

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 10th February 2016

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

**In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Chief Executive
Ms Clare Birtwistle, Monitoring Officer
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Cheetham, Essex, Graham, Haworth, Kempson,
Morris, Sandiford, D. Smith and P. Steen
10 members of the public
1 member of the press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 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 25th November 2015 be approved as a correct record subject to the following notes:-

Item 6 of the previous minutes – Councillor Essex noted that he had requested that an opposition member be added to the Asset Management Plan Capital Programme Steering Group.

Item 9 of the previous minutes – Officers would check if the Senior Management Team Structure had been communicated to members.

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 Frank Rogers asked a question regarding the Empty Homes Scheme and expressed concerns about the Council's expertise to manage projects with taxpayers money. He requested that the Cabinet publish their CVs in the Rossendale Free Press to prove the management of the Council was in safe hands.

The Leader of the Council stated that management was competent and had a good track record of delivering success outside of the Empty Homes Scheme. A very detailed report had been published regarding the scheme and mechanisms were in place to put things right and to ensure no reoccurrence. It had been recognised by the Homes and Communities Agency that the scheme will be delivered.

- 5.2 Mr Clive Balchin stated a source had told him that Cabinet members had been interviewed possibly under caution by Lancashire Police and asked whether they would be stepping down or if it was appropriate for them to seek re-election until this matter was cleared.

The Leader of the Council stated that this was not true and that Mr Balchin's source was incorrect.

- 5.3 Mr Cuan Hoare asked a question regarding Green Vale Homes' plans to move into the old town hall site and had any agreement been reached. He also asked if architects had been appointed and plans drawn up.

The Leader of the Council answered that discussions were ongoing and full details could not be given due to commercial sensitivity. The Architect appointed was the same one that had been appointed via a very rigorous competition process. The Leader offered to speak to Mr Hoare outside of the meeting.

- 5.4 Mr Michael Pickup alleged that the Mayor had behaved in a partisan manner at the last three Council meetings. The Leader of the Council asked Mr Pickup to clarify his question and he asked if the Mayor would be asked to apologise for bringing the dignity of her office into disrepute.

The Leader of the Council stated that the Mayor was doing an outstanding job and that the Mayor had told her off on a number of occasions. She stated that a strong Chair was needed to run meetings of Full Council.

- 5.5 Mr John Atherton asked a question regarding the Local Plan and expressed concerns regarding the Member Steering Group, whether it was in the Constitution and lack of public participation.

The Leader of the Council stated that there had always been a Member Steering Group which was necessary to ensure that Members have a strong understanding of the Local Plan. There was a legal obligation to consult on the Local Plan and the public would be involved. Terms of Reference of the Group would be going to Full Council.

- 5.6 Mr Tony Winder stated that at the last meeting of Full Council he was told that he would receive a written answer within 10 days. He stated that he had chased for a reply and had received an email today. He did not consider the email to be an answer to his question. He asked would the Leader confirm where the additional £1m for the bus station was coming from. He asked whether the cost would be funded by ratepayers and if so, where was this in the budget.

The Leader of the Council replied that she had responded to this question and had also responded to the same question at the Neighbourhood Forum. She stated that she did not recognise the additional £1m figure quoted by Mr Winder and this was a large scheme that would use LCC funding, growth funding and some small funds from the Council, for example, £150k for the Police Station.

- 5.7 Mr Peter Wood asked when the Leader had last visited Rawtenstall Library and alleged that she was continuing to mislead the public with outdated plans for the bus station and the town square. He asked why the Council had gone out to consultation with these plans, even though alternative plans were being drawn up.

The Leader of the Council stated that she had visited a week last Tuesday and noted that she had already answered his question at the Neighbourhood Forum and the answer would not change. She stated that changes had been made to the plans following public consultation and feedback.

6. 2016/17 CORPORATE PRIORITIES, BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance introduced the report which set out the Revenue Budget and level of Council Tax for 2016/17, together with implications for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

- 6.2 The Portfolio Holder moved the report and noted that there were changes to some of the recommendations as follows:-

1.5 – that Council Tax could be frozen for 2016/17 and that the MTFs would be updated to reflect that the Revenue Support Grant from the Government was 23% not 25% following further information recently received. That £66k from Council Tax Collection Fund would be moved to fund surpluses to provide a balanced budget for 2016/17.

- 6.3 The Portfolio Holder noted the risk implications within the report and thanked members from all sides for their input into the scrutiny process.

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

- The Leader was asked to clarify whether she would be voting to freeze Council Tax in her capacity as a Lancashire County Councillor and some members sought assurances as to who she represented. The Leader noted that these were separate budgets and that the challenges faced by Rossendale were very different to that of County.
- Concerns were expressed that the key messages expressed by Senior Officers on page 7 of the report had not been noted by members.
- It was noted that the council faced large challenges over the coming year and the potential loss of the windfarm income was noted.
- The Leader agreed to speak with Cllr Morris outside the meeting regarding his comments regarding RTB, as it did not relate to this report.
- It was noted that the Council was able to set a budget for the next 4 years.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Priorities are recommended to Full Council as follows:-
 - **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
 - **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.
2. That Cabinet recommends to Council the additional cost and savings for 2016/17 as noted in 5.4 and which now form part of the Council's core budget.
3. That Cabinet recommends to Council the use of: £200,000 from the Empty Homes reserve, £253,000 from the Business Rates Retention Reserve and £60,000 from the Transport and Employment Reserve to support the 2016/17 annual budget.
4. As a consequence of the above, the Cabinet recommends to Council a net revenue budget for 2016/17 of £8,349,000.
5. That Cabinet recommend to Council to freeze the Council Tax rate and that the B and D equivalent for 2016/17 remains at £253.40 and that the MTFS would be updated to reflect that the Revenue Support Grant from the Government was 23% not 25% following further information recently received. That £66k from Council Tax Collection Fund would be moved to fund surpluses to provide a balanced budget for 2016/17.
6. That Cabinet recommends to Council that to raise fees and charges by 1% or to the nearest 10p subject to any other commercial considerations.
7. That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Government's four-year settlement officer is accepted.
8. That Cabinet recommends to Council that the Head of Finance and Property Services is instructed to prepare the technical resolutions necessary to give effect to the proposals.

Reason for Decision

To ensure a robust 2016/17 budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Alternative Options Considered:

None

7. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report and outlined the resources and programme for the next three years. The programme set out the due diligence that had been carried out and advised members of the financing issues related to future capital expenditure.
- 7.2 Members were invited to comment on the report; no comments were made.

Resolved:

1. That the potential resources for 2016/17 and the medium term are considered and noted.
2. That the Affordable Capital Programme for 2016/17 is recommended to Full Council.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council is able to generate adequate sources of capital funding.

Alternative Options Considered:

None

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2016/17)

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report and noted that this was a report that was required to be taken on an annual basis.
- 8.2 The Head of Finance and Property Services noted that there were no material changes other than the overdraft facility to Rossendale Transport which was likely to be used again this year; securities would be attached to this.
- 8.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- Concerns were expressed regarding insurance implications regarding the recent flooding and damage to the IT services. It was noted that the Council was fully insured and that the servers were in the process of being moved out of New Hall Hey to a specialist unit this week.

Resolved:

1. That the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and Treasury Management Policy and Practices are recommended to Full Council.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council complies with financial statutes, codes of practice and regulations.

Alternative Options Considered:

None

9. Q3 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance outlined the report which updated members on the latest revenue forecast for 2015/16 as at the end of December 2015.
- 9.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the projected full year budget surplus was now £400k and highlighted the favourable and adverse movements within the report.
- 9.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that there was a £95k cost associated with the bus station on page 14 of the report. The Leader stated that it was not possible to deliver a £20m scheme without incurring some costs, which the Council would seek to recover. It was noted that the Empty Homes Scheme had not been 'hidden' in the report but was referenced on almost every other page.
 - It was noted that Councillors did have access to the Council's finance officers and could ask any questions and raise concerns.

Resolved:

1. That the report is noted.

Reason for Decision

To ensure robust monitoring of the Council's finances.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.30pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE