

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 16 January 2014

Present: Councillor Alistair Bradley (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Peter Wilson (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Beverley Murray, Terry Brown, Dennis Edgerley and Adrian Lowe

Also in attendance

Lead Members: Councillors June Molyneaux, Danny Gee and Kim Snape

Other Members: Councillors Eric Bell, Henry Counce, John Dalton, Alison Hansford, Keith Iddon, Kevin Joyce, Paul Leadbetter, Greg Morgan and John Walker

Officers: Gary Hall (Chief Executive), Lesley-Ann Fenton (Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy), Jamie Carson (Director of People and Places), Chris Moister (Head of Governance), Simon Clark (Head of Health, Environment and Neighbourhoods), Asim Khan (Head of Customer, ICT and Transactional Services), Chris Sinnott (Head of Policy and Communications) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Members of the public: Two

14.EC.1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

14.EC.2 MINUTES

RESOLVED - The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 12 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Executive Leader.

14.EC.3 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

14.EC.4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Leader reported that there had been no requests from members of the public to speak on any of the meeting's agenda items.

14.EC.5 2014/15 BUDGET AND SUMMARY MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (MTFS)

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the report which set out the budget position for 2014/15 including the forecast for the following two years. The reported presented the proposals in respect of potential investment in the Council's Corporate Strategy priorities in 2014/15, increasing budget resilience in the longer term and consultation on the budget.

Members noted that Council Tax would be frozen and not increase in 2014/15. This would be the second consecutive year that the current administration had achieved a balanced budget position for the forthcoming financial year without increasing Council Tax.

The publication of the Local Government Finance Settlement completed the CSR 2010 four year period. It had resulted in large scale reductions in Central Government grant placing significant pressure on the Councils budget.

Moving forward there would be challenges as the provisional figures published for 2015/16 indicated that a further £0.874m would be reduced from Central Government

Grant in 2015/16. Announcements had been issued stating austerity measures would continue after 2015/16 and beyond, therefore, a reduction in the region of £0.350m had been assumed in 2016/17 although this would be subject to change as part of the CSR 2014. This resulted in a forecasted budget deficit totalling £2.709m.

Early planning and preparation had enabled the Council to address the forecasted budget deficit in advance of 2014/15. Consistent with last year's budget setting process, a balanced budget position had been achieved with no further permanent use of NHB to fund the financial commitments within the base budget.

This presented an opportunity to invest in the Council's Corporate Strategy for a further year despite the significant reductions in grant funding. The investment projects link to the Corporate Strategy and the priorities contained within it. The New Investment Programme, now in its second year, supported the delivery of the Corporate Strategy priorities. The potential new programme of investments was set out in Appendix Two with more detailed individual mandates for each proposal in Appendix Three.

The Council would address the significant budget deficit in the longer term to 2016/17 brought about in the main by cuts to core funding and Central Government's austerity measures. Despite a balanced budget being achieved for 2014/15 further action would be required to achieve the same budget status in future years.

Options that would be considered over the next three year MTFS period included the re-engineering of services to fundamentally review service provision to reduce net expenditure and improve efficiency. Also, a programme of reducing the Council's debt position which had an impact on the revenue account including a possible accelerated rate at which the Pension Fund deficit was clawed back and income generation schemes as a continuation of the projects implemented to date. Finally, increases in Council Tax.

Members noted that the project "Town Centre Masterplan" included the development of a prospectus for the civic quarter. This was dependant on the site and other factors. The prospectus would be developed internally and shared with partners as appropriate.

Decision made

Approval granted to the contents of the report in order to start the Budget Consultation process and noted the following proposed budget items in particular:

- **Council Tax to be frozen in 2014/15.**
- **The proposed New Investments for 2014/15 and 2015/16.**
- **The balanced budget position for 2014/15.**
- **The forecasted budget position to 2016/17.**

Reason(s) for decision

To progress the Council's 2014/15 Budget Setting process to achieve an approved and balanced budget.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

Setting the budget is a statutory responsibility.

14.EC.6 REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME AND DISCOUNTS AND EXEMPTIONS

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented a review of the first year of the council tax support scheme and the discounts and exemptions for empty properties, which were implemented in April 2013.

Collection rates for council tax from council tax support recipients and those affected by the changes to discounts and exemptions had been better than modelled. The number of claims for council tax support had decreased during the financial year, and the number of long term empty properties had decreased.

The schemes had been in operation for less than one year, and the review set out in the report outlined that the changes had been successfully implemented and the overall impact on individuals was difficult to fully estimate at this point, particularly with other changes being made nationally through welfare reforms.

Members discussed the number of empty properties and noted that landlords appeared to be turning round properties quicker than previously, including Registered Social Landlords.

Decision made

- 1. Recommendation to Council supported that the proposed council tax support scheme and discounts and exemptions for empty properties and second homes be presented for approval.**
- 2. Approval granted that the other precepting authorities be consulted on the proposed scheme.**

Reason(s) for decision

The council is required to adopt a scheme for council tax support and discounts and exemptions for empty properties. In adopting the scheme last year, the council agreed to review the scheme after the first year and make any necessary changes.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

To not make change the schemes. This was rejected as the schemes are currently operating successfully and have only been in place since April 2013.

14.EC.7 MEMBER INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the report which sought approval for the members IT desktop and associated home package to be replaced entirely with data enabled tablet devices empowering members to access information systems beyond home and office boundaries.

The drive for efficiencies had led to improvements in digital systems across the Council. The proposed roll out of tablet devices for members and officers would improve access to these systems. Members would be empowered to access information on the move to support engagement with their communities.

Several members had volunteered to engage in a proof of concept exercise using tablet devices for a trial period. The project was facilitated by Member Support Working Group. Two device types were trialled and a third rejected on lack of operational merit. The iPad was the most favoured and would present the least user issues which had also been the experience of other local Councils.

A number of criterions were set and feedback gathered at the end of the trial period. Improvements suggested would contribute to the final configuration of devices before roll out.

Members queried several points including the use of Office 365 and Lync in the future, wi-fi, 4G connectivity, 1 GB data usage and the ability to print. Training and support would be available and the detailed roll out plan would be forwarded to Members for their information.

Decision made

1. **Approval granted to the proposals outlined at Option 1 of the report.**
2. **Approval granted that upon issue of the tablet device, the current desktop and associated peripherals be withdrawn.**
3. **Approval granted for the use of tablet devices for officers is agreed if clear business benefits can be achieved in support of the councils Digital Strategy.**
4. **Approval granted that procurement of iPad devices, data bundles and protective cases be agreed followed by a phased roll out and training in 2014.**

Reason(s) for decision

The proposals are in keeping with the council's drive towards improving access to digital information. Option 1 is the favoured solution for business use and Public Service Network (PSN) requirements.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

Option 2 would require contributions from member's allowances and likely to cause security concerns for PSN compliance. A like for like replacement of the current desk top provision was also considered and rejected.

14.EC.8 GIS STRATEGY 2014-2017

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the report which sought approval of the GIS Strategy 2014-17 and provided information on the work completed since approval of the last strategy in 2008.

The strategy set out how the council would use GIS to enable digital access to information and data, and how it could be used to improve service productivity and performance, enabling staff to work efficiently through the use of desktop and mobile systems.

Business intelligence from the use of GIS would support day to day operational management of services and inform decisions on resource planning.

The strategy proposed development of applications to support ward/parish based information that would be available online through the Council website. It was particularly pertinent to provide geographical insight for Council members about service requests such as Planning, Licensing applications and fly tipping.

The GIS Strategy would support the implementation of both the council's ICT Strategy 2014-17 and Digital Strategy 2014-17.

Members noted that the Council were working with LCC to map their assets and that the function relating to "My Parish" would be operational by the end of the year.

Decision made

Approval granted to the GIS Strategy 2014-17.

Reason(s) for decision

The use of GIS is integral to the Council's ICT infrastructure providing significant business intelligence and support for the delivery of day to day services. Approval of the strategy will continue to support the development and priorities for GIS over the period 2014-17.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

None.

14.EC.9 DIGITAL STRATEGY 2014-2017

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the Digital Strategy 2014 – 17 for consideration and agreement.

Reductions in local government financing meant that services needed to be delivered in a more efficient way and working practices needed to be streamlined in order to reduce costs. Much investment had been made in technology and the Council needed to make the most effective use of the digital opportunities available.

Members noted that an integrated impact assessment would be undertaken on the strategy to assess its implications, particularly for different equality strands. The strategy's aim to make online the preferred channel for customers was not at odds with the council's Equality Scheme. The strategy would not preclude customers from using other channels to access services and alternative approaches such as face to face support could be made available for customers.

Decision made

Approval granted to the Digital Strategy 2014 – 2017.

Reason(s) for decision

The Digital Strategy 2014 - 2017 sets out the principles and outcomes for the digital delivery of services and information provision over the coming three years. These principles and outcomes will ensure services are provided in a way that will meet customer expectations and allow the efficient delivery of those services.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

None.

14.EC.10 APPROVAL FOR THE CONTRACT AWARD PROCEDURE AND EVALUATION CRITERIA: SKATE PARK ON JUBILEE RECREATION GROUND, ADLINGTON

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the report which sought approval for the award procedure and evaluation criteria for the tender of design and installation of a concrete skate park on Jubilee Recreation Ground in Adlington.

The Council obtained Section 106 monies from the Grove Farm development in Adlington which specified that £ 103,000 be used to improve play facilities on Jubilee Recreation Ground in Adlington. In conjunction with Councillors from Adlington, an outline project plan was written to scope out the delivery of this project.

Extensive consultation had been carried out with young people and residents from Adlington in three individual sessions throughout September and October 2013 and the results of this consultation analysed. 100% of those consulted agreed that the play area needs to be improved, no one objected to the site being improved. Young people and surrounding residents were asked what they would like to see improved on site.

A skate park was the most popular option along with improved surfacing, next was dynamic play equipment and football along with more seating. A further consultation was carried out with the young people to determine preference of the design of the skate park and to provide the brief that would be given to the tenderers.

Decision made

1. **Approval granted to the procurement approach of advertising tenders through the Chest e-tendering system using an open invitation to all companies who specialise in free form concrete skate design and installation. It would be a fixed price contract of a maximum of £100,000.**
2. **Tenders would have to pass the qualification questions first which assessed their financial position, health and safety policies, insurance cover, previous experience and equality, upon which they would be evaluated to establish the best skate park submission based on:-**
 - 25% fulfilment of the brief in the design.**
 - 25% design quality, play value, robustness, safety compliance, functionality,**
 - 10% user involvement proposals for company to work with young people,**
 - 10% appropriateness of design in site context,**
 - 10% contract management structure/ability to meet timescale,**
 - 5% maintenance liability,**
 - 5% warranty/guarantees,**
 - 5% previous project references and experience,**
 - 5% cost.**

Reason(s) for decision

Under the Council's Contract Procedure Rules approval by the Executive Cabinet of contract award procedure and evaluation criteria for tenders greater than £ 75,000 in value is required.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

To not agree contract award procedure and evaluation criteria would fail to comply with the Council Procurement rules.

14.EC.11 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED – To exclude the press and public for the following items of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

14.EC.12 CREATING A SINGLE FRONT OFFICE: STAFFING REVIEW OF REVENUES, BENEFITS, CUSTOMER SERVICES AND PLANNING BUSINESS SUPPORT

The Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance presented the report which sought approval for the phased restructure of the Revenues and Benefits, Customer and Transactional, and the Planning Business Support teams within the Customer, ICT and Transactional Service.

The report set out the principles that would inform the change, which included developing a single front office where services were delivered as far as possible at the first point of contact.

Migrating processes to the front office would enable an immediate reduction in management costs, and in the longer term would enable significant reductions in the back office.

Decision made

1. **Approval granted to the principles for the long term organisational business model set out a paragraph 23 of the report.**
2. **Approval granted to the proposed structure detailed in the report, for consultation.**
3. **Approval granted to the remodelling and extension of the Customer Service Centre at Union Street to support capacity for increased front office space and digital inclusion initiatives.**
4. **Approval granted to delegate authority for approval for the final structure to the Executive Member for Resources, Policy and Performance.**

Reason(s) for decision

To ensure that the council has a fit for purpose staffing structure and business model with the right capacity and skills to ensure delivery of the forthcoming changes.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

To not change the structure of the revenues and benefits, planning support and customer services teams.

Some consideration to a shared service model has previously been undertaken with South Ribble Council but remains incompatible with the council's proposed operating model at the present time.

14.EC.13 STRATEGIC HOUSING RESTRUCTURE

The Executive Member for Homes and Business presented the report which provided details of a review of the Strategic Housing Team, including the outcome of an informal consultation exercise, and proposals for a new structure.

Decision made

1. **Approval granted that the establishment changes proposed in the body of the report be implemented subject to the statutory staff and Union consultation period.**
2. **Approval granted that delegated power be given to the Executive Member for Homes and Business to make the decision to sign off any amendments to the proposals contained within the report as a result of the consultation.**
3. **Approval granted that the budgetary changes proposed with the report be approved.**

Reason(s) for decision

This will deliver the objectives identified in the review and identify £24,249.00 cashable savings.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

None.

Executive Leader