

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE
BUDGET WORKING GROUP
HELD AT NELSON TOWN HALL
ON 1st OCTOBER, 2015**

PRESENT –

Councillor M. Iqbal (Chairman – in the Chair)

Councillors

*J. Cooney
A. R. Greaves
C. Wakeford
D. Whalley
D. M. Whipp
P. White*

(Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A. Mahmood, G. Roach and Dean Langton (Strategic Director)).

Also in attendance

<i>Philip Mousdale</i>	<i>Corporate Director</i>
<i>Vince Green</i>	<i>Financial Services Manager</i>
<i>Jane Watson</i>	<i>Senior Committee Administrator</i>

13. MINUTES

AGREED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd September, 2015 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

14. PROGRESS UPDATE ON SAVINGS TO-DATE

The Financial Services Manager reported on progress on savings to-date. In relation to the business rates pooling a letter had been sent to the DCLG about the financial arrangements for 2016/17. A response had been received from DCLG which advised that the arrangements for pooling in 2016/17 had not yet been confirmed. However, informally, DCLG did suggest that any expression of interest be submitted by the end of October.

AGREED

That the Andrew Stephenson MP be asked to intercede on behalf of the Council to progress this decision.

15. CEMETERIES – FEES AND CHARGES

As requested at the previous meeting the Councils fees and charges for cemeteries were submitted for information. In responses it was agreed to defer further consideration on this matter until later in the budget process.

16. DELIVERING THE SAVINGS REQUIRED – OPTIONS TO BRIDGE THE GAP

Details of the options available to bridge the savings 'gap' were submitted for information. The Financial Services Manager highlighted the areas where a decision was yet to be made and it was noted that of the £1.47m savings required to be saved only £682,160 had been identified to-date.

With this shortfall in mind it was suggested that consideration be given to savings options for years 2 and 3 (2017/18 and 2018/19). Whilst items identified for consideration during this period were more on a strategic level officers felt it was important to explore the scope to bring options forward to help bridge the gap.

AGREED

That the position be noted.

17. PUBLIC AWARENESS OF THE COUNCIL'S FINANCIAL POSITION HOW TO GET THE MESSAGE ACROSS

The Working Group discussed how they could raise awareness of the Council's financial position with members of the public. Although the Council had undertaken a number of savings challenges over recent years it was felt the public did not appreciate the extent of these savings and the savings that were still required over the next three years.

Various means of communicating this information were considered from a short animated film to an old fashioned press conference. It was also suggested that publicity around the transfer of services and facilities to Town and Parish Councils was a good angle to focus on and that this could have a big impact on the public's awareness of the Council's financial position.

AGREED

- (1) That the idea of commissioning a short animated film not be pursued.
- (2) That the Leadership Group be presented with a draft communications plan on the Council's financial position to the public.

Due to the disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial and business affairs (including employees) of Pendle Leisure Trust the following item was considered to be private and confidential.

18. PENDLE LEISURE TRUST – OPTIONS FOR SAVINGS

Phil Storey and Jason Whittaker from Pendle Leisure Trust attended the meeting and discussed with the Group a number of potential saving proposals that would, if agreed, result in a reduction in the management fee paid by the Council to the Trust.

The Group talked at length about various issues and these were listed in the savings proposal pro-form which had been circulated to Members. There was a lengthy discussion about various issues and in particular the arrangements and associated financial implications of the Blues Festival.

AGREED

- (1) That the savings proposals for Pendle Leisure Trust be noted.
- (2) That a meeting be sought with representatives from Pendle Leisure Trust, Members of Colne and District Committee and Colne Town Council to discuss the future of the Blues Festival.

Chairman _____