at the appropriate time.

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

This item was withdrawn from the agenda and would be considered at a future meeting.

#### 9. Lytham Institute

Councillor Karen Buckley introduced a report concerning the Charity Commission's decision on the objectives and governance of the Lytham Institute charity, of which the council was currently the sole trustee. A formal consultation was undertaken in 2022 on a draft scheme to update the Objects of the Trust. The Commission had endorsed the charitable objects proposed by the Council. The Charity Commission had therefore now made a scheme which replaced the previous outdated objectives.

With the new object of the trust now in effect, it was a matter for the committee to consider initiating a consultation about the charity's future structure and governance.

Councillor Buckley highlighted that the Commission recommended that the Council sought to appoint additional trustees.

Minutes – Executive Committee – 30 January 2024

Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, advised that where the Charity Commission suggested additional safeguards in relation to the selling of the building, closing the charity or in changing of the objectives of the charity, that should not be read as criticism of Fylde Council but reflected general advice provided to all local authorities in the position of being a trustee.

He further advised that Charity Commission guidance was available regarding appointing trustees such as looking for specific skill sets, how to advertise for and interview prospective trustees. A proposal for that process would be put before the committee.

It was therefore RESOLVED that the committee;

1. Welcomed the clarity and direction provided by the Charity Commission Scheme and supporting documents;
2. Recognised that the charitable objectives of the trust will be best achieved by appointing further trustees to work alongside the council; and
3. Authorised the Head of Governance to prepare proposals to amend the constitution of the charity to place before the committee to enable additional trustees to be appointed.

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