

SOUTH RIBBLE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Council

Meeting held at 6.00pm on Wednesday, 2 March 2016 in Shield Room, Civic Centre, West Paddock, Leyland PR25 1DH

Present:-

Councillor Mrs Mary Green (Mayor)

Councillors Mrs Ball, Ms Bell, Bennett, Bird, Mrs Blow, Coulton, Evans, Forrest, Foster, M A Green, Miss Hamilton, Hancock, Hesketh, Hughes, K Jones, Mrs S Jones, Marsh, Martin, Ms Mawson, Mrs Moon, Mullineaux, Mrs B Nathan, M Nathan, Ogilvie, Patten, Rainsbury, Mrs M Smith, P Smith, Mrs Snape, Suthers, Titherington, C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, G Walton, Mrs K Walton, Watkinson, Watts, Wharton, Woodcock, Wooldridge, Mrs Woollard and Yates

In Attendance:-

The Chief Executive (Mike Nuttall), the Director of Corporate Governance and Business Transformation (Ian Parker) and Democratic Services Officer (James Wallwork)

Public Attendance:- 5 members of the public were present.

Other Officers:- 10 other officers were also present

Minute No.	Description/Resolution
74	<p>Apologies for Absence</p> <p>Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Clark, Higgins, Howarth, Mrs Mort, Nelson and Mrs Noblet.</p>
75	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>Councillor Hughes declared a personal interest in minute no. 80, Report of the Cabinet - Land at Leyland.</p>
76	<p>Minutes of the Last Meeting</p> <p>Councillor Foster referred to the second paragraph of minute no.71, Questions to Members of the Cabinet (Finance and Resources), and stated that it should be amended to read "Councillor Bennett responding to Councillor Foster's comment..."</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED: That, subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting held on 20 January 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.</p>
77	<p>Report of the Cabinet</p> <p>The Leader, Councillor Mrs Smith, presented the Report of the Cabinet meeting held on 10 February 2016. The report was seconded.</p> <p>At that meeting, Cabinet considered a number of matters which were contained in the report which needed to be considered at this Council Meeting. The remaining matters would be considered at the Council Meeting on 30 March 2016.</p> <p>In respect of item 4 within the Cabinet Report concerning My Neighbourhood Plans 2016/17, the Leader indicated that the position of Vice Chairman of Leyland My Neighbourhood would remain vacant until such time that the Labour Group identified a</p>

	<p>replacement for Councillor Heyworth.</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) That, with the exception of items 1, 2, 3 and 8 which were considered later in the meeting, the Report of the Cabinet be noted; 2) That the change to the My Neighbourhood's approach be noted and the My Neighbourhood Plans be approved. 3) That, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Authority be granted (under Section 3.4 of the Financial Regulations - Contract Procedure Rules) to incur capital expenditure <i>on behalf of City Deal</i> of up to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) £300,000 for Bamber Bridge Regeneration – specifically for town centre improvement works including central 'square', station improvements, heritage trail and gateway features b) £170,000 for Landmark features – to complete the Leyland Masterplan strategy, the final three landmark features. 2. The Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Leisure be authorised to finalise details, on the above schemes moving forward. 3. Authority be granted for the necessary procurement exercises to be carried out in respect of the above schemes. 4. The Director of Development, Enterprise & Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Leisure, following completion of the procurement exercises, be authorised to award the contracts to the most economically advantageous tenders. 5. To enable this matter to proceed without a further report to Cabinet (as envisaged in recommendation 4 above), a waiver be granted of the relevant paragraph (26.4) of the Contract Procedure Rules for the reasons set out in the report. 4) That, <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Pilot study to operate across 2016/17 in order to assess and review its success measures be approved. 2. Funding of £80,000 to support this additional Housing Options scheme be identified. 3. The funding to be used flexibly to encourage and motivate private landlords to provide long-term tenancy arrangements for people in priority need and homeless and/or facing eviction.
78	<p>Council Tax Setting 2016/17</p> <p>Councillor Bennett (Cabinet Member for Finance & Resources) introduced the report and commenced by thanking all officers and members on behalf of the residents of South Ribble, who had worked so hard over a number of years. He particularly thanked both the Leader and the Chief Executive for their work over those years. Their hard work and dedication had ensured that the Council was in a strong financial position compared with others. The Council would need all of that financial strength going forward as all local authorities come to terms with the reductions in central government funding.</p> <p>He also added a special thank you to Susan Guinness, Head Of Shared Financial Services and the whole finance team. He appreciated he could be challenging at times, and her support and guidance had been invaluable.</p> <p>He also thanked Seema Kennedy MP, who had worked tirelessly in securing additional transitional funding and the outstanding work she had done in this respect. The Council would continue to work with her on the clarification of the reduction in the New Homes Bonus payment structure, down from six years to four years, announced in the Autumn Statement. This change had significant implications for the funding model for the City Deal and those discussions were ongoing.</p> <p>Councillor Bennett referred to the City Deal and as could be seen from the road works</p>

around the borough, this was taking shape. The leap of faith shown by all parties in this chamber would play a key part in delivering both housing and economic-development, development which would help the Council balance the books moving forward. This would enhance the already buoyant economic picture in South Ribble, which had seen a 5% increase in businesses to over 3700 since 2010 and had seen job creation grow at a faster rate than any other district within the North West region, with a 26% increase between 2009 and 2014.

Councillor Bennett explained that this budget was very much about a journey, a journey to bridge the budget gap moving forward that would be well in excess of £2m by 2018/19 and beyond; the budget was about creating a platform for this authority to be at the forefront of investment and development in South Ribble as the Council moved to become self-sufficient.

Moving on to the key points from the last year, Councillor Bennett stated that the journey had begun last May, when the residents of South Ribble put their faith in this Conservative administration. Along with other Cabinet Members, he had delivered last year's budget, which was presented 12 months ago by former Councillor Stephen Robinson. Those key messages were delivered, the excellent performance record maintained while reducing costs and generating savings. The Cabinet in the last year was projected to produce in-year savings of £600k. A significant portion of which would be re-invested back into the workforce, through a long-term commitment to fund the Council's successful Apprenticeship Programme.

Councillor Bennett indicated that last May, he had met with officers to develop and lay out his vision on how the Council needed to change moving forward, as the Government looked to remove the Revenue Support Grant and demand that councils become self-sustainable. Over the last 10 months, since taking on this important portfolio, he firmly believed that this Council needed a balanced approach and that the future funding gaps shouldn't be approached simply through cuts to services. The Council needed to look to work in different ways with still room for significant savings from back office costs and more collaborative working. Business Transformation would play a key role in this process and he looked forward to gradually adopting a zero based budgeting approach across the whole organisation. When successful, zero based budgeting could produce radical savings and liberate organisations to look at things differently. He was delighted that he had such an excellent councillor in Councillor Mrs Moon to take that process forward. With an eye for detail, this approach would be in very safe hands especially working alongside the Director of Corporate Governance and Business Transformation, Ian Parker who had delivered 'change' in the past with excellent results.

Councillor Bennett then referred to the impact of the recent spending review on core funding which he stated was revolutionary. The change would remove core, direct grant funding received from Central Government, and be 100% sourced from either local taxation or charges for services. Members needed to be fully aware of the significance of such a change.

The reduction in Central Government funding had been compounded by the decision by Lancashire County Council to remove recycling tax credits which would result in a loss to this council of almost £1m in 2018/19. He suggested that all members should focus on that budget gap and consider how this Council could close such a significant, and challenging funding shortfall.

The Cabinet Member thanked all members of the council for supporting the recent alterations to the Treasury Management Strategy. As those changes worked through, this would increase the projected interest income by £80k by 2018/19, based on a like for like scenario. However, changes to the use of reserves would reduce those benefits and would ensure that the cash balances were working harder for the residents of South Ribble. The Conservative Group's desire to invest in the borough was evident by the creation of a new housing portfolio. Councillor Bennett was delighted to be able to

support those aims with just under £3m and wished Councillor Michael Green well in fulfilling his new housing strategy. With the support of partners, our cash contribution would hopefully accelerate and help deliver those plans.

Councillor Bennett expressed his desire to ensure that all councillors become aware of the Council's financial position and future challenges in order to be able to understand the significance of future pressures. He thanked all those who attended the budget learning hour, and that he hoped to bring more financially based learning hours forward and to become a firm part of the member development plan.

He continued and referred to asset management and that he had instigated a review of the Council key property assets. He had been working with the Director of Neighbourhoods, Asset Management and Environmental Health, Mark Gaffney and Property Services Manager, Mandy Catterall in order to ensure that the council had value for money from the property portfolio. The outcomes of this asset review would be revealed in the coming months and would highlight a number of key decisions that the Council would need to make over the coming months and years in order to balance the budget and support services in a self-sustaining way. As part of this process the Council would need to invest in some assets, such as Worden Park. Talks with potential partners for Worden Park had highlighted similar themes, such as needing improved road access, better toilet facilities and increased access to parking.

He stated that he had brought forward plans to address some of these issues within this budget and that this also included some income generation which included charges for car parking and toilet facilities. Members needed to be aware that this move would hopefully attract external investment to Worden Park, which was not only the jewel of the borough but also had regional significance.

Councillor Bennett explained that he had brought forward plans in the budget to invest into new toilet facilities and had hoped to be in a position to address increased access to car parking and take a step forward towards self-sufficiency for the park through income generation from charged car parking at the same time. He had been in dialogue with Lancashire County Council for many months regarding on-street parking and had previously expressed his disappointment at the significant reduction in enforcement across the borough and the impact that this had on road safety. He had hoped those talks would have been concluded by now in order to take a report to Cabinet meeting in April which would then start a full consultation process, but sadly this looked a challenging timeframe. He continued by stating that he had always been clear that any potential introduction to car-parking charges would have to been aligned with enforcement. But until he had answers on this he was not in a position to consult residents and businesses on the various options.

He indicated that he had spoken to members regarding their concerns of parking borough wide and he thanked the Labour Group for their early feedback. It was clear that both groups shared the same appetite to look across the borough at all the Council's car parks and that they had already expressed support for the strategic approach being worked on. With no final decision at present from the County Council and a desire to go further in the review of car parking in South Ribble, he indicated that it made sense to remove the car park income totally from this year's budget. Whilst he had removed the car park income, the investment of £43k had still been retained. This variation would be supported through the transitional funding received post the Cabinet agenda being distributed. The investment would provide new line markings, additional bins and new signage as required and that this was in response to safety concerns from ward members. Therefore, it was decided not to delay this investment so that the Council was in a position to move forward following on from the consultation period.

Moving to the main items in the budget, Councillor Bennett commented that members could have noticed a change in the presentational style of the budget papers and it was hoped that they could now see a clearer link between the budget and the corporate plan with our key themes.

Councillor Bennett highlighted the six key principles within the budget. The first principle related to the freezing of Council Tax, not just for one year but for the next two. This would be the sixth year out of the last seven that this Council's share of the council tax bill for South Ribble residents, had been frozen. He commended past and present Councillors' for this approach. The pledge made within the group's manifesto would now be delivered, offering a clear message to the public. He therefore proposed that the borough council's band D equivalent Council Tax for 2016/17 would remain at the same level as last year at £208.38. He also proposed that the reduction in Council Tax Support would also remain at the same level as last year at £3.50 per week.

He indicated that he would not consider raising tax because he could, but would only raise it when it was needed. Taxing residents should be treated as a last resort and not the first and easy option. For many of the residents, Council Tax was their largest monthly expenditure, particularly affecting those on fixed incomes and this should be remembered when increasing taxation.

The Cabinet Member continued to confirm that he had balanced the budget without any funding from reserves for the first time since 2009/10 and that he would be taking proposals to Cabinet in the coming weeks to do that again next year.

Next he referred to the growth items which would not impact on the base budget. Firstly £80k towards addressing homelessness, the details of which had been covered in other reports. He thanked Councillor Mrs Moon for bringing forward this pilot scheme and was delighted that Cabinet had chosen to support the scheme so enthusiastically. While this was a pilot, with no immediate impact on the base budget, he hoped that this scheme would be successful.

The second growth item was £135k for engineering support to City Deal projects which had significantly increased the workload on capital projects. The position was for an additional project engineer to support the exciting and growing workload, which was purely a result of the City Deal programme. Initial projects, which the position would support, included Central Parks and the regeneration of Bamber Bridge, Leyland, Penwortham and Lostock Hall. It was proposed to fund this fixed new investment growth item from the annual City Deal receipt, and would support the excellent work of Councillor P Smith and his team.

The next item was £100k towards business support and place promotion, which was a refreshed Inward Investment campaign that would have wide coverage, to hit target audiences and raise awareness of what South Ribble offers to businesses and investors. It would focus on the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership priorities to promote South Ribble's unique selling points. It was also proposed to fund this new investment growth item from the annual City Deal receipt. The Place Promotion Programme would play a significant part in ensuring that the commercial development outcomes anticipated within the City Deal would be delivered.

Last year the Council established a programme of four apprentice posts and this was supplemented with an additional six apprentices recruited for positions within Neighbourhood Services, Shared Assurance Services and Sports Development. Due to its success, it was proposed to expand this programme and recruit a further four positions increasing the overall numbers to 14 and that £300k would be allocated to this. It was proposed to fund the total cost of the programme from the revenue budget underspend forecasted to be achieved in 2015/16. Councillor Bennett thanked his fellow Cabinet members and officers for driving efficiencies in the last twelve months which had enabled him to support this fantastic programme.

The final growth item was £135k for a Specialist Project Management position in the Strategic Housing team. This would facilitate the delivery of the Housing Capital Programme, which supported the new South Ribble Housing Framework. The post would focus on enabling new affordable housing but would also be involved in other

capital projects including housing for older people and empty homes. It was proposed that this new investment growth item would be funded from external contributions.

Councillor Bennett then turned to the significant investment proposals within the budget which totalled £4.18m for investment to support various schemes. The proposals on housing utilises the whole capital receipt from previous right to buys which had been in reserves for too long and that the budget proposals would make use of Section 106 receipts. He also proposed £250k for Withy Grove Park in Bamber Bridge to try and obtain a Green Flag Award, £280k for Worden Park with new toilets and further car parking improvements and £50k towards Hurst Grange Park. The latter was in addition to the funds made available last year to be used to develop a masterplan for the whole of Hurst Grange.

He indicated that he had set aside funds to support several My Neighbourhood plans. Money would be allocated for Walton-le-Dale Community Centre car park, which was a wonderful project and this was due to the fantastic support from the whole community. He congratulated all those involved. He also proposed support for a similar scheme at Hutton Village Hall to support their community facility. A further £250k was proposed for projects in the Central area with Farington Lodges and football facilities gaining significant funding. He asked all Central members to work together to unlock available funds held locally, in order to make this funding go further.

As mentioned earlier, there was £2.945m towards the Council's Housing Strategy and that this would support the Extra Care Scheme, Affordable Housing and Home Ownership and Empty Properties and Private Home Improvements. Councillor Bennett wished Councillor Michael Green well in delivering this significant investment, together with partners.

Councillor Bennett then moved on to the changes in respect of Reserves and how the Council could move towards a more self-sustainable model. He referred to the creation of a Borough Investment Account which would set aside an initial figure approaching £4m. He wanted to proactively strengthen the Medium Term Financial Strategy, and he therefore proposed to set aside funds to be used to generate on-going income for the Council. This would be a two-stage approach to reshaping the total reserves structure as part of budget setting, and closing the accounts in June. This approach would create an account to support income generation schemes and create a diverse and self-sustaining income portfolio, which would enable the Council to further bridge the funding gap. This option would minimise the impact on residents.

He had also instigated external challenge to establish the appropriate level of reserves that would ensure the Council protected itself for the future, but would free up and make better use of the available funds at the Council's disposal. He indicated that he would bring forward the first of these investment proposals later in the month, subject to the budget being agreed.

In summing up, he asked all members to welcome the significant investment and preparation for the future, living within our means, and moving towards creating a self-sufficient Council. This approach would be needed to enable the Council to continue to deliver high quality services, at an affordable price for the residents of South Ribble. He asked members to support this considered and thoughtful approach, an approach that was in stark contrast to other political leaders both locally and county wide, who talk of doom and gloom and appeared not to have a plan. This budget was setting a path, it would be a journey, a journey to create a self-sufficient council, delivering excellent services, at an affordable cost to the public. He believed that he had laid out the required firm foundations to set the Council on that path.

He commended the budget report to the Council.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Mrs M Smith, was pleased to second the report.

Councillor Foster rose to speak on the report. He started by stating what a difference a year had made. As a Labour Group they had been damming in their criticism of the Conservative administration's lack of ambition when it came to progressive politics and ticking along year after year waiting for something to happen. He referred to this year's proposals which had a sense of déjà vu. This was not because of the reoccurring lack of ambition, but because of the number of policies and proposals which had been taken from the Labour Group's alternative budget from last year.

He stated that last year the Labour Group proposed initiatives and employment for the borough's young people. The Conservative Group announced last year, proposals for four apprenticeships to which the Labour Group had suggested should be at least doubled and demonstrated how this could be funded. Now this year, the scheme had been supplemented with an additional six apprentices with the programme being expanded to recruit a further four. This was the Labour Group's proposals last year implemented in full.

In respect of Parks and Open Spaces, last year the Labour Group provided detailed proposals for additional investment of £1.8m in our Parks, Open Spaces and District Centres. Councillor Foster indicated that the Conservative Group had now included plans for investment of up to £1.235m in our town centres, park and play areas, with the funding predominately from unallocated developer's Section 106 contributions. He added that last year his group clearly stated that it was time to start investing the Section 106 monies within the borough.

The Leader of the Labour Group then referred to the Right to Buy Capital Precepts and Commuted Sums. His group stated last year, that it was a disgrace that the Conservative Group had sat on the Right to Buy Capital Precepts for in excess of eight years along with the lack of investment in regard to the commuted sums. Again, there were now proposals, through the Housing Framework within the Capital Programme, for the entire provision of Right to Buy Precepts and Commuted Sums to be allocated. This amounted to £2.945m, and had been allocated just as they had argued so strongly for last year. He commented that the devil would be in the detail, as the Housing Framework gave very little, if any point, on specific fact. However, it was good to see, again, that his group's proposals were being acted upon.

He then turned his attention to the Reserves and that his group had been heavily critical on how they had been allocated and the rather large sums being held. It was therefore also pleasing to see that the Reserves were being tidied up and reallocated, with the introduction of the Borough Investment Account.

Councillor Foster wasn't surprised that the new Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources and new Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Bennett, was adopting Labour's original proposals. He stated that this was probably due to Councillor Bennett previously being a member of the Labour Philosophical and Recreational Teaching Institution, or the Labour PARTI, or as an Idle Toad, standing against and twice beating the official Conservative candidates at elections for this Council between 1999 and 2007. He had spoken out many times against Conservative proposals.

Moving on, Councillor Foster stated that with so many of the Labour Group's previously published policies being presented, there were clearly many areas within the budget that his group would be happy to support. However, as his group was a responsible opposition they had, and always would, offer their support when they felt appropriate. But this also meant that where there were weaknesses and challenges, these must be brought to the Council's attention.

Councillor Foster added that in presenting this budget to Council, Councillor Bennett made many assumptions, and had taken the 'upside' wherever appropriate. The financial projections made, particularly in respect of revenue, were at best overstating the position, and at the worst reckless. He explained that Councillor Bennett presented reoccurring revenues of £350k per annum for New Homes Bonus for the next three

years. This was based on the Council retaining the benefit for a full six years following the initial award. However, he should be aware that the Government had already stated that it intended to reduce this entitlement from six years to four. This would have a projected impact of a reduction of £170k in 2017/18, £291k in 2018/19 and £389k in 2019/20. These were significant sums and suggested that Councillor Bennett should explain why he had not taken this into account.

Next he stated that within the income generation there was a projected increase in the Council Tax Base of £60k, £120k and £180k over the next three years. This increase required a substantial number of properties to be built across the borough on a continual basis. For example, 300 Band D properties would increase the tax base by £60k. Councillor Foster was therefore interested to see the Leader and Councillor P Smith, addressing the Planning Committee last week, urging the refusal of a proposed scheme for 175 properties adjacent to Croston Road which was against the officer's recommendations.

Councillor Foster then turned his attention to the Business Rate Retention and stated that the Council had clearly benefited this year from the Government's Business Rate Retention Policy and the associated Lancashire Pooling Arrangement. He added that the Council had benefited from £1.76m this year and that this provided the large surplus being sent to the newly created Borough Investment Account Reserve. However, it must be understood that if any of the Lancashire Authorities pulled out of the pooling arrangement, which they were at liberty to do at any time, then the scheme would fall for everyone. The Government Valuation Office was also currently conducting reviews into historic business rate assessments, due to legal challenges, which could also see a significant reduction in the Tax Base. Members would be able to see that there had been a small adjustment made for this within the proposals, but as he mentioned earlier, those revenues could be overstated and would provide a significant challenge for the authority.

Next Councillor Foster drew the Council's attention to the fact that of the £516k efficiency savings targeted within the budget, along with an additional £100k of General Employee Turnover savings shown separately, this equated to another £336k of additional employee related savings being sought this year. Members of the Labour Group were becoming more and more concerned at the consistent, sustained attack on the structure of this authority and challenged that it was no longer fit for purpose in ensuring the Council delivered its statutory obligations in an effective manner.

Councillor Foster then moved on to the issue of Council Tax and the increases advised by central Government. He said that HM Treasury had made it clear, that Local Authorities should generate more revenues and in the Government's revised financial projections it assumed all Council's would raise Council Tax by a minimum of 1.75%. He indicated that at least 90% of authorities in England had just done just that, yet Councillor Bennett was proposing to freeze it for a further two years in South Ribble. The economic impact of a 1.75% rise for the next four years would have the compounded effect of an additional £528k for the revenue budget, so when the Council was facing a budget deficit of £2.5m in two years, he would be interested in Councillor Bennett's economic justification.

At this point the Mayor reminded Councillor Foster of Standing Order No.13 (5) concerning the content and length of speeches.

Councillor Foster continued and suggested that Councillor Bennett's response would be that the Conservatives were the party of 0% Council Tax rises. He then referred to the Conservative Longton Parish Council, which proposed to raise its precept by a whopping 253% and that the Deputy Mayor had written to Penwortham Town Council asking that they raise the precept by 44%. He also mentioned that the Conservative Group at Lancashire County Council had raised numerous amendments at the previous week's Budget meeting, all of which recommending a 3.99% rise. He then reminded Council that the 21.01% rise in 2002/03, followed by the 19.1% rise in 2003/04 had both

been presented and recommended to this Council by the now Leader of the Conservative Group when she was the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

Moving on to the Borough Investment Account Reserve, Councillor Foster challenged that now this had been created, the Council must fully understand how it would be used. He indicated that the budget report was silent on this and showed no projected growth year on year. The Council would have to face a deficit of £700k next year and £2.3m the year after. Therefore the Reserve must be put to good use quickly. However, his group would only support schemes that were validated and contained the appropriate risk profile.

Next he mentioned the car parking charges and the last minute Cabinet amendment. He indicated that the Labour Group had taken the unprecedented step to write an open letter to Councillor Bennett urging him to reconsider his ill-judged, ill-considered policy of introducing car parking charges at our borough's major parks following their sustained objections at the last meeting of Cabinet. As well as clearly demonstrating the dangers associated with this policy, he stated that they had also published the group's proposed amendment. Councillor Bennett had then called him prior to the meeting to advise him of the last minute changes which the Labour Group had proposed to him and that he thanked Councillor Bennett for doing this. Councillor Bennett had made it clear in the conversation that the revised policy, when completed and consulted upon, would come before this Council to consider whether parking charges should be imposed at the council's parks.

Councillor Foster recalled that when Councillor Bennett proclaimed himself as the saviour of South Ribble, and that if any members from any party, had any ideas or suggestions then they should forward them to him and he would do his best to deliver them. Well the Labour Group had, and that a lesson had been learnt that no individual was bigger than the Council. Councillor Foster thought it was inappropriate to consider to attempt to push through such a policy which could have such a detrimental impact on the residents of South Ribble with no consultation with ward councillors, Neighbourhood Forums, the County Council, the Police or the public themselves. Councillor Bennett was challenged at Cabinet by members from all political parties and from concerned residents, and despite this had issued a Council press release attempting to link any future investment in the Council's parks and open spaces to the new charging. The two issues were clearly not linked and suggested that Councillor Bennett should apologise for this misleading statement. The Labour Group would play a full part in the review to be undertaken and would support the most appropriate recommendations. Last year the Labour Group stated that the parking situation in South Ribble was chronic and had proposed the introduction of further parking enforcement officers, both on and off-street. The group had also demanded a review into car parking and had done for the past eight years.

In conclusion, Councillor Foster stated that the Labour Group was generally supportive of the proposals, most of which they had proposed in their alternative budget last year. They supported the apprenticeships, in fact they wanted to see more; they supported the investment, in fact they wanted to see more; they supported the principles of the extra care housing and affordable housing schemes, but wanted to see much more delivered far quicker; they supported the investment in the Council's parks and open spaces, but again much more could and should have been done. He suggested that the Council should stop 'dragging its heels' and become the leader of the delivery of new initiatives in Central Lancashire. He indicated that Councillor Bennett should be exceptionally careful as to his revenue projections, as they were most certainly overstating the Council's financial position.

Councillor M Tomlinson stated that there was much to admire within the budget proposals. He specifically mentioned the apprenticeship scheme and the reserves and that they had been calling for this for 2-3 years. He was excited by the borough investments and in particular the investment in the Council's parks. He echoed the warning by Councillor Foster regarding the projected increase in the Council Tax Base

and that if the proposed properties were not built, the figures would not stack up. He referred to the car parking proposals and that there had been no consultation with Lancashire County Council and the county council were not 'dragging its heels'. Hours had been spent trying to get a parking scheme on the Worden Estate which was accepted by local residents and was therefore delighted that Councillor Bennett had removed those proposals. Councillor Tomlinson expressed his disappointment that the County Council had decided not to renew the cost share agreement for the disposal of household waste. He understood that it would have to end sometime, but there would never be a good time.

Councillor Mrs Smith referred to the proposed increase in apprenticeships and that she recalled that the Labour Group had previously mentioned this. But stated that they should not take away the hard work that her group had put in to this. She stated that following a reorganisation in Neighbourhood Services, it enabled the Council to make further positions available. Not all the apprentices had come straight from school and therefore this opened up the opportunity to more people. She explained that the apprentices had recently met with Seema Kennedy MP, who had been very passionate about meeting them.

Councillor Mrs Smith referred to Councillor Foster's comment regarding the planning application recently considered for Croston Road. She indicated that she had made a comment that the spine road was important to the existing residents in that area and that it was important that the Council got the best for those residents before new properties were built. She confirmed that she still agreed with that comment and that the application was actually deferred.

The Leader then referred to Councillor Foster's comment regarding previous increases in Council Tax. Whilst she had been the Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, this was during the period of the cross party coalition and that all members had voted in favour of it. In fact the reason for the increase was because the Labour Group had spent the £6m from the sale of the housing stock. Councillor Mrs Smith also stated that she was not responsible for the Longton Parish Council precept increase.

Councillor Titherington stated that it was important that everyone worked together to help move the Council towards becoming self-sufficient. Given this he thought it was wrong to adopt the principle not to raise the Council Tax for two years. To rule out now, the possibility of raising it next year was irresponsible. He referred to previous increases of Council Tax under the coalition and that there should be a collective responsibility for it. He suggested that there was still a lot more the Council could do to provide services digitally which would help reduce costs and bring in additional revenue.

Councillor Mrs Jones made reference to the key action for the Council to become a dementia friendly borough and although it was in the Corporate Plan report presented to Cabinet, it did not appear within the Corporate Plan document.

Both Councillor Ogilvie and P Smith welcomed the proposals and in particular the freezing of the Council Tax for two years. Councillor Ogilvie agreed with Councillor M Tomlinson concerning parking in around Worden Park and supported the amendment to consult further on this.

Councillor Michael Green thanked Councillor Bennett for his support and bringing forward the Housing Framework. He indicated that he was apprehensive at the last borough elections following the news that the former Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, Councillor S Robinson would not be standing again. However, Councillor Bennett had certainly stepped up to the position very well and he thanked him for driving this forward and that he had presented the budget in a fresh way.

A member of the public thanked the Leader for bringing this Cabinet together and thanked Councillor Bennett on his budget and ensuring it was balanced at no additional expense to the public.

Councillor Bennett responded to Councillor Foster's comment regarding his political history and stated that he had always been a Tory. He thanked all members for their comments and stated that any budget was an assumption. He hoped that all members would support the recommendations.

UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:

- 1) That the Corporate Plan 2016/2019 (Appendix 1 to the report) and Corporate Risk Register 2016/2017 (Appendix 2 to the report), deferred from the report of the Cabinet under min. no.77 above, be approved.
- 2) That, with regard to the Financial Strategy, Budget and Council Tax 2016/17, deferred from the report of the Cabinet under min. no.77 above:-

Revenue Estimates

1. That the council's revised estimates for 2015/16, the original estimate for 2016/17 and indicative original estimates for 2017/18 through to 2018/19, summarised at **Appendix A** to the report, be approved.
2. That **Appendix D** and the proposed budget efficiency targets designed to further improve efficiency/increase income and reduce the forecast budget deficit be approved.
3. That the assessment on the level of reserves for 2016/17 be endorsed.
4. That the adjustment to General and Earmarked Reserves, whilst recognising that this figure may need to be revised when the Government announces the final Local Government Finance Settlement figures for 2016/17 in advance of the Council meeting on 2nd March 2016, be approved.
5. That, subject to the amendments proposed in considering recommendations 1 to 4 above, a Borough Council Net Expenditure requirement for 2016/17 (including parish/town council precepts) be approved to support the delivery of the MTFS (Mid Term Financial Strategy).
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. This will be done in consultation with the Leader, and in her absence the Deputy Leader also being the Cabinet member with responsibility for Finance and Resources and, as appropriate, other relevant Cabinet Members.

Council Tax

7. That, subject to the consideration of recommendations 1 to 6 above, the Borough Council's Band D equivalent Council Tax for 2016/17, remaining at the same level as 2015/16 being £208.38, be approved
8. That the reduction in Council Tax Support applicable to working age claimants with effect from 1st April 2016 be approved.

Capital Programme and Budget

9. That the Capital Programme as set out at **Appendix E** to the report and its proposed funding be approved.
- 3) That with regard to the Treasury Management Strategy, deferred from the report of the Cabinet under min. no.77 above, the following be approved;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Treasury Management Policy Statement presented in Appendix A to the report. 2. The Treasury Management Practices (TMPs) presented in Appendix B to the report. 3. The Prudential Indicators for 2016/17 to 2018/19. 4. The Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Indicators for 2016/17. 5. The Annual Investment Strategy 2016/17 including Financial Institutions and Investment Criteria. 6. The Annual Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement 2016/17. <p>4) That the formal Council Tax resolution appended to these minutes and the revised budget for 2015/16 along with the Council's budget for 2016/17, be approved.</p>
79	<p>Exclusion of Press and Public</p> <p>UNANIMOUSLY RESOLVED:</p> <p>That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following item of the Report of the Cabinet as it involved the discussion of information defined as exempt from publication under paragraph 3, Information Relating to the Financial or Business Affairs of any Particular Person (including the authority holding that information) of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, in which the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing it.</p>
80	<p>Report of the Cabinet - Land at Leyland</p> <p>Councillor Hughes declared a personal interest in minute no. 80, Report of the Cabinet - Land at Leyland as he received a pension from North British Housing Association, but was able under the Code of Conduct for Elected Members, to remain in the meeting and take part in the consideration of the application.</p> <p>Following the deferral of this item from within the Report of the Cabinet under min. no.77 above, a discussion took place concerning land at Leyland.</p> <p>RESOLVED: (23 Yes, 18 No, 0 Abstention)</p> <p>That for the reasons outlined in the report, the land at St Andrews Way, Leyland be now disposed of to the Kier Construction Group on the amended terms set out in the report.</p>

..... Mayor

(The meeting finished at 8.12pm)