Budget Task Group Minutes

Notes of the meeting of the Budget Task Group held on Tuesday 15 November 2011 at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Members present:

Councillor Anderson  Councilor Hodgkinson
Councillor E Anderton  Councilor Lawrenson
Councillor Balmain  Councilor Lees
Councillor Brooks (Chairman)  Councilor McCann
Councillor M Gandhi  Councilor Martin
Councillor R Gandhi  Councilor Perkin

Officers present:

Philippa Davies, Corporate Director of Resources
Michael Ryan, Corporate Director of People and Places
Chris Walne, Venues General Manager
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer

BTG.  Apologies for Absence
19

Apologies were received from Councillor M Vincent

BTG.  Declarations of Interest
20

None

BTG.  Minutes of last meeting
21

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 25 October 2011 were agreed as a true record.

BTG.  Chairman’s Opening Remarks
22

This being the last meeting of this particular round of Budget Task Group meetings, the Chairman thanked members of the task group, the officers who had supported the group and other officers who had attended as witnesses for the contributions that they had made. He was particularly pleased to see members from the opposition group and thanked them for their contribution.

Cllr Brooks reminded members of the degree of independence and objectivity that an effective scrutiny process brings to the decisions that are made by the
Executive on behalf of Council Tax Payers.

**BTG. Fees and Charges – Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre**

Michael Ryan, Corporate Director of People and Places, acknowledged that the Marine Hall benefitted from a large subsidy from Council Tax payers. The Hall needed a fresh approach and a more realistic charging structure was also required in order to reduce the deficit.

Chris Walne, recently appointed as Venues General Manager, summarised his background and experience, which was extensive in show business and leisure management.

Mr Walne presented the proposed fees and charges for the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre for 2012/13.

The task group were wholly supportive of the Managers’ proposals which included:

- The phasing out of hourly rates and the introduction of a 4 hour minimum occupancy. (Such rates to include 1 member of staff as opposed to the 4 currently provided).
- Hourly overtime charges for any additional support.
- Simplification of the charging structure, moving away from commercial, semi-commercial and non-commercial and introducing commercial/profession or community/amateur rates.

The Chairman thanked Mr Ryan and Mr Walne for their attendance and contribution to the work of the task group.

**BTG. Cemeteries**

The task group had considered some comparative figures on the costs of bereavement services in Blackpool and Fylde. They were also advised that the reasons that Preesall cemetery appeared to operate at a significantly higher cost than Fleetwood and Poulton were two-fold:

- that the income from burials was much greater in Fleetwood and Poulton than in Preesall, and,
- that there was a wider range of bereavement services available at Fleetwood and Poulton (e.g. columbaria)

There was a general trend of increased expenditure and reduced income in 2011/12, when compared to 2010/11 actuals, at all three of the council’s cemeteries, which was noted by members.

The task group had previously expressed a view that they were generally supportive of the principal of ensuring that the cemeteries service broke even and suggested that the fees should be increased annually to avoid the need for steeper rises at a later date. The task group proposed that fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.
In response to a previous question from members about swimming pool opening times, it was confirmed that some changes had been made to public swimming times on Fridays only, but those changes did not appear to have affected attendance figures or income to date, according to Mr Dave Parker, General Manager of the Fleetwood YMCA. Further clarification was sought as to the actual hours that were available for public swimming, and on which days and at what times.

Details of room usage at the Garstang Community Centre were provided to members as they had requested.

Philippa Davies advised members that, following a query from Cllr Berry, Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder, car park season ticket prices had been reconsidered and, in particular, the cash discount for each period. The revised prices were reported as being:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERIOD</th>
<th>COST</th>
<th>DISCOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 month</td>
<td>43.75</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>122.50</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>227.50</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>364.00</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The task group supported this proposal.

Philippa informed members that Danfo had confirmed that they had sought legal advice on their proposals, and a response was awaited.

No further meetings were arranged.

APPENDIX

Review of Fees and Charges 2012/13 – Budget Scrutiny Review – Recommendations
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject Area</th>
<th>Portfolio Recommendation</th>
<th>Holders</th>
<th>Supporting Information</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Planning (pre application discussions)</td>
<td>Increase fees by approximately 5% to reflect inflation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The task group propose that fees should be increased in line with September's CPI of 5.2%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cemeteries</td>
<td>No increase proposed due to previous increases.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparable costs at Blackpool and Fylde. Actual service costs 2006/07 to 2010/11. Draft Estimates for 2012/13</td>
<td>The task group generally support the principal of ensuring that the cemeteries service breaks-even and suggest that the fees should be increased annually to avoid the need for steeper rises at a later date. The task group therefore suggest that fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre | Original proposal was to increase fees by approximately 3% but this proposal was subsequently withdrawn pending a fundamental review by the newly appointed Marine Hall Manager. |         | Comparable fees and charges at other venues. Impact of new prices on existing hirers. | The task group are wholly supportive of the Managers proposals which include:  
  - The phasing out of hourly rates and the introduction of a 4 hour minimum occupancy. (Such rates to include 1 member of staff as opposed to the 4 currently provided).  
  - Hourly overtime charges for any additional support.  
  - Simplification of the charging structure, moving away from commercial, semi-commercial and non-commercial and introducing commercial/profession or community/amateur rates. |
<p>| Leisure Centres (including pools) | The fees and charges are determined by the YMCA Board (with involvement from the Council) and reflect a 3% increase. |         | Availability of the pools for public swimming. | N/a |
| Garstang Community Centre  | No increase proposed to maintain and encourage use by community groups. |         | No. of vacant rooms/availability of space at the centre | The Garstang Room and the Wedding/Meeting Room fees to remain at the 2011/12 rates. The Old Tourist Information Centre (rooms G11 and G12) are now let to the Fig Tree and are no longer available for hire and should therefore be removed from the report. |
| Outdoor Leisure               | A 3% increase was considered the maximum possible to maintain use. |         |                        | The task group propose that fees should be increased in line with September's CPI of 5.2%. |</p>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Private Sector Housing Grant Assistance (excluding disabled facilities grant applications)</strong></td>
<td>A 4.4% increase in line with the current CPI.</td>
<td></td>
<td>The task group propose that fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject Area</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Recommendation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pest Control and Drain Clearance</strong></td>
<td>A 4.4% increase in line with the current CPI.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparable figures from private sector pest control companies. Actual service costs 2006/07 to 2010/11. No. of treatments performed in 10/11.</td>
<td>Members note that in respect of the treatment of rodents this often cannot be isolated to one house and therefore are supportive of a continued subsidy in this area. The task group propose that the fee for rodent control at domestic properties be increased from £30 to £35 and that all other fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Food Safety (excluding Fishery Hygiene and Ship Sanitation Certificates)</strong></td>
<td>A 4.4% increase in line with the current CPI.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The task group propose that fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dog Warden (excluding fixed penalty charges)</strong></td>
<td>Fees to remain at the 2011/12 rates.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The task group propose that fees should be increased in line with September’s CPI of 5.2%.</td>
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Note: Unless specifically referred to in the table above, all the remaining Portfolio Holder recommendations were agreed.