



# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 21 November 2022
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Vince Settle (Vice - Chairman)  Councillors Peter Anthony, Peter Collins, Ellie Gaunt, David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, John Singleton JP, Michael Withers.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Ian Curtis, Paul O'Donoghue, Lyndsey Lacey- Simone
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Louise Jones, Head of Revenue & Benefits Shared Service.

### Public Platform

There were no speakers under the Public Platform on this occasion.

### Procedural Items

#### 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. There were no interests on this occasion.

#### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 28 September 2022 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

#### 3. Substitute Members

There were no substitutions under Council procedure rule 23 (c).

### Decision Items

#### 4. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Financial Forecast Update (Including Revenue, Capital & Treasury Management) 2022/23 to 2026/27

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented an update of the Financial Forecast for the Council for the five years 2022/23 to 2026/27. He advised that the report included the changes arising since the Budget had been set by Council in March 2022. Furthermore, the report set out the purpose and background to the financial forecast and took account of the latest reserve and balances position, revenue and capital spending forecasts and treasury management issues. It also identified and updated the financial risks and challenges facing the Council.

In his report, Mr O'Donoghue went on to highlight some key areas including: the increase in the bank base rate to its current level of 3%; specific adjustments made to the Forecast as detailed in Appendix Ci of the report together with details of expenditure/income and the associated reserves as set out in Appendix E of the report.

Mr O' Donoghue stated that integral to the forecast were details of the Local Government Settlement which would be announced late December.

In conclusion, Mr O' Donoghue confirmed that the financial position of the Council remains robust. Members were asked to continue to be cognisant of the risks that were detailed in the report to maintain a sustainable financial position for the Council.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited questions from the Committee. Clarification was sought on the measures taken by the Council to reduce energy costs at the Town Hall. Mr Oldfield addressed this point.

The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked Mr O'Donoghue for the comprehensive report and in doing so, welcomed the budgeted surplus position as reported.

It was RESOLVED to note the implications of the updated financial forecast as detailed in the report and note that the report will be presented to the Council meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### 5. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2023/24

Louise Jones, Head of Revenue & Benefits Shared Service introduced the report which set out the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) proposals for 2023/24 and in doing so, stated that the recommendations of the Committee would be considered at the 5 December Council meeting.

Members were advised that the Scheme is reviewed annually to ensure that it remains fit for purpose and includes the continuation of the additional Discretionary Hardship Relief Fund to provide support for claimants in exceptional circumstances.

A copy of the consultation and responses from major preceptors was included as an appendix to the report.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited questions from the Committee. These related to the following areas: the application of the maximum discount applied; costs of administering the CTRS; details of the balance within the hardship fund and demand for/ payments made under the fund. These points were addressed by Mr O'Donoghue and Ms Jones as appropriate.

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

1. To recommend to Council the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2023/24 as set out in section 3 of the report.
2. To recommend to Council the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2023/24 to provide additional support for claimants in exceptional circumstances.
3. To recommend that Council approve, as necessary, that the financial implications are reflected in the Council's Revenue Budget and Financial forecast for 2023/24 onwards; and
4. To authorise the Chief Financial Officer to make any necessary final amendments to the scheme arising from changes in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities guidance or elsewhere and to bring any such changes to the next full Council meeting for approval.

#### 6. New Homes Bonus: Provision of Grants to Town and Parish Councils 2023/24 and Future Years

By way of introduction, Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer reported that the New Homes Bonus policy provides the framework for a system of grant support to town and parish areas which have experienced above average growth in housing numbers, funded from a portion of the New Homes Bonus that is received by Fylde Council.

This report proposed the continuation of the arrangements in respect of 2023/24 and future years which are consistent with the approach taken the previous year due to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the future of the national scheme of New Homes Bonus grants. Details of previous allocations to town and parish councils under the scheme together with the proposed distribution methodology were set out in the report.

A copy of the updated 'Policy on the Provision of New Homes Bonus Grants to Town and Parish Councils 2023/24 and future years' was included as an appendix to the report.

Following the presentation, the Chairman invited questions from the Committee. Clarification was sought on the arrangements for recording the amount of allocation to each of the town/ parish councils and the associated reporting arrangements detailing what the allocation had been spent on in line with the aims of the policy. This was addressed by Mr O'Donoghue.

The Committee RESOLVED:

1. To note the current situation in respect of the national scheme of New Homes Bonus grants; and
2. To approve that with effect from 2023/24, and for all financial years thereafter, if Fylde Council receives confirmation of an allocation of New Homes Bonus grant for each year, 5% of that grant will be distributed to town and parish councils that have experienced above average housing growth in the previous year using the distribution methodology adopted for previous years as set out in the report.

7. Fully Funded Addition to the Capital Programme - Fairhaven Lake Pathway Improvements

The report detailed a request from the Tourism and Leisure Committee held on 3 November 2022 for approval of a fully funded capital scheme addition of £70,000 in 2022/23 to be funded from the Capital Investment Reserve to undertake repairs and improvements to the pathways at Fairhaven Lake

Members were advised that the scheme includes works to several sections of pathway and the construction of a new path from the car park to the main circular lake path. The Committee was requested to approve a fully funded capital scheme addition in 2022/23 of £70,000 to be funded from the Capital Investment Reserve.

A map of the proposed works was included as an appendix.

The Committee welcomed the pathway improvements.

It was RESOLVED: to approve a fully funded capital scheme addition in 2022/23 of £70,000 to be funded from the Capital Investment Reserve to carry out the works detailed within the report.

8. Fully Funded Addition to the Capital Programme - Affordable Warmth Grant

The report detailed a request from the Environment, Health and Housing Committee held on 15 November 2022 for approval of a fully funded addition to the Capital Programme of £59,856 for the delivery of the 'Affordable Warmth Grant 22/23' to be spent in 2022/23 to be met from grant funding received from Lancashire County Council for Affordable Warmth Initiatives.

Members were advised that the scheme will provide capital measures for home energy improvements to vulnerable residents where an affordability issue had also been identified.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the Chairman invited questions. Clarification was sought on the number of residents the grant would be able to support, the associated criteria used and details of the accredited supplier(s). These points were addressed by Mr Oldfield.

It was RESOLVED: to approve fully funded addition to the Capital Programme, 'Affordable Warmth Grant 22/23' for £59,856 to be spent in 2022/23 to be met from grant funding received from Lancashire County Council for Affordable Warmth Initiatives.

9. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2023 - Returning Officer Fees

Ian Curtis (Head of Governance) was invited by the Chairman to present the report. In summary, the report provided details of the Annual Pay Policy Statement for Fylde Council with specific reference to the payment of election fees because of the reduction in the number of wards following the recent Local Government Boundary Commission review. Details regarding this matter were set out in the report.

Clarification was sought on several areas including: the formula used or the calculation of fees; responsible body for the payment of fees; the Returning Officer/ Deputy Officer Returning duties and matters associated with parish council and LCC election arrangements. These were addressed in turn by Mr Curtis.

It was RESOLVED - To approve the methodology in paragraph 2 of the report for the 2023 local elections, with the formula as outlined in paragraph 3 of the report being used thereafter and that these changes be incorporated within the draft Annual Pay Policy replacing paragraph titled 'electoral fees'.

#### 10. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2023

Allan Oldfield (Chief Executive) presented the report. In doing so, he advised that as part of the Localism Act, it has been a requirement (since 1st April 2012), for all local authorities to have in place a Pay Policy Statement. The report provided details of the Pay Policy Statement for Fylde Council. Members were advised that the objective of the Statement is to ensure and confirm openness, transparency, and fairness in the pay policy arrangements at Fylde.

A copy of the Pay Policy Statement was included as an appendix to the report.

It was suggested by the Vice-Chairman that the weblink included within the Policy required updating to reflect the current staffing arrangements and recent pay awards.

It was RESOLVED: that subject to the amendments outlined above, to approve the Pay Policy Statement as set out in the report.

#### Information Items

#### 11. Lancashire 2050

The Chairman, Councillor Karen Buckley introduced the item. In doing so, she advised that there would be a 'Celebration of Lancashire Day' (which is November 27<sup>th</sup>) on 23<sup>rd</sup> November hosted in the Speakers Room at the Houses of Parliament, Westminster.

The Chairman then went on to highlight the report on Lancashire 2050 which was being considered by each of the fifteen local authorities in Lancashire.

The report presented details of the progress made by the 15 Lancashire Local authorities since the last update in January and February 2022. It set out the general principles and high-level priorities of a long-term strategic framework for Lancashire, known as "Lancashire 2050". The report also represents the commitment to ensure that there continues to be opportunities for all the partner authorities to contribute to and influence regional plans, including identifying specific schemes and activities.

A copy of the Lancashire 2050 Framework and a Scope Diagram were included as appendices to the report.

#### 12. General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Position as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

The Committee received an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and specifically for those areas under the remit of the Committee.

#### 13. Capital Programme Monitoring Report 2021/22 - Position as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

The Committee received an update on the approved Capital Programme of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and specifically for those schemes under the remit of the Committee.

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