

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Thursday 1st December 2011

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (in the Chair)
Councillors Jackson, Lamb, MacNae, Marriott and
Serridge**

**In Attendance: Mrs H Lockwood, Chief Executive
Mr S Sugarman, Director of Business
Mrs J Crawford, Finance Manager
Mr S Jackson, Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer
Ms R Fletcher, Assistant Conservation Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Cheetham, Crawforth, Evans, Farrington,
McInnes Morris, Nuttall, Pilling, Shipley and D. Smith.
Mr Jake Berry MP**

**1 member of the public
2 members of the press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence, all Cabinet Members were present.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2011 be approved as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Marriott declared a personal interest in Item 7 by virtue that the proposed boundary changes would encompass an immediate family member.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Mr Leonard Entwistle asked for clarification of how much money the Council had spent in the financial year to date with Rossendale Leisure Trust on the consultants Kier and Mouchel. The Leader asked the Finance Manager to respond to Mr Entwistle directly.

6. DERELICT PROPERTY SALES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration introduced the report which put policies into place under the Law of Property Act 1925, and noted that this policy and procedure was part of a toolkit which would enable the Council to bring long-term vacant properties back into use, whilst continuing to work with property owners and landlords.
- 6.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following points were raised:-
- Staff resources and the prioritisation of properties. It was confirmed that there was a Vacant Property Task Group who prioritised areas.
 - The blight that vacant properties put onto towns and villages.
 - The importance of this policy as a tool in the regeneration of the Borough.
 - Issues regarding Mytholm House were discussed. It was noted that this policy may not be the appropriate avenue for this matter.
 - It was noted that the Council did have these powers in place previously, however a clear policy and procedure was required to enable the Council to act.
 - Clarification was given regarding the timescale of pursuing this policy versus a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO). It was noted that cases were on an individual basis, however, a CPO meant that the Council would incur costs to acquire the property, whereas this procedure meant that charges would be claimed back from the sale of a property.
 - Clarification was given that should a Serving Officer of the Council serve a notice, that Officer was acting on behalf of the Council. There would, therefore be no continuity issues should that officer leave.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet adopts the Derelict Property Sales Policy and Procedures for dealing with long-term, problematic properties.
2. That any minor amendments to the Policy and Procedure be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To provide a clear statement and process for dealing with long-term empty properties.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER APPRAISALS, BOUNDARY REVIEWS AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSALS PLANS (RAWTENSTALL TOWN CENTRE AND BACUP)

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report which sought authorisation for the adoption of the Rawtenstall and Bacup Conservation Area Character Appraisals, Boundary Reviews and Management Proposals for two town centres

with a strong heritage value. It was noted that establishment of these areas and boundaries could be used to encourage funding and bids such as the Townscapes Initiatives Funding.

7.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-

- Consequence and impact on local trade and residents and the recent negative publicity regarding roller shutters was discussed and noted.
- Implementation of recommendations with limited resources.
- The importance of input from Lancashire County Councillors and Members of Parliament. The implementation of the Three Tier Forums on 6th December 2011 was noted.
- Concerns were raised regarding flagged pavements for wheelchair users and the importance of consultation with the relevant equality groups was discussed and noted.
- It was noted that the extension of boundaries would be subject to consultation and concerns were raised regarding Waterside Mill on Burnley Road in Bacup.
- Clarification was given regarding the input and involvement of Ward Councillors during the consultation events.

Resolved:

1. That the Conservation Area Character Appraisals for the Conservation Areas of Rawtenstall Town Centre and Bacup be adopted as material considerations for development control purposes with effect from 2nd December 2011.
2. That authorisation be given for the recommended actions within the related Management Proposals Plans to be developed and where necessary, brought back to Council for specific approval for their incremental implementation as resources allow, including the re-designation of Conservation Area boundaries where these are recommended within these documents.
3. All future minor amendments to the Appraisals and Management Proposals Plans to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that each designated conservation area has an up-to-date appraisal, that its boundaries are regularly reviewed and that the statutory duty to prepare Management Proposals is complied with.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. CORPORATE PROJECTS

8.1 The Leader of the Council outlined the report which provided an update on the Council's key corporate projects. It was noted that this report would be brought to every Cabinet meeting.

- 8.2 Valley Centre – the application for consent to demolish and provide an interim use would be considered in January 2012.
- 8.3 Marl Pits – United Utilities were finishing their works on this site and work was expected to commence on 8th December 2011. Letters would be sent to all residents and users of the site regarding the works.
- 8.4 Bacup Trail Head Centre – This was a joint project between the borough Council and Lancashire County Council to provide a base on the land behind Futures Park for the users of Lee Mill Quarry mountain biking trails. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration noted that Mountain Biking Magazine had named the Lee Mill Quarry trails the 3rd best trail in the UK and had referred to it as a unique facility in the world. It was anticipated that specialist shops and a bike wash would be available on the site. It was hoped that this would encourage more custom for Bacup businesses. More meetings with Lancashire County Council were being held and further updates would be given.
- 8.5 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The acquisition of the Valley Centre Site had allowed the Council to apply for funding - The Growing Places Fund.
 - The importance of involving local trades in this site and to ensure that their businesses were not adversely affected.
 - Disappointment was expressed regarding a lack of update on the Stubblelee Vocational Training Centre, Haslingden Pool and Clare House (1 Queen Street). Updates were provided as follows:-
 - o Stubblelee Vocational Training Centre – work was ongoing and the student intake was still expected to be September 2012. The Leader of the Council confirmed that she was meeting with the Principal of Accrington and Rossendale College on 2nd December 2011. Regular meetings between the Portfolio Holder were also taking place.
 - o Clare House (1 Queen Street) – This was on target to receive residents in December 2011 with the official opening in January 2012. In response to concerns raised by a Member, the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration provided clarification on the remit and ethos of the House and undertook to clarify the policy to the Member.
 - o Haslingden Pool – The Leader of the Council confirmed that short term works had been carried out and 6-monthly inspections were taking place. Talks were taking place with the Rossendale Leisure Trust to establish the right options for the pool in the medium to long term. In response to concerns raised by a Member the Leader of the Council noted that the potential failure of the concrete were unlikely to happen overnight and the 6-monthly inspections would give adequate warning of problems.
 - In response to questions raised by members, the Leader of the Council stated that she believed the hotelier was interested in the old town hall site due to its size and proximity to the town centre.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

To continue to update Members on the Council's strategic projects.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. NESTA Creative Councils Bid

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration introduced the report which updated Members on the outcome of the NESTA Creative Councils Bid and sought approval for Phase 2 of the Community Animators Programme. The project would seek to provide non-judgemental assistance and encouragement for people to overcome barriers and to assist the Council in tailoring its services to the needs of residents.
- 9.2 The Portfolio Holder gave clarification of the previous project undertaken in Bacup and noted that this project would be rolled out across Haslingden and Waterfoot. This project had received £10,000 funding in November 2011 and once the initial viability testing had been carried out, a further £20,000 would be released in January 2012.
- 9.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The importance of the Council finding the right balance and ensuring that it facilitated, not controlled the project.
 - The success of previous volunteers and legacy left by the Bacup pilot.
 - The Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration agreed to provide a member with information regarding the numbers of people helped by the Bacup project.
 - The need for Community Animator Volunteers to listen and connect people to the right services.

Resolved:

That Members approve the development of the 'Community Animators Phase 2' programme to be rolled out across Rossendale.

Reason for Decision

To further develop a project which will improve the wellbeing and employment prospects of vulnerable communities in Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. TELL US ONCE SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION

10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services introduced the report which sought Member approval to roll out the 'Tell Us Once' Service. The Portfolio Holder noted that this was a Government initiative which was not mandatory, however the need to provide a clear manner for residents to notify the relevant authorities once of a birth or death was essential.

10.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-

- The wording of the report and it was noted that the word 'enrich' would be removed from future reports.
- It was confirmed that a service would be available at the One Stop Shop.

Resolved:

That the Department of Work and Pensions 'Tell Us Once' service be implemented by the end of February 2012.

Reason for Decision

To provide a valuable service to vulnerable customers.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2011/12

11.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report which provided Members with an update on the Council's current financial position. It was noted that there was a favourable variance on the general fund of £130k. Planning income and the business centre income had continued to have a negative impact on the Council's financial situation. The Portfolio Holder noted that officers were continuing to work hard to secure the Council's financial future. The Portfolio Holder made reference to the Autumn Budget and expressed concerns regarding this matter.

11.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-

- Concerns were expressed regarding not filling some vacant posts and the effect on staffing and resources.
- It was noted that further to previous estimates, with new legislation and policy changes, the funding gap over the medium term financial strategy could rise to £1.6m.
- It was clarified that discussions were taking place following a request for the final payment for Bacup Leisure Hall to be negotiated into instalments. This was being consulted on at the Bacup Neighbourhood Forum and a decision would be made by Cabinet in due course.

- It was noted that the parking disk system was still in place, the £1.7k spend in the Liberal Club was due to dry rot and the business centre shortfall was being addressed.
- It was noted that should the Haslingden Tip close then the Council would not expect to pay 20% towards the cost of replacing the road surface.
- It was noted that the Rossendale Leisure Trust restructure costs of £18k were due to staffing restructures.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the council's emergency planning services and it was confirmed that the Council was procuring administrative and co-ordination services from Hyndburn Council, however the arrangements for senior officers to be contacted would remain in place. Desktop exercises would be carried out.
- It was noted that the £770k VAT refund had been shown in last month's figures. This money is being used to support the Valley Centre project.
- The £777k is being held in reserves until the Council is clear about meeting the £1m+ shortfall. The figure queried was the £1.5m in the accounts, which is supporting the valley centre project.

Resolved:

That the content of the report is noted.

Reason for Decision

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

Alternative Options Considered

None

12. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That the public and press be excluded from consideration of the following items of business under Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, Part 1, Paragraphs 1 to 7.

13. ACQUISITION OF LAND IN ORDER TO FACILITATE THE DELIVERY OF RETAIL DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE AT HENRIETTA STREET/LEE STREET, BACUP

- 13.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration outlined the report and asked for Members' approval of the recommendations contained therein.

Resolved:

1. That the recommendations outlined in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision

To assist in the economic regeneration of Bacup and improve retail facilities within the east of Rossendale for the specific benefit of residents within this locality.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.10pm

_____ CHAIR

_____ DATE