

AGENDA ITEM 2

POLICY COMMITTEE

11th September 2017

Present – The Chairman (Foster) and Councillors Barrett, Brockbank, Dawson, Hull, Ireton, Jaquin, Madeley, Morrell, Mulligan, Myers, Rose, Shuttleworth (substitute for Heseltine).

Officers – Chief Executive, Director of Services, Solicitor to the Council (Monitoring Officer), Strategic Manager – Financial Services (S.151 Officer), Strategic Manager – Planning and Regeneration, Environmental Services and Housing Manager and Committee Administrator.

Also in attendance – Councillor Staveley, Chairman of Select Committee.

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Heseltine, Lis and Welch.

Start: 6.30pm

Finish: 8.35pm

Councillor Madeley left the meeting at 6.51pm.

Councillor Myers left the meeting at 8.08pm.

The minutes of the Committee's meeting held on 18th July 2017 were confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

Minutes for Report

POL.852

REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 1 2017/18 AND FINAL BUDGET OUTTURN 2016/17

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report advising Members of the revenue budget position of the Council based on the quarter 1 review of income and expenditure to the end of June 2017 and also to provide an update on the final budget outturn for 2016/17.

The Council had approved its net revenue budget for 2017/18 at £6,962,165 which was subsequently increased from revenue budget slippage amounting to £159k and capital programme slippage of £633k.

The Council's overall performance against revenue budget was a projected underspend of £276k for the full financial year which included a £38k gain on the forecasted investment income.

The 2017/18 budget included contributions of £9k to parishes to assist them with the impact of the localisation of council tax; £98k from previous years council tax collection fund; £484 contribution to the business rates collection fund deficits; New Homes Bonus grant of £817k; net contributions to/from earmarked reserves of £899k; and a corporate contingency of £75k.

The general fund balance stood at £995k at 1st April 2017 and it was expected that this balance would remain during 2017/18.

The Council had £6,596k in earmarked reserves at 1st April 2017 and estimated in-year contributions of £912k. £1,960k would be utilised in 2017/18 and £765k had been committed for future use.

As a result of the 2016/17 closedown of financial account work, the final outturn position has been determined. The total service related expenditure had increased by £38k to £5,587 which reduced the variance to a favourable £381k.

Resolved – (1) That, the revenue budget position as at 30th June 2017 is noted.

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(2) That, the £64,530 of the savings achieved this quarter and identified as green in Appendix B to the report now submitted, are noted and that these savings be transferred to an earmarked reserve for support to the 2018/19 budget and beyond.
3) That, the Council's Long Term Financial Strategy be amended to take account of the 'green' savings in 2018/19 and beyond where these are not currently allowed for in the Budget.

(4) That, the revised 2016/27 budget outturn of £5,587k and therefore a revised favourable variance of £381k is noted.

POL.853 CAPITAL PROGRAMME MONITORING REPORT – 2017/18

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report informing Members of the capital programme position of the Council based on the first quarter review of income and expenditure to the end of June 2017.

The 2017/18 capital programme of £5,128k included £2,008k of slippage 2016/17 from previously approved projects.

At 30th June expenditure on the programme was £1,429k and the report summarised the programme and provided an update on the status of various projects. The forecasted outturn for 2017/18 was £4,924,876.

Resolved – (1) That, the capital budget monitoring position as at 30th June 2017 is noted.

(2) That, the 2017/18 capital programme and the proposed funding, including the supplementary estimates/sources of funding for overspend projects are noted.

POL.854 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 1 2017/18

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report presenting the Council's first quarter performance monitoring report for the 2017/18 financial year as determined by arrangements set out in the Council's performance management framework. Members were informed of progress and details of current performance against the Council Plan and priority indicators.

Monitoring against the Council Plan showed that good progress had been made on implementing the Council Plan actions. Fourteen had been assessed as on target by those completing the updates.

Resolved – That, the report is noted.

POL.855 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT

The Director of Services submitted a report informing Member of the current position with regard to the resettlement of refugees in Craven and seeking a decision as to whether the Council should accept additional refugee families who were eligible for resettlement under family reunification.

In January 2006, the Council agreed to accept 25 refugees under the programme and Members also agreed that the Council should participate in the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme. A family has now been identified and the children with the accompanying parent/s were due to arrive in the Autumn.

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The Home Office had been working with the UNHCR to ensure that vulnerable individuals were, where possible, housed as a family group. Members were therefore asked to approve the reunification of one family, should a request be made by the Home Office. Efforts would be made to house them in the private sector.

Resolved – That support is given to family reunification and, if requested, one additional family under the SVP or VCRS scheme is accepted, subject to there being sufficient private sector housing available.

POL.856

ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN 2017 – 2022

The Director of Services submitted a report presenting the Council's Asset Management Plan 2017-2022 for consultation. The plan was a structured process to ensure that the Council's assets were fit for purpose and with the continued reductions in public sector funding, were used effectively and efficiently.

Resolved – (1) That, the Asset Management Plan 2017-2022 in the Appendix to the report now submitted, is approved for consultation.

POL.857

CRAVEN CULTURAL STRATEGY 2017 - 2022

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report introducing the draft Craven Cultural Strategy 2017 to 2022. The strategy aimed to set out the priorities for the Council and its work with partners over the coming years as well as identifying where the Council would be focussing effort to bid for external funding and allocating resources.

The strategy would also provide a basis for cultural organisations to seek external funding in order to create greater synergies between them and the aims and objectives of funders, communities and the Council.

Resolved – That, the draft Craven Cultural Strategy 2017-2022 as now submitted is approved for consultation.

(Councillor Jaquin declared an Appendix B interest in the above item as he was Chairman of the trustees of Craven Museum.)

POL.858

RELEASE OF COVENANT – LAND AT CARLETON IN CRAVEN

The Director of Services submitted a report asking Members to consider a request from Carleton-in-Craven Parish Council that a covenant on land in its ownership was lifted so that plans to develop the land for community led housing using funding from the Community Housing Fund which the Council holds.

In 1984 the Council had conveyed a parcel of land to the Parish Council for amenity purposes for a small sum. However, a covenant stated that the land had to be kept for amenity use.

The land had a current value of £28,500 for housing or £4,500 as amenity land. Therefore, to release the covenant the Parish Council would need to pay the Council £24,000. The Parish Council would be able to draw down funding from the Community Housing Fund to pay the Council £24,000.

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Resolved – (1) That, the completion of a Deed of Release for a consideration of £24,000 in order to release the covenant at New Street, Carleton-in-Craven for the provision of community led housing is approved.

(2) That, Carleton-in-Craven Parish Council be asked to make a contribution of £400 towards the District Council's costs in completing the Deed of Release.

POL.859

POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER'S BUSINESS CASE : NORTH YORKSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

Councillor David Staveley, Chairman of the Select Committee presented the Committee's recommended response to the Police and Crime Commissioner's consultation exercise in respect of her business case for the future governance of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

The Policing and Crime Act 2017 placed a duty on police, fire and ambulance services to work together and enabled police and crime commissioners to take on responsibility for fire and rescue services where a local case was made. The North Yorkshire Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) had undertaken a review of the governance of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRA) and proposed changes that were aimed at promoting improved collaboration between the two services.

The three alternative options to the current model of governance were:

1. Representation model – PCC to join the NYFRA with voting rights;
2. governance model – PCC to take on legal and overarching responsibility for the provision of the fire and rescue services; and
3. single employer model – PCC would become the NYFRA but each service would be delegated to a single chief officer.

The Select Committee held two meetings to consider a response to the consultation exercise and heard from County Councillor Andrew Backhouse, the Chairman of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority and Julia Mulligan, Police and Crime Commissioner.

The Policy Committee thanked the Chairman and Members of the Select Committee and officers for undertaking the work at short notice, and it was

Resolved – (1) That, the response of the Select Committee replicated below is approved:

There is some merit in the case and aspirations expressed within the proposed business case for the future governance of the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Services, however, with no time pressures referenced within the 2017 Policing and Crime Act, the Council's preference for the future governance of the service, in the first instance is the representation model; the expectation being that the representation model will lead to greater collaboration between services.

In reaching this conclusion, the Select Committee has reflected on what it considered were a number of grey areas within the business case, and the point that adoption of the representation model enables its operation for a period of time and allows progress made on collaboration to be reviewed within a reasonable timescale, with options for change considered at that point should satisfactory progress not be made. This approach enables a progressive stepping up of arrangements, if necessary, informed by experience.

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Amongst stakeholders there is a desire for collaboration between the three blue light services and the Council would also wish to see active investigation of the opportunities for collaboration with the ambulance service under the preferred option.

(Councillors Barrett, Ireton and Mulligan declared disclosable pecuniary interests in the above item and left the meeting.)

POL.860

REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES – RESERVE FORCES AND CADETS' ASSOCIATION FOR YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER

The Committee was asked to consider a request to replace Councillor Hull with Councillor Brockbank as the Council's nominated representative to the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association Yorkshire and Humber.

Resolved – That, Councillor Brockbank is appointed to the Reserve Forces and Cadets' Association Yorkshire and Humber for the 2017/18 municipal year.

POL.861

MINUTES FROM COMMITTEES

The Chairman presented the minutes of the Craven Spatial Planning Sub-Committee held on 5th June 2017, 14th June 2017 and 22nd August 2017.

Resolved – That the minutes are noted.

POL.862

JOINT VENTURE COMPANY BUSINESS PLAN

The Director of Services submitted a report presenting Members with the proposed business plan for the Joint Venture Company with Barnfield Investment Properties Limited.

The Council had formed a joint venture with a private sector strategic partner and the business plan set out how the joint venture company would deliver the Council's aspirations to generate economic growth by making best use of the Council's land and property assets.

Resolved – (1) That, the Business Plan set out in Appendix A to the report now submitted is approved and that annual progress reports are reported to Policy Committee.

(2) That, a business case for each project to be presented to Policy Committee for approval.

Minutes for Decision

POL.863

LONGER TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY (LTFS) 2018/19 TO 2024/25

The Chief Financial Officer submitted a report providing Members with an update on the forecast financial position for the seven year period to 2024/25.

The Council's Longer Term Financial Strategy (LTFS) provided a framework to assess financial sustainability over a ten year period. The LTFS continued to take a cautious view of the Council's finances given the uncertainty within the wider economy such as Brexit. As Craven delivered 'unprotected services' it was expected that budget cuts would continue. The outcome of the Fair Funding Review and the Business Rates Reset would not be known for some time and therefore the Council could face additional pressures over and above those contained within the LTFS.

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The estimates within the LTFS showed that the Council would need to continue with its savings plan and achieve savings of at least £332k in 2018/19, rising by at least £249k in 2019/20 and a further £232k in 2020/21 to £813K.

RECOMMENDED – That, the long term financial strategy 2018/19 to 2024/25 as set out in the report now submitted is approved.

POL.864

REDEVELOPMENT OF SKIPTON TOWN HALL – HERITAGE LOTTERY FUND STAGE 2 APPLICATION AND FUTURE CAPITAL FUNDING

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report requesting permission to submit the stage 2 Heritage Lottery funding application by 15th September 2017, for the redevelopment of Skipton Town Hall. The report also presented a range of funding sources that were being pursued to deliver the scheme and requested permission to apply to these funds. In addition, Members were asked to approve an addition to the capital budget of £136,000 in 2018/19 using the New Homes Bonus and provide an underwriting facility of £1,600,000 to cover external funding applications.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, an addition to the capital budget of £136,000 in 2018/19 using the New Homes Bonus to redevelop Skipton Town Hall.

(2) That, an underwriting facility of £1,600,000 of capital funding to cover the external funding application that will fund the redevelopment of Skipton Town Hall is approved.

(3) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services in discussion with the Chief Finance Officer and the Lead Member for Enterprising Craven to submit stage 2 Heritage Lottery Fund application by the 15th September 2017.

(4) That, authority is granted to the Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration to submit funding applications as set out in table 3 in the report now submitted.

(5) That, a report that updates the Policy Committee on the funding situation and the options for underwriting the project is submitted once the Heritage Lottery Fund and other potential funding organisations have made their decisions.

(Councillor Jaquin declared an Appendix B interest in the above item as he was Chairman of the trustees of Craven Museum.)

POL.865

DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEMES ANNOUNCED IN SPRING BUDGET

The Chief Finance Officer submitted a report setting out a proposal for a business rates revaluation relief scheme to support certain businesses and wholly volunteer run charity shops that face the greatest increase in their business rates as a result of the 2017 revaluation by the Valuation Office Agency. In particular, the Government announced that discretionary funding of £300m over four years would be made available to support those businesses that faced the steepest increase.

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The Government had also stated its intention to provide funding for a further two discretionary relief schemes that supported small businesses and pubs that had lost some or all of their small business rate relief or rural rate relief.

Craven's allocation over the four year period commencing in 2017/18 would be £285,000.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the proposed Craven District Council Business Rates Revaluation Relief Scheme as now submitted is, subject to consultation, approved.

(2) That, the Chief Finance Officer in consultation with the Lead Member for Financial Resilience, is authorised to make further amendments and implement the scheme.

POL.866

CRAVEN HOUSING RENEWAL POLICY 2017 - 2020

The Director of Services submitted a report seeking Members' approval for the refreshed Craven Housing Renewal Policy 2017-2020 which aimed to improve housing conditions across the District and help people manage their own health and wellbeing.

The main change to the policy was the inclusion of 'indirect financial assistance' under discretionary powers contained in the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 which provided additional financial assistance for housing adaptations. Part of the disabled facilities capital grant from the Department for Communities and Local Government would be used as a funding source.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the Craven Housing Renewal Policy 2017-2020 is approved and adopted.

(2) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Lead Member, to make minor amendments and/or adjustments to the Craven Housing Renewal Policy to meet current or future requirements and in order to facilitate responses to revised priorities and/or funding opportunities.

(3) That, authority is given to place a notice in the local press stating the policy is in force in accordance with the conditions of the Regulatory Reform Order 2002.

POL.867

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT DELIVERY OPTIONS

The Director of Services submitted a report advising Members of the changes to the current provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme (DFG). North Yorkshire County Council who were currently contracted to deliver the scheme including minor adaptations (Handy Person scheme) on behalf of North Yorkshire district council (except Scarborough and Ryedale) had, for financial reasons, given notice for the termination of the contract on 31st March 2018.

The Council had to put in place alternative arrangements to deliver the DFG element and the report evaluated the various ways of delivering the service with a recommendation that the full in-house option was the preferred option. Whilst there would be revenue expenditure implications, the in-house option could procure cost efficient local contractors and tailor future service provision to meet need.

During the debate, Members asked that the Select Committee review the new arrangements after 6/12 months to consider whether the in-house scheme was operating satisfactorily.

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RECOMMENDED – (1) That, the current arrangements for Disabled Facilities Grant delivery and the options available for future provision are noted.

(2) That, the in-house full service option for future delivery from 1st April 2018 is approved.

(3) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, to take timely decisions to facilitate implementation of the chosen option with effect from 1st April 2018.

(4) That, delegated authority is given to the Director of Services, in consultation with the Lead Member for Housing, to review its cost effectiveness and performance post implementation.

(5) That, it is noted that with the increasing flexibility as to the use of discretionary grants an in-house provision would enable the Council to take advantage of the growing increase in opportunities for the fund to be used to benefit more disabled households in Craven.

POL.868

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL STAFF RESOURCES

The Strategic Manager for Planning and Regeneration submitted a report requesting additional resources to implement agreed necessary changes to meet the aims of the Development Control service and our response to the Housing White Paper.

At the core of the Council's response to the challenge set by the Housing White Paper was to accelerate the processing of strategically important sites including the build out of sites with extant planning permission.

The Government had also proposed that planning fees could be increased by 20% to directly improve the planning service. In April 2017, this Committee agreed (Minute POL.821/16-17 refers), that planning fees should be increased by 20% from the 1st July 2017 with a new structure that would meet these challenges.

The Government had yet to introduce the necessary legislation to effect the increase but in the meantime the Committee was asked to approve the changes to the staffing structure so that significant planning applications could be processed fast and also provide cover for long term sickness of a senior officer.

RECOMMENDED – (1) That, with effect from 1st September 2017 the changes to the Development Control staffing as detailed in Paragraphs 3.3 and 3.4 in the report now submitted are confirmed.

(2) That, a supplementary estimate of £31,900 for 2017/18 is approved.

Chairman