

# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 22 November 2021
<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, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades via remote access, David O'Rourke, Richard Redcliffe, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Michael Withers.
<b>Other Councillors Present:</b>	None
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Paul O'Donoghue, Sharon Wadsworth
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Louise Jones, Head of Revenue & Benefits shared service.

### Public Platform

There were no speakers under public platform 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.

Councillors Collins, Silverwood and Withers declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 5, Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy – 2021/22 and 2022/23. The nature of the interest being they were business owners. The councillors 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 7 October 2021 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) 2021/22 to 2025/26

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Paul O’Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, provided the mid-year update to the financial forecast. He advised that the update comprised three elements, namely the capital programme, summary position on treasury management and revenue forecast update.

Mr O’Donoghue highlighted the main high level capital financial risks as being the Kirkham Town Centre Regeneration and the St Annes Sea Wall programme both due to their complexities, high value, strict deadlines and potential for additional costs. The revenue high risks comprised the uncertainty of future funding from central government, the impact of the delayed Fair Funding Review, the level of retained Business Rate income and the future of the New Homes Bonus scheme.

In response to questions Mr O’Donoghue advised that in regards to Business Rates Retention, it was anticipated the Fair Funding Review would include a ‘reset’ which was likely to amend the baseline, and the amount of growth to be retained by local authorities. He also confirmed that the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) had been delayed pending the adoption of the Partial Review of the Local Plan.

Finally the chairman provided an undertaking to follow up the availability of any staff to assist existing officers on the Kirkham Town Centre Regeneration to ensure that the strict delivery timescales can be adhered to.

Members thanked the Finance team and staff across the council for all their work in producing the report and their work throughout a challenging year.

It was RESOLVED to note the implications of this updated financial forecast, and to also note that this report will be presented to the Council meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2021.

#### 5. Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy - 2021/22 and 2022/23

Paul O’Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the council’s Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount policy was reviewed and updated regularly to incorporate any changes or new discounts from government.

The report before committee took into account the extended retail, hospitality and leisure businesses discount as announced by the government as a continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2021/22 and 2022/23 update).

(Councillors Silverwood, Collins and Withers left the meeting for the duration of this item)

#### 6. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2022/23

Paul O’Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, introduced the Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2022/23. He advised that it was a continuation of the existing scheme and that there had been no evidence that the scheme needed to be revised. The hardship element of the scheme would continue.

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

1. Recommend to Council the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2022/23 as set out in section 3 of the report;
2. Recommend to Council the continuation of the Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2022/23 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 2022/23 onwards; and
4. Authorise the Director of Resources 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.

#### 7. Local Council Tax Support 2021/22

Mr. O’Donoghue introduced the report regarding the additional government funding of £670m for 2021/22 for Local Council Tax Support that was announced by MCHLG on the 18th December 2020. It was for Local Authorities to determine how best to utilise these funds during 2021/22. Fylde’s allocation was £130,548 and the report set

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out a number of options for utilising the funding, that would assist the most economically vulnerable households, for members to consider.

One option was to top up the Discretionary Hardship Relief Fund back up to £10,000 to ensure that funding was available in the future. All members were in agreement with this option.

It was suggested that the remainder of the allocation was used to assist Working Age Council Tax Reduction recipients with a one-off award towards their 2021/22 Council Tax. The report detailed four allocation options ranging from all recipients, those that had been in receipt of CTR for over twelve months, over twenty-four months and over thirty-six months.

All members were in agreement that recipients of CTR were vulnerable but it was not possible to evaluate which group were most in need.

Following a vote on the suggested options it was RESOLVED to:-

1. Agree to “top up” the Council Tax Reduction Scheme Discretionary Hardship Relief fund to £10,000 to ensure that funding is available to provide additional support for Council Tax Reduction recipients in future years;
2. Choose Option 2 (A) from the preferred allocation to assist all Working Age Council Tax Reduction recipients with a one-off grant towards their 2021/22 Council Tax

#### 8. New Homes Bonus: Provision of Grants to Town and Parish Councils 2022/23

Paul O’Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, advised that the New Homes Bonus policy provided the framework for a system of grant support to town and parish areas which had experienced above average growth in housing numbers, funded from a portion of the New Homes Bonus that is received by Fylde Council.

It was proposed not to recommend any allocation to Town and Parish Councils until confirmation of the allocation to Fylde Council was received from MHCLG. It was acknowledged this would impact Town and Parish Councils in setting their precepts. However, if an allocation was confirmed for Fylde, it was recommended to provide 5% to those Town and Parish Councils who had experienced above average levels of development. This was consistent with the approach taken last year due to the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the future of the national scheme of New Homes Bonus grants.

It was RESOLVED to:

1. Note the current situation in respect of the national scheme of New Homes Bonus grants;
2. Approve that there would be no allocations of funding to town and parish councils from New Homes Bonus grant until confirmation had been received of the amount of New Homes Bonus receivable by Fylde Council for 2022/23; and
3. Approve that in the event that Fylde Council does receive confirmation of an allocation of New Homes Bonus grant for 2022/23, a proportion of that grant would be distributed to town and parish councils that had experienced above average housing growth in the previous year, equivalent to a total of 5% of the latest estimate of the total New Homes Bonus income received by Fylde Council, using the distribution methodology adopted for previous years.

#### 9. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Accommodation Project for Ex-Offenders and Rough Sleepers

The report detailed a request from the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, held on 2 November 2021, for approval to combine funding awarded under the Accommodation for Ex-Offenders scheme announced by MHCLG in 2021 with the Rough Sleeper Initiative funding received in 2021, to tender an external agency to run Fylde Rough Sleeper and Ex-Offenders Accommodation Project.

The Committee sought the approval of the Finance and Democracy Committee for a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £34,172 to be fully funded by MHCLG Ex-Offenders Accommodation grant within the current Rough Sleeper Initiative scheme. The Environment, Health and Housing Committee approved the drawdown of the additional funding.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in 2021/22 for the total sum of £34,172 to be fully funded by the MHCLG Ex-Offenders Accommodation grant within the current Rough Sleeper Initiative scheme.

10. Fully Funded Revenue Budget Increase - Business Health Matters Funding

The report detailed a request from the Environment, Health and Housing Committee, held on 2 November 2021, for approval of funding awarded from the European Social Fund (ESF) to provide support to the Business Health Matters programme which was being rolled out across Lancashire and delivered within each locality district (other than Ribble Valley). The Business Health Matters programme supported local businesses in improving the physical and mental health of their employees so that staff are happier, healthier and more resilient.

The project runs from April 2021 to December 2023 and the funding allocated to Fylde Council by Active Lancashire to deliver this initiative is £80,251 to 31st December 2023. Fylde Council plan to recruit an officer to deliver this service for the duration of the project which would be fully funded from the ESF funding.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully funded revenue budget increase in the sum of £80,251 (split between the years 2021/22 £26,750, 2022/23 £26,750 & 2023/24 £26,751) to be met in full, from the ESF Funding through Active Lancashire relating to this project.

Information Items

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

The committee received an update on the General Fund Revenue Budget of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and specifically for those areas under the remit of the Committee.

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

The committee received an update on the approved Capital Programme of the Council as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 and specifically for those schemes under the remit of the Committee.

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