

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, 27TH SEPTEMBER, 2018, 5.00 PM

SHIELD ROOM, CIVIC CENTRE, WEST PADDOCK, LEYLAND, PR25
1DH

SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the above meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, the following information:

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| <p>3 Cabinet Decision Notice and published draft minutes - 12 September 2018</p> <p>The published draft Cabinet Minutes are attached for information.</p> | <p>(Pages 16 - 29)</p> |
| <p>4 Cabinet Agenda Item 5 - Communicating with Residents and Businesses</p> <p>Report of the Chief Executive attached.</p> | <p>(Pages 30 - 33)</p> |
| <p>5 Cabinet Agenda Item 9 - Council Tax Support Scheme</p> <p>Report of Specialist Consultant (Leadership and Organisational Development) attached.</p> | <p>(Pages 34 - 39)</p> |
| <p>7 Cabinet Agenda Item 14 - Campus Programme (Contract Award)</p> <p>Report of Director of Neighbourhoods and Development attached.</p> | <p>(Pages 40 - 45)</p> |

Heather McManus
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Electronic agendas sent to Members of the Scrutiny Committee

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Agenda Item 3



MINUTES OF	CABINET
MEETING DATE	Wednesday, 12 September 2018
MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillors Mary Green (Chair), Caroline Moon (Vice-Chair), Warren Bennett, Susan Snape, Karen Walton and Cliff Hughes
OFFICERS:	Heather McManus (Chief Executive), Jane Blundell (Deputy Section 151 Officer), Tracy Boustead (Specialist Consultant (Leadership and Organisational Development)), Catherine Conroy (Temporary Assistant Director (Property and Housing)), Darren Cranshaw (Assistant Director of Scrutiny & Democratic Services), Jonathan Noad (Director of Planning and Property), Andrew Richardson (Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods), Dave Whelan (Legal Services Manager/Interim Monitoring Officer), Dianne Scambler (Governance and Member Services Team Leader), Rebecca Heap (Senior Community Works Officer), Natalie Banks (Senior Public Relations Officer), Howard Anthony (South Ribble Partnership Manager), Jennifer Mullin (Director of Neighbourhoods and Development), Michael Jackson (Principal Management Accountant) and Mark Hodges (Partnership Development Manager)
OTHER MEMBERS AND OFFICERS:	Councillor Jane Bell, Councillor Colin Clark, Councillor William Evans, Councillor Derek Forrest, Councillor Paul Foster (Leader of the Opposition and Leader of the Labour Group), Councillor Michael Green (Member Champion (Community Engagement and Communications)), Councillor Susan Jones JP, Councillor Peter Mullineaux, Councillor Alan Ogilvie (Member Champion (Armed Forces)), Councillor Phil Smith, Councillor Michael Titherington (Deputy Leader of the Opposition and Deputy Leader of the Labour Group) and Councillor Graham Walton
PUBLIC:	2

14 Apologies for Absence

None, all Members were present.

15 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 11 July 2018 of Cabinet

Decision Made: (Unanimously):

That the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 July be approved as a correct record for signing by the Leader of the Council.

16 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of any interests.

17 Business Rates Retention Pilots 2019/20

The Leader of the Council accepted the following item of urgent business as the bid for the possible participation in a Business Rates Retention pilot scheme in 2019/20 had to be submitted to Government by 25 September 2018.

The Cabinet considered the report of the Interim Deputy Chief Executives (Resources and Transformation) that set out the case for participation in the pilot scheme. The proposal was that a substantial element of government funding of local authorities would be received by membership of a 75% Business Rates Retention Pilot pool in 2019/20.

It was noted that, should the Council enter such a pool, the financial benefit would not be gained until the rates had been collected, which would affect 2020/21 budgets through the transfer of surplus deficit from 2019/20.

The exact membership of the pool was still to be determined however, the guidance suggested that the pool should cover the economic areas with the current proposal for Lancashire being that the Lancashire Business Rates Pool member authorities, plus Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Lancaster, Preston and the Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service could be considered.

The deadline for submitting a bid was 25 September 2018 and as the decision sat outside our policy framework would require a formal Council decision, As the next Council meeting is scheduled to meet on 26 September 2018, Cabinet were asked to consider the proposal as an urgent decision was needed by the Council on this matter to meet the deadline set by Government.

The Cabinet were unanimous in their decision to strengthen the Council's response to ensure that they did not lose out financially under the new arrangements.

Decision made: (Unanimously)

1. Approval in principle to the Council's participation in the Lancashire bid to be a pilot of 75% Business Rate Retention in 2019/20 subject to all the issues raised with in the report particularly those contained within paragraphs 3.1, 8.2 and 11.2 being met satisfactorily.
2. That due to the timescales set, approval to endorse the use of urgent powers to approve submission of the bid by the Section 151 Officer (or Deputy Section 151 Officer in her absence) signing off the decision in consultation with the Cabinet Member (Finance).

Reason(s) for the decision:

The deadline for submitting an application from Lancashire councils to the Government is 25 September 2018. Though specific details of the bid are yet to be finalised, agreement in principle is needed at this stage in order to continue as a member of the processed pool. This decision is made on the understanding that the Council will be in no worse a financial position, in entering the pilot, that what it would have been if we continue with our existing business rates retention pilot for Lancashire, and also if we take into account the funding principles for Revenue Support grant. Early consideration of the figures shows that there is sufficient funding for the Council to retain its current position, with Lancashire as a whole also

benefitting from the revised pooling arrangements. If the Council is not a member of a pool in 2019/20, it will lose the financial benefit of pool membership it has achieved from 2016/17 onwards.

18 Lead the development of the Borough Community Strategy

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development which provided details on the progress of the development of South Ribble's Community Strategy and provided reasons as to why the strategy is being developed and the intended outcomes. The Community Strategy is a key project within the Corporate Plan 2018-2023 with the intention of enabling partners across all sectors and the wider community to work collaboratively.

The Leader on behalf of the Cabinet thanked the team for all their work on the Strategy.

Decision made: (Unanimously)

That the report be noted.

Reason(s) for Decision:

The report provided Cabinet with an update on progress with developing the Community Strategy, as a key project within the Corporate Plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The alternative option was to do nothing and continue with the existing strategy until 2020. However the current strategy was considered not fit for purpose. However, it was composed in 2008 and designed against a backdrop of Local Area Agreements. The partners around the table are now different, the environment in which the Partnership operates is different and its financial resources are limited. Therefore the Partnership need to completely consider its strategy and structure to ensure it is fit for purpose and can support a co-ordinated and effective cross sector approach to public sector reform across South Ribble.

19 Communicating with residents and businesses

The Cabinet considered the report of the Chief Executive which outlined proposals for methods of communicating with residents and businesses in the borough until April 2019. The report sought the approval of the Cabinet on the production of three Forward newspapers, approval of its delivery method from two suggested options and approval of the evaluation of said newspapers, in line with the objectives of the Communications Strategy developed in 2017.

Councillors Mick Titherington and Paul Foster raised their concerns at the meeting that the recommendations made by the cross party working group to pursue an electronic version of the FORWARD had been ignored. It had been 18 months since its last publication and they considered the proposals to publish three editions over the next six months to be excessive in the run up to an all-out election.

The Cabinet explained, that whilst the electronic delivery of FORWARD was still being explored, there had been some software difficulties and rather than wait any

further, they had decided to revive the existing arrangements to improve on the authority's communications with its residents. In the future, the Cabinet planned to deliver the publication both electronically and in newspaper format so as to avoid digital exclusion for many of its residents especially those in deprived areas of the Borough. The use of community buildings such as local supermarkets, libraries and doctors surgeries had also been considered as places to deposit the publication in bulk, however a more personal delivery to residents was favoured by the community.

In response to a member of the public it was explained that the Council would be undertaking a review of its website and other online communications to improve on their content and accessibility.

Decision Made: (Unanimously)

That:

1. The production of three Forward newspapers be approved.
2. The newspaper to be posted out via Royal Mail.
3. The evaluation of both the paper edition of Forward and the email newsletter be approved with a report of the evaluation being presented to Cabinet at a later date.

Reason(s) for decision:

A Communications Strategy was developed in 2017 that would transform how we communicate with our key stakeholders. One of the objectives in the medium-term action plan was to undertake a rigorous and evidence-based review of the Forward newspaper.

The decision will revitalise the Forward newspaper as recommended by the Communications Strategy and will improve communications between the Council and residents and businesses.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

20 30 Rhodesway, Hoghton

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Planning and Property that provided an update on the property at 30 Rhodesway, Hoghton, Preston, PR5 0JY. The property posed a detriment to the environment and amenity of the local area and the report provided Cabinet with options of dealing with the property with emphasis placed on continued negotiations in hope of avoiding the need for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

Decision Made: (Unanimously)

That:

1. The Interim Assistant Director of Property & Housing continue negotiations and seek to conclude terms to acquire the property by agreement, to avoid the need for a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO).

2. Subject to the outcome of negotiations, the use of powers of compulsory purchase and the making of an Order under Section 17 of the Housing Act 1985 and all other powers as appropriate for the compulsory purchase of land be approved.
3. The Legal Services Manager is authorised to take all necessary steps to secure the making, confirmation and implementation of the CPO, including the publication and service of all notices, and the presentation of the Council's case at any Public Inquiry and the subsequent service of Notices to Treat and Notices of Entry or the execution of General Vesting Declarations.
4. The Legal Services Manager is authorised to negotiate and enter into agreements and undertakings, prior to or following the making of the Order, with any owners of any interest in the land affected by the Order and any objectors to the confirmation of the Order setting out the terms for the withdrawal of objections to the Order and to authorise the Interim Assistant Director of Property & Housing and Legal Services Manager to draft, agree and execute all necessary legal documents to record any such agreements and/or undertakings.
5. The Legal Services Manager is authorised to appoint suitable Counsel to advise and represent the Council at any Public Inquiry held in respect of the Order and to provide legal support to the project team through the process.
6. Following the confirmation of the CPO or acquisition by agreement, the Interim Assistant Director of Property & Housing is authorised to enter into negotiations with a purchaser, identified following a marketing exercise and agreed in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Assets and Transformation, for the disposal and renovation of the property with minimal financial impact to the Council, to bring it back to a habitable condition for occupation.
7. The Legal Services Manager can approve and execute all legal documentation that is considered necessary to give effect to the above.

Reason(s) for Decision:

The CPO is necessary for the following reasons:

1. The property has been vacant for over fourteen years, having been registered as empty since April 2002 on Council Tax records;
2. The Council has sought to bring the property into acceptable use by way of negotiation to no avail;
3. The Council has made repeated attempts to acquire the property by agreement;
4. No works have been carried out to remedy the sub-standard condition and contribute to the property's re-use for housing purposes, despite having highlighted its condition and its effect on adjoining and neighbouring properties; and

5. The compulsory purchase will achieve a clear housing gain by bringing a sub-standard property back into residential use.
6. The Council also considers there to be no other prospect of the property being brought back into residential use.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

21 New Service Delivery Model of Preventative Health

Councillor Warren Bennett left the meeting.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development which provided details of the development of a new service delivery model of preventative services and proposed the establishment of a cross-party member working group on Health and Wellbeing with the purpose of making recommendations to Cabinet.

The report promoted person-centred wellbeing and healthy lifestyle choices in comparison to the traditional medical model of care, in line with the authority's commitment to wellbeing for all as outlined in its Corporate Plan.

Decision Made: (Unanimously)

That the establishment of a Cross-Party Working Group on Leisure, Health and Wellbeing (to be supported by Democratic Services) that will make recommendations to the Cabinet on the Leisure, Health and Wellbeing agenda be approved.

Reasons for Decision:

A Cross-Party Working Group will position the Council at the forefront of the discussion of reshaping the debate on wellbeing and prevention. It will facilitate a move away from a medical model of care based on the treatment of disease and towards a holistic view of the promotion of person-centred wellbeing and healthy lifestyle choices.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

22 Approval of the Housing Enforcement Policy and Civil Penalties Guidance Document

Councillor Warren Bennett returned to the meeting.

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development which sought approval of the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and the Private Sector Housing Civil Penalties Enforcement Guidance.

These policies outlined the enforcement approach, methods and powers of the Council, in line with the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The comments of the Statutory Finance Officer were not included within the report. It was explained that the final version of the report did contain those comments but as they only stated: That the financial implications are set out in the body of the report. The report had not been reissued.

Decision Made: (Unanimously)

That the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy and Private Sector Housing Civil Penalties Enforcement Guidance be adopted.

Reason(s) for Decision:

The development of own policies and procedures on how new powers are to be implemented is in line with the statutory guidance issued by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

23 Council Tax Support Scheme

The Cabinet considered a report of the Specialist Consultant (Leadership and Organisational Development) that updated on the current situation with the authority's Council Tax Support Scheme (CTSS) and sought agreement as to how to proceed with the scheme that included the undertaking of a consultation exercise for the proposal of introducing an amended scheme for the 2020/21.

Councillor Foster commented that it was his understanding that the Council had already voted upon the removal of the scheme at its budget setting meeting and asked that if the Council were continuing its provision in 2019/20 a reversal of the decision would also need Council approval. In response the Deputy Leader, Councillor Caroline Moon explained that the CTSS could not be removed at Budget Council, as legally there had to be a period of consultation with all preceptors on proposed options, and as such was a process that would take time. Whilst this consultation was being undertaken, the Cabinet considered it necessary to continue with the scheme in its present form especially with the recent introduction of Universal Credit.

There was general acceptance that the scheme was unfair and that the introduction of any future hardship scheme needed to be widely advertised so that it reached the right people.

Decision made: (Unanimously)

1. Approval of an Equality Impact Assessment to be carried out on the current Council Tax Support Scheme given the new operating context that is Universal Credit.

2. Approval for the Council to consult with all major preceptors on potential scheme changes (as outlined in the report) that could be introduced in the year 2020/21.
3. That the result of the informal consultation with major preceptors to be reported back to Cabinet, along with any impact assessments that need to be considered on the wider effects of the schemes which will affect residents.
4. Approval for the Council to continue with its existing scheme for 2019/20, and to strengthen and promote the exceptional hardship funds available to residents.

Reason(s) for the decision:

To carry out a review of all existing policies in this area and to consult on possible changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme in order that it is efficient and equitable as possible.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The Council does have the option to seek to amend the current South Ribble Council Tax Support Scheme in 2019/20, however this would not allow for the impact

24 Corporate Peer Challenge Action plan and response to Statutory Recommendation (under Section 24 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014)

The Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive which provided an update on progress made against the recommendations from the LGA Peer review from 2017 and subsequent revisit in March 2018.

The report also addressed the recommendations of the Annual Audit of the Statement of Accounts (SOA) 2017-18, particularly those that related to the LGA Peer review. The Council was required to submit a formal response within prescribed timelines and a Plan detailing those actions taken was appended to the report.

Decision Made: (Unanimously)

That:

1. The Council will accept the recommendation made by the external auditor.
2. The Council will provide a formal response to the external auditors advising that all actions recommended within the Original Peer Review visit and actions suggested in the revisited Peer review have been actioned and are either complete, or are currently in implementation.

Reason(s) for Decision:

To provide the Cabinet with an update on progress with Developing the Community Strategy, as a key project within the Corporate Plan.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

25 Cabinet Forward Plan

Decision made: (Unanimously)

That the Cabinet Forward Plan be noted.

26 Exclusion of Press and Public

Decision made: (Unanimously)

That the press and public be excluded 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.

27 One asset approach to refurbishment and future management of Civic Centre

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Planning and Property which sought approval of the development and implementation of an Asset Management Plan for the Civic Centre to ensure that the Council's assets were being appropriately used for the transformation of wider public service sector delivery, in line with item no.7 on the agenda ('New Service Delivery Model of Preventative Wellbeing').

Decision made: (Unanimously)

1. Development of an Asset Management Plan/Strategy for the Civic Centre, informed by a condition survey, planned maintenance and refurbishment programmes, incorporating a refresh of current plans for third floor, to ensure consistent 'corporate South Ribble/campus brand'.
2. To receive a further future report regarding cost and programming of works to achieve a consistent fit-out across the building on a 'whole asset approach' including Gateway space, to enable a refreshed 'Gateway to a Seamless Public Service' within the building.
3. The principle of Lancashire Care locating within the building as part as an integral service delivery model to be located on second floor, subject to agreement of contractual terms.
4. Delegate authority to Corporate Property Officer and Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Asset and Transformation and Finance to agree detailed occupational terms with Lancashire Care.
5. Halt for now development of the catering framework and explore use of kitchen in line with LCFT's scope and work with the Civic Project group to look

at how they can provide a USP in terms of a socially responsible business model and as part of the offer for external agencies to use the Civic Suite.

6. Utilise existing allocation within the Capital programme to fund Condition Survey, development of planned maintenance and refurbishment programmes in most cost effective and efficient way.
7. Continue to proactively explore potential of further utilisation of the building, engaging with public sector partners including LCC, Police and MoJ.

Reason(s) for the Decision:

1. The Civic Centre is crucial to the continued delivery of South Ribble services in the future. In addition it constitutes a fundamental element to successful implementation of the Council's aspirations regarding new services delivery models of preventative wellbeing and the Campus Concept Model.
2. Consequently it is imperative that the physical condition of the building is maintained to a good standard, that a planned maintenance programme is identified and budgeted for, and that the asset is 'future-proofed' as far as possible. In order to ascertain the extent of backlog maintenance and likely timescale for repair/replacement being required, a survey of current condition is required.
3. Works are currently underway on the ground floor Civic suite, with a second phase of works under review (see paragraph 5.2 of the report), and following extensive staff consultation aspirations to refurbish the third floor of the building have been reflected in the Capital Strategy.
4. It is proposed to pull together these elements and aspirations, align to the direction of travel regarding integrated service delivery (see paper entitled New Service Delivery Model of Preventative Health on this agenda) into a cohesive 'Asset Management Plan/Strategy' for the Civic Centre as one asset best fit to support the Council's ambitions moving forward.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Individual 'floor by floor' piecemeal refurbishment of the building could be progressed although this approach would not maximise the opportunities to reduce cost of overall programme, support robust budget planning and monitoring, develop a clear physical 'branding/image' as a visible statement of Transformational change, being 'open for business' and attract multiple occupiers.

28 Leisure Campus (Contract Award)

The Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development which sought delegated authority to enter into a contract with Faithful and Gould Limited via the PAGABO Framework to procure the services of a comprehensive design and development team to aid the progress of the Leyland Campus project.

Councillor Paul Foster expressed his concern about the lack of detail within the report that included, the commercial terms of the consultants, the format of a design team, schedule of fees, development programme and risk register.

At meetings of the cross party working group, Members had been assured that any financial decisions would be taken by the full Council and as the final Masterplan for the Campus had not yet been completed, asked for this decision to be deferred.

In response, the Cabinet Member (Asset and Transformation) indicated that he was satisfied with the measures that had been undertaken by officers on the project so far and was happy to support the recommendation.

Decision made: (Unanimously)

1. That Cabinet endorses the utilisation of the PAGABO's national framework for Professional Services in Construction and Premises, as the preferred procurement route for developing the leisure element of the Leyland Campus detailed within the report.
2. That Cabinet grant delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhoods and Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member (Asset and Transformation and Cabinet Member (Public Health, Leisure and Wellbeing) to enter into a contract with Faithful+Gould to design, manage construction and deliver the leisure building element of the Leyland Campus project on the basis that the final proposal does not exceed £1.8m under the trims of a full RIBA scheme of works appended to the report.

Reason(s) for the Decision:

1. Development of campuses is a key element of the Health and Wellbeing priority within the approved Corporate Plan and Capital Strategy. Cabinet at its meeting on 21 June 2018, gave authority to go down a route of a single source, direct award framework.
2. The appointment of a development team for the leisure element of the Leyland Campus is essential to move the project forward. Without this the project and hence the whole programme would stall. The single source direct award via the PAGABO framework is the preferred route for the Council to secure the wide range of services required. This route does ensure compliance with the Official Journal of European Union (OJEU) procurement process, secures best value and enables the Council to move forward with the project. This chosen route via PAGABO will also allow the Council to build in flexibility and adjust the resources required as the project evolves.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

29 South Ribble Home Build

The Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Planning and Property which provided an update on the progress of the South Ribble Home Build project and sought approval to progress with site investigations on three identified sites, utilising One Public Estate (OPE) Land Release Funding (LRF). The report also sought approval to commence a procurement process to secure a Registered Provider

partner to deliver and manage new housing on the three identified sites, utilising the Commuted Sums funding pot.

The Home Build concept was aligned to a wider plan transforming the Borough and City Deal, to build modular homes on relatively small sites of under-utilised Council owned land, quality homes to be targeted at identified housing need.

Decision made: (Unanimously)

1. That Cabinet approves the release of the following three sites to undertake immediate site investigations for residential development:
 - Bridge Road/Todd Lane, Lostock Hall
 - Kingsfold Drive, Penwortham
 - Balcarres Green, Leyland
2. That Cabinet approves the continued exploration of other Council assets for the Home Build project.
3. That the procurement of specialist financial and legal advisors to support development of a Full Business Case for establishing a Council House Development Company, utilising funding (25k) identified in the 2018/19 budget be approved.
4. That Cabinet approves the principle of utilising the Commuted Sums funding to contribute towards build costs to deliver affordable housing for rent.
5. That Cabinet approves the principle of procuring a Registered Provider partner to develop and therefore manage the development, subject to detailed terms being reported back to Cabinet.

Reason(s) for the decision:

1. The report is required to secure approval to the principle of releasing the Council owned sites, to undertake site investigations on three of those sites immediately, utilising OPE/LRF funding in preparation for procuring a development partner to build and manage modular built housing. In addition, continue to explore options for the fourth site seeking to maximise the financial and social value of public sector assets in the vicinity.
2. This initial phase of development will be progressed alongside development of a Full Business Case (FBC) to support the roll out of the South Ribble Home Build programme and Company delivery vehicle, in line with the Corporate Plan and Campus Strategy.
3. On-going strategic asset review will seek to establish a portfolio of Council owned small-medium sized sites, suitable for residential development which will provide a future pipeline for development via the Company structure to be developed as outlined in the report.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

If progress is not made in taking forward an initial tranche of sites within the overall Home Build concept, then further OPE/?LRF funding will not be forthcoming., the funding already received is likely to be withdrawn and the Council will suffer reputational damage for failure to deliver and spend grant allocation.

Chair

Date

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Agenda Item 4

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	12 September 2018



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
Communicating with residents and businesses	Leader of the Council	Chief Executive

Is this report a KEY DECISION (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	No
Is this report on the Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan ?	No
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	No
Is this report confidential?	No

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To propose the way the Council will communicate with residents and businesses in the borough until April 2019.

2. PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet approve the production of three Forward newspapers the first produced in October 2018, second in December 2018 and the third edition in March 2019.
- 2.2 Cabinet approve a delivery method of the paper edition of Forward from a combination of both Option one Council employees will had deliver the editions and Option two where Council staff will ensure the paper is available in community buildings.
- 2.3 Cabinet approve the evaluation of both the paper edition of Forward and e-mail newsletter with a report of the evaluation being presented to Cabinet at a future date.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

A Communications Strategy was developed in 2017 that would transform how we communicate with our key stakeholders. One of the objectives in the medium-term action plan was to undertake a rigorous and evidence-based review of the Forward newspaper. The report sets out below the recommendations for the delivery of three Forward newspapers this financial year and the development of a new way of communicating via an electronic mailing system.

3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Excellence and Financial Sustainability	✓
Health and Wellbeing	
Place	

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

People	
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4. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

- 4.1 In March 2017 a Communications Strategy was approved by the Cabinet. One of the objectives in the medium-term action plan was to undertake a rigorous and evidence-based review of the Forward newspaper, to review its effectiveness, cost, demand on resources and ways to simplify the process.
- 4.2 On the 6th September 2017 a proposal to establish a cross party member working group to review the way the Council should communicate with residents and businesses in the borough in the future was approved by Cabinet.
- 4.3 The cross party group met to discuss the options for the future which were:
- ▶ Continuing to produce Invest (for business) and Forward (for residents), supplemented by existing social media channels (no change)
 - ▶ Merging the two publications as a new product aimed at both businesses and residents, supplemented by existing social media channels
 - ▶ Continuing to produce the Invest newsletter, but to distribute Forward as an e-newsletter with the option for residents to select areas / services they are most interested in hearing news about, supplemented by existing social media channels
 - ▶ Cease all production of paper newsletters in favour of electronic means
- 4.4 A presentation was made to the group detailing the current position in relation to communicating with both residents and businesses. This included the methods and costs of existing mechanisms. Information was also provided on current communication trends nationally and resident preferences identified in the 2017 Residents' Survey.

5 PROPOSALS

- 5.1 A full investigation was undertaken into email newsletter distribution software, which enables organisations to issue attractive newsletters (based on simple templates) with links to more detailed information. This approach facilitates quick and effective evaluation through access to statistics on how many recipients have opened the newsletter and how many have clicked through to more information. This can subsequently be used to target future communications more effectively and enables newsletters to be customised to very specific audiences, e.g. small businesses as well as to a general audience.
- 5.2 Following this investigation and recommendations of the cross working party, new email distribution software was purchased.
- 5.3 The Council's website is integral to this process as the electronic newsletters will be accessed via the website. The website is currently being reviewed to ensure that it can be

accessed using mobile technology and once this is in place the distribution software can be used to communicate with our residents.

5.4 As the Council is not in a position to go ahead with the electronic newsletter due to the web site review, it is proposed to produce three printed editions of Forward newspaper. The editions will be produced in October 2018, December 2018 and March 2019.

5.5 As part of the Council's priorities of being an efficient, effective and exceptional Council it is prudent to re-consider delivery options and costs:

Option1: Council employees hand deliver to every household in the district at an estimated cost of £6,500.

Option 2: Arrange for postal delivery at an estimated cost of £8,000.

Option 3: Council staff will ensure the paper is available in community buildings, such as the Council offices and leisure centres and be made available for members to hand deliver to their residents.

5.6 The Communications team will continue to seek feedback on the value of Forward newspaper and views will be sought from our residents in the next scheduled residents' survey and in the next paper editions of Forward when residents will be asked if they wish to continue to receive it.

5.7 Once the e-mail distribution is up and running a review of both the e-mail and paper Forward, via the analytics provided by the software and in the residents' survey, will be undertaken and a report of the evaluation will be presented to Cabinet at a future date for a decision on whether to continue with Forward newspaper in the longer term.

6 FINANCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The production and printing with the third delivery option and e-mail distribution software will be delivered through existing resources within the Council's communications budget. If options one or two are chosen there will have to be a process of centralising costs associated with communications, advertising and promotion.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None

9. ICT/TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The Communications team will be working closely with the ICT team to ensure that the website is able to be accessed via mobile technology to ensure the electronic newsletter is accessible.

10. PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None

11. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 11.1 A team has been established which will guide the Council's work towards delivering this project. A project plan will be developed and key milestones will be monitored by the project group.

12. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

- 12.1 There are many positive equality implications emerging from the recommendations in this report. Every resident, regardless of demographic or geographic factors, will be able to receive current, up to date and useful information on public services and activities within their community.

13. RELEVANT DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 Cabinet approve the production of three Forward newspapers the first produced in October 2018, second in December 2018 and the third edition in March 2019.
- 13.2 Cabinet approve a delivery method of the paper edition of Forward from a combination of both Option one Council employees will had deliver the editions and Option two where Council staff will ensure the paper is available in community buildings.
- 13.3 Cabinet approve the evaluation of both the paper edition of Forward and e-mail newsletter with a report of the evaluation being presented to Cabinet at a future date.

14. COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

- 14.1 The report considers options for more efficient and effective communication with residents and businesses. The financial implications are set out in the body of the report.

15. COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

- 15.1 There are no issues or concerns to raise from a Monitoring Officer perspective.

16. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- 16.1 There are no background papers to this report

17. APPENDICES

- 17.1 There are no appendices to this report

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Jennifer Mullin Director of Neighbourhoods and Development	01772 625329	23/07/18

Agenda Item 5

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET	12 September 2018



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
Council Tax Support Scheme	Finance	Specialist Consultant (Leadership and Organisational Development)

Is this report a KEY DECISION (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	Yes
Is this report on the Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan ?	Yes
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council?	No
Is this report confidential?	No

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of the report is to update Cabinet on the current situation with our Council Tax Support Scheme and to seek their agreement to how we ought to proceed with this scheme including carrying out a consultation exercise for the proposal of introducing an amended scheme for the year 2020/2021.

2. PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That an Equality Impact Assessment on the current Council Tax Support Scheme be carried out given the new operating context that is Universal Credit.
- 2.2 That the council should consult with all major preceptors on potential scheme changes (as outlined in this report) that could be introduced in the year 2020/21.
- 2.3 That the result of the informal consultation with major preceptors should be reported back to Cabinet , along with any impact assessments that need to be considered on the wider effects of the schemes which will affect the residents.
- 2.4 That for 2019/20, the council continues with its existing scheme, and strengthen and promote the exceptional hardship funds available to the residents.

REASONS FOR THE DECISION

To carry out a thorough review of all existing policies in this area and to consult on possible changes to the Council Tax Support Scheme in order to ensure that it is as efficient and equitable as possible.

3 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The report relates to the following corporate priorities:

Excellence and Financial Sustainability	✓
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Health and Wellbeing	✓
Place	✓

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

People	
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4 BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

The scheme overview

5.1 In April 2013, the welfare reforms were introduced and designed to improve the 'incentives to work' principles. At the same time the administration for Council Tax Support was devolved to Local Authorities, packaged with a 10% funding cut. A further element of these reforms was to offer pensioner households protection. This protection means that Council Tax Support available for pensioners can equate to 100% of their Council Tax liability, and therefore mirrors the preceding national scheme.

5.2 However, the above mentioned reforms made provision for Local Authorities to design local Council Tax Support schemes for working age households.

5.3 Given the above, the Council did and informed by a consultation exercise introduce a new Council Tax Support Scheme. This scheme remains in operation today and does feature a minimum payment for working age households. The Council's Council Tax Support scheme requires every working age household in receipt of Council Tax Support to pay a fixed amount of at least £3.50 per week for their Council Tax bill. Neighbouring authorities such as Preston, and Chorley operate schemes that afford a percentage discount, and not a minimum fixed amount.

5.4 We are not currently aware that any of Lancashire's Local Authorities are planning any major Council Tax Support scheme changes, in 2019/20.

5.5 The following should also be noted:

Collection rates pre and post the schemes transfer to Local Authority control have remained high. In 2012/13, the final year of the nationally administered scheme, and in 2017/18, the last full year of the current local scheme collection rates were recorded at 97.5%.

The Council offer three support procedures to residents. These are:

- Discretionary Housing Payments: The Discretionary Housing Payment can provide assistance with rent costs
- Exceptional Hardship Payments: The Exceptional Hardship Payments, are designed to assist with Council Tax Support shortfall
- Personal Budgeting Support: Personal Budgeting Support offered advice on how to manage day to day budgeting

The Exceptional Hardship Policy was introduced in conjunction with the new Council Tax Support Scheme from April 2013. In 2017/18 40 cases were awarded and 1 declined

In July 2018, South Ribble residents started to migrate onto Universal Credit, as and when changes in circumstances are reported. The nature of Universal Credit has the potential to be

administratively burdensome, given the monthly changes such as reassessment and new billing that will include minimal changes to a resident's income. The council has mitigated this risk by providing comprehensive training to our gateway and revs and benefits service, and there has been a Member Learning Hour, to provide assurance to members.

Proposal for amended/new Council Tax Support Scheme

Should the Council wish to change its existing scheme, which has been suggested within the MTFs, the Council must undertake statutory consultation on any changes.

The duty to consult on any new scheme or revised scheme is set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992 as amended by subsequent legislation.

In broad terms there is a duty to consult with any major precepting authority and such other persons as it considers are likely to have an operation in the scheme,

The LGA and Local Government Lawyer have published various advice papers on the subject of consultation, including a consultation checklist. However, the current consultation checklist is procedural in its nature, and does not allow for any consideration of impact, or assessing the relevance of Universal credit being brought into play.

Following the budget council in May 2018, the Council commissioned 'Policy in Practice' to undertake some modelling work which the council could consult upon, for a future scheme initially against three design principles.

The design principles:

- Remain cost neutral
- Reduce administrative burden
- Support the hardest pressed households

The council's new administration in May requested that the design principles were broadened to consider whether the existing scheme could remain with some slight amendments.

Policy in Practice, as a result of a further commission, have modelled the following schemes:

1) Retain **Existing scheme**

- featuring the £3.50 per week minimum payment
- featuring reducing the minimum payment to £3.22 per week

2) Introducing an **Income based Scheme**

- creating a generic income band
- providing income bands that are more generous to larger families
-

3) Introducing a **Maximum support scheme** i.e. removing the £3.50 per week minimum payment

5 PROPOSALS

Before any changes can be considered, or consulted on with the public, it is important to seek the views of all the major preceptor authorities.

The proposal is that the Council will engage in first stage consultation with all major preceptor authorities on the options identified above. For clarity, a more detailed analysis is set out below.

Retention of Existing scheme with amendments to rates: this is self-explanatory

Income Banded Scheme: In this scheme, the amount of Council Tax Support awarded to working age households is calculated very differently from how it is currently done. For each working age household, certain incomes are added up and compared to pre-defined income thresholds, each of which has a corresponding level of percentage discount. Larger households, such as couples with children, are more likely to lose Council Tax Support under this model, when compared to the current scheme. Lone parents and couples with children are less likely to lose support. This scheme could also result in lower administration costs than retaining the current scheme.

The level of support offered under each income band differs by household composition, as is shown in the table below.

Band	Weekly income	% discount (after the application of any other available discounts, e.g. single person discount)		
		Single Person	Couple no children	Families with children
1	£0 – £100 & pass ported/max UC)	85%	85%	85%
2	£100 - £150	80%	80%	85%
3	£150 - £200	Nil	75%	85%
4	£200 - £300	Nil	Nil	80%
5	£300 - £400	Nil	Nil	75%

Maximum support scheme: In this scheme, the £3.50 weekly minimum payment that every working age household must make towards their Council Tax bill is removed. The result is that the scheme would cost £540,000 however this is split across the preceptor authorities. Administration cost could also increase with the introduction of this scheme. This is firstly due to the number of reassessments increasing as households migrate onto universal credit, and secondly because working age households that do not qualify for Council Tax Support may gain eligibility if the minimum payment is removed.

Once this exercise has been carried out, Cabinet will further consider the options on taking forward the Council Tax support scheme.

Whilst the Consultation with the preceptor authorities is being carried out, the council will commission an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) on the current scheme given the new operating context that is Universal Credit. The council would also like to explore how we can fully engage with the residents of the Borough, in a meaningful way, which will go above and beyond the statutory consultation process and timescales.

As a holding measure, the council will continue with its existing scheme for 19/ 20. Members are advised that, in keeping within the existing scheme for 2019/20, there is an opportunity to strengthen and promote the Exceptional Hardship payments and it is proposed that an active campaign is launched to facilitate this.

6 CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT TO DATE

Following Local Government Organisation (LGA) advice and given that no changes have been made to the current South Ribble Council Tax Support Scheme since its introduction no further consultation has been carried out since 2012.

However, the proposal is that we will now carry out a consultation exercise for possible changes to the Council Tax support scheme for the year 2020/2021 as detailed in this report.

7 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The council does have the option to seek to amend the current South Ribble Council Tax Support Scheme in 2019/20, however this would not allow for the impact of Universal Credit to be properly understood. The Council would also like to consider a comprehensive consultation process, with the residents of the borough, picking up new guidelines set out by government on improving our understanding of resident's needs, and the impact of service changes on their daily lives.

8 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

N/A

9 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Please see Monitoring Officer comments

10 HUMAN RESOURCES AND ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

11 ICT/TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS

N/A

12 PROPERTY AND ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

N/A

13 RISK MANAGEMENT

N/A

14 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT

N/A

15 RELEVANT DIRECTORS RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That an Equality Impact Assessment on the current Council Tax Support Scheme be carried out given the new operating context that is Universal Credit.

15.2 That the council should consult with all major preceptors on potential scheme changes (as outlined in this report) that could be introduced in the year 2020/21.

15.3 That the result of the informal consultation with major preceptors should be reported back to Cabinet , along with any impact assessments that need to be considered on the wider effects of the schemes which will affect the residents.

15.4 That for 2019/20, the council continues with its existing scheme, and strengthen and promote the exceptional hardship funds available to the residents.

16 COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER

Council approved an amendment at Budget Council (February 2018) to remove the requirement for CTS Scheme with effect from 1 April 2019 at annual cost of £73k. Alternative compensatory funding was not approved at that time and therefore the call for this resource falls to reserves and consequently is not a sustainable solution. Additional savings would be required in the event the Council were to implement the decision taken. Furthermore, any decision to remove the CTS scheme will have the largest impact financially on the County Council as the major preceptor. The County Council may express a view during any consultation.

Since the introduction of council tax support scheme in 2013 the overall council tax collection rates have remained static (97.5%) which indicates that people do fulfil their duty in paying their council tax.

For those in hardship, the Council has approved policies to assist households in relation to meeting housing costs and council tax support. DWP will fund up to £140k in 2018/19. In 2017/18 this fund was underspent by £40k, with payments of just over £100k. Similar provisions exist within the Collection Fund where the offer of hardship support can be made within prescribed criteria for council tax liabilities.

DWP have provided Universal Credit implementation funding of £22k to assist the Council.

17 COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER

The Council is under a legal duty by virtue of Schedule 1A to the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to consider each year whether to revise its council tax reduction scheme or to replace it with another scheme. Schedule 1A also provides that any revision to the scheme, or any replacement scheme, must be made no later than 11 March in the financial year preceding that for which the revision or replacement scheme is to have effect. The Council has a legal duty to review its CTRS every year and to consult on any proposed changes. The recommendation for 2019/2020 is that there should be no change to our existing scheme. However, if members wish to adopt a new revised or replacement scheme for that year, then, as set out in this report, there is a minimum full consultation will be required for a period of 12 weeks to allow for all those affected an opportunity to comment. It should be noted however, that the proposal in this paper is a recommendation that this Council goes beyond the statutory process, in the interests of having a comprehensive engagement with the residents of the Borough.

18 BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (or There are no background papers to this report)

N/A

20. APPENDICES (or There are no appendices to this report)

N/A

Tracy Boustead
Specialist Support (Leadership and Organisational Development)

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Tracy Boustead	01772 62 5259	09/08/18

Agenda Item 7

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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