

**MINUTES OF: THE CABINET**

**Date of Meeting: Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

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

**In Attendance: Mrs H Lockwood, Chief Executive  
Mrs C Birtwistle, Acting Assistant Head of Legal Services  
Mrs L Murphy, Head of People and Policy  
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance  
Mr S Jackson, Head of Regeneration  
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors A Barnes, Cheetham, Farrington, Morris,  
Nuttall, J Pilling, Robertson and Sandiford**

**1 member of the public**

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. MINUTES**

**Resolved:**

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 14<sup>th</sup> October 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**

Councillor Essex declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item E1 – Allotments and Garden Lets Policy in that his wife rented an allotment from Rossendale Borough Council and he was a member of the Free Lane Allotment Society.

**5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

A member of the public raised questions and points to which the Leader of the Council responded. The issues raised are summarised below:

- Planning application number 2009/0457.
- Various financial matters.

The Leader agreed to accept written questions regarding the above matters from the member of the public and would ensure a response was sent directly.

## **6. PUBLIC REALM INTEGRATION PROJECT**

The Portfolio Holder for the Environment outlined the report which informed Members of the ongoing work in relation to Lancashire County Council's Public Realm Integration Project. The Public Realm Integration Project was summarised as a 'fence to fence' service covering highways, grass verges, trees and shrubs, street lights, signs, street furniture and litter and aimed to clarify the two-tier structure of the services delivered by Lancashire County Council and District Councils.

Members discussed the report in detail and the following comments were made:

- Success of pilot scheme at South Ribble Borough Council and importance of sharing best practice.
- Timescales of the project and costs to Rossendale Borough Council.
- Importance of involving Green Vale Homes with respect to grass cutting.
- Gully cleaning and diversion of Lancashire County Council funds to fund gully cleaning. The County Councillors present agreed to investigate whether this was an ongoing commitment and feed back to members.
- A suggestion was made to include a Member Engagement session on the Public Realm Integration Project.

The Chair of Overview and Scrutiny confirmed that the Operations Manager was due to return to Overview and Scrutiny Committee in March 2010 and would examine the proposed strategy prior to it being presented to Cabinet.

### **Decision Made:**

1. That Cabinet agreed to the commencement of the Public Realm Integration Project.
2. That a further report be presented to the Cabinet in due course which would identify the operational and financial consequences of the Public Realm Integration Project to the Council.

### **Reasons for Decision:**

The Public Realm Project is intended to improve co-ordination across a range of highways, transport and environmental activities and result in a more customer-focused service.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

## **7. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources presented the report which updated members on the General Fund budget monitoring for 2009/10, the Capital Programme and Treasury Matters. It was noted that with respect to right-to-buy (RTB) properties, Green Vale Homes were forecasting no improvement for the rest of the financial year. Other issues highlighted by the Portfolio Holder included 2010 pay settlements, cleared balances of £12.1 million and increase of debtors.

Members discussed the report in detail and the following comments were made:

- Economic recession and the preparations made by Rossendale Borough Council to withstand difficulties.
- Unemployment rates compared with neighbouring Local Authorities.
- Additional playground and disability grant funding.
- Pay claims and legal matters.

It was noted that the link at 4.6.1 had not printed on the hard copies of the Cabinet Papers. This information would be circulated to all Cabinet Members.

### **Decision Made**

Members noted the content of the report.

### **Reason for Decision:**

To facilitate the continued management of the Council's finances.

### **Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**NB: Councillor Essex left the meeting for the duration of this item.**

## **8. ALLOTMENT AND GARDEN LETS POLICY**

The Leader of the Council outlined the report which requested approval of an Allotments and Garden Lets Policy for Rossendale, confirmed areas of responsibility in relation to the administration and management of allotments and review the charges associated with allotments. The report also requested agreement to develop a long-term strategy with a view to increasing the number of allotments, longer term tenancies and garden lets. The Leader outlined the Options of charges for tenancy agreements and put forward Option 3, being £20.

Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:

- Importance of providing allotments for residents and the development of an effective long-term strategy.
- Maintenance of fences at allotment sites.

- Suitable land for allotment sites.

**Decision Made:**

1. That the Allotments and Garden Lets Policy be agreed.
2. That any further changes to the Policy be delegated to the Head of People and Policy in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.
3. That an Allotments Strategy for the Borough be developed which would include an assessment of the feasibility of increasing the number of allotments and an exploration of external funding opportunities.
4. That the charge for the tenancy agreement to be reviewed with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> September 2009 and agreed at £20.

**Reason for Decision:**

The Allotments and Garden Lets Policy will establish clear lines of responsibility and accountability in relation to the provision of Garden Lets and Allotment. In addition the Policy would confirm the Council's Policy in supporting the allocation of land for the growing of vegetables.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

Alternative tenancy agreement charges of £115 or £40.

**9. RETENTION AND DISPOSAL POLICY GUIDELINES AND SCHEDULE – UPDATED VERSION**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outline the report which informed members of updates to the Council's Retention and Disposal Policy guidelines and schedule. The updates included changes in election legislation, updated information on the electronic storage of records and changes in the storage of financial information. The report requested that Cabinet adopts the updated version of the Retention and Disposal Guidelines and Schedule with immediate effect.

**Decision Made:**

1. That the updated Retention and Disposal Guidelines and schedule be approved and adopted.
2. That all future minor amendments to the Policy be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

**Reason for Decision:**

To promote better records management and to ensure that the Policy includes accurate information.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**10. RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outline the report which sought Members approval for the updated Risk Management Strategy. It was noted that risk management was firmly embedded in the Council's infrastructure and it was essential that this strategy was regularly updated.

Members discussed the report and the following comments were made:

- Importance of ensuring all Members receive information on risk management. The Leader noted that a training session had taken place and all training information was available on request to Members who had been unable to attend.

**Decision Made:**

1. That the updated Risk Management Strategy be approved.
2. That any further changes recommended by the Corporate Policy Steering Group be delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

**Reason for Decision:**

To ensure that the Risk Management Strategy is fit for purpose and meets the needs of the Council and assists in the achievement of the corporate priorities.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**11. PROCUREMENT STRATEGY UPDATE**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined a report which sought Member approval for the updated Procurement Strategy. The Strategy sought to use local suppliers where possible to deliver medium and high value contracts.

Members discussed the report and the following issues were raised:

- Difficulties experienced by small suppliers in winning high value contracts.
- Value of 'Meet the Buyer' events.
- Importance of best value.

**Decision Made:**

1. That the updated Procurement Strategy be approved.
2. That any further changes to the policy recommended by the Corporate Policy Steering Group be delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.

**Reason for Decision:**

To ensure the procurement strategy is fit for purpose and meetings the needs of the Council and assists in the achievement of the Council's Corporate Priorities.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**12. INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 (JULY TO SEPTEMBER)**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report which informed Cabinet of the financial monitoring for quarter 2, those indicators not achieving their targeted levels of performance together with the actions being taken to get the performance back on target and the progress made in implementing the actions contained in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Members discussed the report and the following issues were raised:

- Working days lost due to sickness.
- Accessibility of buildings to the disabled.
- Recycling targets and it was noted that this issue would be investigated at Performance Scrutiny in January 2010.
- Success of the Haslingden Home Renewal programme.

**Decision Made:**

- 1) That the levels of performance detailed in the report be noted.
- 2) That the Cabinet would continue to monitor performance of those indicators that are under-achieving targeted levels of performance and would request further information upon this from the relevant Head of Service. An update target LI82aii would be requested to a subsequent Cabinet.

**Reason for Decision:**

To enhance the Pride in Rossendale project.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:**

None.

**13. 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.

**14. PURCHASE, LEASE RENTAL OF COUNCIL LAND**

The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the purpose of the report.

**Decision Made**

That the recommendations contained within the report be approved.

**Reason for Decision**

To ensure that the Council considers financial opportunities.

**Alternative Options Considered and Rejected**

None.

**15. REVIEW OF THE HOMELESSNESS SERVICES PROVIDED BY GREEN VALE HOMES**

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report and the purpose of the report.

**Decision Made**

That recommendations in the report be approved.

**The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.35pm**

CHAIR

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