



# MINUTES

## Finance and Democracy Committee

<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 25 September 2017
<b>Venue:</b>	Town Hall, St Annes.
<b>Committee Members Present:</b>	Councillor Karen Buckley (Chairman) Councillor Roger Small (Vice-Chairman)  Councillors Sue Fazackerley, Neil Harvey, Angela Jacques, Kiran Mulholland, Linda Nulty, Richard Redcliffe, Vince Settle, Elaine Silverwood.
<b>Officers Present:</b>	Paul Walker, Paul O'Donoghue and Katharine McDonnell
<b>Other Attendees:</b>	Kate Foulkes-Williams, Revenues and Benefits Shared Service Steve Smith, Nick Gerrard and Rob Green, Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone 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 Mulholland declared a personal interest in agenda item 7, Town Hall Wedding Venue Proposal. The nature of the interest being that he was a wedding photographer.

Councillor Silverwood declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 5, Business Rates, New Reliefs. The nature of the interest being that she was a business owner. Councillor Silverwood indicated that she would be leaving the room 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 June 2017 as a correct record for signature by the Chairman.

#### 3. Substitute Members

The following substitutions were reported under Council procedure rule 24(c):

Councillor Sue Fazackerley for Councillor David Donaldson

## Decision Items

### 4. Timetable for Developing Budget Proposals 2018/19

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, presented a proposed budget timetable for the period October 2017 to March 2018. He explained that the timetable complied with the budget and policy framework rules, statutory deadlines and facilitated possible early billing for Council Tax.

The report also detailed the other preceptors' decision dates.

It was RESOLVED to adopt the timetable as shown at Appendix A of the report for the budget setting process for 2018/19.

### 5. Business Rates – New Reliefs arising from the 2017 Budget Announcements

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer, and Kate Foulkes-Williams, Senior Revenues Team Manager Shared Service, presented an updated Discretionary Discount Policy which reflected new discretionary reliefs announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer during the March 2017 budget statement. The reliefs were aimed at businesses most affected by the revaluation of business rates which took effect in April 2017.

Mr O'Donoghue advised there were three new categories. He explained that the 'Supporting Small Business Relief' was aimed at those businesses who had lost Small Business Relief or Rural Relief and was to ensure those businesses were not faced with excessive bills. He commented that only a small number of businesses in Fylde had been adversely affected and therefore only a small number were eligible for the relief.

The new discretionary rate relief for pubs was as a result of a large number of pubs being adversely affected by the 2017 revaluation. There was also a discretionary fund for those businesses hardest hit. The fund was to be distributed under locally agreed criteria, the criteria was set out in the accompanying report. He advised that the relief for Fylde was £126k.

In response to questions from committee, Mrs Foulkes-Williams explained that between 35 and 40 pubs in Fylde would be eligible for the rate relief, which was the majority of Fylde pubs. Members of the committee commented on concerns about pub closures and asked if monitoring could be put in place to see if the rate relief had an effect on the rate of closures.

It was RESOLVED to approve the additional Council Tax and Business Rates Discretionary Discount Policy for 2017/18 to reflect the new discretionary Business Rate reliefs that came into effect in April 2017.

(Councillor Silverwood left the meeting for the duration of this item).

### 6. Business Rates Retention and Business Rates Pooling

Paul O'Donoghue, Chief Financial Officer presented information regarding Business Rates Retention and Business Rates Pooling arrangements. He provided an update on business rate retention and the uncertainty regarding the government's intentions. He explained that the Finance Bill was not included in the Queen's Speech and therefore it was unclear how previous proposals for 100% business rate retention would progress.

In regards to the Lancashire Business Rate Pool, Fylde was a current member and the performance of the group had been closely monitored during the year. Mr O'Donoghue advised that Fylde had had business rate growth during the year and it was therefore beneficial to the council to remain in the pool for the 2018/19.

In response to questions Mr O'Donoghue advised that the lack of clarity from the government regarding New Homes Bonus funding and Business Rate retention was compromising the council's ability to move towards self-sufficiency.

Mr O'Donoghue was asked to provide an update regarding Burnley Council's request to rejoin the Lancashire Business Rate Pool. He advised that Burnley had requested to rejoin, however to do so, under the rules, the existing pool would need to be revoked. DCLG would need to be informed of that request to revoke and would need to approve a new pool by January 2018. However DCLG were unable to provide a guarantee that a new pool with updated membership including Burnley would be designated and as such a request to allow Burnley to join would cause uncertainty and risk. Mr O'Donoghue advised that at a recent meeting of the Lancashire Chief

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Financial Officers a recommendation to Leaders of the current pooling authorities from their s151 officers was likely to be made to keep the pool as it was and not revoke in light of this risk. Such a position would most likely not permit Burnley to enter the pool for 2018/19. The final decision would be made by Leaders of the current pooling authorities in October 2017.

It was RESOLVED to;

1. Approve the continuation of Fylde Council participation in the Lancashire Business Rates Pool for 2018/19 on the assumption that the pool remains in existence;
2. Note that the next update of the Financial Forecast of the Council will be amended to reflect the latest information and expectations in respect to future levels of business rate income to the Council; and
3. Agree that participation in the Lancashire Business Rate Pool for future years beyond 2018/19 should be kept under review and should be the subject of a report to the committee for consideration during next financial year.

### 7. Town Hall Wedding Venue Proposal

Alex Scrivens, Performance and Improvement Manager presented a proposal to license the Town as a wedding venue. He outlined the benefits of an income stream with minimal outlay. He also provided information from neighboring authorities who successful used their premises for weddings.

The idea was broadly welcomed by the committee with some debate over extending the offer to every day whilst other cautioned that it could impact on the operational need of the council.

It was RESOLVED that;

1. The Town Hall be approved as a location to host licensed weddings within the Borough and that officers make an application to Lancashire County Council for a licence in 2018 once the Council Chamber refurbishment has been completed;
2. Subject to the approval of a licence the Town Hall is used as a wedding ceremony venue on Fridays (subject to operational requirements) and Saturdays for a trial period of twelve months with set-up costs to be met from existing budgets and a charge of £350 for a Friday ceremony and £650 for a Saturday ceremony.

### 8. The Transformation Strategy

The Chairman presented the final draft of the Transformation Strategy for member approval. She explained the committee had received the Strategy at its last meeting and had requested more member involvement. A cross party member working group had reviewed the strategy, providing feedback. The feedback and consultation responses from other members had been incorporated into the draft now presented to members for approval.

It was RESOLVED that the committee approve the final draft of the Transformation Strategy proposed by the cross party member working group which is included as Appendix 1 to the report.

### 9. Promenade Gardens Water Play Facility Project

Following a proposal considered by the Tourism and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2017, for a new water play facility on the Promenade Gardens, the Committee had recommended option C for approval by the Finance and Democracy Committee.

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, advised that the scheme was fully-funded through some successful external funding bids, S106 monies and £50,000 from the Capital Investment Reserve.

It was RESOLVED to

1. Note the preference expressed by the Tourism and Leisure Committee at the meeting of 7 September 2017 to support Option C of the alternatives as detailed in section 20 of the report in respect of the delivery of the new water play facility on the Promenade Gardens; and
2. Approve a fully-funded budget increase for the Water Play scheme within the Capital Programme for 2017/18 in the sum of £50,000 to be met from the Capital Investment Reserve.

10. Development of Play Area – Bridges Playing Field, Warton

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, advised that the development of the play areas at Bridges Playing Field, Warton had been considered by the Tourism and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2017.

The Committee were recommending to Finance and Democracy Committee the allocation of s106 monies relating to the developments at Riversleigh Farm, Tennyson Avenue and Eden Farm, Warton to deliver the provision of new children's play facilities at Bridge's Playing Fields.

It was RESOLVED to

1. Approve a fully-funded addition to the Capital Programme for 2017/18 in the sum of £106,500 in respect of the parks development project at Bridges Playing Field, Warton, fully funded from the S106 developer contributions relating to Riversleigh Farm, Tennyson Avenue and Eden Farm developments in Warton for the same amount; and
2. Approve a reduction to the Capital Programme for 2017/18 in the sum of £50,000 in respect of the parks development project at Bridges Playing Fields, Warton, to reflect the revised funding arrangements for the scheme as detailed within the report.

11. Release of S106 Monies – Fleetwood Road Playing Fields, Wesham

Paul Walker, Director of Development Services, reported that the public space improvement scheme at Fleetwood Road Playing Fields, Wesham had been considered by Tourism and Leisure Committee at its meeting on 7 September 2017. It was recommending the allocation of s106 monies relating to the Pastures development, Wesham, to deliver the public space improvements.

It was RESOLVED to approve a fully-funded addition to the Capital Programme in 2017/18 in the sum of £25,000 fully funded from the S106 developer contribution relating to The Pastures development, Wesham for the same amount.

Information Items

The following information items were received by the committee:

12. Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone Progress Report

The committee were presented with a comprehensive progress report regarding the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, from officers responsible for the delivery of the Enterprise Zone project at Blackpool Airport.

The officers spoke about the recent investment by Blackpool Council to buy back the airport operating company to secure the runway and aviation operations at the airport. They talked in detail about the likely income from retained business rates during the life of the zone, a masterplan for the zone, new access roads, land for development and a marketing scheme designed to improve north west investment in the site. The officers also stressed the need for a boundary blind approach to decision making.

The committee thanked the officers for their presentation and the Chairman requested that a further progress report be brought to committee in 12 months time.

13. General Fund Revenue Budget Monitoring Report 2017/18 – Position as at 31 July 2017

The committee were provided with an update of the Council's General Fund Revenue Budget as at 31 July 2017, specifically those areas under the committee's remit.

14. Capital Programme Monitoring Report 2017/18 – Position as at 31 July 2017

The committee were provided with an update of the Council's approved Capital Programme as at 31 July 2017, specifically those schemes under the committee's remit.

15. Outside Bodies

Reports from Councillors representing the council on outside bodies were circulated to the committee for information.

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