

MINUTES

Council

Date:	Wednesday, 18 March 2020
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Members Present:	Mayor (Councillor Angela Jacques) Deputy Mayor (Councillor Richard Redcliffe) Councillors Ben Aitken, Frank Andrews, Mark Bamforth (via remote access), Brenda Blackshaw (via remote access), Paula Brearley, Karen Buckley, Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Chris Dixon, Sue Fazackerley MBE, Ellie Gaunt, Brian Gill, Shirley Green, Noreen Griffiths, Will Harris, Gavin Harrison, John Kirkham, Cheryl Little, Sally Nash-Walker, Linda Nulty, Bobby Rigby, Vince Settle, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Roger Small, Ray Thomas, Tommy Threlfall.
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Paul Walker, Ian Curtis, Stephen Reed, Ross McKelvie, Katharine McDonnell, Sharon Wadsworth, Howie Dawson.
Other Attendees:	The BBC

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 Kirkham declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4, M55 Link Road. The nature of the interest being that the proposed route of the road would pass through his land. He left the meeting for the duration of the item.

2. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor announced that sadly the decision had been taken to cancel the Mayor's Ball, which had been due to be held on 20 March 2020. All other planned charity events were also cancelled in line with government advice regarding the coronavirus pandemic. She thanked all those who had donated their ticket money to the charities.

3. Chief Executive's Communications

The Chief Executive thanked those members who were in attendance, that they had made use of the available space to sit apart from one another. He wished everyone good health.

4. M55 Link Road

Councillor Karen Buckley introduced the report, she advised that the recommendation was to divert anticipated business rates growth from the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone of up to £1m to the M55 Link Road project. She

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advised that the additional funding was required to help deliver the project in a timely manner. If reliance was placed upon funding from S106 monies the project was estimated not to be delivered until 2030.

She advised that the funding secured to date was detailed in the report. Councillor Buckley further advised that since the Council had last considered this matter, the developer's contribution had dropped considerably, which had resulted in further delays in bringing this project forward, whilst other avenues of funding were explored.

Fylde Council and the County Council had been requested to make up the shortfall in funding. The LEP funding was due to expire, and other streams of funding had their own requirements to be met. Councillor Buckley advised that £27k of retained business rates had already been received, but the timing of further receipts was uncertain, especially in light of the coronavirus outbreak. She stated it may be necessary to use the Funding Volatility Reserve in the interim.

In conclusion she referred members to recommendation 4. She reported that the legal advice referred to in the recommendation had been received and it confirmed that state aid rules were not engaged. Therefore the fourth recommendation was no longer required and should be removed. Councillor Buckley proposed the first three recommendations to council.

Councillor Sue Fazackerley seconded the recommendations.

Following a short debate, it was RESOLVED unanimously, in the event that it was not possible to secure additional external funding, including contributions through section 106 agreements, to;

1. Commit up to £1m of Business Rate growth from the Blackpool Enterprise Zone as a further contribution towards the accelerated construction of the M55-Heyhouses Link Road;
2. Approve the transfer into the M55 Link Road Reserve of current and future Business Rate growth receipts arising from the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone to a maximum sum of £1m;
3. Approve that in the event that less than £1m of Business Rate growth has accumulated by the time that the funds are required by Lancashire County Council to deliver the road, that any shortfall would be met from the Funding Volatility Reserve.

4. Urgent Item – Coronavirus Contingency – Alternative Decision-Making Option

In introducing the item, the Mayor advised that pursuant to Part VA, Section 100b, paragraph 4(b) of the Local Government Act 1972, she was of the opinion that, due to government guidance regarding the coronavirus pandemic that the following item should be considered as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Susan Fazackerley introduced the report, advising that provisions needed to be made to safeguard the essential services of the council for the duration of the pandemic. She advised that Group Leaders together with the Chief Executive had decided in the face of government advice that it was not appropriate for councillors to meet in person for decision making. It was the appropriate for the council to delegate decision making on essential matters to the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service in consultation with the Leader, Mayor, Chairman and committee members.

In concluding she advised that given the uncertainty surrounding the duration of the pandemic, a third recommendation was proposed to provide a general dispensation to all members in regards to their attendance at meetings due to the pandemic.

Councillor Peter Collins seconded the proposal.

Councillor Silverwood proposed an amendment to include the Leader of the Opposition in the members to be consulted with, Councillor Brian Gill seconded the amendment.

The amendment was carried.

It was therefore RESOLVED unanimously;

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1. That the Council delegate the following decision-making powers to the Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service in consultation with the Leader, Leader of the Opposition, Mayor, Chairmen and relevant members of the respective committees, with immediate effect:

Powers to take any decision on behalf of the council which can lawfully be delegated to officers, subject to the decision-taker, before taking the decision, having taken appropriate steps to consult the chairman and members of the committee which would, save for this delegated power, have taken the decision.

Power to cancel council, committee or sub-committee meetings.

2. That the Chief Executive reviews the alternative decision-making arrangements each week, or more frequently as required, in consultation with Group Leaders, taking into consideration the latest advice from government and appropriate agencies, to determine whether to revert to the normal committee procedures, and that the arrangements be additionally reviewed by members when it is next appropriate, taking into account that advice, for a scheduled meeting of the full council to take place.
3. To approve the following as reasons for non-attendance at meetings by any councillor for the purposes of section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972: Illness caused by the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic, any measure taken by a councillor in response to medical or official guidance in relation to the pandemic, and any cancellation of meetings in response to the pandemic.

(Councillors Bamforth and Blackshaw, accessing the meeting via remote means, did not participate in the vote on any matter, pursuant to Schedule 12, Part VI 39(1) of the Local Government Act 1972)

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