

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 11th February 2026

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Harris, Lythgoe, McInnes and Walmsley**

**David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Chris Warren, Director of Resources, s151 Officer
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal, Monitoring Officer
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services
Andy Taylor, Head of Environmental Services
Jackie Flynn, Community Projects and Partnerships Officer**

Also present: Councillor Neal

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor McInnes declared an interest in item 9 (agenda item D3) as she was a member of the Friends of Whitaker Park Group.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no written or verbal questions.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

The Chair provided an update from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on 12th January and 9th February 2026.

7. BETTER LIVES ROSSENDALE ANTI-POVERTY STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing outlined the report which asked Cabinet to adopt the strategy for the borough.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The ability to resource the Strategy was welcomed.
- The LIFT platform would give the Council the ability to help residents access benefits available.
- Officers were thanked for all their hard work.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet agreed to adopt the Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan for the borough.

Reason for Decision:

To address poverty in Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

8. ADOPTION OF SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMOs)

The Lead Member for Planning outlined the report which asked Cabinet to approve the guidance for use in the determination of all HMO planning applications and delegate minor amendments to the guidance to the Lead Member and Head of Planning.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- Primary Care Network concerns do not appear to apply to HMOs.
- Officers were thanked for all their hard work.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approved the Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for use in the determination of all planning applications for Houses in Multiple Occupation.
2. Cabinet delegated minor amendments to the SPG including formatting changes to the Head of Planning and Lead Member.

Reason for Decision:

To guide decisions on planning applications for HMOs in the borough.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

9. IMPROVEMENTS TO WHITAKER PARK TODDLER PLAY FACILITIES

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to approve the expenditure of £143,000 on the play area and authorise officers to tender for the works. Cabinet was also asked to delegate authority to the Lead Member and Head of Environmental Services to accept the most advantageous tender.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The improvements would complement the new older children's play area.
- It was confirmed that the zip wire had been fixed.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approved the expenditure of £143,000 on the new play area at Whitaker Park, Rawtenstall and authorised officers to tender for the works in compliance with the Council's Constitution.
2. Cabinet delegated authority to the Head of Environmental Services in consultation with the Lead Member to accept the most advantageous tender.

Reason for Decision:

A refurbished play area would further improve one of the borough's main parks and increase its reputation as a destination site, whilst reducing the increasing maintenance costs associated with its current form.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

10. ACCEPTANCE OF THE LOCAL PLAN IMPLEMENTATION FUND (NEW SYSTEM PLAN FUND)

The Lead Member for Planning outlined the report which asked that if the bid was successful, that Cabinet provide authority to the Director of Economic Development and the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Lead Members for Planning and Resources to accept the funding, and enter into any necessary funding agreements.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The benefits of receiving funding were recognised.
- It was suggested that a member briefing take place to help councillors understand how the new regime would work.
- An early start on plan-making would be beneficial in light of the forthcoming Local Government Reorganisation.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approved authority to the Director of Economic Development and the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Lead Members for Planning and Resources to accept the funding, if the bid was successful, under the Local Plan Implementation / New System Plan Fund and to enter into any necessary funding agreements.

Reason for Decision:

It was necessary to seek Cabinet approval as it was expected that, if successful, the Council could be awarded circa £120,000 in funding to help with preparing the next Local Plan, which would need to be prepared under the new system.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

11. THE ACCEPTANCE AND DEPLOYMENT OF THE HOLIDAY ACTIVITIES AND FOOD PROGRAMME (HAF) FUNDING

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to accept the grant of c.£230,000 for the 2026/27 programme and approve the Lead Member and Director of Resources to commission Rossendale Leisure Trust to deliver the programme under existing arrangements.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The amount to be received was currently unknown but confirmation from Lancashire County Council was expected imminently.
- Rossendale Leisure Trust would provide activities across the whole of the borough.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet accepted the grant of c.£230,000 for the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) Programme 2026/27.
2. Cabinet approved the Director of Resources in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources to commission Rossendale Leisure Trust, under existing arrangements, to enable them to support the children in the borough who were in receipt of free school meals.

Reason for Decision:

To provide support during holiday periods for children of the borough who receive free school meals.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

12. COUNCIL BUDGET AND MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to recommend that Council approves a revenue budget for 2026/27, a Council Tax increase of 2.99%, use of reserves to support the 2026/27 revenue budget and approve the proposed fees and charges.

The Director of Resources advised that Table 2 had been amended following the Overview & Scrutiny Committee in readiness for presentation to full Council.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The 3-year settlement had helped the Council make plans.
- It was the first growth budget in some time.
- Monies were being invested for the future.
- The team were thanked for their hard work.

Resolved:

Cabinet recommended that Council approves:

1. A revenue budget for 2026/27 of £14.8m, as detailed in the report.
2. A Council Tax increase of 2.99%, increasing the Council Tax rate for a Band D property from £317.66 to £327.16, an increase of £9.50pa.
3. Use of £1,261k from the reserves to support the 2026/27 revenue budget, acknowledging that this requirement was forecast to reduce in future years
4. The proposed fees and charges as attached in Appendix 1.

Reason for Decision:

The budget process was a key element of the Council's Strategic Planning process. It was part of the service and financial planning approach adopted by the Council, was a means of ensuring that resources were best placed to enable the Council to deliver its Corporate Priorities expressed in the Corporate Plan.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

13. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2026/27 – 2027/28 AND CAPITAL STRATEGY 2026/27

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked that Cabinet recommend that Council approves the Capital Programme and associated capital expenditure for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Highlights were provided on all the projects currently underway.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- Progression of the ongoing projects was positive.
- Much of the funding had come via external funding which was good for the borough's investment.
- Work was needed to put the Council in a good position as it progressed into Local Government Reorganisation.

- The benefits of the Waste Transfer Station were highlighted.
- The team were thanked for all their work.

Resolved:

Cabinet recommended that Council approves:

1. The capital programme for 2026/27 and associated capital expenditure of £30,177m, and additional capital expenditure for the period of 2027/28 of £3.682m.

Reason for Decision:

To achieve the Council's strategic plans and operational requirements for the next two years.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

14. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2026/27

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to recommend that Council approves the Treasury Management Strategy, including borrowing statement, the Investment Strategy, including Investment Indicators, the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement and delegate minor amendments to the Lead Member and Director.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- It was an important report which showed how carefully the Council were managing large sums of money.

Resolved:

Cabinet recommended that Council approves:

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 Officer) in consultation with the Lead Member for Resources.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure continued compliance with the Code and continue to manage the Council's exposure to financial risk.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

15. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

The Leader outlined the reasons for dealing with the matter with the exclusion of public and press.

Resolved:

That public and press be excluded from the following item of business under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 since the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

16. SUNDRY DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report.

Cabinet commented on the report.

Resolved:

Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To approve the Sundry Debt Management Policy.

17. COUNCIL TAX AND NON-DOMESTIC RATE DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report.

Cabinet commented on the report.

Resolved:

Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To approve the Council Tax and Non-Domestic Rate Debt Management Policy.

The meeting concluded at 7.47pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE