

COUNCILLOR MICHELLE SMITH, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

DATE OF MEETING: 6th May 2026

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor M. Smith (in the Chair)
Councillors Adshead, Ashworth, A. Barnes, Bauld, Bleakley, Cheetham, Diamond, Eaton, Gill, Hancock, Harris, Hodgkiss, Holland, Looker, Lythgoe, McInnes, McMahon, Neal, Norton, Payne, Procter, Ritson, S. Smith and Woods.

IN ATTENDANCE: Rob Huntington, Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Darren Kershaw, Mayor's Attendant

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: 1 press
1 public

A short silence was held as a mark of respect for former Councillor, Past Mayor and Honorary Alderman Sheila Conway (nee Oldham).

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors S Barnes, Driver, Harrison, Kenyon and Walmsley.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th March 2026 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made in relation to item C1 (minute 6):

- Councillor S. Smith was a Whitworth Town Councillor and Rossendale Leisure Trust Board Member.
- Councillors Harris and McInnes were members of Rossendale Harriers.
- Councillor Lythgoe was as Rossendale Leisure Trust Board Member.
- Councillors Neal and Ritson were Whitworth Town Councillors.

4. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

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

There were no communications from the Mayor.

The Head of Paid Service informed that Councillor Laura Diamond had been elected at the by-election on 2nd April 2026 and welcomed her to the meeting. Committee membership details had been updated on the Council website.

The Leader of the Council also welcomed Councillor Diamond to the meeting and provided the following updates:

- The Better Lives strategy had been launched.

- A new netball club had commenced at the Adrenaline centre for girls aged 7-16 years, now with a core group of 50 netballers and four new England netball level 1 coaches.
- A talented athlete scheme had also been launched by Rossendale Leisure Trust, supporting those athletes in Rossendale who had achieved regional, national or international success.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

6. Delivery of a Sustainable Leisure Offer for Rossendale

The Council considered the report on Delivery of a Sustainable Leisure Offer for Rossendale.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- It was noted that the full review had not been shared.
- The Chief Executive did attend the last board meeting and went through the main findings of the report.
- The Lead Member for Leisure met with the Chief Executive of Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) last week and went through the report.
- Leisure provision was not a statutory function and we do not get funding for it. Funding has to be applied for via external sources.
- The Public Health budget helps to subsidise leisure but the current two-tier structure hinders this.
- The Hill would be retained subject to a further review and options appraisal.
- There is an expectation that the investment outlined is made and not delayed due to Local Government Reorganisation.
- Pride in Place and the Football Foundation funding are able to contribute to leisure in the borough.
- The Trust was formed to save business rates.
- A member briefing would be put in place regarding Pride in Place activity coming through in relation to this process.
- A number of other organisations were going down the same agency model route.

Resolved:

That Full Council agrees to the following:

1. Transition the existing Rossendale Leisure Trust to an agency model, with supporting management and legal agreements and leases redrafted to reflect the reshaped portfolio and new operating arrangement.
2. Reconfigure the portfolio of facilities managed by RLT as follows:
 - a. The Ashcroft – Invite the asset transfer to Whitworth Town Council, subject to submission of a comprehensive business plan.
 - b. The Whitaker Museum and Art Gallery – retained under its current operational and governance arrangements, with active work toward the conditions necessary for independent viability in the medium term.
 - c. The Hill – retained under RLT operation, with a future options appraisal for further investment or alternative use to be undertaken in the near term.
3. Progress three capital investment priorities across the retained facilities:
 - a. Marl Pits – extension of the existing gym and studio offer, and invite the asset transfer of the outdoor sports facilities to the east of the site to a new multi-sports organisation.
 - b. Pioneer – relocation to a new site fitted out for gym and studio provision.
 - c. Adrenaline – remodelling of the existing layout to improve facility capacity and configuration.
4. Develop a clear vision and action plan to support sustained investment in physical activity facilities across the borough.
5. Establish an annual reporting mechanism to Rossendale Borough Council to monitor implementation, outcomes, and the overall impact of the revised leisure delivery model.

6. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Lead Member for Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing, the Director of Economic Development, and the Head of Legal and Governance, to take all necessary steps to implement these recommendations, including but not limited to the negotiation and completion of revised legal agreements, leases, asset transfer documentation, and any associated contractual, financial, or governance arrangements.

Reason for Decision

Rossendale Leisure Trust (RLT) was established in 2004 and currently manages a diverse and ageing portfolio of leisure and cultural facilities on behalf of Rossendale Borough Council (RBC). The breadth of that portfolio spanning core physical activity and leisure provision, cultural assets, and specialist facilities. creates real challenges in generating sufficient income to cover operating costs, invest in facilities, and service the intercompany loan. While this diversity reflects the historical development of the trust, it limits RLT's ability to focus its management capacity and commercial effort on the areas of greatest return.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

7. Rossendale Local Plan: Indicative Timetable, Publish Notice to Commence and Approve Scoping Consultation

The Council considered the Local Plan report.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- Remaining capacity of brownfield sites is low. There is demand, but there are challenges with identification of such sites.
- The process allows for community consultation.
- Local Plans are challenging as communities generally do not want more houses building near them.
- Members welcome community consultation on the Local Plan.

Resolved:

That Council:

1. Approves a full update of the Rossendale Local Plan to commence in accordance with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2026.
2. Approves the publication of the Council's formal "Notice of Intention to Commence" the Rossendale Local Plan before 30 June 2026.
3. Agrees that the Local Plan Steering Group retains oversight of the preparation of the Local Plan
4. Delegates authority to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member for Planning for the following:
 - a. to publish the Rossendale Local Plan timetable, with submission by Friday 8 May 2026 to MHCLG.
 - b. to approve updates to the Local Plan timetable as required
 - c. to approve, publish and submit the documents and statements as required for the statutory Gateways 1, 2 and 3
 - d. to commission, subject to the Local Plan budget, and approve all evidence base documents, reports and supporting data and analysis for publication and where appropriate consultation
 - e. to finalise, agree and publish the statutory 'scoping stage' consultation ahead of the Gateway 1 assessment (to be published before 30 October 2026)

Reason for Decision

The Council is required to start work on a new Local Plan, publishing the Nol to commence before 31 December 2026 and the Gateway 1 assessment before 30 April 2027. Accepting

this funding accelerates the timescale by six months. As well as publishing a 'formal notice of intention to commence local plan preparation', there is a requirement to publish the local plan timetable. A scoping consultation will also be required.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

8. Urgent decisions

Council noted the Special Urgency Decisions taken 8th April 2026 and 22nd April 2026 regarding the acceptance of the Local Authority Housing Fund and the Crisis and Resilience Fund grants as detailed in the decision notice.

NOTICES OF MOTION

9. Notice of Motion

Councillor Julie Adshead moved the motion with a slight amendment to the wording of paragraph 3 which was seconded by Councillor John Payne as follows:

This Council recognises that:

- *improving waste-management services can support cleaner neighbourhoods, reduce illegal fly-tipping and promote civic pride.*

This Council Notes:

- *the ongoing concerns raised by residents regarding street cleanliness, fly-tipping and access to affordable waste-disposal options across Rossendale.*
- *fairer and less expensive bulky item collection schemes and incentives offered in surrounding districts.*

This Council resolves to undertake a full costing of, and proceed to implement the following changes:

1) Restructure bulky-waste collection charges

Introduce a revised charging model for bulky-waste collections to make disposal more accessible and reduce the incentive for fly-tipping including:

- *A simplified charging structure of £25 for 1-2 items and an additional £12 for 3-4 items,*
- *One free bulky-waste collection per household per year for pensioners and residents eligible for Council Tax Support.*

2) Provide regular community skips in town centres

Establish a programme of regularly scheduled community skips in town-centre locations across the borough, enabling residents to dispose of household items safely and reducing the build-up of waste in public areas.

3) Introduce an annual bulky-waste amnesty weekend

Create a yearly waste-amnesty weekend, offering a limited number of free bulky-waste collection slots on a first-come, first-served basis, to support responsible disposal and reduce pressure on local environments.

An amendment was moved by Councillor Lythgoe and seconded by Councillor A. Barnes as follows:

This council resolves to bring forward the following changes:

1. To modify bulky waste collection charges by:

Introducing a revised, simplified charging model for bulky waste collection so that it will cost £20 for up to three items and then £14 each for any additional items.

2. To introduce an annual bulky waste amnesty weekend offering up to fifty slots on a first come first served basis for an initial trial basis.

In response to questions on the amendment it was confirmed that:

- There would be a cost implication of around £10k but this would be monitored.
- It would be good to promote reuse and recycle and not just skip waste.
- It would be good to pilot this, rather than doing nothing.

Resolved:

This council resolves to bring forward the following changes:

1. To modify bulky waste collection charges by:

Introducing a revised, simplified charging model for bulky waste collection so that it will cost £20 for up to three items and then £14 each for any additional items.

2. To introduce an annual bulky waste amnesty weekend offering up to fifty slots on a first come first served basis for an initial trial basis.

Reason for Decision

To support the amended motion.

Alternative Options Considered

Original motion.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 8.05pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date