

**MINUTES OF: THE CABINET**

**Date of Meeting: Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2015**

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

**In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Interim Chief Executive  
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance  
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Essex, Farrington, Haworth, Hughes, Sandiford  
2 members of the public  
1 member of the press**

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

- 1.1 There were no apologies for absence. Councillor Jackson entered the meeting during Item 6.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 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 Mr Entwistle asked a question regarding notices publicising the bus station development. The Leader of the Council informed him that the decision would be taken to the meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2015 and that comments would be accepted up to the day of the meeting.
- 5.2 Mr Entwistle asked whether every effort had been made to occupy and make use of the old Town Hall building and offered to purchase the building for £150,000 and make it good. The Leader of the Council stated that this was a difficult situation, as the building was not fit for occupation and there had not been any interest from retailers considered to be viable in the long term. She thanked him for his offer and it noted that it would be considered.

- 5.3 Mr Atherton asked a question regarding the process for selling land in Rossendale and referred to a capital receipt within the financial monitoring report. The Head of Finance noted that it was the sale of a freehold on a long leasehold on an existing site.

## **6. REGENERATION PROJECTS UPDATE**

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which outlined the regeneration projects being delivered and operated across the borough. He noted that the progress had been achieved by hard work and commitment and that small investments by the Council and match funding had been obtained in many cases to enable the projects to proceed.
- 6.2 The Portfolio Holder outlined the main projects as follows:-
- Rawtenstall Town Centre:
    - o £1.85m had been obtained from the Lancashire LEP Growth Deal to deliver a quality public realm.
    - o £3.5m would be invested by Lancashire County Council to invest in a new bus station for Rawtenstall.
  - New Hall Hey
    - o Marks and Spencer's were due to open in the near future and RTB were in discussions with other retailers/businesses. It was anticipated that this would bring hundreds of jobs to Rossendale.
  - Bacup THI
    - o £2m had been obtained from the Heritage Lottery Fund and the physical work on the project was due to start shortly, starting with the Pioneer Building, St James Street and the Real Building. It was noted that the Bacup project was focussed on what local businesses required and designed to ensure that local tradespeople got to work on the project.
  - RTB Partnership
    - o A clear work programme was underway which would focus on the Rawtenstall Town Centre, New Hall Hey, Bacup THI, Waterside Mill and other derelict sites. Work would also continue with absent landlords and legal avenues would be pursued.
  - Haslingden Task Force
    - o Regular meetings were being held and £100k had been allocated to challenge and target the issues important to the town, e.g. shop frontages, the market and public realm.
  - Tourism
    - o A Promoting Rossendale Board had been established which comprised of officers and volunteers. Work would be carried out to promote Rossendale via events, visitor guides, information boards, mountain bike trails, guidebooks etc. The importance of volunteers and civic pride was noted.
  - Cycle Routes
    - o £2m had been awarded via the Lancashire LEP to continue the Rawtenstall to Rochdale and Route 6 projects.
    - o Council Officers and LCC colleagues were thanked for their support on this project.

- Rossendale Museum
  - o The progress of the Museum was summarised and it was noted that the museum had more visitors and spend.
  - o A £2m heritage lottery fund bid would be submitted shortly.
- Ski Rossendale
  - o A bid for Sport England Improvement Fund funding had been submitted which, if successful, would improve the facilities.
- Rogue Landlord Schemes and Empty Homes 2015-18
  - o Work was on-going regarding these schemes and it was noted that empty homes were a blight that needed to be brought back into use.
- Up and Active
  - o The scheme was underway and £75k had been allocated to support the scheme. This was expected to have a long-term positive impact on health services in the future.
- Counter Fraud Scheme
  - o £150k had been obtained from the DCLG to establish a pilot programme with Rochdale MBC to tackle non-benefit related council tax and NNDR fraud.

6.3 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health emphasised the Council's all-embracing approach to regeneration and noted the importance of the rogue landlord and empty homes schemes, and the up and active scheme, which would include Rossendale's more vulnerable residents. She noted that the Up and Active Scheme had been designed to work with activities that were most useful to residents and their particular needs

6.4 The Leader of the Council thanked officers for their work to achieve the regeneration projects and noted that this had been achieved despite the Council having to make budget cuts.

6.5 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure noted that on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2015 there was a Jobs Fair at Bacup Methodist Church.

6.6 Members were invited to comment on the report; no comments were made.

**Resolved:**

1. That the contents of the report were noted.
2. That Members approved the outline Year 3 Work Programme for the Rossendale Together Barnfield Partnership.
3. 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 Holders.

**Reason for Decision**

To continue to achieve significant progress in achieving ambitions for the Council.

**Alternative Options Considered:**

None

## **7. IRRECOVERABLE DEBT REPORT**

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which requested members' approval to write off irrecoverable non-domestic rate debts and irrecoverable benefit debts.
- 7.2 The Leader of the Council noted that these write offs were for accounting purposes only and that the council would continue to pursue the debt.
- 7.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that some of the names were redacted on the appendices. The Leader of the Council stated that these were names of individuals who may have declared bankruptcy or have died. She agreed to look at this position but stated that it was unlikely to change at present.

### **Resolved:**

1. That the write off of £122,080.30 in respect of irrecoverable non-domestic rate debts is approved.
2. That the write off of £11,430.40 in respect of irrecoverable benefit debts is approved.

### **Reason for Decision**

To enable the Council to make prudent financial decisions.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

None

## **8. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 – UPDATE MARCH 2015**

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report which provided members with a brief update on the Council's financial position since the last meeting.
- 8.2 It was noted that there had been no notable changes to the net favourable variance or reserves and there were two additional staff vacancies. Collection rates were noted and the capital receipt referred to in public question time was highlighted.
- 8.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was clarified that the increase in reserves remained at £1.5m.

### **Resolved:**

1. That the report is noted.

### **Reason for Decision**

To continue robust monitoring of the council's finances.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

None

The Leader of the Council noted that this was the last meeting of the Cabinet before the end of the municipal year and thanked everyone for attending.

**The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.05pm**

\_\_\_\_\_ CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_ DATE