

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL**COUNCIL MEETING – 04 MARCH 2015****REPORT OF THE CABINET**

The Cabinet met on the evening of Wednesday 11 February 2015.

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.

1. Discretionary Rate Relief Autumn Statement Changes

The Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support introduced this item which informed members that the Local Government Finance Act 2012 amended the Local Government Finance Act 1988 and provided Local Authorities powers to award, Local Discounts for Business Rate Payers. These powers were in addition to the existing Discretionary Rate Relief powers and that the Government had requested that Local Authorities award a local discount under Section 47 to deal with the changes relating to Empty Property Relief, discount for shops, pubs and restaurants of £1000/£1500, extending the Transitional relief for eligible rate payers and reoccupation relief.

The Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support informed members that a draft Policy (APPENDIX A to the report) to address these changes had been developed to support the retail economy of South Ribble Borough Council.

Members of Cabinet and other Councillors present expressed their support for the proposals.

It was decided to:-

1. Recommend that Council approve the amended policy in APPENDIX A in the report to remain in force between the 30th September 2013 and expiring on the 1st October 2016 unless otherwise amended and approved by Council
2. Recommend that Council approve delegated authority for the Revenues Manager or responsible officer to decide upon any application for relief made under this policy taking into account the contents of this policy, the council's priorities and policies and in addition the advice provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government's "Retail Relief - Guidance" and "New Build Empty Property – Guidance" documents. This mirrors the provisions contained within our existing Discretionary Rate Relief Policy

2. Moss Side Playing Fields

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure & Healthy Communities introduced this item which marked the latest development in a long term programme to improve the site, seeking to allocate Section 106 funding to extend the car park on site, and noted a waiver of Contract Procedure Rules for procurement of groundworks relating to the modular clubhouse building.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Leisure & Healthy Communities further reported that this had been fast moving and changing scenario and that it was now appropriate to change the recommendation to enable the waiving of Standing Orders to be made tonight.

Other members of the Council present expressed support and appreciation for this course of action.

It was decided to:-

1. Approve expenditure of up to £50,000 in Section 106 monies to fund an extension to the existing car park, increasing capacity from 26 spaces to 128 and to widen the access road off Moss Side Way.

2. That Cabinet approves the waiver of Contract Procedure Rules (all relevant paragraphs including 11.3, 11.4 and 11.6) in accordance with Contract Procedure Rule 44 to enable a contract to be entered into with Integra Buildings Ltd. for the urgent carrying out of groundwork, to a value of £82,000 at Moss Side Playing Fields (£52,000 contribution from Sport England, £30,000 already allocated by Cabinet on 14 January 2015).

3. **Corporate Plan, Budget and Risk Register 2015/16**

(a) **Corporate Plan and Corporate Risk Register 2015/16**

The Leader of Council introduced this item which outlined the approach to agreeing the Council's re-freshed Corporate Plan and Corporate Risk Register for 2015/2016. She referred to some slight amendments to the Corporate Risk Register which were included in a replacement document.

Councillor Mullineaux informed Cabinet that waste recycling now exceeded the target figure and was now at 50%.

The Chair of Scrutiny reminded Cabinet that the Scrutiny Committee in considering the Corporate Plan had made several comments and asked what consideration had been given to them and in particular the suggestion that some targets which had been exceeded should be revisited to make them more challenging.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that Scrutiny Committee's comments had been considered but that as they were coming to the end of the 5 year Corporate Plan preferred to leave them largely as they were as there would be time after the election to revisit them.

It was decided:-

That Cabinet agree the Corporate Plan (appendix 1) and Corporate Risk Register 2015/2016 (appendix 2).

(b) **Financial Strategy, Budget and Council Tax 2015/16**

The Cabinet member for Finance & Resources introduced this report which provided background information that would need to be taken into consideration in determining the Council's forward financial strategy and, specifically, budget and council tax setting for 2015/16. The Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) recognised the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan and risks identified through the corporate risk assessment processes. The MTFS recognised the continued and significant uncertainty surrounding core government grant funding.

The Cabinet member for Finance & Resources referred members to the proposal to freeze Council Tax again and to the improved position that would not require a contribution from reserves for 2014/16

He also acknowledged the Council's leading position on economic development in partnership with City Deal, the substantial investment in parks, the proposed central park, the growth in new modern apprenticeships the personal budgeting together with substantial investment in the refuse vehicle fleet together with the substantial savings from the new waste contract.

The Deputy Leader and Neighbourhoods & Street Scene commented in support of the budget presented on the substantial savings from the waste contract which would allow the council to put more money into front line staff and achieve a 0% Council tax increase.

The Cabinet member for Regeneration, Leisure & Healthy Communities congratulated the Cabinet member for Finance & Resources and the officers on looking after the finances so effectively which enabled Cabinet to continually review and change things and welcomed the new opportunities now identified. With regard to the Capital Programme he proposed bringing forward two areas that were proposals in line with the Corporate Plan, investment in village improvements for Walmer Bridge and support for the Coastal Communities Fund which will support projects that will create jobs, apprenticeships, and training places as these areas would not directly benefit from City Deal.

It was decided:-

Revenue Estimates

1. That Council consider for approval the council's revised estimates for 2014/15, the original estimate for 2015/16 and indicative original estimates for 2016/17 through to 2018/19, summarised at Appendix A to this report.
2. That Appendix E and the proposed budget efficiency targets designed to further improve efficiency/increase income and reduce the forecast budget deficit be approved.
3. That Cabinet endorse the assessment on the level of reserves for 2015/16.
4. That Cabinet recommend to Council that the forecast residual revenue funding deficit in 2015/16 (£0.185 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 Local Government Finance Settlement figures for 2015/16 in advance of the Council meeting on 4th March 2015.
5. That Cabinet recommend a Borough Council Net Expenditure requirement for 2015/16 (including parish/town council precepts) for approval at the Council meeting on 4th March adequate to support the delivery of the MTFs.
6. That the Chief Executive be authorised to deal with all staffing issues arising from the report within the agreed budget and in accordance with the 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, as appropriate, other relevant Cabinet Members.

Council Tax

7. That subject to consideration of recommendations 1-6 above, Cabinet recommend the Borough Council's Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2015/16, for approval at the council meeting on 4th March 2015, remains at the same level as for 2014/15 being £208.38. This will entitle the Council to receive an estimated Council Tax Freezing Grant in the sum of £77,000.
8. That the Council determine the reduction in Council Tax support applicable to working age claimants with effect from 1 April 2015.

Capital Programme and Budget

9. That Cabinet approve the Capital Programme as amended, as set out in revised Appendix F and its proposed funding.

(c) Personal Budgeting Service

The Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support introduced this item which reported that as part of the Government's wider Welfare Reform agenda, Councils had been approached to assist with the local implementation of Universal Credit. An essential part of this local support was the availability of personal budgeting support and the Council had secured access to funding to provide Personal Budgeting Support (PBS), locally via Gateway.

To support the transition to Universal Credit, DWP has provided the funding to cover the costs of this PSB service. However, access to external funding ends on 31st March 2015. This supplementary report was to allow Cabinet to consider whether this service will continue as and when access to funding is withdrawn. The costs are identified as £30,000 and are included in the parent report "Financial Strategy, Budget & Council Tax 2015/16" previously considered.

It was decided:-

That Cabinet agree to continue with Personal Budgeting Support service providing funding as set out in the Financial Strategy Budget & Council Tax 2015/16 report.

(d) Apprenticeship Scheme

The Leader of Council introduced this item which reported that as part of the review of the council's forward budget position, it was felt to be an appropriate time to introduce an Apprenticeship Scheme. The council prides itself on being an employer of choice providing the opportunity for young local people to obtain a range of skills and formal training to equip them to become employable, ideally within the council, or elsewhere and this would be yet further evidence of this. The introduction of an Apprenticeship Scheme within the council would therefore help demonstrate the council's leadership role to other local employers, as it will be recognised as being an employer of apprentices.

Members and non-members of Cabinet expressed support for this scheme.

It was decided:-

That Cabinet agree to the proposal to introduce an Apprenticeship Scheme, as set out in the Financial Strategy Budget & Council Tax 2015/16 report.

4. Scrutiny Review – Review of Welfare Reform

The Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support introduced this item and commented in detail on the recommendations of the Scrutiny Committee and confirmed that he, together with the Director of Governance & Business Transformation (Monitoring Officer) would provide a written detailed response to all the recommendations contained in the report.

With regard to the recommendation that there should be change the national regulations to allow outstanding council tax to be deducted directly from benefits with the permission of the claimant there was general consensus and it was agreed to pursue this.

Reference was made to the Discretionary Housing Payments and the funding made available for this and it was clarified that this was an allocation from government to cover discretionary payments not a budget to be spent.

The Chair of Scrutiny thanked the Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support for his response and noted the consensus on arrears being able to be collected from source and looked forward to receiving the detailed response in due course.

It was decided:

1. To note the Scrutiny Committee's review of welfare reform.
2. That a final detailed response to the recommendations from the review of welfare reform be delegated to the Director of Governance & Business Transformation (Monitoring Officer) in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Shared Services and Corporate Support.

5. Treasury Strategy 2015/16 to 2016/17

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources introduced this item on the prudential indicators, and treasury strategy for the financial years to 2015/16 to 2017/18.

It was decided:-

1. That the Council be asked to approve:

The Prudential Indicators for 2015/16 to 2017/18.

The Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Prudential Indicators for 2015/16.

The Annual Investment Strategy 2015/16.

The Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2015/16.

2. That a review of investment counterparties (financial institutions and investment criteria) should be presented to Governance Committee during 2015/16.

6. Forward Plan

It was decided:-

That the Forward Plan submitted under Section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000 be approved.

7. Exclusion of Press and Public

It was decided to excluded the press and public from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business as it involved the discussion of information defined as exempt from publication under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, 'Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).' and, in which the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing it.

8. Land at Leyland

The Cabinet member for Finance and Resources (Councillor Robinson) reported that the decision at Council to defer this had provided the opportunity for further discussions and clarifications and that now all risks had been mitigated. Councillor Foster thanked the Cabinet Member for the opportunity to look further into this and now fully understood the issues and supported the recommendations.

It was decided:-

1. That the terms provisionally agreed for the disposal of land at Moss Side, Leyland be approved.
2. That the Council enters into a new "clawback" agreement with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) which provides for recovery of 50% of the proceeds if the Council disposes of any part of Paradise Park within the next 21 years.

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

COUNCILLOR MRS MARGARET SMITH

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL