

**BUDGET AND
PERFORMANCE PANEL**

6.00 P.M.

4TH DECEMBER 2024

PRESENT:- Councillors Ross Hunter (Chair), Chris Hanna (Vice-Chair), Keith Budden, Hamish Mills, Sue Penney, James Sommerville and Jackson Stubbs

Also Present:

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources

Officers in attendance:

Paul Thompson
Stephen Metcalfe

Chief Officer - Resources and Section 151 Officer
Principal Democratic Support Officer

It was noted that Councillors Bottoms and Maddocks were now no longer able to attend meetings of the Panel as Panel Members after being appointed as Cabinet Members. This had occurred after the publication of the Panel's agenda.

11 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 18th September 2024 were approved as a correct record.

12 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

The Chair advised that there were no items of urgent business.

13 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations were made at this point.

14 LOCALISED COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2025/26

The Panel received a report from the Assistant Director (Head of Revenues and Benefits) that had enabled Cabinet to consider the existing Localised Council Tax Support ("LCTS") Scheme and the options available, ahead of formal consideration and approval by Council for application in 2025/26.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, were set out in the report.

The officer preferred option was to retain the existing Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 (Option 1). This will assist financially vulnerable Council Tax customers in the Lancaster City Council District.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

It was moved by Councillor Chris Hanna, seconded by Councillor Jackson Stubbs:

“That the recommendation, as set out in the report, be approved.”

Councillors then voted.

Resolved: -

That it be recommended that the existing Localised Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 (Option 1 to the report) be retained.

15 DELIVERING OUR PRIORITIES: Q2 2024/25

The Panel received a report from the Chief Executive and S151 Officer to provide members with an update on financial performance during the first two quarters of 2024/25 (April – September 2024).

As the report was for commenting and noting no options had been provided for the Cabinet to consider.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

Members of the Panel, referring to the General Fund Summary and savings being made due to the number of staff vacancies, queried the impact on the well-being of existing members of staff trying to provide a service with less staff resources. The service areas raised at the meeting were Engineering and Planning. It was noted that the Council's Senior Leadership Team would be looking into the issue of vacant posts and the impact on services next week.

The Panel also expressed concern regarding the HRA Capital Programme for Mainway and the Salt Ayre Leisure Centre's shortfall of income.

The Panel agreed.

Resolved: -

- (1) That the Chief Officer – People and Policy be requested to attend a meeting of the Panel to inform on staff vacancies, the well-being of Council staff and how the Council are to fill vacancies.
- (2) That the Chief Officer – Housing and Policy be requested to attend a meeting of the Panel to inform on the HRA Capital Programme for Mainway.
- (3) That an update report be provided to the next meeting of the Panel regarding the shortfall of income at Salt Ayre Leisure Centre.

16 PROJECTS AND PERFORMANCE - Q2 24/25

The Panel received a report from the Chief Executive to provide Members with an update on performance and projects during quarter two of 2024 - 25 (July - September 2024).

As the report was for commenting and noting no options were provided for the Cabinet to consider.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

Members of the Panel asked a number of questions including HR issues, homelessness, full fibre network, housing projects, how can capital projects on hold not be a risk, Williamson Park Café, White Lund Depot, UKSPF and the lack of reporting and the Government's future allocation to the fund.

Resolved: -

That the report be noted.

17 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT

The Panel received a report from the Chief Executive.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, available to Cabinet were set out in the report.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

It was moved by Councillor Ross Hunter, seconded by Councillor Jackson Stubbs and unanimously resolved: -

That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act, 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting to enable the Panel to consider Appendix B to the report, on the grounds that it could involve the possible disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of that Act.

Members of the Panel then considered Appendix B of the report.

After considering the exempt Appendix the meeting continued in public.

Members of the Panel asked a number of questions regarding Risk 3 – SR03 – The Council fails to recruit and retain competent/key staff resulting in ineffective leadership, increased costs and failure to deliver recruitment and there seems no expectation to reduce this further and regarding Risk 4 – SR04 – The use of Council assets is not maximised leading to insufficient funding to meet the funding gap and deliver capital projects and Risk 11 – SR11 – International and national issues rapidly impact on the strategic and financial context of the Council and /or partners, businesses and communities. Members requested that the ratings needed to be reviewed.

Members of the Panel moved, seconded and then voted as follows:

Resolved: -

- (1) That Risk Management Guidance be shared with Members of the Panel to enable assurances to be robustly scrutinised.
- (2) That the effectiveness of the mitigation factors, in particular with regard to Risk 3 – SR03, be increased to reduce the likelihood of risk.

18 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE 2025/26 – 2029/30

The Panel received a report from the Chief Finance Officer to provide an update on the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy forecasts for 2025/26 to 2029/30 and outline the approach to balancing the budget.

The options, options analysis, including risk assessment and officer preferred option, available to Cabinet were set out in the report.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

Resolved: -

That the report be noted.

19 TREASURY MANAGEMENT MID-YEAR REVIEW 2024/25

The Panel received a report from the Chief Finance Officer which had sought Cabinet's consideration of various matters in connection with the Treasury Management Mid-Year Review 2024/25.

Members were advised that Cabinet had been informed that as the report was for consideration and progressing to Budget and Performance Panel and Full Council, no alternative options were put forward.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources, presented the report, both he and the Chief Finance Officer then answered questions from Members of the Panel.

Resolved: -

That the report be noted.

20 WORK PROGRAMME

The Panel was requested to advise of any items to be considered to be included in the Panel's Work Programme within the Panel's Terms of Reference, set out in the Council's Constitution and any training requirements.

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with responsibility for Finance and Resources and the Chief Finance Officer requested Members of the Panel to consider arranging an additional meeting of the Panel in January 2025 to consider the latest budgetary information.

Resolved: -

That an additional meeting of the Panel be held on Wednesday, 15th January 2025.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 7.53 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
Stephen Metcalfe, Democratic Support - email sjmetcalfe@lancaster.gov.uk**