



MINUTES

Finance and Democracy Committee

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Date: | Monday, 19 March 2018 |
| Venue: | Town Hall, St Annes. |
| Committee Members Present: | Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Roger Small (Vice-Chairman) Councillors David Donaldson, Neil Harvey, Angela Jacques, Kiran Mulholland, Linda Nulty, Liz Oades, Richard Redcliffe, Vince Settle, Elaine Silverwood |
| Other Councillors Present: | Councillor Ed Nash and Councillor Mark Bamforth (via video link) |
| Officers Present: | Allan Oldfield, Tracy Morrison, David Holmes (Shared Service), Simon Stott, Katharine McDonnell |
| Other Attendees: | One member of the public was 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 Silverwood declared a personal and prejudicial interest in item 4, the nature of the interest being that she was a business owner.

Councillor Silverwood 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 19 February 2018 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

3. Substitute Members

There were no substitutes on this occasion.

Decision Items

4. Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy – 2018/19 Update

(Having earlier declared an interest, Councillor Silverwood left the room).

Tracy Morrison, Director of Resources, gave a brief overview of the item and introduced David Holmes, from the Shared Service, who presented the updated Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy. It was explained that the policy update incorporated the approved Discretionary Discount Policy 2017/18 and the rate

reliefs which came into effect in April 2017, including relief for pubs, support for small businesses and a local discretionary fund.

In response to questions from committee, Mr Holmes advised that Town and Parish Councils may be eligible for rate relief on community halls but would need to get in touch with the revenue service. He further advised on how public house rate relief was calculated on a daily basis and undertook to provide details of how many pubs in Fylde were eligible for the rate relief. He also undertook to provide details to committee regarding how the discretionary fund was publicised. The committee also request further information regarding those groups benefitting from discretionary discounts, specifically the hardship fund, and how the new GDPR regulations were likely to impact the identification of target groups.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve and adopt the Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy (2018/19 Update).

(Councillor Silverwood returned to the room on conclusion of the item).

5. Write-off of Uncollectable Debts 2017/18

Tracy Morrison, Director of Resources, gave a brief overview of the item and introduced David Holmes, from the Shared Service, who presented details of the write-off of debts in relation to Business Rates, Council Tax and recovery of Housing Benefit overpayments.

Mr Holmes explained that in accordance with the council's constitution, five unrecoverable debts less than £25,000 each had been written off by the Chief Financial Officer under delegated powers. The details of these debts were presented to the committee for noting.

Additionally, Mr Holmes provided details of five uncollectable business rates debts in excess of £25,000 which required committee's approval for the write-off. He advised that 97% of business rate debt was collected, and debt was only ever written off in exceptional circumstances.

In response to questions, and concern, from committee, Mr Holmes undertook to provide details of how debts accrued over a period of time and how the recovery process worked. Following a discussion, it was RESOLVED

1. To approve the write-off of the five uncollectable Business Rates debts in excess of £25,000 details of which were provided in Appendix A to the report;
2. Note the write-off by the Chief Financial Officer under delegated powers of the five uncollectable Business Rates debts below £25,000, details of which were also set out in Appendix A to the report; and
3. To provide a fuller breakdown, in future reports, on the action taken to recover debts.

6. Web Conferencing Technology

Tracy Morrison, Director of Resources and Councillor Ed Nash, Chairman of the Member Development Steering Group, presented an interim report of the work undertaken, to date, by the Member Development Steering Group in regards to remote access to meetings.

It was explained that Councillor Bamforth had been remote accessing meetings of the Member Development Steering Group and Members' Information briefings utilising a piece of software called Google Hang-outs. Councillor Nash advised that pilot had been largely successful but had not been without its challenges. The Member Development Steering Group were keen to continue with the pilot and to extend Councillor Bamforth's access to meetings, to include a programme committee.

Ms Morrison advised that Councillor Bamforth would be able to attend committee meetings under provisions afforded to any Councillor, as laid out in the constitution. However the legislation precluded Councillor Bamforth becoming a full member of a committee as remote voting was not permitted.

The committee discussed the benefits and future scope of the technology, together with the limitations of the legislation.

It was RESOLVED to accept the recommendations of the Member Development Steering Group;

1. To extend the pilot of remote accessing meetings, by at least six months;
2. To extend the trial of remote access to a programme committee, of which at least one member of the Member Steering Development Group was also a member of that committee; and
3. To approve the updated version of the Working with Councillors with Disabilities and Welfare Document.

7. Appointment to Outside Bodies/Working Groups

The Committee were invited to recommend nominations to the various outside bodies/working Groups, within the remit of the committee, for consideration at Full Council. In addition, copies of reports received from members currently serving on outside bodies were also included as an appendix to the report for information.

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, advised that an additional recommendation not to re-establish the Transformation Strategy should be considered as the work of the group was complete following the adoption of the Transformation Strategy by committee in September 2017.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED to

1. Recommend the following nominations to the outside bodies for consideration by council:
 - Fylde Community Project Fund – The Mayor
 - Blackpool Airport and Hillhouse Enterprise Zone Project Board – Chairman of Finance and Democracy
 - North West Employers Organisation – Chairman of Finance and Democracy Committee (named substitute – Councillor Roger Small)
 - North West of England & Isle of Man Reserve Forces and Cadets Association – Councillor Ed Nash
2. Confirm the continued establishment of (i) Budget working group comprising Councillors Fazackerley, Buckley, Little, Aitken, Eaves, Fiddler, Redcliffe, Small and Settle; and (ii) Accommodation working group comprising Councillors Fazackerley, Oades, Buckley, Fiddler, Ford and Jacques;
3. Confirm that the work of the Transformation Strategy Working Group had concluded and the group should therefore be disestablished; and
4. Note the reports from members currently serving on outside bodies.

8. Promenade Gardens Water Play Area (Splash)

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented the recommendations of the Tourism and Leisure Committee, to approve a further addition to the cost of the Promenade Gardens Water Play Area scheme in the Capital Programme in the sum of £109,285. The increase would be fully met from external funding sources and S106 contributions.

Following a brief discussion, it was RESOLVED to;

1. Approve a fully-funded increase to the value of the Promenade Gardens Water play facility scheme within the Capital Programme for 2018/19 in the sum of £109,295 to be met in full from the various external grants and Section 106 contributions as detailed within this report; and
2. Approve that the Council may act as the accountable body for the delivery of the scheme in its entirety in the total sum of £259,295.

9. St Annes Regeneration (Wood Street)

Allan Oldfield, Chief Executive, presented the recommendations of the Planning Committee, to approve a fully-funded increase to the Capital Programme for 2018/19 for the regeneration of Wood Street, St Annes. Mr Oldfield advised that the actual amount to be approved was £189,745, not £190,000 as stated in the agenda papers, as complete costings had now been received.

It was RESOLVED to

1. Approve a fully-funded increase in the total sum of £189,745 in the value of the 2018/19 capital programme scheme for St Annes Regeneration works for the proposed scheme for Wood Street (and other locations within the town centre) to be met from the Section 106 contributions as detailed in the report; and
2. Note that a further report containing full details of the scheme shall be presented to the Planning Committee for approval, prior to the commencement of the works.

Fylde Borough Council copyright [2018]

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 Borough 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

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.