

COUNCILLOR JUDITH DRIVER, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

DATE OF MEETING: 5th March 2025

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Driver (in the Chair)
Councillors Adshead, Ashworth, A. Barnes, Bauld, Belli, Bleakley, Cheetham, Eaton, Gill, Hancock, Harris, Harrison, Hodgkiss, Holland, Kenyon, Looker, Lythgoe, McInnes, McMahon, Neal, Royds, M. Smith, S. Smith and Walmsley.

IN ATTENDANCE: Rob Huntington, Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer
Chris Warren, Director of Resources
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: 1 press
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Finance
Phillip Veevers, Mayor's Attendant

A short silence was held as a mark of respect for two former councillors: past Mayor of Rossendale John Holt and past Mayoress Janet Eaton.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors S Barnes, Norton, Payne, Proctor and Woods.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Annual Meeting held on 11th December 2024 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 declarations of interest were made:

- Councillor McInnes was a member of Friends of Whitaker Park and Civic Pride Rossendale (Item D3 minute 11).
- Councillors S. Smith and Lythgoe were Leisure Trust Board Members (Item C1 minute 6).

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

There were no communications from the Mayor or Head of Paid Service.

The Leader of the Council responded to a statement made by Councillor Neal and would take up his traffic light issue with Lancashire County Council (LCC).

An update was provided on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation in Lancashire and the next steps:

The new Lancashire County Combined Authority had been agreed by Parliament. The first meeting of the new authority would be held at County Hall in Preston on 11th March. The aim would be to have simpler structures leading to better outcomes, significant financial savings,

and improved accountability, especially in two-tier areas like Lancashire. It was expected that the new unitary authorities would be operational by April 2028. Several potential options were being considered by different Councils within Lancashire at present. Leaders supported by Chief Executives would work through the potential options prior to the November submission. There would be an approval process for Rossendale in due course as the proposals were developed.

In response to the update, it was confirmed that consultation would take place with residents throughout the process.

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS

6. 2025/26 Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Council considered the 2025/26 Council Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Officers and members were thanked for their work and input into the budget process and proposals.

Background information was circulated for consideration which related to an amendment, which was moved by Councillor Scott Smith and seconded by Councillor Hodgkiss as follows:

To remove the £6m capital provision for the proposed Waste Transfer Station in Bacup and make all necessary adjustments to the budget.

Members discussed the amendment and it was confirmed that:

- Officers were thanked for assisting with the amendment at short notice.
- The S151 Officer had confirmed that the amendment impact was deliverable within this financial year 2025/26.
- There would be impact beyond 2025/26 taking the Council below the government threshold.
- The need for a waste transfer station came out of the need for infrastructure detailed in the Integrated Waste Strategy.
- There was a current climate crisis, but technology existed to be able to deal with waste.
- Discussions were started in 2021 notifying about the closure of Whinney Hill.
- This was the responsibility of the County Council.

Councillors S. Smith, Hodgkiss and Holland requested a named vote on the amendment.

Members voted on the amendment becoming the substantive motion as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Adshead	Against
Cllr Ashworth	Against
Cllr Alyson Barnes	Against
Cllr Bauld	Against
Cllr Belli	Against
Cllr Bleakley	Against
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Driver	Against
Cllr Eaton	Against
Cllr Gill	Against
Cllr Hancock	Against
Cllr Harris	Against
Cllr Harrison	Against

Cllr Hodgkiss	For
Cllr Holland	For
Cllr Kenyon	Against
Cllr Looker	Against
Cllr Lythgoe	Against
Cllr McInnes	Against
Cllr McMahon	Against
Cllr Neal	Against
Cllr Royds	Against
Cllr Michelle Smith	Against
Cllr Scott Smith	For
Cllr Walmsley	Against
For:	4
Against:	21
Abstentions:	0

The motion was lost and members continued to discuss the original motion as follows:

- Thanks to the Finance Team for all their work on the budget.
- The predictions within the proposal would maintain the reserves until 2029.

Members voted on the recommendations of the report as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Adshead	For
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr Alyson Barnes	For
Cllr Bauld	For
Cllr Belli	For
Cllr Bleakley	For
Cllr Cheetham	Against
Cllr Driver	For
Cllr Eaton	For
Cllr Gill	For
Cllr Hancock	For
Cllr Harris	For
Cllr Harrison	For
Cllr Hodgkiss	Against
Cllr Holland	Against
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Looker	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr McInnes	For
Cllr McMahon	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Royds	For
Cllr Michelle Smith	For
Cllr Scott Smith	Against
Cllr Walmsley	For
For:	21
Against:	4
Abstentions:	0

Resolved:

Council approve:

1. A revenue budget for 2025/26 of £11.535m, as detailed in the report
2. A Council Tax increase of 2.99%, increasing the Council Tax rate for a Band D property from £308.44 to £317.66, an increase of £9.22 pa.
3. Use of £574k from the reserves to support the 2025/26 revenue budget.
4. The proposed fees and charges attached as Appendix 1
5. The technical resolution necessary to give effect to these budget proposals attached as Appendix 3

Reason for Decision

The financial position for the council, like all local authorities, is challenging and subject to a high-level of risk regarding the current economic position. The council is proposing to set a revenue budget for 2025/26 of £11.535m. The Council must remain focused on identifying and delivering further savings and income in order to ensure annual balanced budgets over the immediate and medium term. It must also ensure that all its budget resource allocations are directed to the core functions of the council and that the use of its resources drives the delivery of the council's Corporate Plan priorities.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

7. Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29 and Capital Strategy 2025/26

The Council considered the Capital Programme 2025/26 – 2028/29 and Capital Strategy 2025/26.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- The levels of investment were welcomed.
- Thanks would be given to the Finance Team.

Resolved:

Council approve:

1. The capital programme for 2025/26 and associated capital expenditure of £24.272m and further capital expenditure of £11,928m for the period between 2026/27 and 2028/29
2. The Capital Strategy 2025/26 is attached at Appendix A

Reason for Decision

The proposed capital programme for 2025/26 and up to 2028/29 represents an affordable plan, as indicated by the prudential borrowing performance indicators the Capital Strategy (Appendix B).

Alternative Options Considered

None.

8. Treasury Management Strategy & Treasury Management Practises

The Council considered the Treasury Management Strategy & Treasury Management Practises.

Resolved:

Council approve:

1. The Treasury Management Strategy Statement, including the borrowing strategy
2. The Investment Strategy, including Investment Indicators
3. The Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement

4. To delegate any further minor amendments to the Director of Resources (s.151) in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources.

Reason for Decision

To approve the adoption of the updated Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Policy and Practises, which will ensure continued compliance with the Code and continue to manage the council's exposure to financial risk. In light of the current economic climate and potential resultant changing cash flow requirements, Members are asked to delegate any minor amendments required within year to the Director of Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

9. Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26

The Council considered the Council Tax Support Scheme 2025/26.

Resolved:

That Full Council approve the Rossendale Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2025/26 as set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

Councils are required to set a Council Tax Support scheme annually, before the 11th March on the charge year, in this case 2025/26. No conclusive case for significant amendment to the scheme has been identified at this time.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

10. Council Pay Policy Statement

The Council considered the Council Pay Policy Statement.

Resolved:

Full Council approves the attached Pay Policy Statement.

Reason for Decision

The Pay Policy Statement meets the legal requirements as per the Localism Act 2011.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

11. UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2025-26

The Council considered the UK Shared Prosperity Funding 2025-26 report.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- There was a 25% revenue/75% capital split on the grant.
- It would be best to consult with the Whitworth Town Council Clerk regarding the funding.
- Blackpool was acting as the Combined Authority agent for the distribution of the funding.
- Officers would keep members updated regarding the payment and reporting mechanisms.

Resolved:

1. Full Council to authorise the acceptance of £857,874 UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) from the shadow Lancashire Combined County Authority.
2. Full Council to accept the proposed 25-26 investment plan and note the progress of 23-25 UKSPF funded projects.
3. Full Council to authorise the Head of Legal and Governance in conjunction with the Director of Resources to enter into necessary agreements to deliver the investment plan.
4. Full Council to delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development and Director of Resources to implement the investment plan and in conjunction with the lead member for Economic Development & Regeneration, make any required further minor amendments to the investment plan.

Reason for Decision

The UKSPF investment for 25-26 will continue the momentum gained through the first 3 years of the programme, leading to attractive and thriving town centres, enhanced leisure opportunities and support local businesses. This will help us achieve our economic and leisure aspirations.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

12. Acceptance of grants in relation to the prevention of Homelessness

The Council considered acceptance of grants in relation to the prevention of Homelessness.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- Thanks would be given to the officers working hard for residents and trying to prevent homelessness.
- Council Tax was still payable on empty properties.
- Numbers of empty properties that could be brought into use
- The Council would give priority to Rossendale residents.
- This would work towards enabling long terms solutions to tackle temporary accommodation challenges.

Resolved:

1. That the Council approves acceptance of the following grants:
 - Homeless Prevention Grant - £387,639
 - Rough Sleeper Prevention and Recovery Grant - £149,000
 - Local Authority Housing Fund - £356,000
2. To Delegate Authority to the Head of Legal, Director of Resources and Director of Economic Development with the lead member for Housing to enter into any agreements to accept and deliver the relevant grant funded schemes.
3. To note Rossendale Borough Council's continued role as the accountable body for the Rough Sleeping Initiative in joint delivery with Burnley and Pendle.

Reason for Decision

To accept the grants to prevent and relieve homelessness in the Rossendale Borough in line with the Local Authorities Visions and Priorities, specifically having access to a good quality home to either rent or buy plays a fundamental part in our residents' quality of life, as we want people to live long healthy lives and take pride in their communities.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

13. Urgent decisions

No urgent decisions had been taken since the last meeting of the Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES

14. Recommendation of the Governance Working Group – Constitution Review

The Council considered the Constitution Review report.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- The amendments to the Local Plan Steering Group were welcomed to ensure greater representation from across the borough.

Resolved:

To update the Council’s Constitution as detailed in Appendix A in relation to:

- a) Local Plan Steering Group
- b) Roll of Honour

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.

15. Recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Climate Change Strategy Update

The Council considered the Climate Change Strategy Update.

Thanks was given to the Climate Change Officer for all the hard work.

Resolved:

That Council note the progress in year four of the Climate Change Strategy and approve the revised Climate Change Action Plan.

Reason for Decision

In 2020, the Council made an ambitious commitment to play its part in reducing carbon emissions. The subsequent 4 years have seen significant progress towards achieving this. Continued development of the outlined projects will allow us to move forward to achieve our net zero ambition. The adoption of the revised Climate Change Action Plan and implementation of outlined actions will ensure that we address the Climate Emergency that the Council declared in 2019, meet the strategic priorities set out in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2021-2025 and ensure we reach our net zero ambitions by 2030.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

(The meeting commenced at 6.45pm and concluded at 8.37pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date