
CABINET

Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

Present: Councillor Miles Parkinson OBE (in the Chair), Councillors Paul Cox (Vice Chair), Loraine Cox, Munsif Dad BEM JP and Joyce Plummer

In Attendance: Councillors Peter Britcliffe, June Harrison and Marlene Haworth

244 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, who was delayed for a short time at the start of the meeting.

245 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no reported declarations of interest or dispensations at this stage of the meeting

NOTE: Several interests were declared by Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP later in the meeting and are recorded in last paragraph before Minute 251.

246 Minutes of Cabinet

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12th January 2022 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

247 Minutes of Boards, Panels and Working Groups

The minutes of the following meeting were submitted:

- Regeneration and Housing Panel - 14th December 2021

Resolved - **That the Minutes be received and noted.**

248 Reports of Cabinet Members

There were no verbal reports provided on this occasion.

249 Quantity Restrictions - Hackney Carriage Vehicles

Members considered a report of Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, outlining the findings of a recent consultation conducted by the Licensing Manager regarding the possible removal of limits on the numbers of hackney carriage licences issued in the Borough in favour of wheelchair accessible vehicles.

Councillor Plummer indicated that the number of hackney carriage licences in Hyndburn was currently limited to 59. However, to maintain this limit a survey was needed every

three years to provide evidence that there was no unmet demand. The survey was due in 2022. Complaints had been received in recent times from customers struggling to find a taxi at night. The result of a stakeholder consultation had demonstrated that there was currently unmet demand. If the limit were to be scrapped, any new licences would only be available for wheelchair accessible vehicles. The consultation had also included the taxi trade and of the 26 responses received 14 were against the removal of restrictions. However, if a formal Unmet Demand Survey were to be carried out, this would cost around £12k with the cost normally being borne by the taxi trade themselves. Given the evidence obtained so far that there was unmet demand, this would seem to be an unnecessary cost. The Police had also been consulted and agreed with the proposal to remove the limit on the grounds of public safety.

Councillor Perter Britcliffe, Joint Deputy Leader of the Opposition, commented that this appeared to be a significant shift in policy and queried whether the move would actually increase the numbers of taxi vehicles on the road. He suggested a more cautious approach, perhaps by raising the limit to 70 hackney carriage vehicles. Members discussed the impact of the pandemic on the trade and loss of many private hire taxi drivers to working on take away food deliveries, such as via Just Eat or Uber Eats. This was believed to be, in part, as a result of the low fares in the private hire sector, making alternative work more attractive. The Council could not set the prices of fares in the private hire sector. However, it was possible that market forces would eventually cause an increase fares in the private hire sector leading to more drivers. The Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder emphasised that the limit in hackney carriage licences could only be raised if a costly survey was undertaken and the outcome showed that there was no unmet demand. However, current evidence suggested that there was unmet demand.

Councillor Marlene Howarth, Leader of the Opposition, commented that there appeared to be insufficient taxi ranks for hackney carriages and that these were often blocked by unauthorised vehicles. If more licences were granted there would be nowhere for additional taxis to park. She mentioned that take away food deliveries might wane as the pandemic subsided, returning drivers to the taxi trade. She asked if out-of-borough licenced taxis could be prevented from picking up a fare in Hyndburn. Jane Ellis, Head of Legal and Democratic Services, responded that there was no way to prevent a properly licenced driver/vehicle from operating in the Borough wherever their licences originated from. The majority of local authorities no longer had a limit on the number of licences. Officers were currently liaising with Lancashire County Council about enforcement in respect of taxi rank usage.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP spoke in support of the proposals. Consultations with drivers had provided a mixed response but, on balance, the proposals would prevent unnecessary costs being borne by the taxi drivers for an Unmet Demand Survey. He also welcomed the work to tackle the unauthorised use of taxi ranks.

The Leader commented that the standard of hackney vehicle required would prevent any relaxation of the limit on the number of licences from becoming 'free for all'.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The report set out the detailed background to the proposed decision and highlighted the following conclusions:

The consultation had clearly set out that there was significant unmet demand for hackney carriages in Hyndburn with 66.63 % of people responding on the Survey Monkey

questionnaire stating that they had given up waiting on ranks and 56.45% stating that they had given up trying to hail a cab in the street due to the lack of availability and had to look for alternative ways of getting home. The concern was that this could sometimes mean walking home late at night, getting a lift in an unlicensed vehicle with an unlicensed driver or even risking driving themselves after having a drink.

When asked what would encourage someone to use a taxi more often 55.78% had said more hackneys they could phone for and 43.89% said more hackneys that they could hail on the street or get at a rank. When asked if there were enough hackney carriage vehicles in Hyndburn 78.9% of those responding on Survey Monkey said no.

Of the responses to the question about requiring a wheelchair accessible vehicle 12.9% said they knew someone that needed to use one and 2.58% said they needed to use one themselves.

Taking into account the outcome of the consultation, officers recommended that the Council remove the restrictions on the numbers of hackney carriage licences that were issued.

Further officers recommended that any new licences should only be issued to purpose built or professionally modified wheelchair accessible vehicles and that current proprietors of hackney carriage vehicles should maintain their grandfather rights.

Members could consider the removal of the limits on hackney carriage vehicle licences issued completely for any type of vehicle, however there was a requirement for wheelchair accessible vehicles in the Borough.

Members could choose to maintain the limits on hackney carriage vehicle licences and instruct the Licensing Manager to commission an Unmet Demand Survey. If this option was taken Members should determine how the survey should be paid for.

When making the decision Members should consider the issue from the travelling public's point of view and consider what benefits or disadvantages would result for the public if the controls were removed. For example, was there evidence that the removal of controls would result in deterioration in the amount or quality of taxi service provision?

If Members were minded to remove the restrictions on numbers in favour of wheelchair accessible vehicles officers recommended that the policy wording be amended to reflect this change, as set out at Appendix 4 to the report.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

The Council could have taken the option to do nothing however it was clear from the complaints received and the consultation responses, that there was a real problem in Hyndburn that the Council needed to deal with. Further, in the event of a challenge to a decision to refuse a licence, the authority would have to prove that it had reasonably, been satisfied that there was no significant unmet demand.

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet notes the responses to the consultation and the apparent current shortage of available licensed taxi vehicles in Hyndburn.**
- (2) That Cabinet agrees that the limit on hackney carriage vehicles be removed in favour of wheelchair accessible vehicles.**

250 Smart Working Strategy

Members considered a report of Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, seeking approval for a Smart Working Strategy.

Councillor Plummer indicated that staff had continued to work throughout the pandemic and that this had presented big challenges, particularly during lockdown and with other restrictions in place. Most staff had been able to come into the workplace. Others had set up desks at home and were working in a different way. ICT had supported staff being able to work from home. The Government's advice to work from home during the Omicron wave had now been lifted. Overall it was felt that hybrid working had been successful with improved business continuity arrangements and improved sickness absence management. The draft Smart Working Strategy set out the proposed priorities for the Council and its workforce. In the longer term this could provide benefits in terms of reduced journeys, more virtual meetings and a review of the Council's property assets.

Councillor Marlene Haworth commented that the Conservative Group had some concerns about the strategy presented. She indicated that there were difficulties in contacting officers within certain teams and sometimes responses were slow. Any delay made the councillor's relationship with the public more difficult. At Prime Minister's Question Time today Boris Johnson MP had indicated that all COVID restrictions were likely to be lifted in around one month. There was a feeling that introducing a more flexible working strategy at the moment would be moving too quickly. It remained important for councillors to meet with officers face to face. There was broad consent for the ethos of smart working, but not at this pace. It was reported that some staff who could not work from home because of their roles were already critical of those who could do so. Also, the on-going use of meetings on Zoom or Teams did not allow for natural communication and personal contact. The Leader commented that all modern employers were shifting towards a better work-life balance for their employees. This improved productivity and helped to recruit staff. Many frontline roles within the Council such as Refuse Collection of Grass Cutting would be unaffected. However, the Council now operated in a digital world which allowed more flexibilities in some service areas.

Councillor Britcliffe added that there was a case for returning to normal working arrangements and for meeting face to face. There was also a need to support the local lunchtime and retail economy by repopulating offices in the town centre. The Leader commented that before the pandemic staff might be unavailable for drop in visits due to other meeting commitments and appointments should normally have been made. On the question of local businesses, those private sector staff working from home rather than in the city would add to the local economy, balancing up any loss of footfall from Council staff. The proposed Manchester congestion charge might also make journeys to the city less attractive. Councillor Plummer commented that Members could use the telephone functionality on Microsoft Teams to contact staff directly wherever their location.

Councillor Howarth reported that Hyndburn Leisure staff based at the Town Hall were frequently disturbed by members of the public seeking access to the Council's Contact Centre on Broadway for Benefits or other advice. Many of these individuals had no access to mobile phones or the internet to use on-line services. The Leader reminded Members that the drive for more digital services had come from Central Government. Councillor Plummer added that the public hall in the Contact Centre had been altered to a telephone only service long before the pandemic. The new corporate Reception at Scaitcliffe House would provide a mixture of digital and face to face services when it opened shortly. The Leader asked officers to arrange a site visit to the Reception for elected Members to view the new facilities.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The pandemic had necessitated different ways of working, in particular to apply the working from home guidance which had been in place throughout various periods, from the initial lockdown in March 2020. Homeworking had been a key element in keeping services running and helping to make our workplaces safer for those staff who needed to attend. There had been considerable investment in ICT equipment and infrastructure to support the new arrangements.

All elected members had been invited to a discussion on 7 July 2021. This had included a presentation on the issues to be considered, the pros and cons of hybrid working as reported by staff and service managers, and an update on how staff were actually working. This showed that around 60% of staff were coming into the workplace all the time, including front-line operational staff, as well as some office-based staff. In most cases this was because their role did not allow remote working. About 20% of staff were coming in 2 or 3 days a week, with the rest at home, and the remaining 20% were almost entirely home-based.

On 19 July 2021, the Government's COVID-19 guidance moved to step 4 of the roadmap, including the dropping of the requirement to work from home wherever possible. Since then, the Council had asked staff to come into the workplaces for a minimum of 2 or 3 days per week, providing COVID-secure arrangements were maintained. This had been reversed for a short period while "Plan B" restrictions were in place. Management would continue to make decisions that were informed by national guidance.

It had been agreed in July 2021 that a small working group would be set up to consider the issues and determine a way forward. It included the Leader and Portfolio Holder, a further Labour member, the Leader of the Conservative Group plus another Conservative member, 2 Unison representatives, the Head of Policy and Organisational Development and the Head of ICT. This group had met on 3 August and 7 September 2021 and had considered further information, in particular around productivity, safety, communications and likely training needs.

Members had made a decision on 7 September 2021 to recommend retaining hybrid working into the future, and that officers should work with Trade Unions on the policies and practices required to make this work effectively. In particular, officers had been asked to note that there were still concerns about responsive and effective communication.

At its meeting on 15 September 2021, Management Team had agreed the recommendations to develop a Smart Working Strategy with a small officer steering group. This included the Head of Policy and Organisational Development, the Head of ICT, the Regeneration and Property Manager, the Head of Audit and Investigations, the acting Head of Environmental Health and the Safety and Emergency Planning Officer.

The group had developed the draft Strategy now being presented. This included an action plan which captured the individual work elements envisaged, some of which were longer-term actions. This was intended to be a living action plan which would be added to and updated as necessary.

The draft Strategy set out the overall approach and principles. It was likely to be necessary to continue to operate flexibly as the pandemic, any restrictions or identified risk measures changed. The Strategy would also allow the Council to make changes to any ongoing arrangements if service needs required this.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

This proposal sought to implement the recommendation of the Member working group set up to consider future ways of working.

- Resolved**
- (1) That Cabinet approves the draft Smart Working Strategy.**
 - (2) That the Smart Working Strategy Group be requested to continue to progress the work identified within the associated action plan and the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic) be given delegated authority to approve updates to the action plan as deemed appropriate.**

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP declared a personal interest in Agenda Items 8 - Self-Isolation Pilot Programme, 13 - Revenue Budget and 14 - Capital Programme, on the basis of his role as a trustee of Hyndburn Leisure.

251 Self-Isolation Pilot Programme - Acceptance of Funding

Members considered a report of Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, seeking formal approval to enter into relevant legal agreements to release funding in connection with the delivery of the Self Isolation Pilot Programme.

Councillor Plummer indicated that during the pandemic government funding had been used to good effect to achieve lasting benefits around health and wellbeing and supporting community groups. A bid for a Self-Isolation Pilot Programme had recently been successful and had secured around £54k. The programme would focus on young people through a combination of innovative projects and small grants available to third sector organisations. The programme would build upon some of the achievements of the Community Champions Fund work and would involve joint delivery by the Council, Hyndburn Leisure and Hyndburn and Ribble Valley Council for Voluntary Service (CVS).

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council was the lead authority in receipt of 2.5 million pounds of funding from the Department of Health and Social Care for the delivery of the Self-Isolation Pilot Programme. They were leading the Programme on behalf of the Upper Tier and District Authorities from whom proposals had been received for individual projects to support individuals through self-isolation resulting from COVID-19.

The Council had been invited to put a proposal forward for a Self-Isolation Pilot Programme in autumn 2021 and had recently been notified that the funding for this had been approved, subject to reaching a formal legal agreement to accept the funding, which outlined the Council's obligations in respect of the project. The amount of funding which would be awarded to the Council was £54,540.

The Council's proposal, which the funding would allow to be implemented, covered 3 main strands:

- (i) **Producing marketing assets aimed at young people around self-isolation:**
Current information regarding isolation was readily available but not engaging for young people or created with them in mind. To have an impact the authority had learnt engagement work was key, but better tools and resources could reach people in a way that counted. The Council would procure external support to create new assets, including using “gamification” methods to increase participation and engagement.
- (ii) **The delivery of an “Isolation Station extension” project via Hyndburn Leisure:**
This would allow people to engage in activities which created a more positive self-isolation experience, and would learn new ways to build activity and healthy eating into their lifestyle. Hyndburn Leisure would provide and promote free access to Hyndburn’s Mywellness App, providing on demand activity classes and bespoke exercise sessions.
- (iii) **Grant scheme via Hyndburn and Ribble Valley CVS:** This scheme aimed to support voluntary and community sector organisations to expand or deliver new services to increase engagement with young people and people with a learning difficulty and to demonstrate their ability to react flexibly, at pace, to support the Hyndburn community. It would deliver £15,000 funding to be distributed via a grant scheme to voluntary and community sector organisations who would deliver activities to engage and support teenagers and young adults with positive lifestyle activities.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

The Council could choose not to accept the funding and not deliver the projects outlined above.

Resolved

- **That Cabinet grants approval to the Head of Policy and Organisational Development to sign the funding agreement with Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council in relation to the Self-Isolation Pilot Programme, and subsequently with Hyndburn Leisure and Hyndburn and Ribble Valley CVS.**

252 Revised Statement of Community Involvement and Revised Local Development Scheme

Members considered a report of Councillor Miles Parkinson OBE, Leader of the Council, which presented two updated documents: a draft revised Statement of Community Involvement; and a draft revised Local Development Scheme, for consideration and approval. Both were documents which the Council had to produce in relation to its planning functions and related to the processes rather than the content of Local Plans. These two updates had been produced in anticipation of the upcoming public consultation on the emerging Local Plan (Strategic Policies and Site Allocations). A further report on the Local Plan and the public consultation would be brought to Members in due course.

The Leader outlined key elements of the report. The draft Statement of Community Involvement updated the version adopted in June 2018 and set out how and when the Council would engage local communities in producing the Local Plan and in determining planning applications. It was updated to reflect changes since adoption in relation to legislation, regulations, guidance and progress with the Local Plan. The revised Local Development Scheme set out an up to date timetable for the production of documents within, and associated to, the Development Plan, otherwise referred to as the Local Plan. A summary of the timeline was set out at p.101 of the Agenda. This was a very lengthy process, although the Government was considering shortening the timetable in the future.

The final Local Plan document was expected to be adopted by the Council late in 2023 or early in 2024.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

Statement of Community Involvement

The Council had a duty to prepare a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI). This had to be updated at least every five years, or sooner if circumstances had changed since the last SCI was produced.

An SCI had first been adopted in 2006 to reflect the requirements of the new plan-making system introduced by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and reflected the relevant provisions at the time in relation to both plan-making and determination of planning applications. The SCI had then been revised in 2018 to reflect changes in legislation, such as amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and new guidance on Neighbourhood Planning.

This latest SCI had been revised to reflect the most recent NPPF (published in 2021) and the latest timetable for the production of the Hyndburn Local Plan.

Local Development Scheme

The Council also had a duty to prepare a Local Development Scheme (LDS) which had to publicise the intended timetable for producing the Local Plan. The LDS should be published on the Council's website and be kept up to date. Reporting of progress against the LDS was made in the Council's annual Authority Monitoring Report and was an important way of keeping communities informed of plan-making activity.

The Council's last LDS had been published in June 2018, covering the period of plan preparation up to August 2021. During this time the Council had completed three rounds of consultation on the emerging Local Plan and was preparing to publish the final consultation version shortly, as set out in the LDS itself. This revised LDS presented the intentions of the Council to progress (and complete) the Local Plan over the period 2022-2025.

Whilst it had been prepared separately to the statutory Local Plan making process, the Masterplan for Huncoat formed a key part of the future development and growth of Hyndburn. It was intended that the Masterplan would be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in due course.

Summary

Both the SCI and LDS were documents which an inspector would consider at the examination stage in assessing the soundness of plan documents, to ensure that the relevant procedural and legal requirements had been met. Inspectors might also consider the SCI at planning appeals to ensure that Council had discharged its engagement and consultation functions appropriately.

Both documents would be monitored and reviewed in the light of any further changes and any requirements to keep them up to date

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

The only alternative option would be not to adopt the updated SCI and LDS and rely on the previous versions. However this was not a realistic option for various reasons. The adopted SCI would not be up to date in terms of reflecting current legislation, guidance and regulations. Furthermore, if an updated SCI was not adopted now, it would shortly be at risk of not complying with the requirement that it be reviewed every five years. There were significant inherent risks in not having an up to date SCI or LDS which could impact on the tests of soundness when a plan was examined.

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet notes the approach to public engagement as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement included with the report for the purposes of engaging the local communities in producing the Hyndburn Local Plan and determining planning applications.**
- (2) That Cabinet notes the timescales for preparation of the documents which will make up the Hyndburn Local Plan as set out in the Local Development Scheme (2022-2025) included with the report.**
- (3) That Cabinet approves the content of the Statement of Community Involvement and the Local Development Scheme.**

253 Financial Position Report - December 2021 - Report for the Year Ending 31st March 2022

Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, provided a report on the Financial Position as at December 2021 and the financial forecast outturn position for the Accounting Year 2021/22.

Councillor Plummer highlighted the following issues in connection with the report:-

With 9 months of the year gone the Council was forecasting a small positive variance of £123k by the end of the financial year. COVID-19 had suppressed income for the year, especially in connection with the Market Hall, where rent concessions had been maintained. Income for commercial lettings was also low. There were also other cost pressures on the Council, including the price of energy.

Councillor Britcliffe considered that the half-day closing of the Market Hall on Wednesday afternoons was outdated and that nationally spending on Wednesdays outperformed spending on Mondays. The Leader of the Council responded that the Levelling-Up Fund Bid, which was mentioned in the Capital Budget item, outlined the stakeholders' vision for investment in the Market Hall, which might include a mixture of both the daytime and night-time economy. The Partnership Board would look at the options for the future, which might involve engaging a new operator for the Market Hall.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The spend for the first 9 months of the financial year to the end of December 2021 was £8,572,000 compared to a Budget of £9,350,000 giving a positive variance of £778,000 over the first 9 months of the year.

The current forecast spend to the end of the financial year in March 2022 was £11,104,000 compared to a Budget of £11,227,000. This forecast produced a positive variance of £123,000 by the end of the financial year.

The Council had received additional financial support from Lancashire County Council (LCC) to meet the cost of continuing COVID-19 pressures over the second half of the year. This would allow the Council to meet its current forecast spend in relation to COVID-19 activities for the remainder of the year.

So far since the spike in cases caused by the Omicron variant, the Council had been able to provide the support the local community required within its current funding envelope and therefore unless there was a dramatic swing upwards in COVID-19 cases over the last 2 months of the financial year, the authority would expect to maintain this position. Any unspent balances of specific COVID-19 funding would be carried forward into the New Year and used to continue to support the local community as necessary.

The Budget forecast included large elements of expenditure and funding in connection with COVID-19. As this was a new area of budget management, controls and management of the expenditure and income was not at the same high standard as for the Council's normal budget expenditure. There was, therefore, a higher degree of risk around these figures in the forecasts made. Accountancy staff and Management were working to improve the thoroughness and accuracy of these figures.

The report included more detailed commentary about expenditure in the following service areas:-

- Environmental Services;
- Culture and Leisure Services;
- Planning and Transportation;
- Regeneration and Property Services;
- Policy and Corporate Governance; and
- Non-service Items.

The additional funding of £581,000 requested by the Council from Lancashire County Council to support its on-going work around COVID 19, had reduced the risk of an overspend this year and if COVID-19 activity largely remains as currently forecast, the Council should have sufficient funds to meet the known costs it expected to incur at this time.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons

Resolved - **That Cabinet notes the report and asks Corporate Management Team to continue to reduce expenditure and increase income so as to further improve the overall financial position of the Council over the remaining months of the year.**

254 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2022/23 to 2024/25 - February 2022 Update

Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, provided a report to inform Cabinet of the 3-year projections of income and spending for the Council ahead of formulating its 2022/23 Revenue and Capital Budgets.

Councillor Plummer highlighted a number of key issues within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) report, as follows:-

- The report set out the financial position of the Council for the next few years.
- The information would help the Council to set its Budget and identified its medium term prospects.
- A key aim was to provide stability year on year.
- Forecasting was difficult, in part due to austerity and reductions in public spending. COVID-19 had added a further dimension to complexity around forecasting.
- It was not yet clear if the Government would reform local government finances and any impact could be positive or negative.
- The 2021 Announcement of the Local Government Financial Settlement had indicated that some funding would be provided, but no future commitments had been made, meaning that the approach could change in 2023/24. If there was no change the Council would have to make savings in 2023/24, but would then have a small surplus.
- Projections around growth in the Council Tax Base were good, but if there were changes to Business Rates Retention rules the Council could have to make large savings.
- Further clarity was expected in the autumn 2022, which potentially might identify no reform of finances.

In summary, there was a degree of uncertainty in the projections. The Leader of the Council commented that the MTFS was a very understandable document given the subject matter. Hyndburn had consistently kept its Council Tax bills below the rate of inflation and was one of only seven authorities in the country to achieve this. The authority needed to maintain reserves at a minimum of £2M. Government financial support was worth around £1.5M to the Council but, by way of contrast, in 2010 the level of support had been around £7.1M. The Council might have to make savings of around £45k in 2023/24 to balance the Budget. The Council collected around £16M-£17M in Business Rates, but was only allowed to keep around 25% of that income. Future commercial growth at Frontier Park, Altham and Whitebirk estates, along with additional housing developments, should help the Council's financial position.

Approval of the report was not a key decision.

Reason for decision

The Cabinet required an update on its medium term financial outlook ahead of setting the Budget for 2022/23 and determining the level of Council Tax for the new financial year. This report also ensured those decisions were taken with a view to the overall position of the Council going forward and were not limited to a narrow one-year perspective.

The substantive report included the following summary information.

The Council's activities and finances had been dominated this year by the continuing impact of COVID-19 and it was expected that COVID-19 and its consequences would continue to have a major impact on the Council's finances for at least the next financial year as a minimum, with the potential for the effects to continue much longer.

In response to the great uncertainty the Council faced it would operate a roll forward Budget for 2022/23 based on the 2021/22 Budget adjusted for changes to salary and wages, pension contributions and increased income from the Government and the Council Tax

Base. This provided Service Managers a fixed reference point from which to continue to respond to the crisis and allowed a degree of stability for one further year, while the Council recovered from the most significant challenge it had ever faced. To achieve a balanced Budget during the year the Council would need to generate £294,000 of internal savings during the year. As with previous years, the Government was encouraging Councils to increase Council Tax by up to a maximum of 2%. It was proposed that the Council follow this direction. Overall expenditure would need to be contained at below £12m in 2022/23 to set a balanced budget.

The Council would face significant financial challenges over the next two years as it sought to overcome the consequence of COVID-19 and addressing the impact of any proposed Government funding reforms and increased pressures on its spending. As the extent of the Government financial reforms was unclear at this time and details were unlikely to emerge until December 2022, this produced great uncertainty and potentially significant variance around the forecasts contained in the MTFs.

Previously, for the last four years the expectation had been that the Government would implement what it termed as a “Fair Funding Review of Local Government Finance” and this would effectively end the Revenue Support Grant to the Council and potentially redistribute the amount of Business Rates the Council was allowed to retain. The expected impact of these changes if they went ahead were expected to cause a significant decrease in the funding available to the Council and require it to make substantial reductions in its expenditure levels as a consequence, either immediately in the aftermath of the announcement or over a short period, if some form of transitional arrangements accompanied these changes to assist those Councils most dramatically impacted.

After 4 years in which these reforms had been postponed for various reasons and in the light of the Government signalling a potential change in its view of public spending commitments during the pandemic, the certainty around the introduction of Fair Funding was no longer as sure as it once seemed, with the potential that current levels of funding to the Council would continue.

As a consequence, the modelling now recognised that there was a real possibility that a largely continuation Budget might be the single most likely outcome over the next few years of all the potential different scenarios that could occur. However, the strong prospect of a Fair Funding Review which significantly reduced the Council’s funding remained a very real prospect. Ministry of Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (MLUHC) officials continued to indicate they wished to introduce some kind of Fair Funding Review during 2022 to re-shape Council finances and the prospects of this occurring remained high.

This presented the Council with two very different future budget scenarios. The first was a scenario in which funding from Government remained largely in its current shape and where the Council while under some financial pressure, should be able to largely cope. While the second scenario, would see reform of local government finance, with a wide range of possible outcomes for the Council potentially occurring, from changes that were relatively small in consequence, all the way through a whole series of results up to outcomes which would be large and very dramatic in terms of the challenges it presented to the Council.

These 2 scenarios were modelled within the report. The more severe of the two, as the Pessimistic Scenario and the other as the Standard Model. A third model was also presented which indicated the Council’s potential position if the Government chose to provide local government with an injection of cash over and above current levels and locally the Council was able to boost its own tax revenue as a consequence of a buoyant tax base. This Optimistic model was considered to have a much lower probability of occurring

compared to the other two models but was provided to illustrate the wide range of potential outcomes.

In these circumstances it was prudent for the Council to look to increase its reserves and revenue streams such as Council Tax and Business Rates whenever it could and to avoid committing to any new revenue expenditure while continuing to concentrate on its work to reduce internal costs.

Detailed information was provided in the report on the following matters:-

- Objectives;
- Elements of the MTFS;
- Service Planning to support overall strategy;
- Integrated resource planning with services;
- Background information;
- Financial analysis 2022/23 to 2024/25 (resources; Government grant; business rates; Council Tax; expected loss of income; and changes in costs)
- Growth;
- Reserves;
- Other assumptions;
- Scenarios;
- Robustness of forecast; and
- Overall net position.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons

Resolved - **That Cabinet approves the report and the accompanying Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).**

255 Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management & Investment Strategy 2022/23 - 2024/25 including Capital Strategy

Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, provided a report setting out the Council's policy and objectives with respect to treasury management, to explain how it will achieve its objectives and manage its activities; and to agree an investment strategy for 2022/23 - 2024/25.

Councillor Plummer highlighted a number of key issues within the report, as follows:-

- The effective management of resources;
- Prudential indicators and limits;
- Borrowing;
- Loans; and
- Investment

The report had been prepared in line with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) advice.

Approval of the report was not a key decision.

Reason for decision

Treasury management was defined as:

- The management of the Council's investment and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions;
- The effective control of the risks associated with these activities;
- And the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks.

The Council was required to operate a balanced budget which meant that cash raised during the year would meet cash expenditure. Part of treasury management was to ensure the cash flow was properly planned with cash available when needed. Surplus monies were invested in line with the Council's low risk preferences.

The second function of treasury management was funding the Council's capital plans. The plans gave a guide to the future borrowing need of the Council. The management of this longer term cash flow might involve arranging long or short term loans or using longer term cash flow surpluses. Occasionally, outstanding debt might be restructured to reduce Council risk or meet cost objectives.

The report had been prepared in line with the Treasury Management Code and Guidance (2017) written by The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA). In the case of local authorities in England and Wales, the Code was significant under the provisions of the Local Government Act 2003. This required local authorities 'to have regard (a) to such guidance as the Secretary of State may issue, and (b) to such other guidance as the Secretary of State may by regulations specify'. The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) Regulations 2003 in paragraph 24 required local authorities to have regard to this guidance. Acceptance of this report fulfilled those obligations. CIPFA had published revised codes on 20th December 2021 and had stated that formal adoption was not required until the 2023/24 financial year.

The report included detailed information on the following matters:-

- The Prudential Code and Prudential Indicators;
- Capital expenditure and the capital financing requirement;
- Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP);
- Affordability prudential indicators;
- Treasury Management Strategy 2022/23 - 2024/25;
- External debt overall limits;
- External v internal borrowing;
- Limits on activity;
- Debt rescheduling;
- Investment strategy;
- Treasury Management Practices (TMP);
- Policy on the use of external service providers; and
- Treasury Management Strategy in-year and year-end reporting.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons

Resolved

- That Cabinet recommends Council to:

- (1) Adopt the prudential indicators and limits detailed in the report;**

- (2) Approve the Treasury Management Strategy, and associated indicators, as set out in section 8 of the report;**
- (3) Approve the Investment Strategy as set out in section 13 of the report;**
- (4) Approve that the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) for year 2022/23 – Appendix 1;**
- (5) Approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement 2022/23 – Appendix 2**
- (6) Approve the Treasury Management Practices Statement 2022/23 – Appendix 3**
- (7) approve the Capital Strategy 2022/23 – Appendix 4**

256 General Fund - Revenue Budget 2022/23

Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, provided a report setting out proposals for the 2022/23 General Fund Revenue Budget. It also provided an overview of key issues arising from the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The decision to set the Budget would be a core decision of the Council. The role of the Cabinet was to recommend a proposed Budget to the Council.

Councillor Haworth indicated that the Conservative Group had hoped to provide an alternative Budget for 2022/23, but were cognisant of the fact that finance officers were extremely busy and would be unable to support Members to develop a detailed alternative Budget. Accordingly, the Group would not prepare that type of draft Budget. However, Group might wish to propose some amendments to the existing Budget recommendations at the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Budget meeting. She expressed a hope that the lack of a formal alternative Budget would not be raised as a political point at the Council meeting. The Leader noted that the way that Budgets were developed had altered as local authorities had shifted from the traditional the Committee Model of governance arrangements.

Councillor Plummer highlighted some key issues from the report as follows:-

- The Council had managed its Budget well in 2021/22, so could set balanced budget in 2022/23 without draining reserves or making cuts to services or staffing;
- Grants would make up around £2M of the total £12M spend;
- COVID-19 was waning but the virus had not yet gone away and there could be further combative action and extra resources required in the future;
- Around £1.2M cost pressures had been added to the proposed Budget;
- Overall there would be small increase of around 2% in Council Tax, around 7p per week for most households and below inflation;
- The Budget would support key projects including town centre events, environmental health team activity and enforcement, ICT infrastructure, permanent posts, correcting budgets which had become detached from actual costs, maintenance of public defibrillators as recommended by Overview and Scrutiny; and

- The final details of precepts from Lancashire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner, Lancashire Combined Fire Authority and Altham Parish Council should be available in time for Council on 24th February 2022.

The Leader of the Council added that the major costs in the Budget were around staffing - about £10M. A list of the growth pressures was included at Appendix 3 to the report, along with the corporate savings target of £120k and resources released by the abolition of the Cabinet Action Fund of £20k.

Approval of the report was not a key decision.

Reason for decision

This report set out the Council's Revenue Budget for 2022/23. This would require net expenditure of £12,334,000.

Under these proposals, Council Tax for Hyndburn residents would rise for Hyndburn Council provided services by £5.11 (1.99%) for a Band D property. The amounts due for each band were shown at Appendix 4 of the report. The increase was equivalent to less than 10p per week for a Band D property. However, for most residents the increase will be less than 7p per week as the majority of households in Hyndburn were Band A properties that paid two-thirds the value of a Band D property in Council Tax.

This was the only the sixth rise in Council Tax for Hyndburn services since 2009/10 and the average annual increase over this period had been 1%. This was significantly below the rate of inflation over this period. If the Council had increased Council Tax simply by inflation (CPI) over the last 13 years rather than the actual increases made, Council Tax for Hyndburn's services would have been almost 14% more expensive at £292.76 for each average Band D property within Hyndburn which was £32.12 more than proposed for 2022/23 at £260.64.

The increase in Council Tax by Hyndburn Council was a result of cost pressures from wages, other expenditure inflation, the loss of income and the impact of COVID-19 which had altered at a faster rate than the increases generated from Government Grant or Business Rates.

Lancashire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) and the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority had not yet formally taken their decisions on Council Tax Levels for 2022/23. It was expected that the County Council would raise its Council Tax for each household by a general increase of 1.99% and a 2.0% increase to assist with meeting the cost of Adult Social Care which equated to a 3.99% increase overall. It was expected that the PCC would increase a Band D Property by £10.00 and that the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority would recommend a £5.00 increase.

Altham Parish Council had set a separate precept for its activities for the fourteenth time in 2022/23. This year the Parish Council intended to increase its precept. The Band D charge for Altham Parish Council would therefore increase from £40.27 to £41.07 for the year and the Parish Council would precept the Collection Fund for £12,731. Details of the proposed position on other Bandings for properties in Altham were shown in Appendix 6 of the report.

In setting the Budget for 2022/23 the Council faced continued volatility around some of the most significant items within its Budget. Major reforms of local government finance had transferred the risk of business rate revenues and Council Tax benefits to the Council. The

certainty on which the Council could budget and manage its finances had therefore decreased since 2013 and it would be important going forward to plot any deviations away from the expected figures and take appropriate action if these should start to emerge. The ongoing impact from COVID-19 was also difficult to predict at this time. This might result in the need to reduce spending during the year, if revenue monitoring started to indicate the amounts of funds received would fall short of the target or if the authority faced an upsurge in spending.

The Cabinet intended to continue the good financial stewardship of the Council's affairs by continuing the successful policies introduced over the last 18 years to manage costs effectively and promote appropriate service investment. This Budget would therefore deliver,

- *A continuation of the Council's established approach of limiting enhancements on early retirement, continuing its rigorous approach to absence management and committing to minimising borrowing costs. These actions had already stemmed the build-up of unproductive costs within the organisation. In each of these cases the authority had put a stop to the costly and financially damaging policies of the past and created a healthier and more financially stable culture within the Council.*
- *The Capital Programme for 2022/23 would be the largest the Council had ever authorised at over £38m. The Programme would include a £24m investment in Accrington Town Centre with £20m coming from the Government's Levelling Up Fund and a £12m investment into our Leisure Estate to modernise it and significantly boost the number of people making use of the facilities to keep fit and healthy. There would also be £250,000 of investment into Accrington Stanley Community Trust to help them expand their facilities and £240,000 to replace the artificial pitch at Hyndburn Sport Centre. In addition, the Council would be committing a further £1m to Disabled Facility Grants this year and around a further £500,000 would be spent on a variety of projects to improve the Council's service delivery and value for money. Within the overall capital programme it was the Council's intention to maintain its commitment to avoid borrowing whenever possible and therefore it would be looking to only borrow to finance the investment in the Leisure Estate which could not be finance by external grants and existing capital and revenue resources.*
- *Despite costs of over £85,000 to provide car parking in Hyndburn for residents and visitors and particularly for shoppers, the Council would continue to provide this facility free of charge and not introduce charges for parking in Hyndburn. The Council believed this action would help bolster the town centres through these difficult economic times and provide an incentive for people to shop locally rather than drive and pay to shop elsewhere across the North-West.*
- *Further reductions in the Council's accommodation costs, building on the success over the last 13 years including further rationalising its accommodation and looking at more ways of using its accommodation more effectively. The authority would also continue its actions to reduce its carbon emissions and energy costs and continue contributing to the improvements of its environmental footprint by positive action.*

The Council intended to continue to deliver all of the above and remain committed to a radical agenda of improvement while managing within its available resources. This would be more difficult in the years to come, given the authority's reduced resources from the Government. However, there remained a firm commitment and absolute determination

amongst Members and Officers of the Council to control the finances of the Council, drive forward on the efficiency agenda and continue to improve service delivery. The authority wished to continue to push forward on the drive for delivering value for money as a key priority for the Council.

The rewards of strong financial control remained clearly evident. The Council had built itself back from experiencing major difficulties in controlling expenditure and a position of negative reserves in 2003/04 to a situation by March 2021, in which Balances were over £2.3m. The authority had been able to operate within its existing financial resources over the last two years during the pandemic, through good financial management and would continue to deliver strong financial performance in the years to come.

Within the Budget for 2022/23 there were a number of areas which were subject to the Council's best estimation. There were therefore a number of risks around the Budget, should these estimated costs or revenue amounts vary during the year. The authority had assumed that extra costs from COVID-19 were containable within the funds previously provided by Government or that additional funds would be made available if required.

After the introduction of the Government reforms to Business Rates Funding of Local Government, the Council now carried a significant risk around the level of monies available, fluctuating substantially from this source. In addition, as the calculation of how much funds would be available was dependent on a number of factors (including debt collection rates, the size of appeals against business rates assessment and the success of these appeals, new rules around levies, safety nets and pooling, the introduction of new rules on rates relief on retail premises and small businesses, as well as predicted levels of growth or decline in business activities and the estimation of a number of figures which would only truly emerge after the end of the financial year), the imprecision in these estimates was regarded as high and could be subject to variations of hundreds of thousands of pounds. The volatility around these forecasts had increased due to the impact of COVID-19 that the pandemic would have on the Business Community. Volatility was therefore expected to remain for a number of years until the new system became bedded down and the financial impact of COVID-19 began to subside.

The report included detailed information on the following matters:-

- Medium Term Financial Strategy;
- Continuation Budget;
- Growth pressures;
- Available resources (Core Government Revenue Support Grant (RSG), Business Rates, Council Tax; New Homes Bonus; and other Government funding);
- Budget proposals 2021/22 (general financial pressures; and Budget savings proposals);
- Reserves;
- Risks and risk management; and
- Consultation.

In summary, the overall Revenue Budget 2022/23 was set out at Appendix 2 to the report. The Budget for 2022/23 would be £12,334,000 and would be supported by a Council Tax levy of £260.64 for a Band D property—translating into a revenue source of £5,486,000 to meet services to the local community. The Budget had been determined in light of continuing upward pressure on costs, the additional costs associated with COVID-19, previous financial difficulties that continued to overhang the Council, the available funding from Government and the Council's strong desire to provide high levels of service to the Community in line with its priorities.

The recommendations in the report provided an appropriate platform on which the Cabinet could recommend a Budget to the Council which would meet the objectives and key priorities of the people of Hyndburn.

Alternative Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection

There had been a wide number of individual proposals put forward to produce a Balanced Budget. Options had been rejected on a variety of grounds including policy objectives, practicalities and the potential for additional costs to be incurred. Further options might be presented at the Council meeting.

Resolved

- (1) That Cabinet proposes to Council an increase in Council Tax for 2022/23 of £5.11 per year for a Band D property. This is equivalent to less than 10 pence per week. As most households in Hyndburn are Band A rather than Band D properties, the vast majority of households will only see a rise of less than 7p per week. This is only the sixth increase in Council Tax by Hyndburn Council in 13 years.**
- (2) The Budget for 2022/23 will therefore be £12,334,000 as detailed in Appendices 1 and 2.**
- (3) That Cabinet recommend approval of the growth items and savings approach outlined for 2022/23 as set out in Appendix 3 to ensure the Council has a balanced budget.**
- (4) That Cabinet note the significant improvement made in relation to budget monitoring and cost reduction within the Authority over the past 18 years and confirms its commitment to continuing this approach in the year ahead.**
- (5) That Cabinet recommends during the financial year 2022/23, the Deputy Chief Executive be delegated responsibility to amend the Budget (following consultation with the Leader of the Council) for technical reasons, such as the restructuring of cost centres, the re-apportionment and re-allocation of overheads etc., provided such amendments have an overall neutral impact on the Budget.**
- (6) That Cabinet recommends during the financial year 2022/23, the Deputy Chief Executive be delegated responsibility to amend the Budget (following consultation with the Leader of the Council) should the estimate of Business Rates not be sufficiently accurate, by drawing on reserves if needed or paying over additional contributions to reserves.**

- (7) That to aid future financial management planning, any surpluses generated during 2022/23 are set aside to help the Council reduce its cost base over the next three years, to support its long term capital programme or to strengthen its overall reserve position.**
- (8) That Cabinet recommends that the Lower Tier Service Grant and the 2022/23 Services Grant are used to help balance the Council's Budget.**
- (9) That Cabinet recommends that the New Homes Bonus and any additional funds from Government that are not ring-fenced funding as well as any other surplus funds can be used if required to support capital expenditure as determined by the Deputy Chief Executive in the overall financing of capital expenditure or be transferred to Reserves.**

257 General Fund - Capital Programme 2022/23

Councillor Joyce Plummer, Portfolio Holder for Resources, provided a report requesting Cabinet to consider the Council's capital investment priorities for 2022/23 and recommending to the Council a Capital Programme for approval at its meeting on the 24th February 2022, having regard to key linkages between the management of the Council's capital and revenue resources.

Councillor Plummer reported that the Capital Programme for 2022/23 was the largest ever with in excess of £38.5M projects planned (double the previous peak spending when delivering the housing schemes across west Accrington). Major schemes included some £24M on Accrington Town Centre under the Levelling-Up proposals and £12M on the Leisure Estate to make it fit for purpose and improve the health and wellbeing of residents at inviting venues. Other projects included:-

- A contribution to the extension of Accrington Stanley Community Trust's indoor sports facility;
- £1.1M Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to allow vulnerable residents to maintain independent lives and reduce pressure on hospitals and social care services;
- A new play area at Knuzden Recreation Area;
- Leeds and Liverpool Canal towpath cycleway;
- Accrington cemetery improvements; and
- Other estates improvements.

The Leader of the Council commented that two years of the pandemic had taken its toll on residents and businesses and it would take time to recover. A Capital Programme of over £38M would help to drive forward recovery. Levelling-Up money would support the Town Centre Investment Plan and growth was also linked to the Huncoat Garden Village project. The Partnership would develop the Levelling-Up Fund bid and would take account of wider stakeholder involvement. Town Centre Investment would utilise £20M provided from external sources, with £4M available from Council Reserves. The project was centred on increasing footfall in Accrington, but would benefit the whole of the Borough. The project around Leisure represented the largest investment in this sector since 1974. Older facilities

needed investment and some would be repurposed, not closed. The Programme also included replacement of the 3G pitch at Hyndburn Leisure Centre for which around £55k of funding had already been set aside.

Councillor Haworth thanked the Leader of the Council for the commitment to the project at Knuzden Recreation Area. Councillor Britcliffe asked if the Budget meeting would be held in the Council Chamber, as the acoustics in the Ballroom were not ideal. Jane Ellis, Executive Director – Legal and Democratic Services responded that Members had previously been consulted on their risk appetite around social distancing. There was a spectrum of responses with some councillors happy to return to less restrictions, but a number indicating that they were vulnerable. The emergence of the Omicron variant had meant a return to higher levels of risk control recently.

Councillor Plummer thanked Joe McIntyre, Deputy Chief Executive, and his staff for their hard work in producing all of the budget papers. Councillor Paul Cox, Deputy Leader of the Council, commented that this was a fantastic Capital Programme. He was particularly impressed with the commitment towards sports and leisure, which was so important. Parks and open spaces had been a big outlet for people during the pandemic and Hyndburn had numerous Green Flag Awards for its parks. The Council had invested all across the Borough in its green spaces. Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP mentioned the importance of the DFG monies. Many residents had benefited from this grant, which improved their quality of life. The Leader added that sources of other funding for projects such as at Memorial Park and Mercer Hall would continue to be pursued.

Approval of the report was not a key decision.

Reason for decision

The report set out the Council's Capital Programme for 2022/23. In the past 20 years, the Council had funded significant programmes of Capital Expenditure which sometimes exceeded £15m per annum. After a number of years in which due to austerity the Council had vastly reduced its Capital Programme, it was now returning this year to a major funding programme of capital investment centred around its leisure estate and redevelopment of Accrington Town Centre with a total of proposals for capital investment in excess of £38.5m.

The significant level of investment proposed to start this year had only been made possible by the Council obtaining financial support from external organisations and its own effective financial management over recent years which had allowed it to have the funds necessary to finance these major projects when other funding became available.

It was intended that the Council would continue these strong policies of financial management and look only to borrow what it needed to fund these 2 major investment projects. The Council would continue to rely upon securing external sources of funding, using capital receipts, making revenue contributions to capital projects and would use unspent monies to fund its programme. It would also apply a rigorous approach to selecting projects by examining all proposals against its corporate objectives and only selecting the most pressing and deserving projects to fund. This was in accordance with the Council's policy of limiting the increase in debt and borrowing costs, while ensuring the Council's objectives were met.

The Revenue implications of the strategy to finance the Capital Programme were a key element in the affordability issues on the Revenue Budget this year. The programme contained a limited amount of risk this year. The level of risk was up compared to previous years due to the size of programme compared to previous years. However to further

reduce the risk the Council would be looking to supplement its own project management and cost control capacity by the appointment of experienced professionals in both disciplines for its two largest projects. The Council's overall resources and management systems were believed to be sufficiently robust to effectively monitor these risks and ensure appropriate action was taken if they should materialise.

The Council would continue with its strategy adopted for over 10 years of attempting to reduce its level of debt wherever possible by restricting borrowing and repaying debt and would continue to work extensively with external funders to bring forward realistic plans for Capital investment in the area.

In summary, the Council would be investing £38.5m in Capital investment in 2022/23. There was a significant amount of the total resource available this year dedicated to major improvements to Accrington Town Centre and the Leisure Estate, along with supporting people with disabilities to continue to live in their own homes and investment in key assets and infrastructure.

The details behind all of these proposals remained at the outline stage only and further work was required to ensure that these projects provided positive benefits to the community and the Council. Each project was therefore required to submit further detailed plans if required in order to obtain final approval for expenditure to occur and to obtain final clearance from the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources.

The Capital Programme did require a degree of flexibility within it, to respond to sudden demands for capital expenditure, actions to be taken on the receipts of monies and revisions to proposals as projects were not financially viable or encountered other problems such as securing external funding. The Capital Programme Working Group (CPWG) would report back to Cabinet at frequent intervals throughout the year to ensure Cabinet was kept apprised of the current situation and that any approvals necessary for alteration were obtained.

The report also included additional details and a section on improving the management of capital investments.

Alternative Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection

A wider programme of funding had not been considered due to the Council's policy commitment to limiting capital expenditure to affordable levels and seeking to repay debt.

Resolved

- **That Cabinet recommends to Council:-**

(1) To approve a Capital Programme for 2022/23 of £38,593,918 as set out in Appendix 1.

(2) That the programme is funded by new anticipated direct external grants of £23,428,958 and £15,164,960 of new investment from the Council's resources, the redesignation of reserves to support the capital programme and the use of borrowing. External grant funding must be secured before any internal funds are

committed to projects that rely on external funding to proceed.

- (3) That delegated authority is given to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources to flex the programme in accordance with the available funding, provided this does not require any additional borrowing.**

- (4) That the individual projects within the Capital Programme require the written authorisation of the Deputy Chief Executive following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources before commencing and incurring expenditure and that Service Managers provide the Deputy Chief Executive, with written details of estimated costs of schemes with full justification of the need and benefits from undertaking the capital investments before approval is provided and that approval to commence is delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources. Where the Deputy Chief Executive deems it appropriate, he has the authority to release funding in stages to ensure effective financial control can be maintained and project risk managed.**

- (5) That Projects are timed to minimise the need for borrowing and the Deputy Chief Executive be requested to seek project start dates after September 2022 whenever this is practical.**

- (6) That in-year underspends are not made available to fund new projects during the year.**

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed