

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 18th February 2009

**PRESENT: Councillor Swain (in the Chair)
Councillors Challinor, Essex, Gledhill, Graham, Smith and
P. Steen**

**IN ATTENDANCE: Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive
Linda Fisher, Executive Director – Business
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance
Steve Jackson, Head of Regeneration
Philip Mepham, Environmental Health Manager
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Aldred, A. Barnes, Cheetham, Crawforth,
Evans, Farrington, Gill, Morris, Nuttall, C. Pilling, J. Pilling,
Robertson, Sandiford, Stansfield, Unsworth, and Wilson
County Councillor Serridge
4 members of the public
1 representative from the press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were required to be submitted.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 21st January 2009 be agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

The Leader of the Council reported that there were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Committee were asked to consider whether they had an interest in any matters to be discussed at the meeting and the following interests were declared:

- Councillors Cheetham, Essex, Robertson and Unsworth declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the item on Asset Disposal as they are Board Members of the particular company.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public raised questions and points to which the Leader of the Council, Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources responded:

- Responses to written leisure query submissions
- Length of reports and public involvement
- Difficulty locating information on the web site
- Implications and savings made by bringing IT provision back in-house
- Making use of reserves by spending them rather than earning low interest in the current economic climate

In response to the query on responses to written leisure queries the Leader of the Council confirmed he had already responded to many of the queries and would continue to respond to the remaining queries.

6. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Councillor Essex, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report of the Head of Finance which provided an update to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy reflecting the Cabinet's policy proposals.

Councillor Essex reported that the Medium Term Financial Strategy had set a savings target of £1.4M over the three years 2009/10 and 2011/12 for the Council.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Costs of Street Cleansing and Tourism compared with other areas
- Leisure White Paper

Decision Made:

That Members approve the update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy, subject to any final amendments arising from the Council's final budget approval.

Reason for Decision:

The updated Medium Term Financial Strategy is a robust document for the Council's financial planning over the medium term.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

7. CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009-2012

Councillor Essex, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report of the Head of Finance which outlined details of capital expenditure estimates and resources for 2009/10. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources advised of the proposed capital expenditure and resources for the medium term 2010/ 11 and 2011/12 and the financing issues related to future capital expenditure.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Valley Centre and empty buildings

Decision Made:

- That the following capital expenditure be recommended to Council for 2009/10 (excluding 08/09 slippage):

Detail	£000's
Vehicle replacement Programme (07/08 - 5 year programme)	55
Playgrounds (06/07 - 5 year programme)	50
Cemeteries (06/07 - 5 year programme)	30
Pride in Rossendale Programme (08/09 – 4 year programme)	80
Pathways (06/07 - 5 year programme)	30
Wheeled Bins (06/07 - 5 year programme)	45
Bacup Town Centre Culvert	125
Sport Playing Fields (06/07 - 5 year programme)	45
Museum (06/07 - 5 year programme)	15
Car Park Upgrading (06/07 - 5 year programme)	30
Building Maintenance (06/07 - 5 year programme)	200
War Memorials (08/09 - 4 year programme)	5
Total	710

- To recommend to Council, that subject to confirmation of Housing Programme grants shown in Appendix 1, the housing programme be approved, and the Head of Financial Services be authorised to amend the programme in the light of final grant allocations.
- To recommend to Council to agree that 2008/09 capital programme, not incurred in 2008/09, be carried forward to 2009/10.
- That the Cabinet's Capital Monitoring Group meets quarterly during 2009/10 to review capital expenditure and resources, and reports back to Members any material findings and recommendations.

- That the membership of the Cabinets Capital Monitoring Group remains as last year.

Reason for Decision:

That resources are available to meet the currently proposed capital programme. There will need to be a continued and sustained effort to realise major capital receipts in order to both maintain the ongoing programme, and to deliver more aspirational schemes for capital investment and avoid longer term borrowing, which will have a negative impact on the revenue budget and hence the level of council tax.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

8. REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING

Councillor Essex, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources presented the report of the Head of Finance which outlined proposals for the Revenue Budget and level of Council Tax for 2009/10.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources reported that the proposals represented an increase of 2.9% which was lower than most other local authorities and he presented comparison figures to the meeting.

The Chair of Performance Overview and Scrutiny reported that the Committee had considered the options published for consultation and a number of questions had been raised relating to Bacup Leisure Hall, and the Leisure White Paper. Overview and Scrutiny would be looking to revisit the Accommodation Strategy and also concentrate on value for money in the coming year.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Funding for Tourism Officer
- Reviewing processes
- Household incomes under pressures
- People on low incomes with no access to benefits
- Member allowances and Remuneration Panel recommendations
- Refuse and recycling savings
- Health and Wellbeing funding

Decision Made:

- That the Cabinet recommends to Council a net budget requirement for Rossendale Council for 2008/09 of £ 11,728, 000

- That the Cabinet recommend to Council that a Council Tax is set based on a 2.9% increase on the current year (2008/09), this equates to a Band D equivalent of £253.40 for 2009/10.
- That the Head of Financial Services be instructed to prepare the technical resolutions necessary to give effect to these proposals.
- That the Cabinet, in agreeing to recommend these budget proposals to the Council notes the contents of Appendix 1 and recommends to the Council as part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy the proposed options to mitigate risk, in particular, those regarding Leisure and the potential financing of transitional costs and the current deficit within Rossendale Leisure Trust's balance sheet.
- That Full Council be recommended not to increase the Members Allowances from April as recommended by the Independent Remuneration Panel.

Reason for Decision:

That Council Tax increase of 2.9% resulting on a Band D rate of £253.40 produces a balanced and manageable budget for 2009/10.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

9. PILOT FOR PROPOSED JOINT WORKING WITH OTHER COUNCILS

Councillor Essex, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report of the Executive Director - Business on the Pilot for proposed Joint Working with other Councils.

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources highlighted that it would take a minimum of 9 members to hear a full process, however getting 9 members from a Committee of 12 with no conflict of interest would be difficult.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Length of the pilot
- Number of meetings
- Peers attending the hearing and making decisions
- Selection of working partners
- Peers understand the area and possible reason for actions
- Make up of the panels and balance with independent members
- Increasing the number of elected members on Standards Committee
- Accountability to members of the public
- Comments of the Standards Committee
- Working with different partners

In response to questions from Elected Members the Executive Director – Business informed that joint working on Standards was on the Central Government agenda.

Decision Made:

That the report be presented to the Standards Committee for comments.

Reason for Decision:

To allow the Standards Committee to express a view in the report before being presented to Full Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

10. ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Councillor Challinor, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report of the Executive Director - Business on the Enforcement Policy. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration highlighted the need for an overall strategy with joint working between Council departments.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Educating people about the systems in place
- Implications for Police support
- Problems with fixed penalties including age restrictions and time limits

Decision Made:

- That the revised Enforcement Strategy and Policy be approved.
- That detailed enforcement appendices be considered by Policy Scrutiny Committee together with reports of regulatory performance.

Reason for Decision:

Regulatory Services are currently being increasingly affected by national initiatives for the purpose of simplifying and targeting enforcement activity to achieve specific outcomes. The issues raised by known initiatives have been incorporated into the current Enforcement Strategy and Policy. However, as so many changes are affecting enforcement activities, the Strategy should be seen as a framework for enforcement activity with detailed implementation contained within service specific appendices. Developments in staff safety and welfare, through the development of the Rossendale Borough Council Corporate Enforcement Group, have also been incorporated into the overall Enforcement Strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

11. ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGY

Councillor P Steen, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services outlined the report of the Executive Director - Business on the Environmental Strategy which had been for consultation and amended for future use.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services informed Members that it was proposed to forward the revised Environmental Strategy to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) for adoption.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Climate change
- Council representation on LSP theme groups
- Other sources of data
- Distinction between elements of public responsibility
- Ensure reflect Member views

In response to a query from an Elected Member the Leader of the Council agreed to forward the full list of representation on LSP theme groups.

Decision Made:

That the revised Environmental Strategy 2009-2018 be approved and forwarded to the board of the Local Strategic Partnership for adoption as an LSP document and as a means by which the Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018 will be implemented.

Reason for Decision:

The strategic aims of the Environmental Strategy have been reconsidered and remain valid. Future development of the Strategy and its related actions will be more effectively undertaken by involvement of communities and businesses. This will have the benefits, as stated in the statutory guidance to the Act, of:-

- Strengthening the democratic legitimacy of government and the civic life of the community
- More efficient and effective services that better reflect the needs of users and have higher levels of customer satisfaction
- Safer communities and a more attractive built environment that meets people's needs, and
- Strengthening community cohesion.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

12. USE OF LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INCENTIVE FUNDING

Councillor Challinor, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report of the Head of Regeneration on the Use of Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Funding.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration emphasised the need to bring vacant commercial properties back into use to help establish more business in the Borough by offering improvement grants.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Establishing new businesses in Rossendale
- Motorway network
- Credit Union
- Advice on home repossessions
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Informing of where to direct people
- Age of properties
- Advertising to landlords
- Advertising different initiatives on the web

Decision Made:

- To note the support services available to businesses in Rossendale.
- To create a pilot business grant programme within the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive Scheme (LABGIS) funding allocation to support the new and relocating businesses within Rossendale.
- To grant delegated authority for the Head of Regeneration, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to approve applications for business loans under the pilot programme.

Reason for Decision:

In the current economic climate it is important that the Council can be seen to be taking steps to assist businesses through support services and to address the numbers of vacant commercial properties within the Borough. Whilst there are a number of support services available to businesses, there is currently no provision to assist business through a business grant and this pilot could provide valuable evidence and experience should further funding become available for this type of activity.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

13. ROSSENDALE LOCALITY PLAN 2009/10

Councillor Swain, the Leader of the Council outlined the report of the Deputy Chief Executive on the Rossendale Locality Plan, and informed that it was critical to engage with Lancashire County Council and work jointly to achieve greater benefits for communities of the Borough.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Challenge of two tier working
- Services for children and trust benefits
- Highways
- Need for compendium and common language
- Panoptican
- Grass cutting
- Reducing repetitive work
- Amount of indirect funding coming into the Council

Decision Made:

That the 2009/10 Locality Plan be approved.

Reason for Decision:

It is important both Council's continue to work together with the aim of improving services and the actions contained with the Locality Plan will support this endeavour.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

14. UPDATE ON THE CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN (DPD) DOCUMENT AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME (LDS)

Councillor Challinor, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the update report of the Executive Director - Business on the Core Strategy Development Plan Document and Local Development Scheme.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration informed that the Core Strategy now has a working group. Consultations were underway: the Area Strategies for Bacup and Rawtenstall were presented at the January Neighbourhood Forums, and the Area Strategies for Haslingden and Whitworth would be presented at the March forums. It

was expected that by the end of the year the Core Strategy document would have been accepted.

Decision Made:

That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision:

Significant progress is being made with the production of the Local Development Framework, in particular work is being undertaken to ensure that the evidence required to inform future documents is up-to-date. The Forward Planning Team are working on the Core Strategy scheduled for submission in November 2009 and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

15. UPDATE ON CONSERVATION AND HERITAGE WORK

Councillor Challinor, the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the update report of the Executive Director - Business on Conservation and Heritage Work. He informed that the Council had been working closely with English Heritage and applications for funding had been successful.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Working with the diocese – listed church buildings
- Number of listed buildings in the valley
- Booklet to be produced
- Information on forthcoming work in Haslingden
- Transforming where we live
- Anything listed in the 21st Century
- Request to look at Crawshawbooth as a conservation area

Decision Made:

That the progress made on Conservation and Heritage work across the Borough be noted.

Reason for Decision:

The Council is committed to protecting our Heritage and working with English Heritage and other partners / groups to raise the profile of the buildings and Conservations areas within the Borough.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

16. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Decision Made and Reason for Decision:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information) under Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 and information which is subject to any obligation of confidentiality as defined in Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

17. JOB EVALUATION

Councillor Essex, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the update report of the Head of People and Policy on Job Evaluation.

Decision Made:

That the recommendation as detailed in the report be agreed.

Reason for Decision:

Job Evaluation has the potential to impact on all the Council's Corporate Priorities.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

N.B. Councillors Cheetham, Essex, Robertson and Unsworth left the meeting prior to the start of the following item.

18. ASSET DISPOSAL

Councillor Swain, the Leader of the Council outlined the report of the Head of Finance on Asset Disposal, which would go to Full Council on 26th February for final decision.

Decision Made:

That the recommendations as detailed in the report be agreed.

Reason for Decision:

The Asset Disposal Report contributes to the following corporate priorities: Delivering Quality Services to Customers; Delivering Regeneration across the Borough; Keeping our Borough Clean and Green; Promoting Rossendale as a cracking place to live and visit, and Well Managed Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 9.05pm

CHAIR