

# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 26 November 2018
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Neil Harvey (Vice-Chairman)  Councillors David Donaldson, Sue Fazackerley MBE, Tony Ford JP, Graeme Neale, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades, Richard Redcliffe, Vince Settle, Elaine Silverwood.
<b>Other Councillors Present:</b>	Councillors Mark Bamforth (via remote access), Paul Hayhurst and Ed Nash
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Paul O'Donoghue, Ian Curtis, Paul Drinnan, Simon Stott, Sharon Wadsworth.  Louise Jones, Blackpool and Fylde Shared Revenues and Benefits Service Steve Smith and Rob Green, Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Councillor Glyn Stead (Chairman of District Parish Liaison) Two members of the public were present.

### 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 Karen Buckley declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 4, Council Tax Reduction Scheme, the nature of the interest being that she was a landlord.

### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Finance and Democracy Committee meeting held on 24 September 2018 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

### 3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 22(c):

Councillor Sue Fazackerley for Councillor Angela Jacques;  
Councillor Graeme Neale for Councillor Roger Small.

#### Variation of Business

At this juncture, the Chairman varied the order of the business on the agenda as set out below.

#### Information Items

### 11. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Financial Summary Report

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Officers, Steve Smith and Rob Green, responsible for the delivery of the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone presented a report on the financial matters of the Enterprise Zone. The officers provided a brief overview on the next steps in the development of the area and responded to questions from members in relation to S106 funding.

### Public Platform

Councillor Stead (Little Eccleston with Larbreck Parish Councillor) addressed the committee in relation to Item 8, Review of Parish Election Recharges and, as Chairman of the District Parish Liaison group, reported that the proposed change to the methodology of calculating election charges had been put before all the Town and Parish councils for discussion. To date all but three out of the fifteen councils had responded in favour.

### Decision Items

#### 4. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2019/20

*(Councillor Buckley, having declared an interest, left the room for the duration of item 4. The Vice Chairman, Councillor Harvey, assumed the Chair for item 4).*

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer and Louise Jones, Benefits Manager for the Shared Service, presented details regarding the proposed Council Tax Reduction Scheme for 2019/20. Mr O'Donoghue advised that the scheme was reviewed annually and that the existing scheme was embedded and working well and as in previous years included a Hardship Relief Fund. He also advised that the major preceptors had been consulted, with each supporting the Council's proposed scheme.

Mr O'Donoghue reminded Members of their need to have due regard to the Equality Analysis, as detailed in the papers, in consideration of the scheme.

In response to a question regarding the number of applications to the Hardship Relief Fund in 2018/19, Ms Jones advised that the number of applications awarded funding was consistent with previous years. She advised that each application was considered very carefully and all other avenues of support were explored before hardship relief was awarded, which explained why the fund had been used sparingly.

With no further comment or questions, it was RESOLVED to;

1. Recommend to Council the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2019/20 as set out in section 3 of the report;
  2. Recommend to Council the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2019/20 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 2019/20 onwards; and
  4. Authorise the Director of Resources to make any necessary final amendments to the scheme arising from changes in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government's guidance or elsewhere and to bring any such changes to the Council meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018 for approval.
5. Financial Forecast Update (including Revenue, Capital & Treasury Management) 2018/19 to 2022/23

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented an update of the Financial Forecast. He advised that the report was the first update of the financial forecast since the budget had been set in March 2018. The report, as usual, was in three separate parts relating to the revenue budget, capital programme and treasury management.

Mr O'Donoghue highlighted that the financial forecast had been updated to reflect changes since budget Council. The report also noted that confirmation from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government regarding which arrangements would operate for 2019/20 in respect of the continuation of the existing Lancashire Business Rate Pool and the outcome of the '75% Pilot Status' bid is still awaited. This Financial Forecast assumed that Fylde Council would participate in a Lancashire-wide pooling arrangement up to and including 2019/20.

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Any amendments to the levels of forecast Business Rate income to be retained will be reflected in future updates to the Financial Forecast.

2019/20 would be the final year of the government's four year funding settlement. Mr O'Donoghue advised the draft Local Government Settlement for 2019/20 was due to be announced in December 2018, and that there was uncertainty regarding income levels for future years. Any changes to the levels of anticipated central government funding arising from the settlement would be reflected in future updates to the Financial Forecast.

In relation to the Capital Programme Mr O'Donoghue advised that all the capital schemes from the programme committees are funded.

Finally Mr O'Donoghue drew the Committee's attention to appendix E of the report, which detailed the forecast surplus/deficits throughout the life of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. He advised that there was currently a forecast surplus of £1,468k for the current year, a forecast surplus of £498k for 2019/20. The following three years were also forecast to have a surplus.

Following questions from members, that were responded to by Mr O'Donoghue, it was RESOLVED to note the implications of this updated financial forecast, and to also note that this report would be presented to the Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

### 6. New Homes Bonus: Provision of Grants to Town and Parish Councils 2019/20

Mr O'Donoghue introduced a report that provided a review of the effectiveness of the policy approved in December 2017. The purpose of the policy was to provide the framework for a system of grant support to town and parish areas which had experienced above-average growth in housing numbers.

It was proposed that the scheme would continue for the 2019/20 financial year on similar terms to those for 2018/19. The total grant funding to be distributed for 2019/20 would again be a figure equivalent to 5% of the latest estimate of the total New Homes Bonus income receivable by Fylde Council for that year i.e. a sum of £68,950 in 2019/20.

Grants would only be issued following receipt of a statement outlining how the grant would be used and must be in compliance with the approved scheme requirements as set out in paragraph 4.3 of the policy.

Feedback from members on the committee that were involved in Town or Parish Councils that had received funding confirmed that the scheme was welcomed and was working well.

The Committee RESOLVED recommend to Council the adoption of the updated policy for 2019/20 on the provision of grants to town and parish councils, including the allocation of such grants for 2019/20 in the total sum of £68,950.

### 7. Community Projects Fund

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, presented a report that detailed the recommendations from the Community Projects Fund Working Group that was formed to consider the principle and criteria of the Community Projects Fund.

Mrs Manning made reference to a request in the report that a revenue budget growth item be presented as part of the budget-setting consideration for 2019/20 in the sum of £20k per annum for each year from 2019/20 onwards. The determination of revenue growth items would be made as part of the budget-setting Council meeting in March 2019.

A summary of all applications and awards would be brought back to the committee at the end of the financial year.

The committee considered the recommendations from the Working Group and RESOLVED:

1. The Community Projects Fund should continue, and the bidding criteria should link in with the Council's Corporate Plan including value for money;

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2. That the Committee support that a revenue budget growth item is to be presented as part of the budget-setting process for 2019/20 in the sum of £20k per annum for each year from 2019/20 onwards to provide continued funding for the Community Projects Fund;
3. That the fund is open to local community based, non-political groups, to apply for within the confines of the Borough;
4. That annual reporting on the Community Projects Fund be made to the Finance and Democracy Committee;
5. Sarah Dunne, Relationship Manager with Active Lancashire to be appointed to the join the Community Projects Fund Panel, which should otherwise remain comprised as present;
6. A group of internal officers be established to act as a Community Projects Fund sounding board to offer assistance and feedback to applicants and panel members;
7. A draft scoring matrix be trialed for the larger funding bids by the Panel;
8. That the window for submitting applications be removed, but retain a closing date for submissions;
9. That the availability of the fund is widely publicised to community groups via a social media campaign supplemented by written information and attendance at events as appropriate.

8. Review of Parish Election Recharges

Councillor Paul Hayhurst was invited by the chairman to address the committee on the work and consultation that had been completed through the District Parish Liaison group. He advised members that the new proposed calculation method would enable Town and Parish Councils to budget for anticipated contested elections, reduce the burden on small parishes and reduce administration time for council officers.

Tracy Manning, as Returning Officer, reiterated that the proposed formula was more simple to calculate. Mr Curtis outlined the formula would decrease the overall costs charged to parish councils and correspondingly increase the element of those costs to be borne by the borough council. It was also proposed to increase the set fee for uncontested elections to £100. The fee covers administrative expenses and had not been reviewed since Fylde was established in 1974.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to;

1. Replace the present methodology for calculating recharges for parish council elections with the methodology based on the size of the eligible electorate, divided into bands being for the £500 for the first 1,000 electors on the electoral roll for the parish or parish ward plus £250 for each subsequent 500 electors (or part thereof).
2. Increase the fee, where an election is uncontested, to cover the known cost of the administration of the election to £100;
3. Agree that the recharge methodology and the amended fee arrangements are piloted for the May 2019 elections and thereafter reviewed by the Democratic Services team with a report to committee on the effectiveness of the pilot being presented to a subsequent meeting of this Committee.

9. Coastal Revival Fund Bid : St Annes Pier

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, introduced the report that outlined the details of a fully funded scheme from the Coastal Revival Fund of £48,100 for works on St Annes Pier. Although the pier is in the ownership of the St Anne's Land and Building Company the grant would be subject to the local authority agreeing to be the accountable body to draw down the funding.

Mr Paul Drinnan, Regeneration Manager, was present to update the committee on the news that the bid had been successful. The monies would require to be spent by March 2019 and would be used on areas such as structural repairs to ensure stability and improvements to the forecourt and lighting.

The committee RESOLVED;

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1. To approve that the Council act as the accountable body for the delivery of the scheme in the total sum of £48,100;
2. To approve a fully funded addition of £48,100 to the Councils 2018/19 Capital Programme towards the restoration of St. Annes Pier to be met from a grant from the Coastal Revival Fund of the same amount; and
3. To note that the delivery of the project is to be achieved through the engagement of consultants/contractors and suppliers to deliver the various elements of the project in line with the Councils financial regulations and contract rules and procedures.

10. Remote Access to Meetings

Councillor Ed Nash, Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group, was invited by the chairman to address the committee to update members on the work undertaken by the Member Development Steering Group (MDSG) to trial and test technology to allow members to participate in committee meetings from remote locations. The work had included piloting the technology at MDSG meetings to enable the remote participation of Councillor Bamforth and evaluating the technical, logistical and constitutional issues involved.

It was highlighted that any member attending a meeting by means of remote access would be limited to participating in the discussion and could not validly vote on matters. Similarly, members attending by remote access would be counted as not having attended the meeting for the purposes of the 'six month rule' or for counting a quorum.

Tracy Manning, Director of Resources, reported that the Audit and Standards Committee meeting, held on 15 November, received recommendations from the Constitution Review Working Group which included the introduction of a new Procedure Rule (within Standing Orders) to accommodate remote access to meetings.

It was confirmed that any cost of extending to scheme to full council meetings would be accommodated within current resources available in the ICT team.

It was RESOLVED:

1. To support the use of remote access to full Council meetings in the circumstances envisaged by the proposed new procedure rule, subject as below.
2. To endorse the recommendations to Council on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019, of the Audit and Standard Committee, that the Council Procedure Rules contained within the Constitution be amended to allow for remote access at Council meetings, save that the availability of remote access under the proposed procedure rule should be limited to members who have had a reason for their non-attendance approved under section 85 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, as well as fulfilling the criterion set out in the new procedure rule as proposed by the Audit and Standards Committee.
3. To note that current resource requirements will be used to facilitate the extension of the scheme to full council meetings.

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