

COUNCILLOR GRANVILLE MORRIS, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 1st March 2017

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Morris (in the Chair)
Councillors Aldred, Ashworth, A. Barnes, Bromley, Cheetham, Crawforth, James Eaton, Janet Eaton, Farrington, Fletcher, Haworth, Hughes, Johnson, Kempson, Kenyon, Lamb, Lythgoe, MacNae, Marriott, McMahon, Neal, Oakes, Procter, Roberts, Robertson, Serridge, Shipley, Smallridge, Smith, Stansfield, Steen and Walmsley.

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Chief Executive
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)
Sam Plum, Director of Communities
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
George Taylor, Mayor's Attendant
John Illingworth, Mayor's Attendant

ALSO PRESENT: Katie Gee, Corporate Officer
2 members of the public
1 press

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillor L.Barnes, Essex and Graham.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14th December 2016 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

The following non-pecuniary declarations of interest were made in relation to minute 7:

- Rossendale Transport Director – Councillors Cheetham, Crawforth, Marriott, Oakes and Walmsley

5. Outstanding Items of Business

There were no outstanding items of business.

6. Communications from the Mayor, the Leader or Head of Paid Service

The Mayor, Leader of the Council and Head of Paid Service had no communications to report.

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS

7. 2017/18 CORPORATE PRIORITIES, BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Council considered the 2017/18 Corporate Priorities, Budget, Council Tax and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Councillor James Eaton moved an amendment to take the vote individually on recommendations 1.1 to 1.8, which was seconded by Councillor Stansfield.

Voting took place on the amendment, which was lost.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, Councillor Marriott, asked members to note the technical resolution amendment. He placed on record his thanks to the Finance and Management Teams in assisting the Cabinet in bringing forward the proposals.

In presenting the report, Councillor Marriott brought members attention to the following:

- Reduced funds from central government going forward.
- Working towards fiscal changes into the medium term.
- It had been an open process and comments had been listened to throughout the process.
- Thanks to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their diligence in scrutinising the proposals and also members of the public who took part in the consultation process.
- Council now had to rely on Council Tax and other funding streams.
- £600k funding cuts were announced on Christmas Eve, which equated to £3 million over the medium term.
- Limited resources were available for community benefit in the future, as the Council had to ensure it fulfilled statutory services.
- An additional round of cuts had been announced, the details of which would not be known until the 8th March.
- Not confusing the failure of AAW with the real issue of managing the recovery of the programme.
- The cost of the Empty Homes Scheme had been anticipated and it was not expected to be a material part of future budgets.
- There had been no amendments suggested throughout the consultation process.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Thanks to the Finance Team for their excellent work over the past 12 months and professional way they had conducted the regular meetings with the lead opposition person.
- Empty Homes would cost in the region of £3 million.

- The Police investigation was still ongoing.
- More public spending cuts.
- Changes to the new homes bonus.
- The only way authorities can set a legal budget is to raise Council Tax.
- Relying on the work of community organisations to assist with delivering savings.
- The work done by the Leisure Trust and Rossendale Transport was commended.
- The Empty Homes Scheme report went to all 36 councillors who accepted it was a good scheme based on the information given at that time.
- The scheme was also approved by 4 other partner local authorities at the time.
- AAW Ltd went bust.
- It was naive to say that problems solely rest with this Council.
- In 2010 there was a budget of £11¾ million compared to £9.44 million.
- In 2010 the revenue support grant was raised by ½ of 1%.

N.B. Councillor Serridge left the room.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Problems stem back to 2008 and the banking fraternity.
- National debt of £1.4 trillion.
- Next generations will suffer for years to come.
- Ford now considering pulling out following the Brexit vote.

N.B. Councillor Serridge returned to the meeting.

A point of order was raised that Councillor Steen had already spoken on this item. The Mayor agreed to let Councillor Steen respond to reply to a question during the debate

Members continued to discuss the following:

- When the coalition took over there was no money left.
- If there was no money, the government could not give what it has not got.
- It was about austerity and living within our means.
- Explain why the new homes bonus is being defended along with cuts to the disabled.
- No alternative budget had been proposed.
- Rossendale was a very small Council working under a lot of pressure.
- It had continued to deliver and bring in funding for projects such as THI, Rawtenstall town centre, Ski Rosendale, the cycleway and the Whitaker.
- Every year the Council existed on less and less, and £3 million had been cut since 2010.
- Thanks to Audit and their scrutiny as well.
- A lot more has gone out than we have received.
- Ensuring future partnerships are scrutinised more carefully.
- Revenue belongs to all of us as ratepayers.
- Sometimes partnerships are frustrating when things do not happen as quickly as expected.
- Money had been diverted to adult social care to help sort the situation out and help those with problems.
- Built up reserves have been slowly eroded away.

- Endeavour not to make mistakes in the future.
- Make partnerships stronger, as partnerships will play a big part going forwards.
- Need to concentrate on what people have identified as their main issues, such as dog fouling, and address these.
- Very proud of the borough.

Voting took place on the recommendations of the report as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Aldred	For
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr Alyson Barnes	For
Cllr Bromley	For
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Crawforth	For
Cllr Jimmy Eaton	Against
Cllr Janet Eaton	Against
Cllr Farrington	For
Cllr Fletcher	For
Cllr Haworth	For
Cllr Hughes	For
Cllr Johnson	For
Cllr Kempson	For
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Lamb	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr MacNae	For
Cllr McMahon	For
Cllr Marriott	For
Cllr Morris	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Oakes	For
Cllr Procter	For
Cllr Roberts	Against
Cllr Robertson	For
Cllr Serridge	For
Cllr Shipley	Against
Cllr Smallridge	For
Cllr Smith	For
Cllr Stansfield	Against
Cllr Steen	For
Cllr Walmsley	For
Total For	28
Total Against	5
Total Abstentions	0

Resolved:

1. Council approves the 2017/18 Council Tax Band D of £258.44 (being an increase of 1.99%).
2. Council approves the use of £199,000 from the Transitional Reserve and £700,000 from the Business Rates Retention reserve to support the 2017/18 annual budget.
3. Council approves a net revenue budget for 2017/18 of £9,440,000.
4. Council approves Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 2.
5. Council approves the transfer of the Rossendale Transport Limited pension surplus (c £220k) to Council.
6. Council approves the technical resolution at Appendix 1.
7. Council approves to opt into the national appointing arrangements for external audit appointments being undertaken by Public Sector Audit Appointments Limited.
8. Council freezes all Members allowances for 2017/18.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2017/18.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2017/18

The Council considered the Capital Resources and Capital Programme 2017/18 report. The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, Councillor Marriott, introduced the report and informed that despite cuts, there were still opportunities for capital spend and improvements in the borough.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Good report.
- Working with partnerships.
- Reliance on the windfarm outcome.
- How will the gap be bridged if the windfarm does not go ahead?
- There was money earmarked from the windfarm to help communities.
- The application went through the democratic process.
- Cannot afford to lose revenue in the budget.
- Come up with an alternative.
- More trees have been planted in Whitworth Cemetery without consulting Whitworth Town Council.

The Chief Executive clarified the circumstances under which a member could speak again during the discussion of an item. It could only be to raise a point of order, give a personal explanation, or to reply to a question put during the debate.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Update on funding for HAPPI.
- Being proactive in generating revenue and using capital resources to lever in other money.
- Match funding other projects and finding ways to generate more income and revenue.

- Future budgets predicate on the windfarm income coming in.
- If the Council demonstrated community support for the windfarm, it was assured the government would support it, but this has not happened.
- Delighted to see such a good capital programme.
- Hard work has been undertaken by officers and members over many years.
- The Leisure Trust were ahead of their targets by 2 years, and as of 31st March they would not need to rely on the Council for a grant.

Resolved:

1. Members considered the potential resources for 2017/18 and the medium term.
2. Members considered the affordable capital programme for 2017/18, as set out in Appendix 1, and approved the new capital expenditure projects totalling £885k.
3. Members agreed to delegate any minor amendments to the capital programme throughout the 2017/18 financial year to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council carries out a sustainable capital programme for 2017/18.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2017/18)

The Council considered the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Updates for 2017/2018) report. The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, Councillor Marriott, introduced the report and informed that it came before members every year. There was a slight difference in this year's report in that an opportunity had arisen for the Council to use cash on hand to look at a pre-payment option on the pension deficit.

N.B. Councillor Smallridge left the room.

Resolved:

1. Members approved the revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Treasury Management Policy and Practices.
2. Members agreed to delegate any further minor changes to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance.
3. Members agreed to authorise the Head of Finance to take advantage of any prepayment options offered, as noted in paragraph 5.9, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council continues to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management, and to continue to contain the Councils exposure to financial risk.

Alternative Options Considered

None

ORDINARY BUSINESS

10. Urgent Decisions

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

N.B. Councillor Smallridge returned to the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES

11. Constitution Review

The Council considered the recommendation of the Governance Working Group regarding the proposed changes to the Constitution in relation to the Financial Procedure Rules: Key controls.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Fully support the report.
- Ensuring robust project management.
- Using procedures to catch up on jobs in Bacup.

In response to a comment, the Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democratic Services, Councillor Oakes, confirmed that the jobs in Bacup were snagging jobs and this was standard practice.

Resolved:

1. That Council amend the Constitution as follows:

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Addition to Key Controls (4.47)

i) Where a contract includes the receipt of income on behalf of the Council, by the contractor (by way of an agency agreement or similar) the contractual arrangements should not allow netting off, by the contractor, of the contractors expenses, unless Officers can demonstrate an advantage to the Council.

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Addition to Key Controls (5.24)

d) To ensure the principles of robust project management are followed where appropriate, to include amongst other things: business case, measurable outcomes, governance, and risk management.

2. That members note the ongoing work in relation to the changes required to the Council's Constitution in Part 4 Contract Procedure Rules Section.

Reason for Decision

The Council is required by law to implement a Constitution and it is in the interests of the Council to regularly review and update the document.

Alternative Options Considered

None

12. Response to Resident Survey – Informing the Council’s Corporate Strategy

The Council considered the recommendation of the Cabinet in relation to the Response to Resident Survey report.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- A newspaper article detailed residents concerns about roads and pavements.
- Using 1% of income generated from fuel duty to fund road repairs.

Resolved:

That Council acknowledge the response to the residents survey which will lead to changes to the Council’s vision and priorities, enabling the Corporate Strategy to be developed.

Reason for Decision

The Council needs a new Corporate Strategy and the results of the Resident Survey will be useful in setting new priorities and a vision to align with our residents, our resources and the aim of the Council over the next three years.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The Mayor informed members of two charity events. The first event was at St. Peter’s Church, Haslingden on Friday 3rd March at 7.30pm where there would be entertainment from the Rossendale Male Voice Choir and Scout Band. The second was a fashion show on Sunday 19th March at St. Mary’s Chambers. Funds were being raised for North West Air Ambulance, Rossendale and Pendle Mountain Rescue and Veterans in Communities. Tickets were also on sale for the Grand Draw at £2.

(The meeting concluded at 8.00pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date