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**FINANCE COUNCIL**  
Monday, 26 February 2024

**PRESENT** –*The Mayor Councillor Parwaiz Akhtar, Councillors , Casey, Connor, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Hardman, Harling, Hussain, Khan, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McGurk, Rigby, Riley, Shorrocks, Sidat, Slater, Slater, Slater, Slater, Smith, Smith, Talbot, Taylor, Fielding, Humphrys, Imtiaz, Khan, Ali, Raja, Russell, Whittingham, Baldwin, Desai, Jackson, McCaughran, Gibson and Shaw.*

**RESOLUTIONS**

**58 Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain, followed by Welcome and Apologies**

The Deputy Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

There then followed Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain.

Apologies were received from Councillors Akhtar H, Hussain I, Hussain S, Brookfield, Patel A, Patel Alf, Patel S, Desai S, Fazal, and Irfan.

**59 Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 25th January 2024**

**RESOLVED** – The Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024 were agreed as a correct record.

**60 Declarations of interest**

No Declarations of Interest were submitted.

**61 Mayoral Communications**

The Mayor reported on events he had attended since the last meeting, in particular, Holocaust Memorial Day and Accrington Pals Service.

The Mayor also referred to the forthcoming Mayor's Ball being held at King George's Hall on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024, with ticket sales having gone very well with over 250 people expected to attend.

**62 Pay Policy Statement 2024-25**

A report was submitted which updated the Finance Council and shared information relating to salary payments made to employees in Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council's employment during 2023-2024. Details of the proposed Pay Policy to be applied in the forthcoming financial year, 2024-2025, were also set out in the report. The report also included details of the Chief Executive and Chief Officers pay scales and the range of salaries across the whole organisation during this period of time. The data was extracted and collated on 31 December 2023.

**RESOLVED** – That Finance Council approve the Pay Policy Statement for

2024-25 as set out in Appendix A.

**63 The Robustness of Estimates 2024-25 and the Adequacy of Reserves**

Finance Council received a report on the robustness of the Council's budget estimates for 2024/25 and the adequacy of financial reserves in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

Members were reminded that under Section 25 there was a statutory requirement on the Council's Chief Financial Officer to report on:

a) the robustness of estimates made for the purposes of the calculations; and b) the adequacy of the proposed financial reserves.

Members therefore needed to have regard to the report when making decisions on the 2024/25 Budget (Revenue Budget and Capital Programme) and the associated level of Council Tax.

**RESOLVED –**

Finance Council considerED and haD regard to the statements from the Strategic Director Finance and Resources (as the Council's statutory finance officer) as provided at Appendix A and B when determining the budget (Revenue Budget and Capital Programme) and the level of Council Tax for 2024/25.

**64 General Revenue Fund Budget 2024-25 (including update to Financial Strategy 2022-25)**

The Executive Member for Finance and Governance, Councillor Vicky McGurk, on behalf of the Labour Group, presented proposals on the General Revenue Budget 2024/25 (including an update on the Financial Strategy 2022/25).

The report set out the proposed General Fund Revenue Budget for 2024/25. A report elsewhere on the Agenda for the meeting provided details of the proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25.

The report set out details of the Autumn Statement, the Local Government Finance Policy Statement and information on the Local Government Finance Settlement, details of which were confirmed by the Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on 5th February 2024.

The report gave extensive information on the challenging national economic backdrop and the cost pressures faced, and the Council's budget approach, and whilst the proposed budget for 2024/25 was balanced, there remained a budget gap of c£13.2m to 2026/27, and details were provided of the measures to deal with the budget gap.

In accordance with the Local Government (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which came into force on 25th February 2014, the Council was required to record in the minutes of a budget decision meeting the names of persons who cast a vote for or against the decision or who abstained from voting.

*The report contained the following recommendations, which were voted on in conjunction with the recommendations in the Capital Programme report, following debate on both items.*

## **RESOLVED –**

Finance Council is recommended to:-

- a) Note the requirement for the Council to produce a Productivity Plan for publication on the Council's website by July 2024;
- b) acknowledge the impact of the increase in the Real/National Living Wage as set out below and note that a report on the impact of this on the hourly rates and contract changes for Social Care Providers for 2024/25 will be submitted to the Executive Board in due course;
- c) approve the use of the High Needs Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) Funding block in 2024/25 as set out at Appendix B;
- d) approve the service investment proposals as set out in the report;
- e) approve the savings proposals as set out at Appendix C;
- f) note the estimated balance of reserves as at 31st March 2025 as shown at Appendix D;
- g) approve the General Fund Budget Requirement for 2024/25 as set out at Appendix E to this report;
- h) require each Portfolio to operate within the individual Portfolio Controllable Budgets for 2024/25 as set out at Appendix E and that these be cash limited and subject to regular monitoring and control;
- i) approve an increase in the general Council Tax of 2.99% (reflecting a weekly increase of £1.02p for Band D Council Tax payers and of £0.68p for Band A Council Tax payers);
- j) approve an additional increase in Council Tax of 2.00% to contribute towards the additional costs of Adult Social Care;
- k) note the update to the Financial Strategy and Medium Term Financial Plan for 2022/25 as set out Appendix G and note that a further report on the implementation of the Strategy will be submitted to the Executive Board in June 2024.

## **65 Capital Programme (including Capital Strategy) 2024-27**

The report submitted sought approval for the 2024/25 - 2026/27 Capital Strategy, set out in Appendix 1 and Capital Programme, set out in Appendix 6.

The Capital Strategy gave a high-level overview of how the Council's capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services, along with an overview of how associated risks were managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

Decisions made on capital and treasury management would have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They were therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to a local policy framework, summarised in the report.

In accordance with the Local Government (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which came into force on 25th February 2014, the Council was required to record in the minutes of a budget decision meeting the names of persons who cast a vote for or against the decision or who abstained from voting.

*The recommendations in the report were then voted on in conjunction with the recommendations in the Revenue Budget Report:*

## **FOR**

*Akhtar P, Khan S, Whittingham, Raja, Shaw, Gibson, Humphrys, Fielding, Floyd, Harling, Smith D, Khan Z, Talbot, Hussain M, Smith J, Riley, Mahmood, Gunn, McGurk, McCaughran, Jackson, Casey, Imtiaz, Taylor, Shorrock and Liddle.*

## **AGAINST**

*Marrow, Connor, Russell, Slater Ju, Baldwin, Slater Jacq, Slater N, Slater Jo, Gee, Hardman and Rigby.*

## **ABSTAIN**

*Sidat, Khonat, Ali, Desai M.*

The recommendations contained in the reports at Agenda Items 7&8 were therefore carried.

## **RESOLVED -**

- 2.1. approve the Capital Strategy for 2024/27 (Appendix 1), including:
- a) agree to the Asset Review (Phase 1) interventions as set out in the Strategy;
  - b) delegate authority to the Growth Programme Director, in consultation with the Deputy Director Legal and Governance, to implement the interventions referred to in 2.1(a) above;
  - c) the Council's Capitalisation Policy, as outlined in Appendix 2;
  - d) the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement, which determines the Council's policy for repayment of debt, noting that the policy is subject to the outcome of a current Government consultation. A further report will be presented if required following the consultation outcome. (Appendix 3);
  - e) the proposed Prudential Indicators for the forthcoming year (Appendix 4);
  - f) the proposed Investment Strategy for 2024/25, as outlined in Appendix 5;

and

2.2. Approve the proposed Capital Programme for 2024/25, as outlined in Appendix 6 and Appendix 6A.

2.3. Note the indicative programmes for 2025/26 to 2026/27 as shown in Appendix 6 and acknowledge that these will be subject to further review as part of the development of future years' capital programmes.

2.4. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director Finance and Resources to determine the most appropriate method of financing the capital programme.

## **66 Council Tax 2024-25**

A report was submitted on the Council's requirement to set amounts of Council

Tax before 11<sup>th</sup> March in the financial year preceding that for which it was set.

In setting its Council Tax requirement, the Council took into account any funding from reserves, income it expected to raise and general funding it would receive from Government as part of the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The Council was also required to set a basic amount of Council Tax for the financial year 2024/25. The Council Tax was set on the basis of:

- a) The precept on the Collection Fund issued by the Police and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire.
- b) The precept on the Collection Fund issued by the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority.
- c) The Borough Council's precept on the Collection Fund, which is dependent on two factors: (i) Its Council Tax requirement, and (ii) The precepts issued by the seven Parish / Town Councils.

The Council was recommended to approve the draft resolution setting the Council Tax for 2024/25, as set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted and in also in the Appendix to these Minutes.

In accordance with the Local Government (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2014, which came into force on 25th February 2014, the Council was required to record in the minutes of a budget decision meeting the names of persons who cast a vote for or against the decision or who abstained from voting.

Following discussion, Finance Council moved to a recorded vote, with Councillors voting as follows:

**FOR**

*Ali, Akhtar P, Khan S, Whittingham, Raja, Shaw, Gibson, Humphrys, Fielding, Floyd, Harling, Smith D, Khan Z, Talbot, Hussain M, Smith J, Riley, Mahmood, Gunn, McGurk, McCaughran, Jackson, Casey, Imtiaz, Taylor, Shorrocks and Liddle.*

**AGAINST**

*Marrow, Connor, Russell, Slater Ju, Baldwin, Slater Jacq, Slater N, Slater Jo, Gee, Hardman and Rigby.*

**ABSTAIN**

*Sidat, Khonat, and Desai M.*

**RESOLVED –**

That the draft resolution setting the Council Tax for 2024/25, be approved as set out in Appendix 1 of the report submitted and in also in the Appendices to these Minutes.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum

On 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024

(being the ensuing meeting on the Finance Council) by

MAYOR

### Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

#### Draft Council Tax Resolution 2024/25 – Finance Council 26<sup>th</sup> February 2024

#### The Council is recommended to resolve as follows:

1. That it be noted that on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022, the Council calculated the Council Tax Base for the year 2023/24 in accordance with regulations made under Section 31B(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as amended (the Act):
  - a) 37,069.75 being the Council Tax Base for the whole of the Council area (Item T in the formula in Section 31B of the Act); and
  - b) for dwellings in those parts of its area to which a Parish precept relates, as detailed in Appendix 2.
2. That the following amounts be calculated for the year 2024/25 in accordance with Sections 31 to 36 of the Act:
  - a) £486,872,424 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(2) (a) to (f) of the Act taking into account all precepts issued to it by Parish Councils.
  - b) £417,309,028 being the aggregate of the amounts which the Council estimates for the items set out in Section 31A(3) (a) to (d) of the Act.
  - c) £69,563,396 being the amount by which the aggregate at 2 (a) above exceeds the aggregate at 2 (b) above, calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31A(4) of the Act, as its Council Tax requirement for the year. (Item R in the formula in Section 31B of the Act).
  - d) £1,876.55 being the amount at 2 (c) above (Item R) divided by the amount at 1(a) above (Item T), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 31B of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year (including Parish precepts).
  - e) £186,396.31 being the aggregate amount of all special items (Parish precepts) referred to in Section 34(1) of the Act (see Appendix 2).
  - f) £1,871.52 Being the amount at 2 (d) above less the result given by dividing the amount at 2 (e) above by Item T (1 (a) above), calculated by the Council, in accordance with Section 34 (2) of the Act, as the basic amount of its Council Tax for the year for dwellings in those parts of its area to which no Parish precept relates.

3. That it be noted that for the year 2024/25 the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Lancashire has issued a precept to the Council, in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as indicated in the tables below.
4. That it be noted that for the year 2024/25 the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority has issued a precept to the Council in accordance with Section 40 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, as indicated in the tables below, however at the time of writing this report, the precept had yet to be presented to the Lancashire Fire Authority meeting (scheduled for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2024).
5. That the Council, in accordance with Sections 30 and 36 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, hereby sets the aggregate amounts shown in the tables below as the amounts of Council Tax for the year 2024/24 for each part of its area and for each of the categories of dwellings.

a) Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council

<u>Part of the Council's Area</u>	<u>Valuation Bands</u>							
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>
Eccleshill Parish	£1,262.95	£1,473.45	£1,683.94	£1,894.43	£2,315.41	£2,736.40	£3,157.38	£3,788.86
Livesey Parish	£1,253.57	£1,462.50	£1,671.43	£1,880.36	£2,298.22	£2,716.08	£3,133.93	£3,760.72
North Turton Parish	£1,266.05	£1,477.06	£1,688.07	£1,899.08	£2,321.10	£2,743.12	£3,165.13	£3,798.16
Pleasington Parish	£1,251.47	£1,460.04	£1,668.62	£1,877.20	£2,294.36	£2,711.51	£3,128.67	£3,754.40
Tockholes Parish	£1,278.49	£1,491.57	£1,704.65	£1,917.73	£2,343.89	£2,770.05	£3,196.22	£3,835.46
Yate and Pickup Bank Parish	£1,262.43	£1,472.84	£1,683.24	£1,893.65	£2,314.46	£2,735.27	£3,156.08	£3,787.30
Darwen Town Council	£1,256.00	£1,465.33	£1,674.67	£1,884.00	£2,302.67	£2,721.33	£3,140.00	£3,768.00
All other parts of the Council's area	£1,247.68	£1,455.63	£1,663.57	£1,871.52	£2,287.41	£2,703.31	£3,119.20	£3,743.04

b) Major Precepting Authorities

<u>Precepting Authority</u>	<u>Valuation Bands</u>							
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>
Lancashire Police Authority	£175.60	£204.87	£234.13	£263.40	£321.93	£380.47	£439.00	£526.80
Lancashire Combined Fire Authority	£56.49	£65.90	£75.32	£84.73	£103.56	£122.39	£141.22	£169.46

c) Aggregate Council Tax

<u>Part of the Council's Area</u>	<u>Valuation Bands</u>							
	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>	<u>E</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>G</u>	<u>H</u>
Eccleshill Parish	£1,495.04	£1,744.22	£1,993.39	£2,242.56	£2,740.90	£3,239.26	£3,737.60	£4,485.12
Livesey Parish	£1,485.66	£1,733.27	£1,980.88	£2,228.49	£2,723.71	£3,218.94	£3,714.15	£4,456.98
North Turton Parish	£1,498.14	£1,747.83	£1,997.52	£2,247.21	£2,746.59	£3,245.98	£3,745.35	£4,494.42
Pleasington Parish	£1,483.56	£1,730.81	£1,978.07	£2,225.33	£2,719.85	£3,214.37	£3,708.89	£4,450.66
Tockholes Parish	£1,510.58	£1,762.34	£2,014.10	£2,265.86	£2,769.38	£3,272.91	£3,776.44	£4,531.72
Yate and Pickup Bank Parish	£1,494.52	£1,743.61	£1,992.69	£2,241.78	£2,739.95	£3,238.13	£3,736.30	£4,483.56
Darwen Town Council	£1,488.09	£1,736.10	£1,984.12	£2,232.13	£2,728.16	£3,224.19	£3,720.22	£4,464.26
All other parts of the Council's area	£1,479.77	£1,726.40	£1,973.02	£2,219.65	£2,712.90	£3,206.17	£3,699.42	£4,439.30

Town and Parish Council Precepts

<u>Parish / Town Council</u>	<u>2023/24</u>				<u>2024/25</u>				<u>Council Tax Increase / (Reduction)</u> Council Tax Band D <u>2024/25 less 2023/24</u>
	<u>Tax Base</u>	<u>Precepts</u>	<u>Grant</u>	<u>Council Tax</u> <u>Band D</u>	<u>Tax Base</u>	<u>Precepts</u>	<u>Grant</u>	<u>Council Tax</u> <u>Band D</u>	
		£	£	£		£	£	£	£
Eccleshill Parish	92.44	2,429.00	413.50	26.28	112.89	2,586.50	413.50	22.91	(3.37)
Livesey Parish	2,335.57	19,665.00	1,371.00	8.42	2,567.59	22,697.00	1,371.00	8.84	0.42
North Turton Parish	1,778.74	32,159.00	1,241.00	18.08	1,772.68	48,859.00	1,241.00	27.56	9.48
Pleasington Parish	259.25	1,450.00	0.00	5.59	255.06	1,450.00	0.00	5.68	(0.09)
Stockholes Parish	207.90	9,010.96	146.00	43.34	204.93	9,468.81	146.00	46.21	2.87
Yate and Pickup Bank Parish	145.82	3,227.00	260.00	22.13	146.41	3,240.00	260.00	22.13	0.00
Darwen Town Council	7,722.97	98,095.00	23,905.00	12.70	7,858.13	98,095.00	23,905.00	12.48	(0.22)
<b>TOTAL / AVERAGE</b>	<b>12,542.69</b>	<b>164,384.02</b>	<b>27,336.50</b>	<b>4.57</b>	<b>12,917.69</b>	<b>186,396.31</b>	<b>27,336.50</b>	<b>5.03</b>	<b>0.46</b>