

## COUNCILLOR MICHELLE SMITH, MAYOR

**MINUTES OF:** THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

**DATE OF MEETING:** 4<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**PRESENT:** The Mayor Councillor M. Smith (in the Chair)  
Councillors Adshead, A. Barnes, S. Barnes, Bauld, Bleakley, Cheetham, Driver, Eaton, Gill, Hancock, Harris, Harrison, Hodgkiss, Holland, Kenyon, Looker, Lythgoe, McInnes, McMahon, Neal, Norton, Payne, Procter, Ritson, 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 / S151 Officer  
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development  
Darren Kershaw, Mayor's Attendant

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** 1 press  
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Finance

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A short silence was held as a mark of respect for Paula Lucas, Payroll Officer and Dorothy Mitchell MBE.

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### 1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors Ashworth, McMahon and Woods.

### 2. **Minutes**

#### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> December 2025 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**

Councillors Lythgoe and S. Smith declared they were Rossendale Leisure Trust Board Members (Items C1 minute 6 and C2 minute 7).

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

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

## **POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS**

### 6. **2026/27 Council Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy**

The Council considered the 2026/27 Council Budget and Medium-Term Financial Strategy.

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

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- Play areas in Whitworth had been improved.

Members voted on the recommendations of the report as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Cllr Adshead	For
Cllr Alyson Barnes	For
Cllr Samara Barnes	For
Cllr Bauld	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 Neal	For
Cllr Norton	For
Cllr Payne	For
Cllr Procter	For
Cllr Ritson	Against
Cllr Michelle Smith	For
Cllr Scott Smith	Against
Cllr Walmsley	For
<b>For:</b>	21
<b>Against:</b>	5
<b>Abstentions:</b>	0

**Resolved:**

**Council approves:**

1. A revenue budget for 2026/27 of £14.6m, 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 is forecast to reduce in future years
4. The proposed fees and charges as attached in Appendix 1.
5. The technical resolution necessary to give effect to these budget proposals attached as Appendix 4.

**Reason for Decision**

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

## **Alternative Options Considered**

None.

### **7. Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2027/28 and Capital Strategy 2026/27**

The Council considered the Capital Programme 2026/27 – 2027/28 and Capital Strategy 2026/27.

In response to questions the S151 Officer gave clarification on differential costings on the Waste Transfer Station.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- A decision had already been made on the waste transfer station and waste would always have to be transferred somewhere else.
- The Council was starting to do a review of the Local Plan and there would be housing pressures.
- The infrastructure needs of East Lancashire analysis being undertaken by Lancashire County Council (LCC) was welcomed.
- A report would be coming through in relation to the leisure review.
- Henrietta Street was not fit for purpose in terms of legislative changes and the working environment.
- The County Council had been invited to contribute financially to the waste transfer development.
- The Local Plan had allocated employment sites as and not just housing sites.

#### **Resolved:**

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. The Capital programme is attached at Appendix A.

#### **Reason for Decision**

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

## **Alternative Options Considered**

None.

### **8. 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy**

The Council considered the 2026/27 Treasury Management Strategy.

Thanks was given to the officers of the small finance team for their work and dedication and it was also noted that their work had been recognised at a national level where they had been highly commended by the Local Government Chronical awards.

#### **Resolved:**

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 Section 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.

**ORDINARY BUSINESS****9. Council Pay Policy Statement 2026**

The Council considered the Council Pay Policy Statement and thanks was given to the officers for their hard work.

**Resolved:**

Full Council approves the Pay Policy Statement.

**Reason for Decision**

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

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**10. Extension of Rossendale Works Employability Project for 12 months**

The Council considered the extension of Rossendale Works Employability Project for 12 months.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- It was a valuable scheme for our community that would continue over the next twelve months whilst future funding was identified.

**Resolved:**

1. To extend the Rossendale Works project and staffing for 12 months (to April 2027)
2. To approve the proposed KPI's and delivery plan.
3. To Delegate Authority to the Head of Legal Services and Director of Economic Development, in conjunction with the Lead Member for Economic Development to enter into a Service Level Agreement with Active Lancashire for the extension.

**Reason for Decision**

The project would strengthen the local workforce by equipping residents with job-ready skills and connecting them to employment opportunities, thereby supporting business growth and economic vitality in Rossendale.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**11. Acceptance of housing related grants**

The Council considered the acceptance of housing related grants.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- There was potential for empty properties being brought back in to use.

The Revive Hub in Haslingden was commended by members for the excellent work that they were doing and their relationship with the Council.

**Resolved:**

1. To delegate authority to the Head of Legal, Director of Resources and Director of Economic Development, in consultation with the Lead Members for Communities, Housing and Health and Resources, to enter into agreements to accept and spend the following grant funding:
  - 2025/26 - Homeless Prevention Grant (Winter Top Up) £55,046
  - 2026/27, 2027/28, 2028/29 - Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant (three year award awarded annually)
    - £453,937 (26/27)
    - £499,355 (27/28)
    - £581,058 (28/29)
  - 2025/26 - Supported Housing Strategy Grant £49,621
2. To note and accept the proposed delivery plans set out in section 3.5.

**Reason for Decision**

Acceptance and use of the grant funding supports delivery of the Council's statutory duties under homelessness legislation and preparation for reforms arising from the Renters Rights Act 2025 and the Government's National Plan to End Homelessness. The proposals also enable development of a Local Supported Housing Strategy in line with the Supported Housing (Regulatory Oversight) Act 2023 and strengthen the Council's focus on early intervention and homelessness prevention.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**12. Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27**

The Council considered the Council Tax Support Scheme 2026/27.

**Resolved:**

That Council approve the Rossendale Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2026/27 as set out in the report.

**Reason for Decision**

Councils are required to set a Council Tax Support scheme annually, before the 11<sup>th</sup> March. Adoption of the scheme by full Council before 11<sup>th</sup> March will meet the Council's statutory duty.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**13. Interim S151 Officer**

Thanks was given to the Director of Resources for his hard work during his employment and he was wished well in his new post.

The Council considered appointing Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services, as the Interim S151 Officer.

**Resolved:**

That Council approve the appointment of Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services, as the Interim S151 Officer.

**Reason for Decision**

To agree an Interim S151 Officer.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**14. Urgent decisions**

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

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES**

**15. Recommendation of the Governance Working Group - Update to Contract Procedure Rules and publication of the revised Constitution**

The Council considered the update to the Contract Procedure Rules and publication of the revised Constitution.

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- The changes would make procedures more robust and in line with current practices.
- The Governance Working Group had reviewed the changes and recommended them to Council for approval.

**Resolved:**

1. To approve replacing the existing Part 5 - Contract Procedure Rules within the Constitution with the revised version.
2. That the updated Constitution be published on the Council’s website.
3. That the current Procurement Strategy be removed from the Council’s website to simplify the guidance.

**Reason for Decision**

The revised Rules align with statutory requirements under the Procurement Act 2023. Publication of the updated Constitution and removal of the outdated Procurement Strategy will ensure officers and suppliers access accurate and compliant guidance.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**(The meeting commenced at 7.05pm and concluded at 9.00pm)**

Signed.....  
(Chair)

Date .....