

---

# CABINET

---

**Wednesday, 24th January, 2024**

**Present:** Councillor Peter Britcliffe (in the Chair), Councillors Loraine Cox, Zak Khan, Sajid Mahmood, Kath Pratt, Steven Smithson and Mohammed Younis

**In Attendance:** Councillors Noordad Aziz, Munsif Dad BEM JP, Bernard Dawson MBE and Dave Parkins

**Apologies:** Councillor Marlene Haworth

---

## **279 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Marlene Haworth, Leader of the Council.

## **280 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations**

There were no reported declarations of interest or dispensations granted.

### Announcements

The Chair announced that he had written yesterday to Councillor Phillippa Williamson, Leader of Lancashire County Council as follows:-

“I understand that you are currently considering the possibility of parking meters in towns across Lancashire. I know that you are keen to distinguish between areas that would welcome parking meters and areas where they would be regarded as damaging to town centre regeneration.

In Hyndburn’s case you will know that we are making great strides forward in regenerating out town centre through the Levelling Up Fund and it is important to us that we do not do anything to deter shoppers and visitors to our town centres. For this reason I wish to be clear that we would not support the introduction of parking meters in Hyndburn and I trust that you will respect this position.”

The Chair added that he had already received a reply indicating that the letter was helpful.

## **281 Minutes of Cabinet**

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Councillor Loraine Cox, Portfolio Holder for Leisure Transformation and Leisure Trust referred to Minute 219 – Hyndburn Leisure Request for Financial Support, which had been called-in under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules. That decision had been considered by the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and had subsequently been released in full. Where called-in decisions were released, a written

report on the outcome was not normally provided to the Cabinet. However, it was considered to be good practice to report the outcome verbally.

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

## **282 Minutes of Boards, Panels and Working Groups**

The minutes of meeting of the following bodies were provided:

| <b>Name of Body</b>               | <b>Date of Meeting</b>        |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Leader's Policy Development Board | 2 <sup>nd</sup> August 2023   |
| Leader's Policy Development Board | 1 <sup>st</sup> November 2023 |

**Resolved** - **That the Minutes of the meetings of the above bodies be noted.**

## **283 Reports of Cabinet Members**

Councillor Mohamed Younis, Portfolio Holder for Levelling Up, reported that good progress was being made on the Market Hall decant. On Thursday and Friday this week it was anticipated that the market traders would occupy the units outside the Market Hall. On the following Thursday and Friday it was likely that the units outside the Town Hall would also be occupied. Some additional works would be carried out on the cabins on Wednesdays, when the market was usually closed.

Councillor Younis added that he had visited the Market Hall again recently and had spoken to a number of traders who were pleased with the progress being made.

## **284 Council Tax Base - 2024-2025**

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Marlene Haworth, Leader of the Council, on the Council Tax Base for 2024/25. In the absence of the Leader, Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources, introduced the report.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

In accordance with Section 35 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the Council was required to formally determine the Council Tax Base for 2024/2025 prior to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024. This would allow the Council to notify the major preceptors (Lancashire County Council, the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire and Lancashire Combined Fire Authority) by the 31<sup>st</sup> January of the Council Tax Base.

The requisite calculation had to be carried out in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012. Once determined the Council Tax Base could be changed and had to be used when the Council set their Council Tax for the financial year 2024/2025.

The calculation of the Tax Base for Hyndburn and Altham for 2024/2025 was shown at Appendices A and B of the report. It was proposed that the Tax Base for Hyndburn 2024/2025 should be 22,095. This was an increase from last year's Tax Base of 150 (21,945). The 2024/2025 Tax Base for Altham was 317, which represented no change from last year's Tax Base of 317.

The Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 2012 specified formulae for calculating the Council Tax Base had to be set between 1<sup>st</sup> December 2023 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024.

The Council Tax Base was the measure of the number of chargeable dwellings held on the valuation list as at 11<sup>th</sup> September 2023 and then adjusted to take account of discounts, exemptions, re-bandings and Council Tax Support to arrive at the Authority's Council Tax Band D.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

**Resolved**

- **That Cabinet notes the report and approves the following:**

**(1) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Council for its Council Tax Base for the financial year 2024-2025 shall be 22,095.**

**(2) That in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Tax Base) Regulations 2012, the amount calculated by the Council for its Council Tax Base for the parish of Altham for the financial year 2024-2025 shall be 317.**

**285 [ITEM WITHDRAWN]**

*Item 8 on the Agenda was withdrawn prior to the meeting.*

**286 Revenue Budget 2023/2024 Monitoring - Quarter 3 to end of December 2023**

Members considered a report of Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources, regarding the financial spending of the Council up to the end of December 2023 for the financial year 2023/2024 and the forecast impact on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2023/2024 to 2025/2026. Councillor Britcliffe outlined the purpose of the report.

Councillor Noordad Aziz enquired about the amount of underspends now committed to other projects. He also asked for a more detailed breakdown of the forecast variance for Non-Service Items, as this represented a large financial sum. Mr Dyson responded that the main changes since the last quarterly report included a £490k subsidy to Hyndburn Leisure and a £175k contribution to reserves to provide a contingency fund for the leisure development at Wilson's Playing Field. The consultants fees in connection with the Huncoat Garden Village project were being funded by existing reserves, not revenue underspending. In respect of Non-Service Items, these included investment income, investment income from cash balances and capital financing.

The Chair reported that even after making resources available to fund the Leader’s Budget, Community Chest and the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) waste collection service, the Council was forecasting a positive year end variance of approximately £460k. Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP enquired about how this money would be reallocated.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

*Reasons for Decision*

The financial detail was provided in a table set out as Appendix A to the report.

The current forecast spend to the end of the financial year in March 2024 was £13.925m compared to a Budget of £14.383m. This forecast produced a positive variance of £0.458m by the end of the financial year. Further analysis of these changes was provided in Section 4 and Appendix A of the report.

Appendix A included a breakdown of the Forecast Outturn Variances between staffing costs, non-staffing costs and income. Some service areas showed large variances in the breakdown figures where grant funding was received and subsequently used to fund expenditure, but budgets were not in place because the amounts were not known in advance. In these instances, although the breakdown figures might be large, they offset each other and the overall variance was much lower, or even nil. The largest instance of this was in the Regeneration & Housing Services. The breakdown of variances showed £1.507m for non-staffing costs and £1.462m for income, which related to forecast increases for the Huncoat Garden Village scheme and the grant received for Asylum Seekers.

The revenue forecast underspend in year was a decrease since the figure of £0.998m reported at the end of Quarter 2 (Period 6). Further analysis of these changes was shown in Section 5 and with a table of movements in the last quarter at Section 5.2 of the report.

The forecast outturn position as at Quarter 3 included budget pressures for the nationally awarded pay award for staff that was 1.5% above the original budgeted inflation figure of 5%. This increase was offset by increased investment income due to the recent rises in interest rates.

The forecast underspend by service was summarised below, with the variances including the budget pressures and additional investment income mentioned at Paragraph 3.4 of the report.

| <b>Department</b>         | <b>Original Budget</b> | <b>Budget Changes</b> | <b>Current Budget</b> | <b>Forecast Outturn</b> | <b>Forecast Outturn Variance to Budget</b> |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|
|                           | <b>£'000</b>           | <b>£'000</b>          | <b>£'000</b>          | <b>£'000</b>            | <b>£'000</b>                               |
| Environmental Health      | 672                    | -                     | 672                   | 767                     | 95   |
| Environmental Services    | 4,980                  | (305)                 | 4,675                 | 4,725                   | 49   |
| Legal and Democratic      | 1,585                  | 6                     | 1,591                 | 1,753                   | 162  |
| Planning & Transportation | 639                    | -                     | 639                   | 975                     | 336  |
| Regeneration & Housing    | 1,082                  | -                     | 1,082                 | 1,173                   | 91   |

|   |               |              |               |               |              |
|---|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| Resources   | 4,533         | (23)         | 4,510         | 4,580         | 70           |
| <b>Total Net Cost of Services</b>                             | <b>13,491</b> | <b>(321)</b> | <b>13,169</b> | <b>13,973</b> | <b>804</b>   |
| Non-Service   | 892           | 321          | 1,213         | (223)         | (1,436)      |
| <b>Total Net Expenditure</b>                                  | <b>14,383</b> | <b>-</b>     | <b>14,383</b> | <b>13,750</b> | <b>(633)</b> |
| Contribution to Reserves                                      | -             | -            | -             | 175           | 175          |
| <b>Total Net Expenditure (after contribution to reserves)</b> | <b>14,383</b> | <b>-</b>     | <b>14,383</b> | <b>13,925</b> | <b>(458)</b> |

The report included a more detailed commentary on the variances and reasons for those variances on a service by service basis.

The decrease in underspend from Quarter 2 was as summarised below:

| Department   | Change since last Report at QTR 2 |                         |                               |
|--|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
|  | QTR 2 Forecast Variance           | QTR 3 Forecast Variance | Movement in Forecast Variance |
|  | £'000                             | £'000                   | £'000                         |
| Environmental Health   | 70                                | 95                      | 25                            |
| Environmental Services   | (61)                              | 49                      | 111                           |
| Legal and Democratic   | 141                               | 162                     | 22                            |
| Planning & Transportation                                      | 209                               | 336                     | 127                           |
| Regeneration & Housing   | 37                                | 91                      | 54                            |
| Resources  | (430)                             | 70                      | 500                           |
| <b>Total Net Cost of Services</b>                              | <b>(34)</b>                       | <b>804</b>              | <b>837</b>                    |
| Non-Service  | (964)                             | (1,436)                 | (472)                         |
| <b>Total Net Expenditure</b>                                   | <b>(998)</b>                      | <b>(633)</b>            | <b>365</b>                    |
| Contribution to Reserves                                       | -                                 | 175                     | 175                           |
| <b>Total Net Expenditure (after Contributions to reserves)</b> | <b>(998)</b>                      | <b>(458)</b>            | <b>540</b>                    |

A more detailed breakdown of the changes since the last quarter was set out in a further financial table in the report, along with a written commentary about the individual items shown.

Although the forecast underspend at Quarter 3 stood at £0.458m, there were some real pressures and risks that needed to be considered that were not currently built into any financial forecasts.

The main (in year) pressures / risks to be considered were as highlighted below. A more comprehensive description of these items was provided in the report:

- Waste Disposal Site / Transfer Station;

- Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre;
- Crematorium / Cremators; and
- Leisure Trust Support.

These pressures / risk might need to be considered for Quarter 4 as costs against the Quarter 3 forecast underspend in year.

#### Medium Term Financial Strategy Forecast 2023/2024 to 2025/2026

The Medium Term would be affected by the forecast underspend in year and highlighted pressures. The latest strategy was in the process of being updated to reflect the latest projections and impact of inflation.

The forecasts included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy approved in February 2023 included the assumptions below and, therefore, any changes in future budget and funding decisions would have both positive and negative impacts on any surplus or shortfall projected.

The assumptions already contained in the current Medium Term Financial Strategy for future years 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 were:

- 5% Pay Award for all years;
- 5% General inflation on all supplies and services;
- Forecast increase of 2% on Council Tax along with a 2% growth in the Council Tax property base;
- 3% increase in Government grant funding; and
- 3% increase in Business Rates funding.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy was currently being revised to reflect the provisional local government finance settlement for 2024/25.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That Cabinet notes the report and asks Corporate Management Team to continue to monitor the financial position of the Council over the remaining months of the year.**
- (2) That Cabinet notes the potential pressures and risks highlighted in Section 6 of the report, and that regular updates will be provided on any potential impact on the current forecast underspend in year and the future Medium Term Financial Strategy.**

#### **287 Capital Programme Monitoring 2023/24 - 3rd Quarter Update to 31st December 2023**

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources, which provided an update on the Council's Capital Programme Monitoring. Councillor Britcliffe outlined the purpose of the report, which set out the latest phasing of the programme including the latest estimate of available resources and any additions or changes in forecast outturn since the last current position was presented to the Cabinet on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

*Reasons for Decision*

The Council had authorised new additions to the capital programme of £8.374m at its meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023.

Since the Council meeting in February 2023 new schemes totalling £1.530m had been approved and added to the programme. The additional expenditure approved was to be fully funded by external grants and receipts that had been awarded and or / received.

In addition, the capital spend outturn from 2022/2023 had slipped £37.615m into 2023/2024, of which £35.294m related to the Levelling Up scheme for Accrington Town Centre, the Leisure Estate Investment and Housing Schemes including Disabled Facilities Grants.

The approved Capital programme now totalled £42.619m and was shown in the table below:

|   | £m            |
|---|---------------|
| <b>New Additions to the Capital Programme (Reported at February Council 2023)</b> | <b>8.374</b>  |
| <b>Budget Changes</b>   |               |
| Slippage from 2022/23   | 37.615        |
| New Schemes and Additional Funding Approved in Year                               | 1.530         |
| Unsuccessful Grant Bids – Schemes Removed from Programme                          | -4.900        |
| <b>Current Approved Capital Programme Budget 2023/24</b>                          | <b>42.619</b> |

The financing of the programme in 2023/2024 was set out in the report in the form of a pie chart. This showed that there was approval to fund £5m of the capital programme through external borrowing, if required. The Council continued to maximise the use of its capital receipts, reserve balances and attempted to draw down additional external funding that would delay or potentially reduce its need for borrowing.

The current programme of £42.619m would not be capable of being delivered in the current financial year and it was proposed to now rephase the programme into the years in which it was now expected to be spent. The phasing of the programme was now summarised as below.

| <b>Summary of the Scheme Profiles over the Medium Term Financial Strategy</b> |                  |                  |                  |              |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------|
| <b>Programme Area</b>   | <b>2023/2024</b> | <b>2024/2025</b> | <b>2025/2026</b> | <b>Total</b> |
|   | <b>£'000</b>     | <b>£'000</b>     | <b>£'000</b>     | <b>£'000</b> |
| Operational Buildings   | 971              | 540              |                  | 1,511        |
| Parks & Open Spaces   | 1,006            | 290              |                  | 1,297        |
| IT Projects   | 566              | 7                |                  | 574          |
| Recreation & Sport  | 36               | 0                |                  | 36           |
| Vehicles & Equipment  | 34               | 55               |                  | 89           |
| Community Projects  | 134              | 235              |                  | 369          |
| Planned Asset Improvement Programme   | 272              | 38               |                  | 309          |
| Leisure Estate Investment Programme   | 268              | 11,992           |                  | 12,260       |
| PSDS Decarbonisation Scheme   | 55               | 0                |                  | 55           |

|                                |               |               |          |               |
|--------------------------------|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------|
| Levelling Up Programme         | 5,642         | 17,116        |          | 22,758        |
| UK Shared Prosperity Programme | 263           | 767           |          | 1,030         |
| Transitional Housing Programme | 108           | 0             |          | 108           |
| Housing Improvement Programme  | 1,563         | 660           |          | 2,223         |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>10,920</b> | <b>31,700</b> | <b>0</b> | <b>42,619</b> |

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Update Position

The actual expenditure to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023 was £3.621m against the latest rephased budget for 2023/2024 of £10.920m. This equated to 33.16% spend.

As shown in the table above, there was expected to be £31.70m of budget to be rephased into 2024/2025 of which £17.116m related to the Levelling Up scheme for Accrington Town Centre, £11.992m to the Leisure Estate Investment, £0.767m to Shared Prosperity Funded schemes, £0.660 to Disabled Facility Grants and the balance to miscellaneous capital schemes.

As the programme had been rephased, the latest forecasts were now that there would be a small underspend in year of £11,552 with all other schemes in line with the budgeted profile and expected to be spent in year.

The significant elements of the programme to be spent in year were shown in the table below with a more detailed breakdown shown in Appendix A of the report.

| Programme Area                      | Budget for Year | Actual Spend to Date | Spend for Remainder of the Year | Forecast Outturn Position for the Year | Variance   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--|------------|
|                                     | £'000           | £'000                | £'000                           | £'000                                  | £'000      |
| Operational Buildings               | 971             | 477                  | 483                             | 959                                    | -12        |
| Parks & Open Spaces                 | 1,006           | 320                  | 687                             | 1,007                                  | 0          |
| IT Projects                         | 566             | 275                  | 291                             | 566                                    | 0          |
| Recreation & Sport                  | 36              | 35                   | 1                               | 36                                     | 0          |
| Vehicles & Equipment                | 34              | 34                   | 0                               | 34                                     | 0          |
| Community Projects                  | 134             | 40                   | 93                              | 134                                    | 0          |
| Planned Asset Improvement Programme | 272             | 83                   | 189                             | 272                                    | 0          |
| Leisure Estate Investment Programme | 268             | 237                  | 32                              | 268                                    | 0          |
| PSDS Decarbonisation Scheme         | 55              | -25                  | 80                              | 55                                     | 0          |
| Levelling Up Programme              | 5,642           | 1,290                | 4,353                           | 5,642                                  | 0          |
| UK Shared Prosperity Programme      | 263             | 0                    | 263                             | 263                                    | 0          |
| Transitional Housing Programme      | 108             | 0                    | 108                             | 108                                    | 0          |
| Housing Improvement Programme       | 1,563           | 856                  | 707                             | 1,563                                  | 0          |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>10,920</b>   | <b>3,621</b>         | <b>7,287</b>                    | <b>10,908</b>                          | <b>-12</b> |

|                   |        |        |        |        |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| % of Budget Spend | 33.16% | 66.73% | 99.89% | -0.11% |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|



Close monitoring of the capital programme was undertaken throughout the year to ensure that the projects were kept in line with spend forecasts and were considered in the Council's cash flow forecasts. Deviations from the spending profiles and any financial implications were taken into account in treasury and revenue budget forecasts.

### Financial Risks of the Capital Programme

The report included a commentary on areas of potential financial risk, a summary of which is set out below:

- Capital Receipts (medium level risk);
- External Grants and Contributions mainly comprising:
  - Levelling Up Project (LUF);
  - UK Shared Prosperity;
  - Disabled Facilities Grant;
  - Leisure Estate Investment Programme; (medium level risk);
- External Borrowing (medium level risk);
- Major Schemes in Capital Programme including:
  - Levelling Up Programme;
  - Disabled Facilities Grant;
  - UK Shared Prosperity Grant;
  - Leisure Estate Investment Programme;
  - Asset Programme works, including maintenance of operational buildings and the continued investment in Parks and Playgrounds.

### Conclusion

The capital programme had significantly grown over the past two financial years to a current programme totalling £42.619m. Although the programme was approximately 62% funded from external grants and contributions, it nevertheless puts a strain on the Council's staffing resources to be able to procure and deliver these projects. It was, therefore, key to ensure that projects were well planned and phased to deliver within the required timeframes.

The Programme would continue to be carefully monitored and it might require further revisions in its phasing in the future.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

**Resolved** - **That Cabinet notes the progress on capital expenditure to date.**

## **288 Prudential Indicators Monitoring and Treasury Management Strategy Update - QTR3 Update 2023/2024**

Members considered a report of Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources, updating Cabinet on activities around Prudential Indicators Monitoring and the Treasury Management Strategy since the start of this financial year.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

The *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* required the Council to set Prudential Indicators annually for the forthcoming three years to demonstrate that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Council had adopted its prudential indicators for 2023/2024 at its meeting in February 2023.

The Prudential Code required the Council, having agreed at least a minimum number of mandatory prudential indicators (including limits and statements), to monitor them - in a locally determined format and frequency. This Quarter 3 report to Cabinet complimented a more regular review by the Executive Director (Resources).

The indicators were purely for internal use and not designed to be used as comparators between authorities. If it should be necessary to revise any of the indicators during the year, the Executive Director (Resources) would report and advise the Council further.

'*Treasury Management*' related to the borrowing and cash activities of the authority, and the effective management of any associated risks. On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2023 in the same report referred to above the Council had also set out and then approved its current Treasury Management Strategy. This was in accordance with the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) code of practice on treasury management in public services, the Council having previously adopted, via Cabinet, the then revised code of practice. Associated treasury management Prudential Indicators had been included in the February 2023 report.

### Prudential Indicators Monitoring

Table 1 and Table 2 as (set out at Appendix 1 of the report) showed the monitoring information for each of the prudential indicators, limits and statements. They related to:

- External debt overall limits – Table 1;
- Affordability (eg implications for Council Tax) – Table 2;
- Prudence and sustainability (eg implications for external borrowing);
- Capital expenditure; and
- Other particular indicators for Treasury Management.

### Treasury Management Update

#### Current Treasury Position

| Portfolio Position 2023/24           | Original Estimate 2023/24<br>£000 | Forecast Outturn 2023/24<br>£000 |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>External Debt</b>                 |                                   |                                  |
| Debt at 1 <sup>st</sup> April        | 9,595                             | 9,595                            |
| Expected Change in Debt              | -                                 | -                                |
| Other Long Term Liabilities          | 552                               | 469                              |
| Gross Debt at 31 <sup>st</sup> March | 10,147                            | 10,064                           |
| Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)  | 8,381                             | 8,307                            |

|   |         |         |
|---|---------|---------|
| Under / (over) borrowing                  | (1,766) | (1,757) |
| TOTAL INVESTMENTS (other than short-term) | -       | -       |

As could be seen from the above table, the Council was performing within the original targets set at the start of the year. Within the prudential indicators there were a number of key indicators to ensure that the Council operated its activities within well-defined limits. In general, the requirement was that the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) should exceed Gross Debt. However, in 2023/24, the gross debt would exceed CFR. This was due to the annual payment of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). Other Liabilities reflected the transfer of contract hire leases to the balance sheet to comply with International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 16.

The requirement to have CFR exceed Gross Debt centred around providing an assurance that borrowing was not taking place for Revenue purposes. However, as the Council was not borrowing additional funds at this time, this was not an issue.

The current position of the treasury function, and its expected change in the future, introduced risk to the Council from an adverse movement in interest rates. The Prudential Code was constructed on the basis of affordability, part of which was related to borrowing costs and investment returns.

The Capital Programme 2023/24 had been funded by the use of Government Grants (including New Homes Bonus Grant and S.31 Local Government Act 2003 Grants) and other external financing. It had also been supported during the year by greater use of internal sources of capital finance (including capital receipts reserve) because of the reduced level of external grant allocation. No capital borrowing was forecast in year.

#### Expected movement in interest rates

The Council had appointed Link Asset Services as treasury adviser to the Council and part of their service was to assist the Council in formulating a view on interest rates. A table was included in the report which gave Link's latest available view (as at 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023) of the expected future movement in interest rates.

The latest forecast expected that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) would keep the bank rate at 5.25% until the middle of 2024 to combat on-going inflationary and wage pressures. It was not anticipated that the bank rate would increase above 5.25%.

The Council's exposure to interest rate movements was largely neutralised currently, as its borrowings were effectively at a fixed rate until a trigger point was reached, where the lender believed a better rate could be achieved elsewhere. Interest rates would have to exceed 5.00% however although they were now at 5.25% nothing had been triggered. The table included in the report indicated that rates were not going to go above 5.25%, so appeared unlikely that the borrowings would hit their trigger point.

The Council had invested amounts of surplus cash on a short-term, temporary basis. The interest received from these investments was above the budgeted expectations for the full year to 31<sup>st</sup> December, mainly due to the Bank of England increasing the interest rates. The Council's strategy continued to focus on the security of deposits and the liquidity of funds. The additional interest generated as a result of rate increases and change in investment policy was now forecast at £1.472m for the year ending March 2024. This

increase had been used to offset the additional inflation pressures in the current year and future year's financial forecasts.

The Council continued to invest surplus cash in the top rated financial institutions. The authority continued to spread its money around a number of institutions to ensure that it was not potentially damaged by the unforeseen collapse of any one bank. Deposits were also held with banks where the Council believed that the respective governments were likely to be able to guarantee deposits in the event of bank failure. This strategy was continuing to yield an appropriate rate of return, though at a lower rate, as there was less risk attached to these deposits. The Council also operated a policy of holding no more than £2m in any one bank (with the exception of the liquidity account held with Nat West Bank where the limit was £3m) to ensure that the risk was spread.

The Council had updated its policy on external investment by increasing the maximum limit for investment with the Government's Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility (DMADF) from £2m to unlimited. This had allowed greater flexibility for placing of funds with potential for higher returns with minimal risk. This change in policy had been updated in the Treasury Management Strategy that had been approved at the Council's Budget meeting in February 2023.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

**Resolved** - **That Cabinet notes the update report on Prudential Indicators Monitoring and the Treasury Management Strategy.**

## **289 Disposal of Land, Dale Street, Accrington, BB5 0AL**

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Kath Pratt, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration, seeking approval to the sale of land south of Dale Street and land north of Dale Street, Accrington, BB5 0AL.

Councillor Pratt provided a brief introduction to the report, highlighting the open space land available for disposal and the proposal to accept the second highest offer of £120k, which was deemed to represent market value.

Councillors Steven Smithson and Mohammed Younis spoke in favour of this proposal and referred to the anticipated eradication of blight caused by fly-tipping at this site and meeting the demand for additional housing in this ward in conjunction with other plots of land released, including land at Charter Street and land adjacent to Hyndburn Road.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP enquired about a plot of land off Blackburn Road, Accrington, believed to be leased to a church. Mr Hoyle agreed to look into this matter and to provide written reply.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

Plots of vacant land south of Dale Street and north of Dale Street had prompted interest from local developers requesting to purchase them for redevelopment subject to compliance with planning requirements.

In December 2022, the two sites had been advertised for sale on the Council's website seeking offers on an informal tender basis. Three offers for the combined sites had been received, these were:

1. £17,000
2. £120,000
3. £200,000

The highest offer of £200,000 had been rejected as this offer was conditional on the inclusion of other plots of land elsewhere in the Borough. The combined offer was significantly below market value and as such was considered unacceptable.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> highest offer of £120,000 comprised £100,000 for the land south of Dale Street and £20,000 for the land north of Dale Street, with both the individual and combined offers deemed market value.

Both plots were public open space and, therefore, the Council had followed the requirements of Section 123 (2A) of the Local Government Act 1972, by advertising its intention to sell the land on 13<sup>th</sup> January and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023. No objections had been received.

#### *Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection*

The Council could choose not to accept the offer and not dispose of the land but this could mean forgoing an opportunity for development of the site, which had been vacant for many years and was a focus for fly-tipping.

The sites could be remarketed to see if an increased offer would be made. This should be rejected, as they had been advertised for sale, which had tested the value in the open market and the preferred offer for each site was deemed market value. Recent offers fell well below this offer

#### **Resolved**

#### **- That Cabinet:**

- (1) Approves the disposal of the two plots of open space land at Dale Street, Accrington, BB5 0AL, shown edged red on the plans attached to the report**
- (2) Delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Housing in consultation with the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to finalise the terms and conditions of the proposed disposal.**

## **290 Weight Management Services**

Members considered a report of Councillor Sajid Mahmood, Portfolio Holder for Communities, Health and Wellbeing, on the future provision of Weight Management Services in Hyndburn.

Councillor Mahmood provided a brief introduction to the matter, in which he outlined the invitation from Lancashire County Council and the expression of interest from Hyndburn Borough Council and subsequent discussions. He noted that levels of obesity in Lancashire were increasing and collaboration represented an opportunity to reshape the

service locally. It was proposed that Hyndburn Leisure would deliver these services on behalf of the Council.

In response to a question by Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Councillor Mahmood confirmed that the contract with Hyndburn Leisure would be for one year only, for the reasons set out at Paragraph 3.9 of the report.

Councillor Noordad Aziz commented that if the scheme costing £66,770 catered for 200 people (as in 2022/23), this represented over £300 expenditure per person for a 12 week programme. Given that Hyndburn Leisure offered various annual membership deals at cheaper prices, he asked if it would be possible for participants to receive a free annual membership as part of this programme. Councillor Mahmood undertook to discuss this suggestion with Lyndsey Sims, Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure. Councillor Mohammed Younis spoke in favour of the provision as outlined in the report, and added that if more could be achieved within the funding available this too would be welcomed.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

In early 2023, Lancashire County Council had invited the 12 District Councils to submit expressions of interest to collaborate with the County on the future delivery of weight management services across Lancashire. The Council (alongside all the other Districts) had submitted its expression of interest and had been in discussions since then over future delivery of the service.

The levels of obese and overweight adults and children in Lancashire continued to increase and working collaboratively provided the opportunity to reshape and redesign the service in Hyndburn. In Hyndburn, 71.7% of adults were overweight or obese. In children, the figure was 24.6% for reception year and 42.4% for Year 6. All of these were significantly higher than the Lancashire and National averages.

Since the transfer of public health services from NHS to Local Authority, Councils in Lancashire had provided Tier 2 weight management services, tackling obesity with community-based support. These programs typically ran for around 12 weeks and often operated in group settings. Participants would receive expert guidance on diet, nutrition, and lifestyle changes, with a strong focus on behaviour change generally centred around exercise.

These programmes empowered individuals to manage their weight, improve their well-being, and reduce their risk of weight-related health issues. Though limited in duration, they acted as a crucial springboard for lasting change, helping individuals to find their footing on the path to a healthier life.

Locally, Tier 2 Weight Management Services had been delivered by Hyndburn Leisure since 2016, initially via procurement by LCC and more recently appointed by Hyndburn Borough Council to deliver the services on this Council's behalf. The current agreement between LCC and Hyndburn Borough Council, and reciprocal agreement between Hyndburn Borough Council and Hyndburn Leisure would expire on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024.

LCC had now taken the decision to collaborate directly with District Councils for the delivery of a new weight management service for the next 5 years. District Councils could deliver services in house or appoint a provider to deliver the service on their behalf. The new service would combine weight management with PASTA (Play and Skills at Teatime Activities), a programme currently commissioned by LCC and delivered by Hyndburn

Leisure which aimed to encourage and empower families to make choices to lead a healthier lifestyle through participation in an active play and cooking session. Participants prepared and ate/or took home a nutritious and budget conscious family meal each week, and had the opportunity to understand the importance of good nutrition and physical activity.

The Council did not have the resources or expertise to deliver the service in house and, therefore, would have to appoint a provider to deliver the service on its behalf.

Hyndburn Leisure had a proven track record of delivering weight management services, and in 2022/23 over 200 adults had completed their 12 week programme (third highest in Lancashire) and had the staff resource and expertise required to deliver the new service going forward.

The report recommended that the Council waived its Contract Procedure rules to appoint Hyndburn Leisure to deliver the new service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 for one year for the following reasons:

- Proven track record of weight management service delivery since 2016 and PASTA service delivery since 2023;
- Time and resources required for the Council to go to full tender for this service would not allow for the service to be up and running by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023;
- Potential TUPE implications involving Hyndburn Leisure staff currently delivering the service; and
- The pending review on the most appropriate model for delivering Leisure Services within Hyndburn that would be undertaken over the next 3 to 4 months (Cabinet decision on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2023) meant it would be prudent to only enter into a 1 year agreement for the delivery of the service at present, rather than the full 5 years.

#### *Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection*

Cabinet could choose not to agree to collaborate with Lancashire County Council for the provision of Weight Management Services from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 – This was rejected as it would put a vital service used by residents of Hyndburn at risk.

Cabinet could choose not to agree to waive Contract Procedure rules to appoint Hyndburn Leisure to deliver the service on the Council's behalf from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 for one year – This was rejected for the reasons mentioned in paragraph 3.9 of the report.

Cabinet could decide to deliver the service in house – this was rejected due to lack of resource and expertise to deliver the service directly.

#### **Resolved**

- (1) That Cabinet agrees to enter into a collaboration agreement with Lancashire County Council for the provision of Weight Management Services in Hyndburn from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2029;**
- (2) That Cabinet accepts the £66,770 annual grant for the delivery of Weight Management Services from Lancashire County Council;**
- (3) That Cabinet agrees to waive the Council's Contract Procedure Rules to appoint Hyndburn Leisure to deliver Weight Management Services on behalf of**

**the Council for 1 year from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025 for a fee of £66,770; and**

- (4) That Cabinet agrees to delegate authority to the Executive Director (Resources) to negotiate and agree all terms relating to the above.**

## **291 Grant to Citizens Advice East Lancashire**

Members considered a report of Councillor Peter Edwards, the Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, informing the Cabinet of the vital support provided to residents by Citizens Advice East Lancashire and seeking approval to the continued provision of financial and other support to the service.

Councillor Edwards was in attendance and provided the background to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations. He highlighted the large number of residents who had been advised over the last 12 months, the amount of additional benefit income brought into the Borough and the value of debts written off, as set out at paragraph 3.4 of the report. Members were also reminded that a similar grant had been provided in 2023/24.

The Chair spoke in support of the good work undertaken by Citizens Advice. He confirmed that the Cabinet would consider the funding requested, including a possible increase, but this would need to be undertaken as part of the Council's overall budget process for 2024/25.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP enquired about whether £25k was the actual amount requested by Citizens Advice for 2024/25, or if this was simply the Council's suggested amount. He commented that the organisation had a good record of adding social value and that, for every £1 spent, it was estimated that £14 would be returned.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

At its meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2023, the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee had carried out a short review of the service provided by Citizens Advice East Lancashire, who had submitted an annual report to the Committee.

In their report and presentation to the Committee, Members had been informed that Rossendale and Hyndburn Citizens Advice had merged with Burnley and Pendle Citizens Advice in July 2023 to create Citizens Advice East Lancashire. They had reported the following information:

- People's health, education, work and social lives had been affected in ways that could never have been imagined before COVID-19 and the current cost of living crisis. The Citizens Advice Service was a charity and had delivered independent and impartial advice for over 80 years. The Citizens Advice Service across Hyndburn had many specialist caseworkers who could provide information, signposting and complex casework in welfare benefits, energy costs, money and debt and housing.
- They remained located in the New Era centre on Paradise Street and received a grant from Hyndburn Borough Council of £25,000 per year. This enabled them to leverage further funding from:



- The National Lottery for dealing with clients in a crisis;
  - Energy companies for energy related advice to reduce usage and energy debt;
  - Henry Smith Foundation funding for homeless prevention advice; and
  - Money and Pensions Service for debt and money advice.
- Advice had been provided to 1,642 Hyndburn residents in the past 12 months, but over 2,000 Hyndburn residents had been unable to make contact via telephone this year due to unprecedented demand for the service and lack of paid advisors. Volunteers also worked on the advice line, but the cost of recruiting, training and supervising a volunteer was over £1,000 each. They had a team of 20 volunteers and 46 full time paid advice staff across East Lancashire. Energy related queries followed by debt and personal independence payments had been the top three enquiry issues since October 2022. They had experienced the highest ever number of people contacting them for charitable support and food bank assistance, with a 120% increase since early 2022.

In addition to the grant from Hyndburn Borough Council, Rossendale, Burnley and Pendle Councils also provided grants.

The following achievements had been highlighted by Citizens Advice:

- 1,642 Hyndburn residents advised;
- Benefit gains - over £250,000 of additional income brought into Hyndburn via new benefit claims, winning appeals and successfully challenging decisions;
- Debts written off via insolvency options - £302,114;
- Debt repayments rescheduled - £93,105;
- Social Value - For every £1 invested in Citizens Advice, they calculate that they delivered over £14 in public value, through economic and social benefits. The CAB consider that they saved government and public services money by helping stop problems occurring or escalating, and by reducing pressure on public services like health, housing or out-of-work benefits; and
- Launched a dedicated food and fuel voucher line on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022, which received over 200 calls per week from residents wanting help with a food or fuel voucher.

Due to the current economic climate and cost of living crisis, Citizens Advice had reported that demand for their services (and other similar local services) was at never before seen levels, and the Scrutiny Committee had very much been in favour of the Council providing support to the service, where possible.

The Council had provided a grant of £25,000 in 2023/24 to support the services provided by Citizens Advice Rossendale and Hyndburn, and had provided a grant for many years previously.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had noted the report, presentation and responses to the questions posed. It had also agreed to make recommendations to the Cabinet about the inclusion of a minimum grant to Citizens Advice East Lancashire in its Budget proposals for 2024/25 in line with previous years and about a possible increase:

*Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection*

Cabinet could choose to accept or reject any recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny Committees. Should Cabinet reject the first recommendation, it was likely that Citizens Advice East Lancashire would need to significantly scale back the support offered to Hyndburn residents in 2024/25.

**Resolved**

- (1) That Cabinet agrees to include a minimum grant in line with the previous year for Citizens Advice East Lancashire in its 2024/25 budget proposals (Note that actual approval of the grant will be subject to Council approval of the 2024/25 Revenue Budget); and;**
- (2) That Cabinet agrees to consider a possible increase in the grant to Citizen’s Advice East Lancashire in its 2024/25 budget proposals due to the current demand on the service from Hyndburn residents.**

**292 Economic Development Progress Update**

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Zak Khan, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Sustainability, providing an update and assessment of progress regarding Economic Development activity. Councillor Khan highlighted the main areas covered by the report.

Councillor Mohammed Younis welcomed the report and indicated that he worked closely with Councillor Khan on Town Centre issues. Councillor Noordad Aziz asked, in relation to the Local Plan, if any Hyndburn businesses had been forced to relocate out of the area due to a lack of suitable employment land. Councillor Khan responded that he had recently held discussions with one organisation that had been contemplating leaving the area and had been successful in making the case for them to stay. He was optimistic that better engagement with businesses made Hyndburn an attractive place to carry on a business.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

*Reasons for Decision*

The Council’s newly approved Corporate Strategy had set out an ambitious and sustainable future for Hyndburn. The strategy identified three areas for growth:

- Employment and business growth;
- Revitalise Accrington town centre; and
- Housing growth.

The allocation of £20 million Levelling Up funding, with an additional £3 million from Hyndburn BC and Lancashire CC, supported ambitious growth plans for Accrington town centre. Investment plans and development were well underway with exciting and ambitious plans for the regeneration of three key buildings: the Market Hall, Burtons Chambers and Market Chambers. The recent announcement of a further £20 million funding package over the next ten years for Accrington as part of the Government’s “long term plan for towns” would enable more investment on local people’s priorities for Accrington, providing more growth opportunities. Further good news was the very recent announcement that Hyndburn had secured a £463,056 development grant from The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NHLF) towards the historic building, Market Chambers, which formed part of Accrington

town centre's Levelling Up project. After the development phase was complete (over the next 12-15 months), the proposed plans would be submitted to The National Lottery Heritage Fund to unlock further NHLF funding, which would total £4.5million investment if successful.

As a result of securing additional funding for Accrington town centre, the Council was now considering a new town centre Masterplan that would incorporate key buildings such as the Arndale shopping centre.

Even more good news for Hyndburn's economy and other town centres was the recent £237,000 award of revenue funding after a successful bid to the Government's High Street Accelerators Pilot Programme, to be spent in Great Harwood on greening and revitalising the high street, with a further opportunity to bid for additional capital funding of circa £0.5million.

The Council was also hoping it's bid for £30 million for Huncoat Garden Village would be supported by Homes England early in 2024 in support of its housing growth plans. Huncoat Garden Village would see just over 1,800 new homes built over the next 10-15 years with a total investment of £463.5 million investment.

In addition, the Council had secured just under £3 million UK Shared Prosperity funding up to April 2025 which would support growth and new business, greening of Accrington town centre, low carbon initiatives for local businesses and a regeneration, arts, culture and heritage package.

This level of investment was unprecedented and was an exciting opportunity for Hyndburn to realise it's growth aspirations. Over the summer the Council had created a new Economic Developer Manager position to step up and escalate the Council's economic development function to support the Council's growth aspirations, with a specific role to engage with local businesses and attract new employers to the Borough. Salma Chaudhry, a very experienced economic development officer, had taken up the new role of Economic Development Manager (EDM) since the end of July 2023. Since her appointment, Salma had been making significant progress with the Council's ambitions for employment and business growth.

Economic development activity included the following matters, further details of which were provided in the report:

- Local Plan;
- Federation of Small Businesses;
- Economic Policy Forum;
- Mini Business Workshops;
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF);
- Meeting with Business Leaders;
- Community Outreach;
- Lancashire Business Day;
- Communication; and
- Employment & Skills Meeting.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

**Resolved** - **That Cabinet notes the report and progress with Economic Development activity**

## 293 Energy Efficiency Measures Installed in Residential Dwellings

Members considered a report of Councillor Zak Khan, Portfolio Holder for Economic Development and Sustainability, which provided:

- An overview of the Government's expectations and the national picture for reducing carbon emissions from residential dwellings to help the country move to net zero;
- Information about the energy efficiency measures installed in domestic properties in Hyndburn through various energy funding programmes and grant schemes; and
- A summary of the approach taken by the Council to promote funding opportunities and to support residents to apply for funding

Councillor Khan spoke to introduce this report and to outline the work currently being undertaken by the Housing Strategy and Policy Manager and the Home Energy Reduction Officer. The Council had looked at the national picture and Government expectations. He emphasised that there were numerous challenges ahead, particularly around lack of knowledge and awareness and arising from existing levels of fuel poverty. The report identified what was missing, what was currently being done and what was needed for the future.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP indicated that he had met with Tim Brodest, Home Energy Reduction Officer, and that pamphlets were being prepared for householders which would increase awareness. Councillor Noordad Aziz added that retrofitting Hyndburn properties would be challenging and a long term issue. This was a common problem for towns along the M65 corridor. He asked if the sub-region could lobby Government to be a pilot for energy efficiency measures. Councillor Khan responded that he was liaising closely with Rossendale Borough Council who were piloting a Net Zero Terrace Street project. He also hoped to establish an East Lancashire group to discuss common issues.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

#### Government Expectations

On the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the Government had reaffirmed its position to reduce total carbon emissions by 68% from 1990 levels by 2030, with the view to reaching its overall net zero target by 2050.

So far, between 1990 and 2022, UK carbon dioxide emissions had decreased by 45.1%. The overall reduction in emissions was being driven by many different sectors, however, for the purposes of the report to the Cabinet it was noted that – in 2021, the residential housing sector had been responsible for 16% of all Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the UK. (In Hyndburn the figure was far higher at around 30%).

The main source of emissions in residential dwellings was natural gas for heating. Therefore, to make a meaningful reduction in emissions it was imperative that alternative sources to heat homes were found as well as making them more energy efficient to cut down on the amount of heating required and cost.

Most progress was being made in the new-build sector of the housing market, where Building Regulations had been increasingly tightened with regards to energy efficiency and carbon reduction. Modern houses had far tighter restrictions than ever before, meaning

that all new homes must now produce 30% less carbon dioxide emissions than current standards. Installing low carbon technology, such as solar panels and heat pumps, and using materials in a more energy efficient way to retain heat helped to cut emissions – lowering the cost of energy bills for families and helping deliver the UK's climate change ambitions.

In addition to regulations, the Government had introduced funding programmes, to try and help with the introduction of new, low-carbon measures such as air source heat pumps. As Government built towards the ban of new fossil fuel boilers, they had introduced the Boiler Upgrade Scheme which paid households up to £7,500 towards the cost of replacing gas/fossil fuel boilers with low-carbon alternatives. Along with schemes such as Eco 4, Eco 4 Flex, Home Upgrade Grant, Great British Insulation Scheme and others, the Government was providing opportunities for households to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

### Hyndburn's Housing Stock

The housing sector across Hyndburn contributed a third of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions (120 kilotons [kt]) per annum) with only 24% of the current housing stock classed as energy efficient and an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of 'C' and above (the Government's target). It would cost approximately £250 million to convert all Hyndburn properties (those currently non-compliant) to Government ECO target levels removing 100kt of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per annum from the Hyndburn housing sector.

A significant number of the 37,000 residential dwellings in Hyndburn were older properties and, in 2020, 15% of households were classified as being in fuel poverty. The challenge was to find ways to increase energy efficiency in older buildings through 'retrofit' of newer technologies whilst providing access to funding for those that needed it. Given there were a lot of older, lower value homes, it might be economically unviable to retrofit all of these properties to a required standard.

Terraced houses in particular could be difficult to retrofit to a higher energy efficiency standard. These properties were often built with solid walls with a 'breathable' design, which might rule out 'easy wins' such as cavity wall insulation and, due to a lack of outside space, preclude the installation of heat pumps (air and ground source).

In addition to the practical challenges of improving the energy efficiency of a significant proportion of the Borough's housing stock, there was evidence that monetary and non-monetary factors influenced residents' decisions on undertaking energy efficiency measures in their homes. Hyndburn Borough Council was providing energy efficiency advice and information to support and help resident decision-making in relation to accessing funding to improve the energy efficiency of their homes.

In order to assist the most vulnerable households to try and increase energy efficiency, as well as helping them to overcome issues affecting their housing, there were currently a number of Government funding programmes and grant funding schemes which supported energy interventions in domestic properties. Eligibility criteria differed for each funding programme and grant scheme, so advice and support was available to residents from the Council, Homewise and Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL), which included help with completing applications, explaining eligibility criteria and what energy measures could be installed. This approach would not only help the Council to meet its carbon reduction aims, it would also help with the comfort, health and wellbeing of local residents.

The report provided further information about the following programmes and initiatives:

- Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL);

- Affordable Warmth and Energy Efficiency Funding Programmes and Grant Schemes, including:
  - Home Upgrade Grant;
  - Energy Company Obligation 4 (ECO 4) and Energy Company Obligation 4 Flex (ECO 4 Flex);
  - Lancashire County Council (LCC) Affordable Warmth Funding;
  - Hyndburn’s Better Care Affordable Warmth Grants;
- Resident and Stakeholder Engagement;
- Energy Measure Installation Monitoring; and
- Initial analysis of engagement activities.

*There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons*

**Resolved**

**- That Cabinet:**

- (1) Notes the challenges of reducing carbon emissions in Hyndburn’s housing stock and the steady progress made in delivering energy efficiency measures to residential properties in Hyndburn through energy funding programmes and grant schemes.**
- (2) Notes the steps being taken to engage and improve household awareness about energy efficiency, affordable warmth, and reducing carbon emissions**

**294 Lancashire County Council (LCC) Affordable Warmth Funding 2023-24**

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Kath Pratt, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration, outlining the Affordable Warmth Funding being made available to District Councils, including Hyndburn Borough Council, by Lancashire County Council (“LCC”) to deliver affordable warmth interventions to households who were most vulnerable to harm from cold or damp homes. The report sought approval to enter into a grant agreement with Lancashire County Council to receive a grant allocation of £84,285 for 2023-24.

Councillor Pratt introduced the report and highlighted the intended beneficiaries of the funding, which included the following people:

- Those on low income;
- Those living in thermally inefficient homes;
- Those having higher heating needs; and
- Those experiencing high fuel costs.

A more detailed list of beneficiaries and vulnerable groups was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP enquired about the timeframe for spending the funding given that the end of the 2023/24 financial year was fast approaching. It was noted that Paragraph 3.5.1 of the report stated that the funding had to be spent or committed by the end of May 2024.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

### *Reasons for Decision*

The funding aimed to reduce levels of death and illness over the winter months and to improve people's wellbeing, through affordable warmth interventions to individuals who were the most vulnerable to harm from cold or damp homes. As a consequence, it was hoped to see a reduction in hospital admissions and reduced pressure on health and social care services.

Being on a low income, living in a thermally inefficient home, having higher heating needs and high fuel costs could all increase the risks of living in a cold home. The funding was aimed at those most vulnerable to harm from cold or damp homes. This could include a wide range of individuals who either were, or were at serious risk of, experiencing poor health and wellbeing due to a cold home.

Lancashire County Council's eligibility criteria, detailed intervention guidance and tenure criteria were shown at Appendix 1 of the report.

The funding available could be used for capital or revenue expenditure. The spend limit of Lancashire Affordable Warmth funding per household was £8,000.

It was expected that the funding should be spent or committed before the end of May 2024.

It was proposed that this programme would be delivered by the Council's existing contractor for affordable warmth measures, Rhea Projects Ltd. As per 2022/23, the Council proposed to use the agreement with Rhea Projects Ltd to deliver the Lancashire Affordable Warmth programme.

The role of Rhea, as service provider, was to provide an end to end service from receipt of a referral to installation:

This included:

- Promoting the Lancashire County Council affordable warmth grant programme;
- Receiving and assessing applications from residents and any agency referrals;
- Offering advice on eligibility and identifying eligible households (those with a vulnerability and low income or energy efficiency issue and low income) for survey;
- Providing HBC with quotations for energy measures and applications for approval;
- Organising and overseeing installation works through approved CHiL contractors;
- Undertaking post-works completion surveys; and
- Responding to any complaints.

The LCC Affordable Warmth Grant programme would operate in a way which limited expenditure to the amount of grant provided by LCC and, gave the Council the ability to flex the scheme to maximise the use of grant and also the flexibility to end the scheme once the funding had all been used, even if other applicants had an equally valid claim.

### *Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection*

The Council could have decided not to submit a proposal for securing this grant funding, but this would not have maximised the funding opportunities available to the Council to support fuel poverty interventions in Hyndburn.

This funding plus other energy funding schemes supported the Council's ambition to reduce fuel poverty and improve the energy efficiency and running costs of homes in Hyndburn.

**Resolved**

**- That Cabinet:**

- (1) Notes that Lancashire County Council has awarded the Council £84,285 for 2023-24 to support eligible households with affordable warmth interventions and assistance.**
- (2) Agrees to accept the grant and delegates authority to the Head of Regeneration and Housing, in consultation with the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) to draw up, finalise and execute a grant agreement with Lancashire County Council in respect of this funding.**
- (3) Notes that the Council will appoint a contractor to deliver this programme and that this will be done by extending the current appointment of Rhea Projects Ltd pursuant to Paragraph 2.2.1 of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules, which allows for contract extensions.**

## **295 Community Chest Grant Awards**

Members considered a report of Councillor Peter Britcliffe, Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources, regarding recommendations for grant awards from the 2023/24 Community Chest Fund. Councillor Britcliffe spoke to the report and highlighted that some 88 applications had been received, totalling in excess of £300k, against a Community Chest budget of £88k.

The Chair apologised for the lateness of preparation of the report. With the consent of the meeting, he approved an adjournment for 10 minutes to allow time for Members to read the information provided.

Following the adjournment, the Chair indicated that the recommendations would benefit a wide variety of people and organisations. The task of selecting successful applicants had been very difficult. The Chair also explained the reason for the Working Group's departure from the original selection criteria in the light of the applications received, some of which were communities of interest operating across ward boundaries.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP declared a personal interest in this item, as an associate of one of the applicants in the Spring Hill ward. He expressed disappointment that the revised selection criteria had resulted in only £2k being allocated directly to this ward. He also enquired about whether projects would remain viable where the monies allocated did not match the full amount of the bid. Councillor Smithson responded that advice would be provided signposting applicants to other sources of grant funding. Some 52 organisations had been supported and others might have access to funding via the Leader's Budget.

Councillor Noordad Aziz also raised the matter of the revised selection criteria and a disparity between the total allocations made directly to certain wards. However, the Chair and Councillor Smithson gave examples of several organisations in receipt of this funding which operated across those wards mentioned.



Councillor Dave Parkins was given permission to speak on this item and thanked the Chair for the proposed allocation for Huncoat Community Forum.

Councillors Mohammed Younis and Loraine Cox both spoke in support of the allocations proposed.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

#### *Reasons for Decision*

At its meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2023 Cabinet had resolved to create a Community Chest budget of £80,000. At that time Cabinet had also set out its intention to allocate the fund on the basis of £5,000 for each of the Borough's 16 wards.

Following this decision the application process had opened on the 1<sup>st</sup> November and closed on the 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The Council had received 88 applications, with total bids in excess of £302,777.

Having received the applications, a Cabinet Working Group consisting of the Acting Leader of the Council and the joint Deputy Leader (Councillors Peter Britcliffe and Steven Smithson) was convened to evaluate the bids and make recommendations to Cabinet for determination.

In light of the nature of the applications received, it was the view of this Working Group that the original intention to allocate the grant on the basis of £5,000 per ward was misguided. The reason that this conclusion had been reached was that it was clear that for the most part the organisations that made applications did not run on "ward lines" and instead offered facilities and services to beneficiaries that were much more rooted in communities of interest. Put simply, the types of organisations that had applied for funding – e.g. cricket and boxing clubs, drama clubs, the Hyndburn Green Spaces Forum, the Sea Cadets, Scout Groups etc. were open to residents from across the Borough and did not define themselves in terms of the Council's electoral divisions.

A full schedule of the 52 recommended grant approvals was provided at Appendix A of the report. For completeness the Appendix also listed the unsuccessful applications, although it should be noted that 7 of these organisations had either previously received support from the Leader's Budget or were in the process of doing so.

Subject to approval of this report, it was expected that all organisations would be notified if their application had been successful or unsuccessful in early February. It was anticipated that payments would be made from late February onwards, subject to the completion of grant agreements.

#### *Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection*

It was open to the Cabinet to allocate the funding differently and accept/reject the recommendations as considered appropriate.

#### **Resolved**

#### **- That Cabinet:**

- (1) Rescinds the decision made at its meeting of the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2023 to allocate an equal amount of the Community Chest Fund to each of the Borough's 16 wards.**

**(2) Approves the proposed list of Community Chest Grants attached at Appendix A of the report.**

**296 Exclusion of the Public**

**Resolved**

- That, in accordance with Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item, when it was likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings that there would otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraph at Schedule 12A of the Act specified at the item.

**297 Proposed Sale of Vacant Plots of Land at Pendle Street Accrington BB5 0SL**

*In accordance with Regulation 5(6)(a) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, approval was obtained from Councillor Paddy Short, Chair of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the following decision being made by Cabinet on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2024, in private, on the grounds that the decision was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred.*

*Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 - Relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Councillor Kath Pratt, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration introduced this item. Councillors Steven Smithson and Mohammed Younis spoke in support of the proposals.

Approval of the report was not considered to be a key decision.

*Reasons for Decision*

The reasons for the decision were set out in the exempt report.

*Alternative Options Considered and Reasons for Rejection*

The alternative options considered and reasons for rejection were set out in the exempt report.

**Resolved**

- That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.

Signed:.....

Date: .....

Chair of the meeting  
At which the minutes were confirmed