

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 27th June 2012

**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
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Mr S Jackson, Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Ashworth, Cheetham, Farrington, Oakes,
Robertson, D. Smith and County Councillor Winder.**

**2 members 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 7th March 2012 be approved as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Jackson did not declare any interests, however she noted that there was a potential interest in Item 6 on the agenda in that she was an employee of Bacup Consortium Trust.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Leader of the Council stated that no members of the public had given notice of their intention to speak. Questions were taken from the floor, however, the Leader noted that on this occasion, due to the length of the agenda, she would allow additional questions on each item.

Mrs Freeman requested an update on the tender process for the appointment of a preferred development partner for the Valley Centre site. The complex OJEU

process was briefly outlined and it was noted that the Council expected to be in a position to issue the Invitation to Tender within the next few weeks.

6. BACUP TOWNSCAPE HERITAGE INITIATIVE

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which provided members with an update regarding the Council's bid for Townscape Heritage Initiative funding and outlined the proposed structure and governance of the project. The Portfolio Holder updated members on the stage 1 funding bid which had been successful, resulting in £50,000, to include £12,500 of match funding from the Council. It was noted that the council's successful bid was one of only two successful bids in the North West. If the second stage of the bid was successful then this could potentially give the initiative £1.5m of Heritage Lottery money, with £500k match funding to be found.
- 6.2 The Portfolio Holder outlined the proposed Partnership Board membership and noted that for the initiative to succeed, buy-in from the business and community sector was essential. It was further noted that it was the Council's intention to bring other partners on board, to help bring in further match funding.
- 6.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that this was an opportunity for Bacup in terms of jobs, apprenticeships and tourism.
 - Locating match funding from partners/outside the Council was a good way for the Council to operate for future projects of this nature.
 - The timetable was clarified and it was noted that the next bid would be submitted in June 2013.
- 6.4 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle requested an update on the Morrisons supermarket development. It was noted that Morrisons had had to acquire several other pieces of land, and that this had only recently completed. It was noted that the planning process had been followed and that English Heritage were happy with the proposals.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report were noted.
2. That the membership of the Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) Working Group and Partnership Board outlined at paragraph 5.6 and 5.9 of the report is approved.
3. That all future minor amendments to the project are delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Reason for Decision

To provide a catalyst for change and future private sector investment.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. HIGH STREET INNOVATION FUND

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which requested Members to decide on a preferred option for allocating the High Street Innovation Fund money of £100,000. This money had been awarded following the Portas Review of the High Street, as part of a package to support those areas with a large number of empty properties on their high streets and those areas affected by the 2011 riots.
- 7.2 The Portfolio Holder outlined the options available for allocation of this funding, which included:-
- Option 1 – spread the funding evenly across the five centres of Rossendale.
Option 2 – focus the funding on the Borough’s three main centres.
Option 3 – use the funding to provide generic business rates discounts across Rossendale’s five centres on a first come first served basis.
Option 4 – Focus all of the funding to support the Bacup Townscape Heritage Scheme.
- 7.3 The Portfolio Holder asked Members to consider Option 4 as the preferred option, as this would provide further match funding opportunities for Heritage Lottery money, should the bids be successful.
- 7.4 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was enquired as to whether there was a time limit on spending the £100,000 funding and the Portfolio Holder clarified that he was not aware of one.

Resolved:

1. That preferred Option 4 is approved for allocating the High Street Innovation Fund.
2. That all future minor amendments to the project to be delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Reason for Decision

To provide the Council with an opportunity to assess the best method of bringing further investment and sustainability to Rossendale’s town centres.

Alternative Options Considered

Options 1, 2 and 3 as outlined in the report.

8. MYTHOLME HOUSE, WATERFOOT

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure outlined the report which requested Member approval for the commencement of a project with Green Vale Homes to redevelop Mytholme House in Waterfoot. It was noted that this was a

long-standing challenge in Waterfoot and proposals had been put forward to demolish the building and replace it with new homes. It was noted that there were still queries regarding the state of the ground and the financial package.

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

- Enquiries were made regarding the timescales for this project and the Portfolio Holder noted that there were no formal timescales established, however the council intended to act quickly on this matter.
- It was noted that this was a good example of the Council working intelligently with external partners despite diminishing resources.
- It was clarified that a site report was being carried out and would be available in the next few weeks.
- It was noted that any works needed to be mindful of the bus turning circle and the public toilets contained within the site.

8.3 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle requested clarification of the land ownerships within the project. The Portfolio Holder clarified this matter.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approve the commencement of work on the Myholme House Project with Green Vale Homes.
2. That all future minor amendments to the project to be delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

Reason for Decision

To address the dereliction of the site and bring regeneration to the town centre.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. CORPORATE PROJECTS UPDATE

9.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report which provided Members with an update on the Council's major projects.

9.2 Valley Centre - the Director of Business provided the meeting with an update on the Valley Centre Project. The works carried out to date and currently on-going were outlined and it was noted that discussions were taking place with Lancashire County Council regarding street lighting columns. It was noted that the timetable was on track for the Town Square to open in late August/early September.

9.3 Signage – the Leader provided Members with an update on this project and it was noted that the new directional signage throughout the borough would be in place soon.

- 9.4 Vocational Training Centre – the Leader noted that this project was on-track and 50 students were expected in the 2012/13 intake.
- 9.5 Bacup Trail Head Centre – following evaluation of tenders submitted, the contract has been awarded to Ride On, a local company based in Rawtenstall. The legal agreement was expected to be in place by September 2012 and further progress would be noted in a future Cabinet report.
- 9.6 Marl Pits – this project was on-track and the final handover was expected to be October 2012.
- 9.7 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that care should be taken to ensure that all spellings were correct on the proposed new signage.
 - The Portfolio Holder noted that the Vocational Training Centre intended to hold an open day in July 2012.
 - It was clarified that the Valley Centre site had not been affected by the recent bad weather and floods, and reference was made to the Historia project and the importance of using local museums.
 - Clarification was sought regarding the timescales for the Valley Centre Project and it was noted that the project was on track and the Leader stated that the project had never been 'off track'.
 - It was noted that United Utilities were commencing with works in Rawtenstall and were expecting to invest £7m this summer. It was noted that this would cause some disruption in the town centre.
- 9.8 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle requested clarification of roller works on the Valley Centre Site, enquired what would happen to the old signage and requested clarification on works at plot 5 at Futures Park. It was clarified that the roller would be onsite for as long as required, the old signage would be disposed of and any values of the scrap metal investigated and that it was intended to offer a building lease to Ride On and then once the site had been developed to the Council's satisfaction then the Council could sell the freehold of the site.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

Reason for Decision

To continue to monitor progress on delivering the Council's key priority projects.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. USE OF THE NEW TOWN SQUARE, RAWTENSTALL

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which requested Cabinet approval for the outline policy for use of the new Rawtenstall Town Square. The policy had been developed in consultation with local businesses and the community groups and an events programme was being developed.
- 10.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- Members expressed approval that use of the square would be free of charge for not for profit groups. However, it was noted that the Communities Team should be asked to give support to those groups who may need assistance in completion of forms etc.
 - Enquiries were made as to the whereabouts of the memorial benches from the hospital site, and whether these could be used in the Town Square. The Leader stated that benches were already allocated to the Town Square, however she would make enquiries as these could be used around the borough's parks.
 - Concerns were expressed as to the expenditure of the project and the Leader noted that this was a transitional arrangement and that the site would be redeveloped.
 - It was noted that Rawtenstall had been extremely crowded on Saturday 23rd June 2012 with the Olympic Torch Relay event, and if the new Town Square, once open, would encourage more events.
- 10.3 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle made enquiries regarding the bus station and services on site. It was noted that services would be available onsite and that the Council would work with Lancashire County Council and the development partner, once appointed to establish the best site for the bus station. The Portfolio Holder noted that it was the Council's view that the best use for the site was commercial use.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet approve the outline policy for use of space at the new Rawtenstall Town Square.
2. That all future minor amendments to the project to be delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.

11. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY – ACHIEVAL OF BUDGET REDUCTIONS

- 10.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report which provided Members with an update to the Medium Term Financial Strategy which had been approved in February 2012. The report outlined the Council's financial position and the required savings. It was noted that the Council would be reviewing several areas as outlined in the report and that transparent and detailed consultation with residents, stakeholders, staff and unions would be undertaken.

- 10.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The need for a robust consultation process was noted and it was clarified that the processes would be monitored by the Council's Internal Audit Service.
 - It was noted that further reports would be brought to Cabinet meetings once consultation had been undertaken.
 - Concerns were expressed regarding the Rossendale Leisure Trust review and it was enquired whether it was intended to close the Haslingden Pool. The Leader stated that a group had been established to examine potential savings and that any further comments would pre-empt the consultation process.

Resolved

1. That the commencement of consultation as identified in Section 7 of the report is approved.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to remain focused on identifying and delivering c£1.3m of cuts over the medium term.

Alternative Options Considered

None

12. ACCOMMODATION OPTIONS

- 11.1 The Leader of the Council outlined the report which asked the Cabinet to approve a period of public consultation during which consultation could take place with customers, officers, stakeholders and the unions regarding the efficient use of the council's operational and surplus buildings.
- 11.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that this was an opportunity to review the number of empty buildings with the valley and the level of rates bills for the empty town hall was noted.
 - Concerns were expressed regarding the One Stop Shop facility and it was noted that accessibility and full and meaningful discussion on this would be essential.
- 11.3 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle asked that the public were kept informed regarding consultation and decisions.

Resolved:

1. That a period of public consultation to 31st October 2012 on the proposed options, which will also include a Scrutiny meeting, is approved.
2. That Cabinet approve a further report being brought back to the Cabinet after the consultation period with a final recommendation for Full Council regarding the proposals for the Councils' priorities as noted in paragraph 5.2 of the report.

Reason for Decision

To assist the Council in reviewing and rationalising its operational assets.

Alternative Options Considered

None

13. CHANGES TO THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

- 12.1 The Portfolio Holder for Customers, Licensing Legal introduced the report which sought Cabinet approval to ask the Governance Working Group and the Civic Matters Working Group to review and consider changes to the democratic process. The review would examine the number of councillors per ward, prior to a request that the Local Boundary Commission for England undertake a review, it would review proposed changes to the committee structure and consider changes to the mayoralty for a modern mayor for the borough.
- 12.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the report had been considered by the Governance Working Group that afternoon and they had recommended that the report be taken to Overview and Scrutiny and then Full Council. It was also suggested that the report be circulated to all elected Members with a deadline of mid-July for feedback.
- 12.3 Members were invited to comment on the report, and the following comments were made:-
- Concerns was expressed regarding daytime meetings and it was noted that a move to daytime meetings could restrict the types of people who could apply to be a Councillor. It was noted that daytime meetings would also restrict public access.

Resolved:

1. That the feedback from Governance Working Group be noted and that Cabinet Overview and Scrutiny be tasked to review and consider the following issues and report back to Council:-
 - Numbers of councillors per ward prior to a request that the Local Government Boundary Commission for England be asked to undertake a review.
 - That changes to the committee structure should be reviewed.
2. That the Cabinet approve that the Civic Matters Working Group be tasked to review and consider the following issues then report back to Council:-
 - That changes to a modern mayor for the borough should be reviewed.
3. That Cabinet approve a report to be sent to all elected Members detailing the proposed changes, and that a deadline of mid-July 2012 for feedback be established.
- 4.

Reason for Decision

To assist the council in realising some of its financial savings target.

Alternative Options Considered

None

14. ABOLITION OF COUNCIL TAX AND REPLACEMENT WITH A LOCAL SCHEME

- 13.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which outlined the imminent changes to Council Tax benefit support to be implemented from 1st April 2013, as a result of a 10% reduction in the central government support grant for 2012/13. It was noted that liability for this would transfer to local government, which was likely to result in an additional strain on the Council's finances.
- 13.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the timescales for implementation were extremely tight and requested additional delegated powers for himself, the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Licensing and Legal and the Chief Executive in order to consult and prepare for the implementation and to bring a further report to Cabinet.
- 13.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that this would have a huge impact on the Council's finances and in particular on the Valley's most vulnerable residents.
 - Some members present at the meeting expressed support for this scheme.
- 13.4 Members of the public were invited to comment on the report and Mr Entwistle enquired if the Council would be able to create more jobs in order to run the local scheme. The Leader of the Council stated that she thought this was unlikely.

Resolved:

1. That the Cabinet approve a period of consultation until 31st October 2012 on how best to pay for the Government's proposed c£600k reduction in council tax benefit grants.
2. That following the consultation a further report is brought back to Cabinet and a final recommendation to Council is made.
3. That delegated authority is given to the Chief Executive in consultation with the Portfolio holders for Finance & Resources and Customers, Legal & Licensing to:
 - Prepare and publish for public consultation a draft local scheme, in light of Government policy and guidance, which they consider the most viable for, including amongst others: current claimants of working age, Council Tax payers and Rossendale Borough Council.
 - To prepare and publish for further consultation other options for a local scheme together with the financial consequences for, including amongst others: current claimants of working age, Council Tax payers and Rossendale Borough Council.
 - To update and republish the draft scheme as necessary in light of, amongst other things: consultation feedback, further Government guidance or any other information received.
 - To bring a further report to the next Cabinet, updating Members on progress to date.

Reason for Decision

To establish the best way forward with regard to the proposed changes to council tax benefits.

Alternative Options Considered

None

15. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2012/13

14.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced and moved the report.

14.2 Members commented on the report as follows:-

- It was noted that the museums in the Valley were well supported by volunteers, were popular in terms of tourism and that it was important to obtain the full potential value of these attractions, as they were an essential part of recording history and modern social history.
- Clarification was requested with regard to Page 11 of the Financial Monitoring Report and the LCC recycling income. The Head of Finance clarified that the County Council had imposed their right to take a share of that recycling income and he agreed to circulate a briefing note to Members regarding this matter.

Resolved

That the contents of the report are noted.

Reason for decision

To continue to monitor the council's finances.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8pm

_____ CHAIR

_____ DATE