MINUTES OF: **THE CABINET**

Date of Meeting: **Wednesday 15th July 2026**

Present: **Councillor Walmsley (Chair)**
Councillors S Barnes, Lythgoe and M Smith

Andy Taylor, Director of Operations
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer)
Kimberly Haworth, Head of Financial Services (s151 Officer)
Jackie Flynn, Community Project and Partnership Officer
Angela Richmond, Service Assurance Officer – Benefits Lead

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1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE
Apologies were received from Councillors A Barnes and Harris.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:
The minutes of the meeting held on 13th May 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS
There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST
Councillor Lythgoe declared an interest in agenda item D3/minute 9; Rossendale Refugee Support Service tender as he was a trustee and volunteer at the Rossendale Refugee Support Group.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME
There were no written or verbal questions.

6. CHAIR'S UPDATE
An update from the Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 15th June was provided. Thanks were expressed for the work they undertake.

7. HOUSING BENEFIT WAR PENSION AND ARMED FORCES COMPENSATION DISREGARD POLICY 2026
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.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:

- Discussions had taken place with residents and agencies to ensure veterans were aware of the policy.
- The Council had reached out to its statutory partners and the Veterans In Communities Charity (VIC) for input on how this can be supported.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet approved the Housing Benefit War Pension and Armed Forces Compensation

Disregard Policy as set out in the report.
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:
To review the arrangements for Housing Benefit made in respect of Section 134 8(a) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

8. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to approve and adopt the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- The position on infrastructure for new builds was to be confirmed.
- Managing infrastructure on terraced streets was a challenge and options were being explored.
- There were challenges around ‘channels’ on residential streets and parking in suitable locations.
- Car parks across the borough brought opportunities for all to charge their vehicles.
- Chargers were needed in the right places and this needed to be considered strategically.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet approved and adopted the Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy.

Reason for Decision:
To provide a clear and coordinated framework for the future delivery and expansion of EV charging infrastructure across the borough.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

COUNCILLOR LYTHGOE LEFT THE MEETING

9. ROSSENDALE REFUGEE SUPPORT SERVICE TENDER

The Lead Member for Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing outlined the report which asked Cabinet to agree procurement, accept the tender, authorise the relevant Director and Lead Member to extend the contact if performance satisfactory and funding available and authorise the Head of Legal to enter into all necessary legal agreements.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- Work by the group to date had been very positive.
- The support would be in the communities where it was needed.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet agreed to proceed with the procurement of the Rossendale Refugee Support Service and accept the tender from the Rossendale Refugee Support Group, with the commencement of the service in August 2026 for up to two years at a total contract price of £119,000.

2. The Director of Place, in consultation with the Lead Member, were authorised to extend the contract after year one subject to satisfactory performance and available funding.
3. The Head of Legal and Governance was authorised to enter into all necessary legal agreements for delivery of the service.

Reason for Decision:
To provide a support service to refugees and asylum seekers in the borough.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

COUNCILLOR LYTHGOE RE-JOINED THE MEETING

10. ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT – ROSSENDALE COLLABORATION AGREEMENT 2026-29 – REDUCING SMOKING PREVALENCE RATES IN ROSSENDALE

The Lead Member for Communities, Housing, Health and Wellbeing outlined the report which asked Cabinet to approve acceptance of the grant and authorise relevant Officers to enter into the collaboration agreement up to March 2029.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- It was another good opportunity to accept funding to build on the success of the programme.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet approved acceptance of the grant of £156,000 to extend the Smokefree Lancashire Collaborative Agreement with Lancashire County Council.
2. Cabinet authorised the Monitoring Officer and the s151 Officer to enter into the collaboration agreement up to March 2029.

Reason for Decision:
The collaboration supports the Council's ambition to improve health outcomes, reduce health inequalities and increase access to smoking cessation support for residents.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

11. IMPROVEMENTS TO EDGESIDE PARK PLAY FACILITIES

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to authorise acceptance of grant funding and to approve the budget. Cabinet was also asked to authorise Officers to tender for the works and authorise the relevant Director and Lead Member to accept the most advantageous bid.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- It was great to see investment in the borough’s parks.
- Officers and partners were congratulated on this week’s Green Flag Award.
- Masterplans were coming to fruition which was proving a benefit in the borough.
- Plans could occasionally take time to progress so improved communications with residents would help them understand the process.
- Community involvement was great to see.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet authorised acceptance of the £20,000 from DET and approved the budget of £140,000 for the new play area.
2. Cabinet authorised Officers to tender for the works and authorised the Director of Operations to accept the most advantageous bid in consultation with the Lead Member.

Reason for Decision:
To make improvements to the existing play facility.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

12. COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY 2025-2029
The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to consider and approve the refreshed strategy and annual Action Plan update for 2026/27.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- Officers were thanked for their work.
- The terminology used with residents resonated.
- The Valley News circular had been a positive and welcome source of communication for residents.
- The increased use of videos was a positive step and was more engaging for residents. It was good to see a more positive proactive approach in sharing good news stories.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet considered and approved the refreshed Communications Strategy 2025-2029 and annual Action Plan update 2026-2027.

Reason for Decision:
To ensure the Council's communications approach remains modern, accessible and aligned with the Valley Plan, and to ensure the Council has the internal capacity and tools required to deliver an effective communications function.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

13. VALLEY PLAN OUTTURN REPORT 2025/26
The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to consider and note the update and associated achievements for 2025/26.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- Officers were thanked for their work.
- It was suggested that a snapshot of achievements from the report should be mirrored in the Valley News.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet considered and noted the Council's annual Valley Plan update and associated achievements for 2025/2026.

Reason for Decision:
To provide an overview of the Council's annual performance and associated achievements for

2025/26.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

14. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT QUARTER 4 2025/26

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report which asked Cabinet to consider and note the Council's performance during Quarter 4 2025/26.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- Temporary Accommodation was a good news story.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet considered and noted the Council's performance for Quarter 4 2025/26.

Reason for Decision:
To note the overview of the Council's performance against the Valley Plan 2025/29 – Our Place, Our Plan.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

15. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 4 2025/26

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report which asked Cabinet to note the content of the Quarter 4 Financial Monitoring Report.

Cabinet was invited to comment on the report:
- Officers were thanked for all their work and for making the report easy for the lay person to understand.
- The reduced use of B&Bs for temporary accommodation had seen a positive impact on families in need.
- Past investments the Council had made had seen a positive outcome.
- There had been an underspend on staffing due to vacancies. It was felt that the headcount should be maintained but consideration/review of vacancies was needed initially.

Resolved:
1. Cabinet noted the Financial Monitoring Report for Quarter 4 2025/26.

Reason for Decision:
To note the update on the Council's General Fund Revenue outturn, Collection Fund performance and Capital outturn for the year ended 31st March 2026.

Alternative Options Considered:
None.

16. 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 Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

17. BAD DEBT WRITE-OFF

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet approved the recommendations in the report.

Reason for Decision:

To write-off bad debt.

The meeting concluded at 7.42pm

______________________ CHAIR _________________________ DATE