

Minutes of a Meeting of the Executive Board held in The Hub, Mareham Road, Horncastle, Lincolnshire LN9 6PH on Wednesday, 10th January, 2024 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT

Councillor Graham Marsh (Vice Chairman in the Chair)

Councillors Graham Marsh, Tom Ashton, Sarah Devereux, Martin Foster, Richard Fry, William Gray, Adam Grist and Steve Kirk.

Councillor Rosalind Jackson attended the Meeting as an Observer.

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

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| John Leach | - Deputy Chief Executive, Communities |
| Christine Marshall | - Deputy Chief Executive (Corporate Development) and S151 Officer |
| Colleen Warren | - Head of Finance, Public Sector Partnership Services Ltd |
| Ann Good | - Democratic Services Manager |
| Elaine Speed | - Senior Democratic Services Officer and Civic Officer |

49. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Craig Leyland.

50. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY):

No declarations of interest were received.

51. MINUTES:

The Open and Exempt Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 November 2023 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

52. ACTION SHEETS:

The Deputy Chief Executive, Communities confirmed all actions were complete.

53. JOINT SCRUTINY OF THE SOUTH & EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCILS PARTNERSHIP:

A Joint Scrutiny Report of the South & East Lincolnshire Councils Partnership was presented to enable a review of the Partnership's progress against opportunities identified in the business case and key lines of enquiry.

During discussion it was confirmed that points raised by Overview Committee in reviewing the report on 28 November 2023, (Overview Committee Minute no 60 refers) had been included.

Members supported the recommendations and extended thanks to Councillors and Officers involved under the Chairmanship of Councillor Brewis, Chair and report author, South Holland District Council.

RESOLVED

1. That the report (Appendix A) and associated recommendations be noted;
2. That approval be given by the Executive for the recommendations contained within the report.

Reasons:

To continue to learn, build on our experiences and continue our success as a Partnership of Councils.

Other options:

None.

54. LOCAL COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME 2024/25:

A report was presented that sought an Executive Board decision on the final proposals for the 2024/25 Council Tax Support scheme, to be presented to Council for approval on 28 February 2024.

During his introduction the Portfolio Holder for Finance referred to:

- The background to the report detailed at paragraph 1
- The current economic position relating to the cost of living detailed at paragraph 2
- The consultation requirements of the scheme which took place between 3 October 2023 and 17 November 2023 - High level findings were summarised at paragraph 3
- Provision for Care Leavers detailed at paragraph 4

During discussion Members fully endorsed the recommendations, particularly support provided through the scheme to the most vulnerable residents.

RESOLVED

1. That Full Council be recommended to approve: -
 - i) The continuation of the current Council Tax Support scheme, including uprating in line with DWP's annual update of allowances and premiums for 2024/25, and

- ii) The provision for Care Leaver support under this scheme to be increased to age 25.
2. That approval of the 2024/25 final scheme policy be delegated by Executive Board to the Section 151 Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance, including administrative and minor changes.

Reasons:

Full Council must make any revision to its scheme, or any replacement, and agree its final scheme no later than 11 March 2023 in respect of the 2024/25 financial year.

Continuation of the current scheme will align the CTS scheme and uprating for working age customers with DWP provisions for Housing Benefit and the CTS scheme for pensioners. This has been consistent each year since the introduction of the local scheme, and will maintain that position for 2024/25, pending a fundamental review of the scheme for future years.

Other options:

The 'do nothing' option was considered, which would see the current scheme retained without uprating.

55. BUDGET OVERVIEW 2024/25 FOR CONSULTATION:

A report was presented to enable consideration of the draft budget for approval for consultation. Attached to the report was the draft detail of the 2024/25 budget, the 5-year Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) from 2024/25 to 2028/29. The report also included the recommended level of Council Tax for 2024/25.

The proposed budget showed that efficiencies would be required to support the medium-term financial strategy (MTFS).

The Portfolio Holder for Finance detailed the report and recommendations contained within. Following which, the Vice Chairman of Executive Board extended thanks to the Portfolio Holder for a full briefing and to the Finance Team for their preparatory work.

During discussion reference was made to:

- Internal Drainage Boards (IDBs). A significant element of the Council's budget was the Drainage Board Levy, like the Council the drainage boards were also experiencing increased cost demands. The Council was liaising with the Boards, who were attempting to limit future increases where possible. This was increasingly difficult with significant increases in power costs being experienced. Representations to government have been made and continued due to the substantial loss of income to the Council. It was noted that a Special Interest Group had been formed to lobby Government led by

South Holland District Council on behalf of the South and East Lincs Councils Partnership. In addition, the IDBs had made extensive representations to the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and the Association of Drainage Authorities (ADA) on this significant issue.

- Greater collaboration with partners to support key projects enabling those most complex cases to be dealt with in an appropriate way, particularly important to ensure support for the most vulnerable.
- The importance of a balanced budget in fulfilling the strategic objectives of the council.

During discussion the Portfolio Holder for the Coastal Economy referred to the estimated IDB levy. A query was raised if this could be detailed specifically in Council Tax statements. Following which, it was agreed to seek further advice from Finance Officers.

RESOLVED

1. The Draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for the period 2024/25 – 2028/29 be recommended by Executive Board for Public Consultation.
2. That the intention to seek alignment of constitutional limits across the partnership and to implement arrangements to facilitate the delivery of the Councils priorities during 2024/25 and onwards as part of the budget setting process be noted.

Reasons:

To comply with the budgetary and policy framework and legislative requirement.

Other Options:

To not commence budget consultation.

56. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:

The meeting closed at 6.45 pm.