

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 17th March 2010

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

**In Attendance: Mrs H Lockwood, Chief Executive
Mr S Sugarman, Director of Business
Ms F Meechan, Director of Customers and Communities
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance
Mr S Jackson, Head of Regeneration
Mr A Buckle, Head of Customer Services and ICT
Mr M Riley, Communities Manager
Mr P Mepham, Environmental Health Manager
Mrs A Storah, Principal Planner (Forward Planning)
Mrs C Sharples, Acting Committee and Member Services Manager
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

Also Present: Councillors A. Barnes, Crawforth, Farrington, Lamb, Morris, C. Pilling, J. Pilling, Robertson and Sandiford

13 members of the public and no representatives of the press

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Essex.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETINGS

Resolved:

1. That the minutes of the meeting held on 17th February 2010 be approved subject to the following amendment:-

Item 7 – Rossendale Gateway (Redevelopment of the Valley Centre)

That the resolutions be amended to include “The Council should consider the use of CPO powers if deemed appropriate.”

3. URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

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

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations of interest were made:

Councillor P. Steen declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item 7 – Grants to Outside Bodies 2010/11 by virtue that he was a Lancashire County Council Trustee for Groundwork Pennine Lancashire.

Councillor P. Steen also declared a personal interest in Item 14 by virtue that his son was a serving member of the Armed Forces.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Members of the public raised questions which are briefly summarised below and responses were given by the appropriate Portfolio Holder:-

- Queries were raised by representatives of the Citizen's Advice Bureau with respect to Item 7 and the Chair agreed to suspend the Procedure for Public Speaking with regards to this item.
- Mr Doug Spencer queried the timescales for a decision to be made on the future of Bacup Leisure Hall.

6. PERFORMANCE REWARD GRANT

The Leader of the Council outlined the report which sought Member approval to the recommendations put forward by the Local Strategic Partnership's Executive on the allocation of the Performance Reward Grant in line with the Protocol which was attached at Appendix 1 of the committee report. The Performance Reward Grant is allocated by Central Government for the achievement of the first set of Local Area Agreement 2006-2009 stretch targets and the level of reward grant is dependent upon the performance of individual stretch targets. It has been agreed that 60% of the total Performance Reward Grant will be shared equally amongst the 12 districts in Lancashire, with Rossendale Borough Council potentially receiving in the region of £1,000,000. The Performance Reward Grant would be paid in instalments between 2010 and 2012.

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- Comparative amounts with the other Lancashire Districts.
- Importance of improving the signage to tourist destinations in Rossendale.

Resolved:

1. That subject to confirmation of the funding from Lancashire County Council, the Cabinet recommends to Council to agree the recommendations put forward by the Local Strategic Partnership Executive as detailed in Table 1 of the Committee Report.

2. That Council be recommended to delegate the establishment of monitoring arrangements for the Performance Reward Grant to Overview and Scrutiny and the Local Strategic Partnership's Executive.

Reason for decision

To ensure that this significant payment assists in the delivery of projects that will help achieve the vision and outcomes outlined in Rossendale's Sustainable Community Strategy, Local Area Agreement and Corporate Plan.

NB: Councillor P. Steen did not participate or vote on the following item of business.

7. GRANTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES 2010/11

The Leader of the Council outlined the report which sought Member approval on the proposed allocation of grants to Outside Bodies for 2010/11 and provided Members with an update on the impact of grants allocated by the Council during 2009/10. The Leader noted that Cabinet had been asked to consider the approval of three extra grants which would be met from unallocated funds as follows:-

Cherry Tree Pre-School	£ 2,250
Bacup Family Centre	£ 8,300 (in addition to the £4,200 agreed in the report)
Whitworth Historical Society	£ 5,200
Total	£15,750

The Leader also outlined Appendix 4 of the committee report which detailed the work and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Value for Money Task and Finish Group.

The Chair allowed members of the public present to make comments.

Representatives from the CAB raised the following issues regarding their grant application :-

- Concerns regarding the CAB funding adjustment to be considered by the Council.
- Timescales with respect to funding adjustment.
- Concerns regarding the specialist financial qualification requirements.

In addition, Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- Importance of scrutiny in order to ensure value for money services are provided.
- Clarification of the work carried out by the Task and Finish Group.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and the Chief Executive provided clarification on the services provided by Help Direct.

Resolved:-

1. That Cabinet approve the grant funding to those groups recommended by the Grants Advisory Group for 2010/11 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the committee report and the additional awards as detailed above.
2. That Cabinet note the positive impact of the grants to Outside Bodies awarded during 2009/10 as detailed in Appendix 3 of the committee report.
3. That Cabinet support the recommendations of Overview and Scrutiny as outlined in their report at 9.1 and 9.2 in Appendix 4, and that following continuation of the value for money exercise with the Citizens Advice Bureau, Help Direct and Rossendale Borough Council, consideration be given to adjusting the funding to the Citizens Advice Bureau in quarters 3 and 4 of 2010-11.
4. That Cabinet ask Overview and Scrutiny Management to conduct a 'Value for Money' evaluation of the main recipients of grants to outside body funding.
5. That the Value for Money evaluation be brought back to Cabinet for consideration at the earliest opportunity.

Reason for decision

To continue to support the important work of the voluntary, community and faith sector.

8. HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2010-2011

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report which sought Member approval for the proposed Housing Market Renewal Programme for 2010-11. The report sought delegated authority for the Director of Business and Head of Regeneration to formalise the adoption of the new Regenerate Pennine Lancashire Framework Agreement for Housing Renewal works on completion of the procurement exercise. The report also sought delegated authority for 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 the allocation of housing market renewal resources being received.

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- The grant funding allocated was welcomed by all Members.

Resolved:-

1. That the Housing Market Renewal Programme for 2010-11 be approved.
2. That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Business in consultation with the Head of Regeneration to formalise the adoption of the new Regenerate Pennine Lancashire Framework Agreement for Housing Renewal works on completion of the procurement exercise.
3. That delegated authority is granted to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration to sign the contract agreements for the housing improvement and environmental works.
4. That delegated authority is 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.

Reason for decision

To ensure that Rossendale continues to deliver the Housing Market Renewal Programme.

9. ROSSENDALE HOUSING STOCK CONDITION SURVEY

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report which provided Members with the key outcomes of the Rossendale Housing Stock Condition Survey. The survey had identified issues within the housing stock which included standards of living, fuel poverty, category 1 hazards and investment requirements. The report informed members of the levels of Disabled Facilities Grant received by the Council which provides additional funding to the Housing Capital Programme resources.

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- Condition of current housing stock.

Resolved:-

1. That the outcomes for the Rossendale Housing Stock Condition Survey be noted.
2. That the Council and its partners continue to lobby for continued investment in initiatives to address the conditions within the private sector housing stock.

Reason for decision

To ensure that the Council's housing stock is fit for purpose and that the council continues to lobby for significant investment in housing renewal initiatives.

10. AFFORDABLE HOUSING ECONOMIC VIABILITY ASSESSMENT (AHEVA)

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report which informed Members of the findings of the Council's Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment (AHEVA) and outlined its role within the emerging Local Development Framework, particularly in relation to the Core Strategy. The assessment recommended that the thresholds for affordable housing be amended as follows:-

20% on brownfield sites over 15 units
Between 30%-40% on Greenfield sites over 8 units

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- Importance of a structured and sensible approach to the allocation of affordable housing.

Resolved:-

1. That the findings of the Affordable Housing Economic Viability Assessment (AHEVA) be approved for use within the Local Development Framework, planning policy preparation and Development Control purposes as appropriate.

Reason for decision

To ensure that the Council is able to defend its policy position with regard to affordable housing requirements and is able to request new provision from developments.

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2009/10: MONTH TO – END JANUARY 2010

In the absence of the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, the Leader invited the Head of Finance to introduce the report which updated Members on the current financial position to Month 10 with respect to the general fund budget monitoring for 2009/10, the capital programme and treasury matters. It was noted that the Council was on course to save over £300,000 in the current financial year.

Resolved:-

That the report be noted.

Reason for decision

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

12. FOOD AND HEALTH STRATEGY

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services outlined the report which sought approval for the Food and Health Strategy 2009-2018. The Strategy has been developed and focussed upon six priority areas which aim to contribute to both national priorities and locally identified needs. The Strategy would be implemented and Managed by the Rossendale Food Forum who would report progress and achievements to the Rossendale Health and Wellbeing Theme Group.

The Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services and other Members thanked the Environmental Health Manager for his hard work whilst in employment with the Council and wished him well in the future.

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- The commonsense nature of the report.
- The focus on environment and the subsequent impact upon health.

Resolved:-

1. That the Food and Health Strategy is adopted and recommended for implementation by the Rossendale Food Forum.
2. That all future minor amendments to the Strategy would be delegated to the Environmental Health Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for decision

To provide a framework for action designed to protect and improve health and wellbeing across the Borough.

13. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services outlined the report which requested approval for the award of Discretionary Relief against National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR) to various charitable organisations.

Resolved:-

1. That discretionary rate relief is awarded as outlined in Appendix 1 of the committee report, the total cost to the Council being £14,871.55.
2. That it be recommended to Council to increase the delegated authority to approve discretionary rate relief up to the value of £5,000 to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, and that this be recommended for inclusion in the Annual Review of the Constitution.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that those charitable organisations which receive financial support from the Council continue to do so.

14. ARMED SERVICES PASSPORT TO LEISURE REVIEW

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services outlined the report which asked Members to consider amending the current provision of the Armed Services Passport to Leisure, to make it more inclusive and accessible to all members of the Armed Forces. It was noted that the proposed amendments would enable all serving members of the Armed Forces to make free use of leisure facilities in Rossendale, regardless of their residency. Those members of the Armed Services would be entitled to bring one guest with them. It was noted that the current Passports to Leisure which enabled families to use the services would be honoured until their expiry date.

Members considered the report and contents and the following comments were made:-

- Importance of showing appreciation for the work of the Armed Forces.
- Removal of the passes for families of the Armed Forces.

Resolved:-

1. That Armed Forces personnel resident in or visiting the Borough may avail themselves of free access to leisure provided that they are able to show valid military identification at each facility.
2. That free use is limited to Armed Forces Personnel only, meaning that immediate family would no longer be eligible for individual membership. However, when any member of the Armed Forces presents valid military evidence when using the eligible facilities, they will also be entitled to admit 1 guest.
3. That the current Armed Services Passport to Leisure cards issued to Armed Forces Personnel and their families are honoured until the expiry date. Thereafter only the family member currently in the Armed Forces would be eligible for free access to leisure on production of valid military identification.
4. That authority for amendment to the Armed Forces Passport to Leisure be delegated to the Head of Customer Services and ICT in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for decision

To simplify the process and procedures of the Armed Services Passport to Leisure.

**15. NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATE, COUNCIL TAX AND SUNDRY DEBTS
WRITE OFFS**

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services outlined the report which sought Member approval to write off bad debts of National Non-Domestic Rates, Council Tax and Sundry Debts which were above the delegated limit of £2,000 as outlined in Appendix 1 and 2 of the committee report. It was noted that should the opportunity to pursue these debts arise, then they would be pursued.

Resolved:-

1. That approval is given to write off £25,809.11 in relation to irrecoverable National Non-Domestic Rates.
2. That approval is given to write off £12,943.73 in relation to irrecoverable Council Tax.
3. That approval is given to write off £6,980.74 in relation to irrecoverable Sundry Debts.
4. That approval is given to increase the delegated authority of the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources to approve sundry debt write offs up to the value of £5,000, and that this be recommended for inclusion in the Annual Review of the Constitution.

Reason for decision

To write off irrecoverable debts prior to the financial year end.

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the 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.

17. PROPOSED SALE OF LAND IN BACUP

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the committee report and the recommendations contained therein.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as outlined in the committee report be approved.

Reason for decision

To improve the area.

18. LEASE OF LAND IN BACUP

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the committee report and the recommendations contained therein.

Resolved:

That the recommendations as outlined in the committee report be approved.

Reason for decision

To secure the financial position of the organisation and improve community facilities.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.15pm

CHAIR