



# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 29 March 2021
<b>Venue:</b>	Remote meeting via Zoom
<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, David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Michael Withers.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Ian Curtis, Paul O'Donoghue, Paul Walker, Carly Smith, Rob Green, Graeme Ruse, Louise Jones, Carrie Clark, Katharine McDonnell
<b>Other Councillors Present</b>	Councillors Shirley Green, Paul Hayhurst, Matthew Lee, Roger Small and Viv Willder
<b>Others present</b>	Two members of the public were also present.

### 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.

Councillor Nulty declared a prejudicial interest in agenda items 8, 9 and 11 as her husband was a member of the YMCA Board. She left the meeting for the duration of the items.

Councillors Silverwood and Withers declared prejudicial interests in agenda item 4. As owners of businesses that might be affected by the policy. They left the meeting for the duration of the item.

#### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 16 February 2021 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

#### 3. Substitute Members

There were no substitutions on this occasion.

### Decision Items

#### 4. Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy – 2021/22

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the council's Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy should be reviewed and updated regularly to take account of any changes or new discounts announced by the government.

Minutes – Finance and Democracy Committee – 29 March 2021

The draft revision of the policy before the committee considered the extended retail discount and nursery discount which were fully funded by government. Mr O'Donoghue advised the retail discount was a 100% discount from April 2021 to June 2021, and a 66% discount thereafter for the remainder of the year.

In response to questions Mr. Graeme Ruse, of the Revenues and Benefits shared service advised that the Small Business Rate Relief was ongoing. Additionally, the government had announced the intention to introduce an additional relief which would have a broader scope, but further details were awaited.

It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the updated Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy appended to the report.

(Councillor Silverwood and Councillor Withers left the room for the duration of the item.)

#### 5. Write-Off of Uncollectable Debts 2020/21

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer presented the report, which included a note of the debts written off under S151 delegation and the debts to be written off by the committee. Mr O'Donoghue advised that following the ongoing impact of the pandemic, more debts to write off had been expected, but the range of reliefs extended by the government had assisted businesses. He advised that the debts before committee were aged debts which demonstrated that every avenue was explored before the decision to write off was sought.

The proposed write-off of debts was in relation to Business Rates, Council Tax, and the recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments.

In response to questions it was advised that as the collection authority, the write-offs would be apportioned between the respective preceptors.

It was RESOLVED to;

1. Approve the write-off of the one uncollectable debt in excess of £25,000 details of which are provided at Appendix A of the report; and
2. Note the write-off by the Chief Financial Officer under delegated powers of the three uncollectable debts below £25,000, details of which were also set out in Appendix A to the report.

#### 6. COVID 19 – Fylde Recovery Plan

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented a report setting out strategic and corporate actions and measures that would be implemented over the next 12 months, or longer, to support the long-term recovery of the local community and the economy in Fylde. It outlined how the council would engage with stakeholders to establish a coordinated partnership approach to recovery.

Mr Oldfield advised that the recovery plan was a one-year complement to the corporate plan. It would be linked to the corporate plan actions and would influence a review of the corporate plan in due course. A review of the council's commercial strategy would also be necessary.

Following a discussion, it was RESOLVED;

1. To approve the proposed Fylde Recovery Plan as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report, and
2. To incorporate the recovery plan into the corporate plan, so that actions are prioritised and monitored.

#### 7. Boundary Commission Review – Warding Arrangement

The Chairman, together with Ian Curtis, Head of Governance, introduced the report. Mr. Curtis advised the Boundary Commission was undertaking a periodic review of Fylde's electoral arrangements. The first stage was to decide on the council size and the Boundary Commission had accepted in principle the council's proposal that the council size should be 37, instead of 51, members from the 2023 election. The review now moved to the next stage,

Minutes – Finance and Democracy Committee – 29 March 2021

the warding arrangements. A public consultation for proposing warding arrangement for Fylde was currently open and would run until 5 April 2021. The Boundary Commission would consider submissions on warding arrangements from any member of the public, group, or interested party.

Mr Curtis advised that in determining the warding arrangements the Boundary Commission must consider how a proposal would achieve electoral equality, support community cohesion and provide effective and convenient local government. Proposed warding arrangements must balance these three criteria.

The Boundary Commissions advice was to ignore previous arrangements and to start with a blank sheet of paper, look to natural boundaries such as geographic features or main roads, railways or waterways, and to use parishes as building blocks.

The committee's working group, appointed in September 2020, reconvened in February 2021 to consider warding arrangements for Fylde incorporating 37 councillors. The working group had produced a draft proposal of 15 wards, each represented by two or three councillors which (with one exception) provided electoral equality within the Commission's accepted tolerance. Freckleton was the only proposed ward outside of the tolerance but had strong community cohesion and respected the parish boundary.

The committee was asked to accept the draft proposal for provisional submission to the Commission and to recommend that it be approved by the council as the council's final submission on warding arrangements.

The Chairman advised of several amendments to the draft submission as set out in the report, which included changes to proposed ward names, corrections to the descriptions of ward boundaries and a number of minor typographical errors.

There was a debate in which some members expressed concern that the draft submission failed to take into account the unique community identities of certain rural settlements, which were not comparable to those of other settlements that had been included in the same proposed wards. In accordance with procedural rule 14.5(i) a recorded vote was taken;

For (8) Anthony, Buckley, Gaunt, O'Rourke, Redcliffe, Settle, Singleton, Withers  
Against (4) Collins, Nulty, Oades, Silverwood

It was therefore RESOLVED to;

1. Approve the document, subject to the ward name change amendments and editorial corrections, at appendix 1, a provisional proposal to the Local Government Boundary Commission prior to the consultation closing date of 5 April 2021; and
2. Recommend to the council that the draft proposal be confirmed as the council's final proposal on warding arrangements to the Commission.

#### 8. Additional Restrictions Grant Bid – Fylde Coast YMCA

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, introduced a report providing details of a request from the YMCA for a grant award from the Additional Restrictions Grant (ARG) fund of up to £100,000 to ensure the financial viability of the Trust during the third re-opening and recovery of facilities after COVID pandemic lockdown regulations.

Mr. Oldfield advised that the YMCA had had significant ongoing costs whilst closed and the grant was considered necessary support until the pools and gyms returned to normal operating levels.

It was RESOLVED to approve a £100,000 award to the Fylde Coast YMCA from the Additional Restrictions Grant fund.

(Councillor Nulty left the meeting for the duration of the item)

#### 9. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase – YMCA, National Leisure Recovery Fund

Minutes – Finance and Democracy Committee – 29 March 2021

At the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on 11 March 2021, a verbal update was given on the Covid 19 recovery arrangements in place which included reference to a grant of £149,612 which had awarded to Fylde Council on behalf the Fylde Coast YMCA as part of the National Leisure Recovery Fund.

The committee noted that the grant would be taken forward as a fully funded revenue budget increase of £149,612 funded from the National Leisure Recovery Fund (NLRF), to support the YMCA in their recovery from the impacts of the pandemic.

It was RESOLVED to approve an additional revenue budget increase of £149,612 in 2020/21 fully funded from the National Leisure Recovery Fund, to support the YMCA in their recovery from the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic.

(Councillor Nulty left the meeting for the duration of the item)

#### 10. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase – Hove Road, St Annes

At the Tourism and Leisure Committee meeting held on 11 March 2021, consideration was given to the release of S106 monies to allow for proposed play area improvements at Hove Road, St. Annes to be undertaken. The committee recommended that the Finance and Democracy Committee consider approving a fully funded revenue budget increase of £1,275 funded from the S106 contribution from the St. Albans Road development, to carry out the proposed play improvements.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded revenue budget increase of £1,275 funded from the S106 contribution from the St Albans Road development, to carry out the proposed play area improvement works at Hove Road, St Annes.

#### 11. Addition to the Capital Programme – 25 Victoria Road, St Annes – Y-Pad Scheme

At its meeting on 10 March 2021 the Planning Committee considered and approved an Expression of Interest (EOI) by Fylde Coast YMCA for the use of Section 106 funds for the refurbishment of 25 Victoria Road, St Annes for the delivery of 5 Y-Pad one-bedroom apartments for the benefit of young people aged 18-25 in training or employment.

The Committee recommended approval of a fully funded addition to the Capital Programme – “25 Victoria Road Fylde Coast Y-Pad Scheme” for £200,000 phased over two financial years (2021/22 - £50,000 and 2022/23 - £150,000) to be funded from a portion of S106 developer contributions for affordable housing currently held by the Council for this purpose (from Agreement Ref: 12/0717 - Moss Farm, Cropper Road, Westby).

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded addition to the Capital Programme – “25 Victoria Road Fylde Coast Y-pad Scheme” for £200,000 phased over two financial years (2021/22 - £50,000 and 2022/23 - £150,000) to be met in full from a portion of S106 developer contributions for affordable housing currently held by the council for this purpose (from Agreement Ref: 12/0717 – Moss Farm, Cropper Road, Westby).

(Councillor Nulty left the meeting for the duration of the item)

#### 12. Fully Funded Addition to the Capital Programme – South Fylde Line Study

Funding has been secured to carry out a study and develop a Strategic Outline Business Case into the viability of creating a passing loop on the South Fylde Line to increase the capacity of the line from 1 to 2 trains per hour. The report outlined the proposed study and progress made to date. A similar report had been considered by the Operational Management Committee on 16/03/21 who recommended that proposal be supported.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded addition to the Capital Programme in 2021/22 ‘South Fylde Line Study’ to the sum of £70,000 funded from a grant of £50,000 from the Department of Transport and further funding of £16,000 from project partners, and the remaining £4,000 match funding from Fylde Council to be funded from the Capital Investment Reserve.

13. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Progress Report

The committee received detailed information regarding progress to date on the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone.

In response to questions Rob Green, Enterprise Zone Manager, advised that the Eastern Gateway link would be consulted upon later this year. He advised that planning permission had not yet been applied for and would require Secretary of State approval so the start and completion dates of the project was currently uncertain. He also advised that a steady programme of development for infrastructure needed to be continued to achieve the aspiration target of 5,000 new jobs.

14. COVID 19 Pandemic Recovery

The committee received an update on the effect of the pandemic on the services within the remit of the committee.

15. Reports of the Various Outside Bodies

The committee received reports from the council's representatives on outside bodies within the remit of the committee.

16. Exclusion of the Public

RESOVED to exclude the public from the meeting in accordance with the provisions of Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the business to be discussed is exempt information as defined under paragraph 3, information relation to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information of schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

17. Public Offices Site

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services and Marie Percival, Estates Manager, presented a report requesting reconsideration of the agreement to lease the Public Offices building and adjacent land in light of proposed revised terms from the prospective tenant. Mr Walker advised that the developer had cited increased building costs associated with the project and was no longer able to commit to the previously agreed terms.

The previous decision to dispose of the former Tourism and Leisure building and adjacent land is unaffected.

The changes to the proposed terms where set out by Ms. Percival and she provided several clarifications in response to questions from the committee.

It was RESOVLED to;

1. Approve revised terms for a 20-year lease for the Public Offices site, outbuildings and adjacent land to Homebird Interiors Limited with the option to purchase at any time as set out in Table 1 at section 6 of this report;
2. Authorise the Director of Development Services to approve the details within the contracts to be drawn up between the parties, consistent with the principles as described within this report, following consultation with the Chairman and the Vice Chairman of the Finance and Democracy Committee.

-----  
**Fylde Council copyright [2021]**

You may re-use this document/publication (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context.

The material must be acknowledged as Fylde Council copyright and you must give the title of the source document/publication.

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This document/publication was also available on our website at [www.fylde.gov.uk](http://www.fylde.gov.uk)

Minutes – Finance and Democracy Committee – 29 March 2021

any enquiries regarding this document/publication should be sent to the Town Hall, St Annes Road West, St Annes FY8 1LW, or to [listening@fylde.gov.uk](mailto:listening@fylde.gov.uk).