

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 6th March 2013

**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
Mr S Stray, Planning Unit Manager
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Cheetham, Crawforth, Farrington, McInnes,
Morris, Robertson, Sandiford and D. Smith**

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 All Cabinet members were present.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th February 2013 be approved as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

3.1 There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5.1 Mrs E Freeman asked a question regarding the properties which the Joint Venture Partnership would be considering and whether the public would be able to view the list. It was noted that the list was still being compiled and many developments were being considered.

5.2 Mr L Entwistle asked a question regarding the involvement of Barnfield within the Rossendale area, in particular Rawtenstall Town Centre and the Valley Centre site. It was noted that there was a 1 year and a 3 year plan. It was noted that it was early days within the partnership and that a public launch was being planned, at which

members of the public could ask questions. It was confirmed that working together with Lancashire County Council was vital with regards to the bus station.

6. PLANNING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Planning introduced the report which provided guidelines and information on reporting breaches of planning conditions/permissions and the actions which would be carried out following this. It was noted that some aspects of planning enforcement were discretionary and that any actions needed to be proportionate. The Policy provided clear guidelines and procedures that Planning Enforcement Officers would follow.
- 6.2 The Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Planning noted that the public could become frustrated during planning enforcement investigations, as these could be very lengthy and for that reason, an additional recommendation would be added to change the policy as follows:-
- 6.2.1 At Section 6, the following sentence would be added in the second paragraph:
The Council's Planning Enforcement Officers will advise complainants that they will provide quarterly updates on the progress of the investigation.
- 6.2.2 Therefore the following sentence would be deleted from Section 8:
The Council's Planning Enforcement Officers will endeavour to provide quarterly updates to complainants on the progress of investigations".
- 6.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- Regular updates to members of the public were vitally important.
 - This Policy could impact positively on the reputation of the Council, as Planning were often a first point of contact.
 - It was noted that this would be useful with regard to historic buildings and Horncliffe in particular was raised by Members.
 - The Policy needed to be well-publicised.

Resolved:

1. That the Planning Enforcement Policy be adopted for use.
2. That the Policy be amended as outlined at paragraphs 6.2.1 and 6.2.2 above.
3. That future minor amendments to the Policy be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council has a robust policy in place.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. PLANNING CHARGES POLICY

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Planning introduced the report which proposed the introduction of fees for the pre-application process. It was noted that this was a discretionary service and that the introduction of fees may recover some of the costs.
- 7.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the Policy may reduce speculative ventures, however it was important not to stifle genuine development within the Borough.
- 7.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The Policy would formalise arrangements.

Resolved:

1. That the pre-application fee charging be introduced in line with the fees outlined at paragraph 5.5 of the report.
2. That all future minor amendments to the pre-application policy be delegated to the Planning Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council has a robust policy in place which allows the efficient processing of applications.

Alternative Options Considered

None.

8. ROSSENDALE TENANCY STRATEGY

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health introduced the report which was essentially a guidance document for registered providers of social housing within the area. The Policy was designed to provide registered providers with strategic information to have regard to when formulating their own individual tenancy policies.
- 8.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that there was a need for 1 bedroom properties and an example of research carried out in Croydon was noted.
 - It was noted that the Strategy was focussed on the relationship between registered providers and tenants, and that property needs would be addressed by the Strategic Housing Needs Assessment which was expected to be carried out during 2013/14.
 - It was noted that lifelong tenancies were being maintained.
 - It was noted that some tenants were being offered smaller housing some miles away from their current homes and communities and that this was an issue for older tenants in particular.

- It was noted that the 'bedroom tax' did not impact upon tenants of pensionable age, however it could affect those approaching this age.

Resolved:

1. That the Rossendale Tenancy Strategy be approved.
2. That all future minor amendments to the strategy and programme be delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council has a strategy in place which meets the requirements of the Localism Act.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. ROSSENDALE TOGETHER BARNFIELD JOINT VENTURE PARTNERSHIP – FORWARD PROGRAMME

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which outlined the progress made to date with regard to the joint venture partnership with Together Housing and Barnfield. The report also outlined a proposed 1 year programme for approval, which would include the development of a viable and feasible option for the site of the Valley Centre and Rossendale as a whole.
- 9.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that a competition would be launched to allow architects to develop a master planning process. It was noted that West Register had now acquired most of the New Hall Hey site and discussions were taking place with regard to opportunities.
- 9.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
 - It was noted that members had a key role to play in terms of liaising with the public to make the joint venture partnership aware of sensitivities around some areas.
 - The importance of consultation was discussed.
 - It was noted that all areas would have sites to be considered.
 - Discussion took place on funding allocation and it was noted that funding was allocated by Council areas, not parliamentary constituencies.
 - The reasoning behind the architects' competition was clarified.

Resolved:

1. That the outline Year 1 Work Programme for the Partnership be approved.
2. That all future minor amendments to the strategy and programme be delegated to the Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. IRRECOVERABLE DEBT REPORT

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which recommended the write-off of debts deemed irrecoverable for accountancy purposes. It was noted that there was a variety of reasons for the debts being deemed irrecoverable, including bankruptcy and imprisonment.
- 10.2 The Leader of the Council noted that though the debts were being written off for accountancy purposes, they would continue to be pursued.
- 10.3 Members were invited to comment on the report; no comments were made.

Resolved:

1. That the write-off of £7,420.19 in respect of irrecoverable council tax debts be approved.
2. That the write-off of £83,902.43 in respect of irrecoverable non-domestic rate debts be approved.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that debts deemed to be irrecoverable are cleared from ledgers before the accounts for the year are closed.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2012/13

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which updated members with the current financial monitoring position. It was noted that there was a favourable variance of £488k and that officers were focussed on the need for continued savings and efficiencies.
- 10.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that grant funding continued to be a good example of working with community groups, for example with Sharneyford Playground and Stacksteads Riverside Park.
 - It was noted that there was a culture of efficiency throughout the Council.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report are noted.

Reason for Decision

To continue robust monitoring of the council's finances.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.15pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE