



## **AGENDA ITEM: 14**

**COUNCIL: 24 February 2016**

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**Report of: Acting Chief Executive**

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**SUBJECT: POLICY OPTIONS 2016/17**

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Wards affected: Borough wide

### **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To report the results of the Policy Options 2016/17 consultation and agree any amendments to the Policy Option proposals as a result of the consultation.

### **2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 That the results of the Policy Option consultation set out at Appendix B be noted.

2.2 That

a. the Policy Options set out at Appendix A be approved for inclusion in the 2016/17 budget, with Option A selected for proposals PO7 and PO8 (reduce grant funding for Parish Councils by 10% per year over each of the next 3 years), or if 2.2a is not agreed, that

b. alternative options be approved, subject to consultation as appropriate, to ensure that a balanced budget position can be achieved for 2016/17.

2.3 That the Acting Chief Executive and Heads of Service be given authority to take all necessary action in connection with the implementation of these Policy Options.

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### **3.0 BACKGROUND**

3.1 The Budget Requirement report elsewhere on this agenda sets out details on the General Revenue Account budget gap of £838,000 between the level of spending required to maintain agreed services and the resources that are expected to be available. This budget gap has been calculated after taking into

account £875,000 of efficiencies and additional income that would not have any impact on the services provided by the Council.

- 3.2 The Policy Option process is a key initiative to enable the Council to deliver the additional income and savings that are required to balance its budget. At the October Council meeting a set of Policy Options proposals with a total value of £696,000 were approved for consultation as set out in Appendix A. The Council has a duty to consult and involve representatives of local persons and others, where appropriate, in the exercise of its functions, and it was necessary to consult on these proposals given that they could have an impact on customers and current levels of performance.

#### **4.0 CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Given the scope of the Policy Option proposals, consultation was undertaken with a range of stakeholders as well as local residents. The consultation was undertaken primarily through two online surveys – one for individual residents and one for stakeholder organisations and community groups, although paper copies of the survey were also available upon request. The surveys were promoted in a variety of ways including:

- Press releases issued to local papers;
- On the home page of the Council website;
- Through partnership work with West Lancashire CVS;
- Using Facebook and Twitter
- Offering meetings to key stakeholders where appropriate;
- Emails sent directly to parish councils and other public sector organisations.

- 4.2 The results of the consultation are contained in Appendix B. In total 110 responses were received, 80 from local residents and 30 from stakeholders. The majority of residents and stakeholders agreed with the Policy Option proposals, with the exception of measures in relation to charging for green waste collection and reducing funding to Parish Councils, where particular concerns were expressed. It should be noted that while the number of responses received from both residents and stakeholders has exceeded those of previous budget consultations, caution should still be applied when reviewing the analysis and findings. This is because the total response remains relatively low and, because this was an open-access consultation with the potential for self-selection, therefore it cannot be considered representative of the West Lancashire population.

- 4.3 There has also been a regular dialogue on the Policy Option process with the Trades Unions in line with good practice.

#### **5.0 FINAL POLICY OPTIONS FOR 2016/17**

- 5.1 Members must now consider the results of the consultation exercise, as well as other relevant factors, in determining what Policy Options to approve.

- 5.2 Over the 4 year period 2011-15 the Council had to make savings of 30% of its budget, which it did primarily through efficiencies and additional income, with only a relatively minor impact on services. However the Council is still facing a very difficult medium term financial position as are all local authorities, and the recent Local Government Finance Settlement has highlighted that there will be further reductions in its grant funding over the next few years. This means that proposals that will have an impact on our services to residents will need to be considered and difficult choices made on how services can be reshaped to ensure that a balanced budget position can be maintained over the medium term future.
- 5.3 The policy options set out in Appendix A have been drawn up on the basis that they are the “least painful” options that are required given the scale of the budget gap facing the Council. Consequently Members will need to consider what replacement savings could be put forward if they wish to modify the list.

## **6.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS/COMMUNITY STRATEGY**

- 6.1 Every effort has been made to minimise the impact of the need to make budget savings on priority areas. Creating a sustainable budget is a priority for all organisations and this report seeks to achieve this.

## **7.0 FINANCIAL AND RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The policy options proposals contained in this report mean that 2 posts will be removed from the staffing establishment. This will be achieved without the need for redundancies.
- 7.2 The total value of the policy options proposals set out in Appendix A is £696,000. However to take account of the consultation responses option A is being recommended for proposals PO7 and PO8 in terms of reducing grant funding for parish councils by 10% per year over the next 3 years rather than making a 30% saving next year. This will reduce the value of the savings next year to £674,000.
- 7.3 There will be one off implementation costs to implement proposal PO4 rationalisation of bin provision, and PO5 introducing a charge for the collection of green compostable material. It will also not be possible to make a full year saving on option PO5 as it will take some months to introduce the new charging arrangement. These one off costs and part year savings can be funded from the Policy Options Reserve, which is an appropriate use of this reserve given its terms of reference.
- 7.4 The decisions taken by Members in relation to the policy options set out in this report will be reflected in the Budget Requirement report later on this agenda, where the General Revenue Account budget for the next financial year will be set.

## **8.0 RISK ASSESSMENT**

- 8.1 The difficult financial position facing the Council is a key risk that is included on the Council's Key Risk Register, and the Policy Options process is the main means for managing and controlling this risk. The financial scenario facing all local authorities means that "doing nothing" is not an option and a large scale package of savings needs to be agreed.

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### **Background Documents**

There are no background documents (as defined in Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) to this Report.

### **Equality Impact Assessment**

There is a direct impact on members of the public, employees, elected members and / or stakeholders. Therefore an Equality Impact Assessment is required. A formal equality impact assessment is attached as Appendix C to this report, the results of which have been taken into account in the Recommendations contained within this report.

### **Appendices**

Appendix A – Summary of policy options

Appendix B – West Lancashire Meeting the Budget Challenge Consultation Report

Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment