

COUNCILLOR AMANDA ROBERTSON, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 26th February 2014

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Robertson (in the Chair)
Councillors Aldred, Ashworth, Barnes, Bleakley, Cheetham,
Crawforth, Creaser, Essex, Evans, Farrington, Fletcher, Gill,
Hughes, Jackson, Kenyon, Knowles, MacNae, Marriott, Milling
(part), Morris, Neal, Oakes, Pilling, Procter, Roberts, Sandiford,
Serridge, D.Smith, M.Smith and Wilkinson.

IN ATTENDANCE: Helen Lockwood, Chief Executive
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager

ALSO PRESENT: County Councillor Stansfield
1 representative of the press
7 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors De Souza, Eaton, Lamb and McInnes. It was also noted that Councillors Milling and Shipley may be arriving late.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 11th December 2013 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. OUTSTANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS FROM THE LAST MEETING

There were no outstanding items to report.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following issues were raised by members of the public and were answered by the Leader or designated person:

No	Issue	Questioner	Answered by (and action)
1.	Proposal by Peel to increase wind turbines.	Mr G.Barker	Councillor Barnes informed that she would not be putting forward a view point at this time owing to the regulatory role regarding planning.
2.	New homes bonus and an indication on the number of new homes promised. What would happen if the target was not met?	Mr J. Atherton	Councillor Barnes confirmed the number quoted was part of the global figure. There was a need to weigh up each application, money did not need to be returned if the target was not met, but the pressure to build was enormous.
3.	Plans to make grass cutters redundant and whether this would provide a better service. Grass verges in Hareholme and reliance on Civic Pride and public.	Mr M. Pickup	Councillor Barnes informed that the same levels of service cannot be expected. Consultation had taken place which confirmed priority areas. She thanked Civic Pride and other environment groups for their efforts. With 5 million in funding cuts things would have to change, but she would take a look at issues in Hareholme.

N.B. Councillor Milling entered the meeting.

7. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR, THE LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Leader reminded members about the public consultation in relation to the Rawtenstall master plan, which would take place at Longholme Methodist on 7-8th March. She encouraged people to attend to give their feedback on the plans and informed that St Mary's School and Alder Grange would be taking part in the interactive sessions.

The Chief Executive informed that at the Cabinet meeting on 23rd October it was agreed to establish a Consultation Working Group and that the members of the group had now been confirmed as Councillors De Souza, Essex, Gill, Jackson, Marriott, Sandiford and Wilkinson.

The Mayor informed members that the Department for Communities and Local Government had informed the Council of new legislation, which required Council's to have a recorded vote on key decisions relating to budget setting and council tax. Whilst

the Council's Standing Orders had not yet been amended, members were asked to consider proposing a recorded vote on item E1 (minute 9).

Councillor Serridge moved and Councillor Barnes seconded that members take a recorded vote on item E1 (minute 9). Members voted on the motion.

Resolved:

That a recorded vote be taken on item E1 (minute 9).

8. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The following issues were raised by Councillors and answered by the Leader or designated person:

No	Issue	Questioner	Answered by (and action)
1.	SRB funding and improvements to the wider community. Free Press article criticising that funding was not coming in with reference to "forgotten towns," but a large amount of funding had been brought in via various projects and sources.	Councillor Neal	Councillor Barnes informed that in Haslingden and Bacup the schemes were run through a Partnership Board which ensured the schemes benefitted local people and businesses. She thanked Councillor Neal for informing members of the various funding projects over the years.
2.	No direct access for emergency vehicles regarding the MP proposal to open up the hard shoulder to traffic on the M66 to ease congestion.	Councillor Bleakley	Councillor Barnes informed that the proposals would not increase the capacity.
3.	UK Competitiveness Index 2013, and is Rossendale's success attributable to Central Government's long term economic plan?	Councillor Hughes	Councillor MacNae informed that success was down to regeneration and encouraging investment in the area in addition to joint projects such as superfast broadband with LCC.
4.	Flooding and Council Tax refunds or rebates similar to the Somerset levels.	Councillor Essex	Councillor Barnes informed that since 2012 there had been a working group with the Environment Agency/LCC/RBC and United Utilities who were being pro-active in flood prevention. The situation in Rossendale was not on the same scale as Somerset. There

			were additional resources to continue flood prevention work.
5.	Loss of jobs and economy in Haslingden through businesses closing.	Councillor Morris	Councillor MacNae informed that they were working to retain businesses in Rossendale by helping them to attract funding or expand and grow. Development of industrial sites in Haslingden would attract investment in the area, as would working jointly with LCC on the transport infrastructure.
6.	£250 million taken away from flood defences, RBC's added resources were a better way forward.	Councillor Wilkinson	Councillor Barnes informed that more pressure was required for more investment.
7.	MP Jake Berry taking credit for good work and achievement of partners. Rossendale were the largest jumpers in the growth index.	Councillor Serridge	Councillor Marriott circulated a map detailing where funding cuts had been made most in the country, and encouraged councillor to condemn the cuts. Councillor MacNae informed that over the last 3 years people had seen a big difference in Rossendale with the Valley Centre, Morrisons, Bacup THI, and RBC would continue to move in an upward direction.
8.	In parliament, MP Jake Berry was in favour of bedroom tax, did the Leader agree that he was not supporting Rossendale people?	Councillor Hughes	Councillor Barnes agreed.
9.	Free Press article and Councillor D.Smith's views regarding the new homes bonus.	Councillor Ashworth	Councillor Barnes informed that she welcomed the money, but it would not replace the £5 million reduction in the budget.
10.	Concern that the government was not committed to supporting disabled people with reference to the disabled facilities grant.	Councillor Jackson	Councillor Marriott shared Councillor Jackson's concerns and placed on record the Labour Group's thanks to Together Housing for the £200k commitment to help disabled people to stay in their homes.

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS

9. 2014/15 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Council considered the 2014/15 Revenue Budget and Council Tax Setting and the Medium Term Financial Strategy report. The Mayor informed members that an amended Appendix 1 had been circulated following receipt of the precept notices.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Technical resolution at Appendix 1.
- Corporate priorities.
- Understanding local government finances.
- Directed to make savings by central government and hold council tax down.
- Presentation of accounts.
- Housing benefit.
- Cuts to the welfare budget.
- Council tax benefits.
- New homes bonus.
- Council reserves.
- Council income.
- Reductions in litter picking and grass cutting.
- Cuts in special responsibility allowances.
- Reductions in the number of councillors.
- Working days for refuse collection.
- Back office review.
- Best value for money.
- Shared services e.g. with Rochdale or Bury.
- Trade Union pressures.
- Parks and Open Spaces charges.
- Support Council Tax freeze.
- Thanks to S151 Officer and finance team.
- Council's role as a collection authority has no bearing on the budget.
- Balanced budget as required by law.
- Operating in a challenging environment.
- Holding council tax down whilst making investments.
- Supporting young people through apprenticeship scheme.
- Investment in flood defences.
- Investment in Haslingden.
- Grants help and assist the financial position.
- Look into more joint working.
- Savings from member allowances e.g. 50% cut from special responsibilities and saving in excess of £50k from member allowances to fund apprentices.
- Housing and the work of the Financial Inclusion Group.
- Cuts in housing benefit and people with no alternative suitable housing.
- Most people on benefits in Rossendale are in work.
- Welcome funding for Haslingden.
- No spare funds for keeping the pool open for Friends of Haslingden Baths.

- Pool floodlights on all night.
- Tackling obesity.
- Number of takeaways in Haslingden.
- Takeaways are closed during the day, which adds to a depleted shopping experience.
- Number of signatures to keep the baths open.
- Pool closure has meant decreased footfall for Haslingden high street.
- Finances stretched.
- Frontline staff and service levels.
- Joint planning service with Hyndburn.
- Need to plan for further cuts down the line.
- Not supportive of 150% charges to owners of second homes.
- Reasons why homes may be empty e.g. bereavement or state of property market.
- Properties in disrepair.
- Previous remuneration reviews and increases to allowances.
- Increases in special responsibilities.
- Members can take a cut in allowances by writing to Chief Executive.

Councillor Serridge moved and Councillor Barnes seconded that the special responsibility allowance for the Opposition Leader be removed as well as the special responsibility allowance for the Deputy Leader.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Coming with an alternative set of budget proposals.
- A member addressing the Independent Remuneration Panel for an increase in special responsibility allowance in respect of Overview and Scrutiny.

A personal statement was given by Councillor Sandiford in that the last statement was factually incorrect, in response Councillor Serridge agreed to circulate the relevant minutes to members.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Moving an amendment to 1.6.

Councillor Marriott confirmed that in relation to recommendation 1.6 members could accept or not accept an increase in line with inflation.

Councillor Neal moved and Councillor Smith seconded that Council approve that the annual inflation increase in relation to Member Allowances was not applied and furthermore that there be a reduction of 50% to all elected members special responsibilities, and that this be used to towards the funding of the Apprentice Scheme.

The Chief Executive confirmed that any changes to Member Allowances had to come from an Independent Remuneration Panel.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Councillors give up a lot of time and often need to take time out of work, without the basic allowance they wouldn't be able to do their job.

Councillor Serridge withdrew his amendment.

The Mayor confirmed that special responsibility allowances do not have to be taken.

Councillor Neal informed that he had moved and Councillor Smith had seconded an amendment even though he noted it could only be done by a Remuneration Panel.

Councillor Serridge informed that members had been given advice by the Chief Executive in relation to member allowances and asked Councillor Neal if he would withdraw his amendment subject to his suggestions being forwarded to the Independent Remuneration Panel for them to consider as part of a full review. Councillor Neal sought assurance from the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council that this would be the case and agreed to withdraw his amendment on these terms.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Drainage and flood problems.
- Help for Irwell Vale and Strongstry.
- Rate relief.
- Consider different licensing charges for those working in and out of the borough.
- Discount for those operating in Rossendale.
- Plans for revisiting licensing charges and policy.

A point of order was raised by Councillor Essex that a member could only speak once during a debate.

Councillor Serridge moved and Councillor Marriott seconded that Standing Orders be suspended. Members voted on the motion and it was carried.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Current licensing legislation and court cases.
- Raising issues with the MP and relevant Minister.
- Council was not allowed to make a profit and fees covered administration costs.

Councillor Serridge moved and Councillor Marriott seconded that Standing Orders be reinstated. Members voted on the motion and it was carried.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- County Council increase in Council Tax.
- Bus Company losses and profits.
- A budget to do more with less.
- Dealing with pressing issues.
- Vulnerable people and modern poverty.
- Impact on working class people.
- 99.9% don't understand finances.

A personal explanation was given by Councillor Essex that he had not been speaking about members not understanding local government finances but members of the public.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Presentation of the accounts, national rules and legal requirements.
- Expenditure and the impact of inflation.
- Bacup Leisure Hall situation was the same as Haslingden baths.
- Map shows wealthy areas sheltered from cuts.
- Budget to support apprentices, flood defences and kick start regeneration in Haslingsden.

Voting took place on the recommendations of the report and amended Appendix 1 technical resolutions as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Aldred	For
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr Barnes	For
Cllr Bleakley	For
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Crawforth	For
Cllr Creaser	For
Cllr Essex	For
Cllr Evans	For
Cllr Farrington	For
Cllr Fletcher	For
Cllr Gill	For
Cllr Hughes	For
Cllr Jackson	For
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Knowles	For
Cllr MacNae	For
Cllr Marriott	For
Cllr Milling	For
Cllr Morris	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Oakes	For
Cllr Pilling	Against
Cllr Procter	For
Cllr Roberts	For

Cllr Robertson	For
Cllr Sandiford	For
Cllr Serridge	For
Cllr D Smith	For
Cllr M Smith	For
Cllr Wilkinson	For
Total For	30
Total Against	1

Resolved:

1. That Council reconfirms the following Corporate Priorities:

- **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
- **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
- **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.

2. Council approves a net revenue budget for 2014/15 of £8,905,235 (before the use of Transitional Reserves).
3. Council approve a 0% increase in Council Tax and that the Band D equivalent for 2014/15 remains at £253.40.
4. Council approve the amended technical resolution Appendix 1.
5. That Council approve the changes to Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 2 of the report.
6. That Council approve that the annual inflation increase in relation to Member Allowances is not applied.
7. That Council approve the changes to Council Tax discounts and premiums as noted in para 5.12.
8. That Council approves a local discretionary scheme for NNDR in relation to Retail Relief as per para 5.13 for 2014/15 and 2015/16. Any other changes to be delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

10. CAPITAL RESOURCES 2013-2016 AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Council considered the Capital Resources 2013-2016 and Capital Programme 2014/15 report. In presenting the report Councillor Marriott placed on record the Labour Group's thanks to officers in the preparation of the budget and this report.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Levels of reserves.
- Capital programme levels were not sufficient and hard choices had to be made on how Capital was used.
- Major obligations.
- Impact on buildings regarding the corporate building maintenance condition survey.
- If not enough money left, something won't get addressed.
- Like to see right level of investment into assets.

Resolved:

1. That members consider the potential resources for 2014/15 and the medium term.
2. That members approve the affordable capital programme for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1 of the report.
3. That members delegate the allocation of any additional resources, up to £400k, during 2014/15 to the Head of Finance and the Portfolio Holder, having regard to the capital receipts available. Any additional allocations to be reported to members via the Council's regular financial reporting framework.

11. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2014/2015)

The Council considered the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Updates for 2014/2015) report.

The Leader of the Council informed that a great deal of work had gone into the document and thanked staff for all their hard work, especially with the setting of the budget generally.

Resolved:

That members approve the revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the revised Treasury Management Practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES

12. Recommendation of the Governance and Training Working Group: Constitution Review

The Council considered the Constitution Review report.

Resolved:

1. That the Terms of Reference of the Consultation Working Group are added to part 3 of the Constitution and the reference to the group at part 2 - 2.06 (as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report).
2. That the Notices of Motion section be amended in the Constitution, to enable Notices of Motion to be submitted by email.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

13. URGENT DECISIONS

The Mayor reported that the Cabinet had not taken any urgent decisions since the last meeting.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.45pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date