

Lancashire County Council

Executive Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday, 4th February, 2014 at 2.00 pm in Cabinet Room 'D' - The Henry Bolingbroke Room, County Hall, Preston

Present:

County Councillor Bill Winlow (Chair)

County Councillors

A Atkinson	M Green
A Barnes	S Holgate
Mrs S Charles	Mrs L Oades
D Clifford	J Oakes
B Dawson	D O'Toole
G Driver	R Shewan

1. Apologies

None.

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary and Non-pecuniary Interests

There were no interests declared.

The Chair, with the agreement of the Committee, agreed to consider Item 6 – Response of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group after Item 4b – The County council's Budget 2014/15.

It was also confirmed that Item 10 – Provision of Traffic Signal Maintenance had been withdrawn.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 January 2014

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2014 be confirmed and signed by the Chair.

4. Reports for decision by Cabinet

The Committee considered the following reports to be presented for decision by the Cabinet on 6 February 2014.

a. Money Matters - Update on the County Council's Financial Position for 2013/14

The Committee were presented with the latest "Money Matters" update on the County Council's financial position for 2013/14. In addition to the information in the report, it was noted that additional income from Business Rates of between £1.382m and £1.487m had been identified and would be reflected in future updates.

The committee noted the report and confirmed the recommendations to Cabinet without amendment or modification.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet be confirmed without amendment or modification.

b. The County Council's Budget 2014/15

The Committee received a report setting out the progress made in relation to the setting of the County Council's budget for 2014/15. It was noted that figures were due to be finalised in advance of the Cabinet meeting on 6 February, including the final settlement from government. The committee's attention was drawn to the consultation responses included in the report, and the Deputy Leader, in thanking all those individuals and groups who took part on the consultation, confirmed that these would be taken into consideration by the Cabinet in making its final proposals to full Council.

In relation to the funding for Care and Urgent Needs, it was explained that concern remained in relation to the withdrawal of this funding. It was noted that this would not affect the 2014/15 budget, but would affect subsequent years, and that the concerns held by Lancashire were shared by many other local authorities and the LGA. Consideration would be given to the most appropriate way to raise these concerns with central government.

In considering the recommendations in the report which would be considered by Cabinet, the Committee noted that it would not be necessary for the Committee to aim to seek consensus on the specific proposals. It was therefore

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to Cabinet be noted without amendment or modification.

5. Response of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group

The Chair of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group, County Councillor Alyson Barnes, presented the response of the Working Group for the committee's endorsement. In summarising the main issues identified by the group, county Councillor Barnes thanked the officers and cabinet members for their involvement, as well as the members of the Working Group for their positive and constructive participation in the process. Staff across the County Council were also thanked for their engagement in the "10% challenge", and the significant savings this had delivered without affecting services.

It was confirmed that the work of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group would continue throughout the year to monitor budget proposals as they came forward.

Resolved: That the response of the Budget Scrutiny Working Group as presented be endorsed and presented to cabinet.

a. **Treasury Management Policy and Strategy 2014/15**

The proposed Treasury Management Policy and Strategy for 2014/15 were presented to the Committee. It was confirmed that the approach set out was unchanged from previous years, although it included increased borrowing limits to take into account the funding switch already agreed for Voluntary Redundancies, and also to support the City Deal. In addition, the policy had been amended to provide authority to issue a bond, if it was felt to be appropriate to do so. It was confirmed that any such decision would require further appropriate approval from members.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet be confirmed without amendment or modification.

b. **Approval of the East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan**

The East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan was considered by the Committee, one of a number of similar masterplans that would cover the whole county. It was noted that the East Lancashire Masterplan was a joint plan with Blackburn with Darwen, and was aimed at securing and setting out the priorities for the Highways and transport infrastructure in the east of the county.

In developing the plan, an extensive process of consultation and engagement had been undertaken, which highlighted the need for the plan to address connectivity within east Lancashire as well as with neighbouring areas. The consultation process also highlighted the need to include more on sustainable transport and to incorporate the suggestions of an East Lancashire railway to be included in the full M66 corridor gateway study.

The proposals for the A56 Colne to Foulridge Bypass were reported as having received a wide and varied response, with businesses and stakeholders expressing strong support for the "Brown route", but with responses from the public being more mixed. More detailed work was therefore proposed on all possible routes and to consider capacity along the North Valley.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet be confirmed without amendment or modification.

6. Forthcoming Individual Cabinet Member Key Decisions

The Committee considered the following key decisions due to be taken by individual Cabinet Members.

a. The Use of Court Experts in Care Proceedings for Children and Young People

The Committee considered a report on proposals to review the use of court experts in care proceedings for children and young people, following changes outlined in a recent Family Justice Review. The Committee were advised that savings were anticipated from the new arrangements, but that no figures could yet be given.

Resolved: That the recommendation to be presented to the Cabinet Member be confirmed without amendment or modification.

b. Our Lady & St Gerard's RC Primary School: Proposal to Make Alteration to the Age Range of the School by Adding a Maintained Nursery

The Committee considered a report setting out a proposal from Our Lady and St Gerard's RC Primary School to add a maintained nursery.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet Member be confirmed without amendment or modification.

c. Outcome of Consultation on the Implementation of the first phase of the restructure of Overnight Break Service for Children with Disabilities

A report was presented outlining proposals to implement the first phase of the replacement of the County Council's existing in-house overnight break provision for Children with disabilities, with a recommendation that a new six bed facility be built at Lynnhurst, Stanifield Lane in Farrington to serve the Preston, South Ribble and Chorley areas.

The Committee were advised that analysis indicated that the capacity was adequate to meet demand, although it was agreed that, in the development of the site, options for increased capacity would be considered. However, it was highlighted that surplus capacity could not be sold, and so could lead to higher, unrecoverable, costs.

Consideration was also given to the location of the other 3 new sites anticipated. It was confirmed that the geographical spread of units was part of the ongoing considerations, and that this included the West Lancs area.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet Member be confirmed without amendment or modification.

d. **Review of Home to Mainstream School Transport Policy**

The Committee considered a report setting out a number of proposals in relation to changes to the discretionary (non-statutory) home to mainstream schools transport policy, following a period of consultation. It was reported that the spend on this area was £8.5m in 2012/13, which was all discretionary. It was recognised that the decisions would be controversial, and that many responses had been received, largely disagreeing with the proposals as they related to transport to faith schools.

The role of the Student Support Appeals committee in ensuring that members were involved in considering appeals from parents was noted, although some concerns were raised about the timescales for appeals, especially in cases of short term need.

Resolved: That the recommendations to be presented to the Cabinet Member be confirmed without amendment or modification, with the exception of recommendation ii), where the proposal for the withdrawal of transport assistance where a child is temporarily unable to walk to school due to a temporary medical incapacity was not supported by the Committee.

7. **Urgent Business**

There was no urgent business.

8. **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the committee would be held at 2pm on Tuesday 4 march 2014 at County Hall, Preston.

I M Fisher
County Secretary and Solicitor

County Hall
Preston

