

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**COUNCIL MEETING – 6 MARCH 2013****REPORT OF THE CABINET**

The Cabinet met on the evening of Wednesday 6 February 2013.

On that occasion, the Cabinet considered the matters set out below. Decisions shown in boxed areas are subject to Council confirmation; the reports considered by the Cabinet were available to all members in advance of the Cabinet meeting.

The Cabinet also considered reports on Home Energy Conservation Act - Key Targets and Priorities, My Neighbourhood Plans, Response to Scrutiny Review of Worden Park, Dog Control Orders, and the Cabinet's Forward Plan and these were reported separately to the Council meeting held on 27 February 2013.

1. Corporate Plan and Corporate Risk Register 2013/2014

The Leader of the Council introduced this report on the Council's Corporate Plan which had been agreed by the Council in September 2011 following extensive engagement with councillors after the 2011 council elections. Progress on the Corporate Plan has been monitored by the Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet at the six-monthly stage and on a quarterly basis.

The Corporate Plan was a two-year plan to reflect the local government finance settlement which was about to enter into its second year, consequently it was not proposed to make any major changes to it as it remained focused on the delivery of the Council's agreed priorities.

The Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support referred to Key Action 16 "Deliver a shared service for Revenues & Benefits with Chorley Council" and informed Cabinet that over the last couple of years the Council had been progressing the extension of the very successful Finance and Assurance Services partnership with Chorley Council to cover the Revenues & Benefits service. The existing partnership was now over 4 years old and had delivered in excess of £0.5 million (around 30%) in annual recurring savings shared equally between the two authorities.

However, as previously reported to the Shared Services Joint Committee, Chorley Council had taken the view that, whilst happy to continue exploring opportunities for delivering efficiencies in the Revenues & Benefits service, they did not wish to pursue deeper integration of the two services until the Government clarified the future for local authority delivered housing benefit services.

In view of this he suggested that key action 16 should be taken out of the draft Corporate Plan for the coming year and the risk register updated accordingly.

The Cabinet Member for Strategic Planning and Housing referred to item 3 in the Corporate Risk Register "Continue to Ensure the Delivery of Affordable Housing", commenting that as the Council was now much clearer on the timetable for agreeing the Local Development Framework and had seen a welcome upturn in planning applications, a number of which were for some large developments, we should be taking a different view on the rating for this risk and proposed that the risk should be scored as a 9, with the rating changed from Red to Amber.

It was decided to agree the Corporate Plan (appendix 1) and Corporate Risk Register 2013/2014 (appendix 2) subject to the incorporation of the amendments referred to above.

2. Financial Strategy, Budget and Council Tax 2013/14

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced this item which provided background information that needed to be taken into consideration in determining the Council's forward financial strategy and, specifically, budget and council tax setting for 2013/14. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) recognised the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and the risks identified through the corporate risk assessment processes. The Medium Term Financial Strategy recognised the continued and significant uncertainty surrounding core government grant funding as a result of the new funding regimes that had come into effect in the last couple of years.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources referred to the exemplary budgeting process which enabled the Council to put forward a positive budget allowing for the freezing of Council Tax for 2013/14. He also referred to some changes to the figures in the report which had required adjustment following further information from central government and which had been circulated.

Members referred to the hard work put in by the Cabinet Member and the Finance team which had enabled the Council to be in a position to go forward in such a measured way.

The Leader of the Council commented on the substantial savings achieved over the last four years through the hard work of Councillors and officers across the authority.

It was decided to:-

Revenue Estimates

1. Approve the Council's projected out-turn estimates for 2012/13, the original estimate for 2013/14 and indicative original estimates for 2014/15 through to 2016/17, summarised at Appendix A to the report.
2. Approve Appendix E and the proposals designed to further improve efficiency / increase income and reduce the forecast budget deficit.
3. Recommend to Council that the forecast residual revenue funding deficit in 2013/14 (£0.607 million) be addressed through making appropriate contributions from the General Fund Reserve, whilst recognising that this figure may need to be revised when the Government announces the final Revenue Support Grant figures for 2013/14 in advance of the Council meeting on 6th March.
4. Recommend a Borough Council Net Expenditure requirement for 2013/14 (including parish/town council precepts) for approval at the Council meeting on 6 March adequate to support the delivery of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.
5. Authorise the Chief Executive to deal with all staffing issues arising from the report within the agreed budget and in accordance with council's human resources policies, in consultation with the Leader, and in her absence the Deputy Leader, and the Cabinet member with responsibility for Finance and Resources and other relevant Cabinet Members.

Council Tax

6. Recognise that the Government's changes to Council Tax Support will reduce the council tax base for parish/town councils, and that this Government announcement was only made very late in the budget setting process, and recommend that a one-off grant in the sum of £20,998 be paid to the parish/town councils in 2013/14 only, as detailed in the table on page 15 of this report.

7. Recommend the Borough Council's Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2013/14, for approval at the council meeting on 6 March 2013, remains at the same level as for 2012/13 being £208.38. This will entitle the Council to receive an estimated Council Tax Freezing Grant in the sum of £78,000. This amount will be received in 2013/14 and 2014/15 making a total receipt of £156,000 over the two years only.

Capital Programme/Budget

8. Approve the Capital Programme as set out at Appendix F of the report along with the proposed funding.

3. Treasury Strategy 2013/14 to 2015/16

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced this report on the prudential indicators and the treasury strategy for the years to 2015/16.

The report proposed one change in policy, namely that the three month restriction on deposits with all counterparties other than the part nationalised institutions should end (paragraph 2.11 of the Investment Strategy refers) and that the Sector Consultancy contract should be allowed to continue for a further year at the existing price.

The report had previously been considered by the Governance Committee on 30 January 2013 who recommended Cabinet to approve the report but to also consider increasing the investment limit for the part nationalised banks.

It was decided to:-

1. Approve the Prudential Indicators for 2013/14 to 2015/16, as set out in the report.
2. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 2013/14, incorporating the Treasury prudential Indicators.
3. Approve the Annual Investments Strategy 2013/14 which proposed:
 - (a) The end to the three month limit on investments which has applied since September 2011.
 - (b) that the limit for each of the part-nationalised banks be increased from £3.0m to £5.0m, with no more than £3.0m per bank to be on fixed term deposit at any one time
4. Approved the Annual MRP Policy Statement 2013/14
5. To continue for a further year the contract with Sector Treasury Services.

I hereby commend the report of the Cabinet to the Council.

COUNCILLOR MRS MARGARET SMITH

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL