

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 18th March 2026

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

**Rob Huntington, Chief Executive
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services (s151 Officer)
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Andy Taylor, Head of Environmental Services
Ian Walker, Service Assurance Team Leader**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th February 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no written or verbal questions.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE

There was no update to provide.

7. HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT POLICY

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to approve the policy and delegate minor amendments to the relevant Officer and Lead Member.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approved the Housing Benefit Overpayment Policy.
2. Cabinet delegated any minor amendments to the policy to the Head of Customer Services and ICT in consultation with the Lead Member.

Reason for Decision:

The policy acts as a guide to the Council's administration of Housing Benefit overpayment recovery and sets out a clear Debt Recovery strategy.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

8. CONFIRMATION OF THE ARTICLE 4 DIRECTION TO WITHDRAW PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT RIGHTS FOR THE CONVERSION OF HOUSES TO SMALL HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION (HMO)

The Lead Member for Planning outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note the consultation responses, confirm the making of the immediate Article 4 Direction and waive the call-in procedure due to the urgency of the decision.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The direction was supported and highlighted the need to ensure residents had the right to live in housing that meets decent home standards.
- It was a positive step and the required planning permission would enable the Council to know the location of HMO's in the borough.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the consultation responses received following the making of the Article 4 Direction.
2. Cabinet confirmed the making of the Immediate Article 4 Direction across all wards within Rossendale to withdraw permitted development rights for the conversion of houses to small Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
3. Cabinet agreed to waive the call-in procedure due to the urgency and to meet the deadlines laid down by legislation.

Reason for Decision:

To confirm the Article 4 direction within 6 months of it being made.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

9. ANNUAL AIR QUALITY REPORT 2025

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note the update for 2025.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- An update on the location of monitoring stations was requested.
- There was an expectation that the increased prevalence of electric vehicles should reduce air quality issues.
- The investment in fleet following the sale of the bus station had made improvements.
- The year-on-year trend was showing improvements in the long term.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the contents of the Air Quality Report for 2025.

Reason for Decision:

To comply with the Council's statutory requirements.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN UPDATE

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note progress of the Climate Change Strategy.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- A benchmarking exercise was requested.
- Reference was made to the climate emergency. The report highlighted the Council's investment which had generated significant external investment in the Valley's decarbonisation.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the progress in year five of the Climate Change Strategy, including:
 - a 36.74% reduction in operational emissions since 2020.
 - £1.5m secured in external decarbonisation funding.
 - delivery of the innovative Net Zero Terrace Streets programme.
 - improved borough-wide air quality performance.
 - significant tree planting and biodiversity gain.

Reason for Decision:

To note the progress made on the Council's Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan which was agreed in July 2020.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

11. RESIDENTS' SURVEY 2025

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to acknowledge the findings of the 2025 survey and agree to use the results to guide strategic and service planning for continuous performance improvement.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- The visual aspect of the report was welcomed and was reader friendly.
- Residents were thanked for participating in the survey.
- Social media was only one method of communication and could not be relied upon to measure overall satisfaction.
- Investment in the Valley was noted in relation to areas of satisfaction.
- Thanks were expressed for the level of detail provided in relation to safety responses.
- Residents were invited to complete the Local Government Reorganisation survey which concludes soon.
- Partner organisations were invited to use the data to continue to make improvements for residents.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet acknowledged the findings of the 2025 Residents Survey and approved the themes for improvement identified within the survey report.
2. Cabinet agreed the use of the survey results to guide strategic and service planning, ensuring residents' views were reflected in setting priorities and actions for continuous performance improvement.

Reason for Decision:

To inform strategic planning, performance management and targeted improvement activity in 2026/27.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

12. PUBLICATION OF THE FIRST STATUTORY BIODIVERSITY REPORT (2023-2025)

The Lead Member for Planning outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note the report, agree publication and delegate minor amends to the Head of Planning and Building control.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- Huge strides were being made which were welcomed. This had especially been seen in Cowpe by local residents who were keen to improve their environment.
- Benchmarking data was requested to compare how this Council compared with neighbouring authorities.
- The investment and commitment made by residents was welcomed.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the content of the Biodiversity Report 2023-2025 and agreed for its publication by 25th March 2026.
2. Cabinet delegated minor amendments to the report to the Head of Planning and Building Control.

Reason for Decision:

Publication of a mandatory Biodiversity Report was a requirement under Section 103 of the Environment Act 2021.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

12. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 3 2025/26

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note the contents of the report.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- Thanks were expressed to the Housing Options team for their efforts in reducing the B&B spend, and efforts to use external funding to purchase properties for use as temporary accommodation.
- The report highlighted the need to monitor the inflationary situation in the wider economy.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the content of the Quarter 3 Financial Monitoring Report for 2025/26.

Reason for Decision:

To provide an indicative estimate of the Council's General Fund Revenue outturn, Collection Fund performance and Capital outturn for the year ended 31 March 2026.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

13. 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.

14. COUNCIL TAX, NON-DOMESTIC RATE & HOUSING BENEFIT OVERPAYMENT WRITE OFFS

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report.

Resolved:

- 1. Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To approve Council Tax, Non-Domestic Rate & Housing Benefit Overpayment Write Offs.

15. HOUSING BENEFIT WRITE OFF POLICY

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report.

Resolved:

- 1. Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To approve the Housing Benefit Write Off Policy.

The meeting concluded at 7.30pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE