

In summary, it was explained that the council was in a good position, and unlike other councils, there was not the looming prospect of bankruptcy or the need for a Section 114 notice. The council would be able to continue to deliver services outlined within the report, address the needs of the residents and achieve its corporate priorities. It was acknowledged that there was a budget gap of £1.5m for the year 25/26, however, through efficient saving, revenue through investments and cooperative working, there was optimism.

Decision:

That Members agree the contents of the report in order to start the budget consultation process as follows:

- **A proposed 2.99% increase in council tax in 2024/25 with no proposed cuts to services;**
- **A forecast balanced budget for 2024/25, based on a 2.99% increase in council tax as noted above and the use of £0.365m of reserves**
- **A forecast budget shortfall for 2025/26 of £1.575m, to be addressed through the development and delivery of the council's savings programme;**
- **To note the proposals in the report for investment in the Labour Administration's priority areas**

Reasons for recommendation:

The council wishes to set out its budget proposals and consult on them with residents.

Other options considered and rejected:

None – this is the draft budget and alternative budgets may be considered as part of the final budget proposals.

52 Fees and Charges 2024-25

Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which set out the current position around fees and charges and the proposals for 2024/25. If agreed, the increases would be implemented from 1 April 2024, or the most suitable date after.

The 10p a week increase for garden waste was viewed to be reasonable. With Tatton Gardens, there was a leak prior to Christmas that delayed the move of some occupants. The process of how lets usually became available and let at Tatton Gardens was explained, and how it was a different process to where occupants move out. There was understood to be a list of applicants seeking accommodation at Tatton Gardens.

Decision:

- 1. To note the current levels of budgeted fees and charges and the issues specific to these;**
- 2. To approve an uplift in the Strawberry Fields service charge of £1 per square foot to better reflect the current costs incurred at the site, as detailed at point 29.**
- 3. To approve an uplift in the rents of all Council owned housing (including Extra Care but excluding Cotswold House) of 7.7%. This is the approach agreed by Executive Cabinet in July 2022 of increasing these rents by CPI plus 1%, where CPI is based on the rate applicable at September each year. As service charges and utility charges are still broadly in line with the**

actual costs incurred, there is no proposal to increase these; these were reviewed last year.

4. To approve an increase in rent at Cotswold House of 3.07%, plus an increase in service charge of 7.52%, but with a reduction in the personal charge of 13.47% as detailed in point 28.
5. To approve an increase in the core charges for the Lancastrian by 6.7% as per point 33.
6. To approve the changes to the structure of community centre hire charges as per point 32 and Appendix 4. Report of Meeting Date Director (Finance) (Introduced by Executive Member (Resources)) Executive Cabinet 18th January 2024 Agenda Page 23 Agenda Item 5
7. To approve an increase of £12.80 per annum for the allotment plots that have water access and a 6.7% increase for the plots with no water access as per point 30.
8. To approve the changes to the structure of Other Licensing Fees, Housing and Pest Control as per point 34 and Appendix 3.
9. To approve a general increase of up to 6.7% in the fees for 2024/25, limited to the services listed in Table 3 of Appendix 1. Given that the rate of CPI in September was running at 6.7%, and RPI at 8.9%, the recommended uplift is in line with CPI.
10. To note that fees and charges in respect of Astley Hall will be reviewed during the year as part of the commercial strategy review.
11. To approve a change to the split of cost in relation to Council Tax and Business Rates Court Summons and Liability Orders as per point 35. The overall cost will remain the same.
12. To approve the full list of fees and charges for upload onto the Council website. Recommendations to Council
13. To recommend to Council an increase in garden waste collection charges of £5.00 as per point 31.

Reasons for recommendations:

To ensure that fees and charges are set at appropriate levels and are publicly available.

Other options considered and rejected:

No other options considered as we are required to review fees and charges each year.

Payment Strategy

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital which set out to review the proposed Payment Strategy.

The new Payment Strategy aimed to encourage on demand methods, and be easy, stress free and intuitive for users. Within the Strategy, it was made clear that cash payments would still be accepted at Union Street, in addition to the 69 establishments across the borough that accept payment on behalf of the council.

Decision:

Executive Cabinet to approve the Payment Strategy to be implemented at Chorley Council.

Reasons for recommendation:

To ensure that the payment methods used to transact with those using council services are up to date and 'on demand' to meet the expectations of customers.

Other options considered and rejected:

The council could continue to operate without a Payment Strategy, resulting in being unable to meet the needs and expectations of those customers who prefer to use 'on demand' payment methods.

54 Updated Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Delivery Approach 2024-25

Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member for Early Intervention, presented the report of the Director of Communities. Which sought approval to deliver the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme by retaining the management fee to fund dedicated resources within the Communities team, and to commission HAF delivery partners by employing a tiered grant funding approach.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the recruitment of a fixed-term HAF Coordinator within the Communities team to coordinate the programme. This post is subject to final grant funding being confirmed but will be funded from the 10% management fee within the grant.**
- 2. To approve the approach to commissioning HAF delivery partners through a tiered grant fund approach.**

Reasons for recommendations:

Including HAF delivery within the Communities team presents opportunity to build additional value into the programme for the benefit of residents.

Other options considered and rejected:

To procure a contractor to manage the delivery of the HAF programme does not present best value for residents.

55 Exclusion of the Public and Press

Decision: To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

56 Approval for the Contract Award Procedure for ICT Hardware, Software and Support Services

Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital, which set out to highlight the proposed shared procurement for ICT hardware, software, and support, and to seek agreement to the shared of costs and assessment criteria.

Decision:

- 1. To approve the contract award procedure for a number of joint procurements with South Ribble Council outlined at Appendix One for software, hardware and support services.**
- 2. To approve the hierarchy for the procurement route outlined in paragraph 16.**

3. To approve the evaluation criteria of 80% cost and 20% quality.
4. That the decision to award is delegated to the Executive Member Resources at Chorley Council

Reasons for recommendation:

By jointly procuring these contracts it ensures alignment of software and hardware across both authorities supporting Shared Services.

Other options considered and rejected:

Each council could procure software independently, but this would make it very difficult to align software or services in future.

Chair

Date