

# **BOROUGH OF BARROW IN FURNESS**

## **OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Meeting: Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> February, 2022  
at 2.00 pm. (Banqueting Hall).

PRESENT:- Councillors McLeavy (Chairman), Cassidy (Vice-Chairman), Assouad, Gawne, McClure, McEwan, Morgan, Preston and C. Thomson.

Officers Present:- Paula Westwood (Scrutiny and Democratic Services Team Leader) and Katie Pepper (Democratic and Electoral Services Officer).

### **36 – Apologies for Absence/Attendance of Substitute Member**

Apologies for absence had been submitted from Councillor M. A. Thomson.

Councillor Assouad had attended as a substitute for Councillor M. A. Thomson.

### **37 – Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> December, 2022 had been omitted from the Agenda pack. It had been noted that those minutes would be reported to the next Committee meeting for approval.

### **38 – Public Participation**

RESOLVED:- To note that no questions, representations, deputations or petitions had been received in respect of the meeting.

### **39 – Budget Proposals 2022-2023**

The Director of Resources submitted a detailed report regarding the 2022/2023 budget proposals. She reported that the 2022-2023 General Fund revenue budget was proposed as £8,841,970 which included £148,760 for the parish precepts.

The £8,841,970 budget included one-off items that related to the prior year results of the Collection Fund for Council Tax and Business Rates; the core funding for the budget was £11,181,940.

It had been proposed that the Council Tax be increased by £5 per year at Band D (2.04%); 59% of properties were in Band A and that increase would equate to £3.33 for the year, 6 pence per week.

RESOLVED: - To note the Budget Proposals 2022-2023 and agree that the following recommendations be presented to Executive Committee on 9th February, 2022 for their consideration:-

- Set the 2022-2023 General Fund revenue budget as £8,841,970 including £148,760 for parish precepts;
- Agree a Council Tax increase of £5 on Band D which is equivalent to 2.04% on all Council Tax bands;
- Approve £16,000 of funding for Cumbria Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) for 2022-2023;
- Agree the total net use of £320,140 of reserves;
- Note the movement in reserves between financial years related to the precepting arrangements for Business Rates of £2,257,900;
- Note the Council Tax Base at 19,899.25;
- Note that there are no fee and charges increases proposed; and
- Approve the inclusion of £817,000 in the Capital Programme as a Leisure Centre project line.

#### **40 – Work Programme Update**

The Scrutiny and Democratic Services Team Leader reported that Work Groups had been established to review the topics identified in the 2021/2022 Work Programme. Her report outlined a summary of the progress made in respect of each topic as follows:-

##### Flooding on Walney Promenade

At the meeting in October 2021, representatives from United Utilities had addressed the Committee and provided an update on the plans being made for the sewer network to prevent flooding on Walney Promenade. It was anticipated that the works could be completed within a 12-18 month timeframe and United Utilities had confirmed that they would be happy to provide regular updates to the Committee as appropriate. This review had therefore been paused for the time being.

The Committee had requested the Scrutiny and Democratic Services Team Leader to contact the representatives from United Utilities with a view to providing an update at the March or May meeting.

##### Discretionary Housing Fund and Supported Housing Payments

The Work Group had wished to undertake a ‘Deep Dive’ into the support available to vulnerable residents in HMOs and supported housing accommodation, looking at both the needs of the residents as well as the financial aspect to the Council.

It had been noted at the meeting of the Committee on 16th December, 2021 that the Executive Committee had taken up the ‘Deep Dive’ on behalf of the Work Group and would provide feedback on progress in due course. This review had therefore been paused for the time being.

The Chair had raised concerns that this review had been taken out of the Committee’s hands which they had originally been tasked to do. In the absence of the Chair of the Work Group (Councillor M. A. Thomson), the Committee had requested the Scrutiny

and Democratic Services Team Leader to contact the chair of the Executive Committee to obtain an update on the issue.

### Arrangements for the Management of Piel Island

At the meeting on 16th December, 2021 the Committee had received a detailed report from the Director of People and Place regarding the future management arrangements of Piel Island. The Committee had considered the report and agreed a number of recommendations to the Executive Committee (Minute No. 34 of the meeting held on 16th December, 2021 refers).

A number of questions had been raised at the previous Committee meeting and Councillor McClure, Chair of the Work Group, had advised that those would be taken forward to the meeting of the Work Group in January.

Councillor McClure (Chair of the Work Group) provided the Committee with an update stating that at the last Work Group meeting on 25<sup>th</sup> January, 2022 they had agreed they were happy for the review to be concluded. The Chair had requested Councillor McClure to report her recommendations at the next Committee meeting to conclude the review.

### Impact of Covid-19 Going Forward

The Work Group had met on 14th January. Information had been noted including:-

- Over the Christmas and New Year Period Barrow had recorded the highest rate of covid cases per 100,000 population in the country;
- The number of cases in Cumbria appeared to have peaked and were now levelling out;
- Like the rest of the country, Barrow had seen staffing problems due to the sheer number of people off sick isolating;
- Barrow had a Covid Compliance Team contracted until 31st October, 2022 comprising of one Covid Compliance Officer plus four Contact Tracers, supporting the NHS National Test and Trace by contacting hard-to-reach Covid positive people in the local area. The Team were also supporting businesses, working on compliance techniques and identifying improvements.
- Town Hall Staff and Members had received communications strongly encouraging them to work from home unless there was a business need to be in the building.

The Work Group had agreed to meet monthly for the time being so that if any problems arose, they could be picked up quickly and the situation could be reviewed.

### Additional Item for Consideration

The Chair advised the Committee that himself and other Members had been made aware of ongoing issues in the Crellin Street vicinity emanating from food takeaway delivery services and proposed that this be added to the Work Programme.

RESOLVED:-

1. To note the updates on progress in respect of each of the Work Groups; and
2. To agree that a Work Group be established to look into the issues on Crellin Street comprising of Cllr McEwan (Chair), Cassidy, Gawne, McClure and M. A. Thomson.

The meeting closed at 2:45 p.m.