

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 18th March 2009

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

**IN ATTENDANCE: Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive
Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive
Linda Fisher, Executive Director – Business
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance
Liz Murphy, Head of People and Policy
Steve Jackson, Head of Regeneration
Heather Moore, Committee and Member Services Manager**

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors Aldred, A. Barnes, Cheetham, Farrington,
Nuttall, C. Pilling and Robertson
1 member of the public**

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 18th February 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. The Executive Director – Business clarified that in relation to the item on Grants to Outside Bodies any Councillor appointed by the Authority to an Outside Body listed in Appendix 1 of the report should declare a personal a prejudicial interest and any Councillor serving as a Member on the organisation, but not appointed by the Authority, should declare a personal interest.

The following interests were declared in relation to the item on Grants to Outside Bodies:

- Councillor Essex declared a personal interest as he is appointed to serve on the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Councillor P. Steen declared a personal interest as he is a member of the Credit Union.
- Councillor Robertson declared a personal interest as she is a member of Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Limited (REAL) and the Credit Union and she is appointed to serve on the Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Councillor A. Barnes declared a personal interest as she is a member of the Credit Union.
- Councillor Dickinson declared a personal interest as he is appointed to serve on the Citizens Advice Bureau.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

In response to a question regarding Discretionary Rate Relief the Leader of the Council indicated that this would be dealt with under the agenda item.

6. THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

The Leader of the Council outlined the proposed priorities for the 2009-2012 Corporate Plan, which had been developed at the priority setting event for Members in October 2008.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Leisure being a top priority going forward and cutting across all priority areas
- Regeneration and the New Hall Hey Site

Decision Made:

1. That the views expressed by members at the Priority Setting Event be noted.
2. That Cabinet recommends Full Council to agree the Priorities from the list as follows:-
 - Encouraging healthy and respectful communities.
 - Promoting the Borough.
 - Providing value for money services.
 - Delivering regeneration across the Borough.
 - Delivering quality services to our customers.
 - Keeping the borough clean, green and safe.

Reason for Decision:

It is important to review the Council's priorities to ensure that they represent what the Council is looking to achieve.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

7. SECOND HOMES INCOME

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods outlined details of the County Council's new Protocol for the use of the second homes fund to support the ongoing development of the Rossendale Partnership (Rossendale's Local Strategic Partnership).

The Portfolio Holder reported that District Authorities in Lancashire had agreed the Protocol previously and the new Protocol provided clarification on reporting and accountability and suggested a three year agreement for the use of the fund.

In response to a question about any under-spend it was clarified that up to 25% could be carried over.

Decision Made:

1. That the principles of the County Council protocol for the collection and distribution of second homes fund to support the ongoing development of the Rossendale Partnership (Rossendale's Local Strategic Partnership) be agreed.
2. That any future amendments to the County Council protocol be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive and Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

Reason for Decision:

Second homes income is a key funding stream that contributes towards the effective operation of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

8. GRANTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods presented the proposed allocation of grants to outside bodies for 2009/10 to 2011/2012.

The Portfolio Holder informed the Cabinet that the grants accounted for a significant element of Council expenditure and the work of the voluntary, community and faith sector was recognised as extremely important.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Signposting to available support
- Monitoring the volume of activity within Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in light of current economic situation and whether the grant allocation was sufficient. The Leader of the Council referred to a meeting of the Advice and Information Agencies in Rossendale, which was attended by Councillor Sandiford.
- The Communities Team were looking at alternative ways of supporting CAB

Decision Made:

1. That the grant funding as detailed in Appendix 1 be approved.
2. That those outside bodies who have sought three year funding be subject to a clause allowing their proposed allocation for year 2 and 3 to be reviewed as part of the Council's Annual Budget setting process.
3. That the positive impacts of the community grants and neighbourhood grants awarded during 2008/2009 to the lives of people in Rossendale be noted.
4. That the following amendment be made to the Grants Policy 2008 / 2011:

From:

Both of these grant types will be determined by the Communities Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods, or the Leader of the Council should the elected member be unavailable.

Change to:

A 'Grants Advisory Panel' made up of elected members supported by a member of the voluntary sector will make funding recommendations to Cabinet for final approval. All applicants will be told whether or not they are successful within 8 weeks of the closing date.

5. That Full Council be recommended to amend the current membership in the Council's Constitution for the Grants Advisory Panel to include a member of the voluntary sector as detailed in 4 above.

6. That any future amendments to the grants policy be delegated to the Deputy Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities and Neighbourhoods.

Reason for Decision:

The work of the voluntary, community and faith sector is recognised as extremely important. The services/projects provided by the sector and the support it gives to individuals and groups across Rossendale is regarded as invaluable.

N.B. Councillor Essex abstained from voting on the item.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

9. HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2009-2010

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration presented information relating to the Housing Market Renewal Programme for 2009-2010.

The Portfolio Holder informed the meeting that the funding resources had not yet been confirmed, but it was expected to be reduced therefore the project allocations may need to be amended should the final allocation differ from the bid.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Allocation process
- Success of previous schemes
- Local Enterprise Growth Incentive (LEGI) funding
- Support of MP in lobbying for funding

Decisions Made:

1. That the Housing Market Renewal Programme for 2009 - 2010 be submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.
2. That delegated authority be granted to the Executive Director - Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to sign the contract agreements (form of commencement agreements) for the housing improvement works.
3. That delegated authority be granted to the Head of Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to agree any amendments to the proposed programme should they be required following level announcement of HMR resources.

Reason for Decision:

Rossendale has a successful track record in delivering the Housing Market Renewal Programme in the area which is recognised by Elevate and the Government Office North West. The 2009 – 2010 Programme will continue this and provides a real opportunity to improve the quality of life for local residents.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

10. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services provided details of proposed Discretionary Relief against National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) to various charitable organisations.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Joint press release with organisations receiving discretionary rate relief

Decision Made:

That discretionary rate relief is awarded as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, the total cost to the council being £34530.67.

Reason for Decision:

The proposal supports various charitable organisations.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

11. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES WRITE OFFS

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services outlined proposals to write off bad debts of National Non-Domestic Rates.

The Portfolio Holder reported that a record of all debts written off was maintained in the event that there was an opportunity for future collections.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Collection rates
- If aware of properties being vacated a credit notice should be submitted to the liquidators
- The Licensing Trade and properties owned by chains
- Naming the businesses

Decision Made:

That the write off of £35,282.22 in relation to Nation Non-Domestic Rates be agreed.

Reason for Decision:

The write-offs are within the provisions available and are prudent before the financial year end.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

12. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources provided an update on the General Fund estimates, Capital Programme, Revenue, Reserves and Treasury Matters.

The Portfolio Holder reported that capital receipts were down and the current economic climate continued to be challenging and a cause for concern in the raising of capital receipts. Employment costs had risen in light of the additional 0.3% national pay increase. A leisure reserve of £180k had been earmarked.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Interest rates
- Financial challenges
- Robust reserves position
- Use of health money to support leisure and projects which would not be delivered as a result
- Whether the Area Based Grant or Change Management Reserve could have funded leisure so that health funding would remain.
- A request for the minutes of the Capital Funding Sub Group be circulated to all Members
- Members' Allowances. The Leader of the Council reported that this would come back to Council in the new Municipal Year.

Decision Made:

That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision:

Strong financial management ensures the effective management of the Council's resources which then enables the provision of value for money services.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

13. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources provided an update on progress of the actions detailed in the Corporate Plan together with information on National Indicators.

The Portfolio Holder reported that most of the actions within the Corporate Plan were on track to be delivered.

In considering the report, the following matters were discussed:

- Risks identified in the report in relation to the Accommodation Strategy. Waste Strategy and implementing recommendations from the Health and Safety Audit
- The improved reporting arrangements through the integrated performance report
- Monitoring of Team Lancashire performance through Overview and Scrutiny
- Progress on the Core Strategy
- Pruning on the roundabout near the Woolpack, Haslingden

Decision Made:

1. That the performance be noted.
2. That those indicators that are under-achieving targeted levels of performance continue to be monitored.

Reason for Decision:

It is important that the performance of the Council is monitored to ensure on target.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

The Leader of the Council agreed to take the following Policies and Strategies together.

14. DRAFT PENNINE LANCASHIRE HOUSING STRATEGY

Decision Made:

That Full Council be recommended to approve the Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy and Delivery Plan.

Reason for Decision:

The Pennine Lancashire Housing Strategy provides a robust evidence base on which to attract investment from the newly formed Homes and Communities Agency, other funding bodies and the private sector.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

15. BIODIVERSITY AND GEODIVERSITY ACTION PLANS

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services reported that the plans were a statutory requirement and he circulated leaflets from Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities on the subject.

Decision Made:

That the Biodiversity and Geodiversity Action Plans 2009-2010 be approved for the purpose of further consultation and development.

Reason for Decision:

The Council will be able to ensure it complies with its Biodiversity Policy by providing the information and guidance for local action to help deliver the aims of the Environmental Strategy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

16. HEALTH AND WELLBEING STRATEGY

Decision Made:

That the revised Health and Wellbeing Strategy be approved and forwarded to the board of the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) 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 Strategy will support the protection and improvement of the health and wellbeing within Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

17. AIR QUALITY STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services outlined the approach being undertaken as part of the Strategy: educate, encourage and enforcement.

Decision Made:

That the Air Quality Strategy be adopted and implemented.

Reason for Decision:

The Council will be demonstrating its commitment to putting air quality at the heart of the decision making process and thereby act in a co-ordinated way to reduce air pollution and protect the health of people and the environment within Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

18. STRATEGIC HOUSING LAND AVAILABILITY ASSESSMENT

Decision Made:

That Members approve the findings of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) and endorse its adoption and publication for use in the preparation of the Local Development Framework and interim planning process.

Reason for Decision:

The SHLAA is a key piece of evidence to the development and progression of the Local Development Framework (LDF), in particular the Core Strategy and Site Allocations Development Plan Documents. Not only will the SHLAA inform the decisions made in those documents, but it will also inform and support decisions made in the interim, whilst they are still being prepared.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.00pm

CHAIR