

COUNCILLOR MARILYN PROCTER, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 24th February 2016

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Procter (in the Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Alyson Barnes, Bleakley, Cheetham, Collinge, Crawforth, De Souza, James Eaton, Janet Eaton, Essex, Farrington, Fletcher, Graham, Haworth, Hughes, Kempson, Kenyon, Knowles, Lamb, Lythgoe, Marriott, McMahon, Morris, Neal, Oakes, Robertson, Sandiford, Serridge, Shipley, Smallridge, D.Smith, M.Smith and Steen.

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Chief Executive
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
George Taylor, Mayor's Attendant

ALSO PRESENT: 1 representative of the press
38 members of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received for Councillor Lynda Barnes.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 9th December 2015 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Kenyon declared a pecuniary interest in minute number 15 as she was a member of the taxi trade in Rossendale and would leave the Chamber for this item.

Councillor Knowles declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 12 as he was the chair of a housing association.

Councillor Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest in minute number 9 as he was on the board of the Rossendale Leisure Trust.

5. OUTSTANDING ITEMS OF BUSINESS FROM THE LAST MEETING

There were no outstanding items to report.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The following issues were raised by members of the public and were answered by the Leader or designated person:

No	Issue	Questioner	Answered by (and action)
1.	In relation to Empty Homes, when were the Cabinet going to face up to their responsibilities, do the honourable thing and resign?	Mr F. Rogers	Councillor A.Barnes informed of the actions taken to date and internal audit outcomes. She had no intention of resigning and would not rest until she had got to the bottom of it, recouped as much money from other responsible authorities as possible and held those responsible to account.
2.	Update on regeneration projects and confirmation of the council's commitment.	Mr A. MacNae	Councillor A.Barnes updated on the various regeneration projects including Bacup THI, Rawtenstall Town Centre, New Hall Hey, Mountain Bike Trail Centre, Promoting Rossendale, Haslingden Shop Fronts, Valley of Stone, Greenway, old buildings, Stubblelee Park, Ski Rossendale, Whitaker Museum, Victoria Park, Waterfoot Centre, grants, Property Level Flood Resilience Grant, Affordable Warmth and other projects.
3.	Where local councillors stand on the referendum?	Mr M. Lake	Councillor A. Barnes informed that this was a matter for individuals not councils.
4.	Explanation on needing more houses and flooding concerns on unsuitable sites.	Ms P. Bromley	Councillor Lamb informed that government guidance requires the Full Objectively Assessed Housing Need figures to replace the figure currently provided in the Rossendale Core Strategy. In relation to flood risk, the Council had previously commissioned Strategic Flood Risk Assessments and further updates would be commissioned as part of the preparation of the Local Plan.
5.	Confirmation of council support in relation to Irwell Vale flooding.	Ms J. Johnson	Councillor A.Barnes informed of the various activities that took place to support the flooding. She had met with the Shadow Minister Kerry McCarthy to look into applying for

			EU funding for infrastructure investments for this area.
6.	Cuts to LCC subsidised local bus services, and what the council was doing to limit this.	Mr P. Marland	Councillor A.Barnes informed that 80% of the services under threat would continue with revised routes/times, and would include looking at gaps left by other operators.
7.	The Local Plan Steering Group and ensuring groups are held to account by public.	Mr J. Atherton	Councillor Lamb informed that the formation of the steering group did not remove key stages of the plan and the timetable which included public consultation was set out in the Rossendale Local Plan item. The formation of the group was part of good practice guidance from the Planning Advisory Service and enabled members to give feedback to planning officers prior to proposals being brought before the full Council meeting. Similar groups existed which also acted in an advisory capacity.
8.	In relation to RTB had the Council secured professional quantity surveyors, and who were they?	Mr C. Balchin	Councillor A.Barnes informed that all partners had their own agents, which was common practice, and she would confirm who the Council's independent agents were.

7. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE MAYOR, THE LEADER OR HEAD OF PAID SERVICE

The Mayor and Leader had no communications to report.

The Head of Paid Service informed of the following changes to membership of outside bodies:

- Councillor Haworth had replaced Councillor Lynda Barnes on the CAPITA Strategic Governance Board.

8. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The following issues were raised by councillors and answered by the Leader or designated person:

No	Issue	Questioner	Answered by (and action)
1.	How many planning approvals for housing development in Rossendale had not been acted upon?	Councillor Fletcher	Councillor Lamb confirmed that 126 units (out of the total 1352) had approval on sites where no development had commenced.

2.	Financial implications of the scout moor wind farm extension call-in.	Councillor Bleakley	Councillor Marriott confirmed the annual revenue contribution of £612k from Scout Moor had been deferred until the second half of 19/20 on the assumption that the local planning decision would be ratified. The assumption meant the Council had £1.2m fewer resources over the medium term. The proposed extension potentially had a 30 year revenue stream to Rossendale Council worth in excess of £18m.
3.	Spending review impact for Rossendale.	Councillor Crawforth	Councillor Marriott confirmed the Revenue Support Grant would be ending after 2018/19. New Homes Bonus would be reducing from 6 years to 4, and could see a reduction in future resources of up to £170k per annum. The Chancellor had promised 100% retention of business rates but there were no details as to what this would mean for Councils. There were indications that Housing Benefit for pensioners would pass to local Councils. There was a danger that the cost risks associated with Housing Benefit would also fall on Local Government.
4.	Upgrading two Whitworth zebra crossings to pelican crossings using S106 money.	Councillor Neal	Councillor A. Barnes confirmed that a signalised 'puffin' crossing was planned for 2016/17 on Market Street near Hall Street. S106 money would not extend to fund an upgrade of the crossing at Market Street /Tong Lane, however, the road markings and illuminated equipment would be checked and replaced if necessary as part of the maintenance programme.
5.	Water sampling results in relation to arsenic poisoning of cows, and planning conditions at Crook Hill wind farm. Cattle are expensive and we need to be mindful of concerns.	Councillor Cheetham	Councillor A. Barnes confirmed that arsenic is naturally occurring in the water from the moor side but the levels were insufficient to acutely poison cattle. A detailed investigation took place in order to target resources i.e. water sampling where it is most likely to be

			<p>effective, then understanding the results before informing the owners. More sampling will take place following a dry spell. In relation to planning conditions, there had been no construction work at the time of the deaths, or spillages that could account for it. There was nothing to suggest that this was a wider public health risk. The Leader informed that she would be happy to meet the people concerned and also provide Councillor Cheetham with a full response.</p>
6.	<p>Latest financial liability in relation to Empty Homes and liabilities beyond the third quarter.</p>	<p>Councillor Essex</p>	<p>Councillor Marriott noted a forecast revenue impact for 2015/16 of £926,000 and £2m set aside to fund future revenue costs, this did not include potential contributions recouped from responsible authorities. Costs were estimates for the year end.</p>
7.	<p>What was the total expenditure of the Licensing department for the financial year 2015/2016? Cost to the tax payer and level of service received for those using taxis in Rossendale.</p>	<p>Councillor Shipley</p>	<p>Councillor Marriott confirmed that there were £830k of direct and indirect costs. The Council did not run the taxis and could only make determinations on the licenses so the service was down to the operators. Councillor A. Barnes also confirmed that the license fee income paid for all of that activity therefore there was no cost to the tax payer.</p>
8.	<p>Irwell Vale flooding and could the Leader outline who meetings had been with and what were the outcomes achieved? Communicating activities to ward councillors and avoiding duplication.</p>	<p>Councillor D.Smith</p>	<p>Councillor A. Barnes referred to her response given during public question time and also confirmed that she had asked Shadow Minister Kerry McCarthy to take forward issues such as getting the Environment Agency to address the condition of the river walls and not just focussing on flood risk.</p>
9.	<p>When would the bust of the Queen be put on display in the foyer of the Town Hall?</p>	<p>Councillor Cheetham</p>	<p>Councillor A. Barnes confirmed that the bust of the Queen was at the Whitaker where it was in a more fitting environment as it was open to the public.</p>

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS

9. 2016/17 CORPORATE PRIORITIES, BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Council considered the 2016/17 Corporate Priorities, Budget, Council Tax and the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The Leader of the Council, Councillor Alyson Barnes, and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Performance, Councillor Marriott, placed on record their thanks to the Finance and Management Teams in assisting the Cabinet in bringing forward the proposals. Councillor A. Barnes thanked volunteer and community groups for their hard work and efforts to see the area prosper. These organisations had helped mitigate the worst aspects of the cuts, and she also thanked Rossendale Leisure Trust, CLAW, the Whitaker, HAPPI and Ski Rossendale. Councillor Marriott also thanked Overview and Scrutiny Committee for their diligence in scrutinising the proposals and also members of the public who took part in the consultation process.

In presenting the report, Councillor A. Barnes and Councillor Marriott brought members attention to the following:

- Thanks to the Finance Team for preparing today's statements.
- A great deal had been achieved since 2010 even though resources had been cut year on year.
- Funding had historically come from 50% Council tax and 50% Revenue Support Grant (RSG).
- Government was in the process of removing all of the RSG and Councils would have to make up that balance from new homes and business rates.
- This was more challenging for rural areas.
- Finances had been managed well owing to tough decisions being taken early on.
- The Council would not be increasing its share of the Council Tax this year.
- Supporting families and vulnerable individuals.
- Many people in the valley had experienced pay freezes.
- Will achieve what was set out to be achieved with Empty Homes, and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) audit was ongoing.
- Last year's budget setting supported local businesses.
- Continuing to support businesses.
- Helping support the case for the rail link.
- The Council had seconded a member of staff from Regenerate Pennine Lancashire to assist with regeneration.
- Year on year reductions.
- The last Financial Monitoring Report saw a positive movement on £400k.
- Achieved cost reductions.
- Windfall with fuel prices falling.
- There was a reduced balanced budget without the need to increase Council Tax.
- There should be a negative figure to show the removal of the support grant.
- The report shows the full anticipated cost of the Empty Homes Scheme.
- The Chief Executive was working hard to share costs equitably.
- Councils rely on Council Tax and Business Rates.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Challenges through the coming year.

- Thanks to the S151 Officer for meeting over the last year.
- All support no raise in Council Tax.
- Government was eradicating deficit and keeping to the financial plan.
- Councils would need to be self-sufficient.
- £1.25 million from accounts for Empty Homes.
- Figures reported in final accounts at the first Audit Committee.
- There had been an increase in every quarterly report in cash flowing out.
- Losses were getting higher.
- Fair to have no increase in Council Tax.
- No increase for 7 years in a row.
- Residents have continually told us not to increase Council Tax.
- Members voting to increase Council Tax at LCC, Police and Lancashire Fire and Rescue.
- Council Tax base continuing to grow.
- Supporting the regeneration programme and growing the local economy.
- Increase in apprenticeships.
- Unemployment lowest in the North West.
- Attractive place to live, work and invest.
- Looking south for Combined Authority links and shared services.
- Management of financial resources.
- Request to remove percentage figure from the schedule of fees and charges.
- Regeneration and housing in Whitworth.
- Council takes 16% of the Council Tax collected, and 72% goes to LCC.
- Ageing population.
- Could end up with elderly on the streets.
- There are people who have served their country now on the streets.
- Bankers caused the massive financial meltdown.
- Protecting hard pressed families, some earning less than £250 a week take home pay.
- Cuts to members allowances and special responsibilities.
- Litter and the number of bins not addressed.
- Performance related allowances.
- Take allowance if you take responsibility.
- Central government cuts were astronomical.
- Council is providing services to residents on a reduced budget.
- It is £60 a week for being a councillor and mileage has to be paid from that.
- It is not an inconsiderable expense.
- Happy to be shadowed as Chair of Development Control.
- Benefits cuts.
- Death rates have risen by 5.4%.
- Homelessness was up 55% in the last 5 years.
- Elderly were at the brunt of the crisis with cuts to social care.
- Previous Council Tax rises and increasing member allowances against Remuneration Panel recommendations.
- Previous leisure costs of £2 million.
- Bus Company previously left to their own devices.
- Required to set a legal budget at LCC based on statutory requirements.

- Rossendale was a smaller council and in a better position financially.
- Reserves had been increased significantly and funds had been set aside to support the Empty Homes Scheme.
- Partnership working was ongoing to ensure money comes back.

In response to questions by members, Councillor Marriott clarified that Fees and Charges would increase by 1% was in line with the recommendations made by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Voting took place on the recommendations of the report as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr A. Barnes	For
Cllr Bleakley	For
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Collinge	For
Cllr Crawforth	For
Cllr De Souza	For
Cllr James Eaton	For
Cllr Janet Eaton	For
Cllr Essex	For
Cllr Farrington	For
Cllr Fletcher	For
Cllr Graham	For
Cllr Haworth	For
Cllr Hughes	For
Cllr Kempson	For
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Knowles	For
Cllr Lamb	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr McMahon	For
Cllr Marriott	For
Cllr Morris	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Oakes	For
Cllr Procter	For
Cllr Robertson	For
Cllr Sandiford	For
Cllr Serridge	For
Cllr Shipley	For
Cllr Smallridge	For
Cllr D. Smith	For
Cllr M. Smith	For
Cllr Steen	For
Total For	34

Total Against	0
Total Abstentions	0

Resolved:

1. That Council approved the following Corporate Priorities:
 - 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 the Council approves a net revenue budget for 2016/17 of £8,610,000 (before the use of reserves).
3. That the Council approves a freeze in Council Tax for 2016/17.
4. That Council recommends Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 2 be increased by 1% for 2016/17 subject to commercial considerations (delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder).
5. That Council accepts the Government's four year settlement offer.
6. Council approves the technical resolution at Appendix 1.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2016/17.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2016/17

The Council considered the Capital Resources and Capital Programme 2016/17 report.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Considering an opposition nominee on the Capital Monitoring Steering Group.

In response to a question from Councillor Essex it was confirmed that a response had been sent regarding his query at Cabinet, and that the response would be re-sent.

Resolved:

1. Members considered the potential resources for 2016/17 and the medium term.
2. Members approved the affordable capital programme for 2016/17, as set out in Appendix 1.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council carries out a sustainable capital programme for 2016/17.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY & TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2016/17)

The Council considered the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Updates for 2016/2017) report.

Resolved:

Members considered and approved the 2016/17 revision of the Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Treasury Management Policy and Practices.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council continues to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Alternative Options Considered

None

ORDINARY BUSINESS

12. ROSSENDALE LOCAL PLAN

The Council considered the report on the Rossendale Local Plan. The report recommendations were moved and seconded along with the following additional recommendations:

- That Council gives a commitment that no currently used sports, play or recreational pitches will be considered as potential sites for housing.
- That Council commits to write to the Prime Minister and our Members of Parliament, detailing this Council's concerns and objections to the outrageous and unrealistic quota of houses that has been forced onto Rossendale by the government, and ask for a full review of this ridiculous position where we are now being told we need to find sites to build another 5000 houses in our borough.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Previous Secretary of State had failed to take existing empty properties into account.
- Lots of good existing stock.
- Also need new houses.
- Supported applications for Whitworth.
- Young people can't get on the property ladder.
- Ask the new Secretary of State to consider existing empty properties.
- Thanks to officers and members for progressing things and taking on residents' concerns.
- Looking at sites for development and making sure it is in the right place.
- Identifying brownfield and previously developed sites.
- What might be right for developers might not be right for residents.
- Recent experiences with flooding and real concerns about delivering large numbers of houses with limited capacity.
- Done the easy ones.

- Mill sites tend to have poor access.
- It asks us not to look at Greenfield sites, but we have no other choice.
- Look at building up rather than out.
- Support the letter.
- Infrastructure needs upgrading from central government funds.
- Understanding what we do and don't want, but it has to be valid planning reasons that are taken into account.
- Not sure about tower blocks or high rise.
- Geographical problems in the valley.
- All need to support a reduction in the figures.
- Get MP's on board.

In response to a question from Councillor Sandiford, Councillor Serridge confirmed that the additional recommendation also covered parks.

A recorded vote was requested by Councillors Serridge, Hughes and Marriott.

Voting took place on the recommendations of the report with the addition of the two further recommendations as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr A. Barnes	For
Cllr Bleakley	For
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Collinge	For
Cllr Crawforth	For
Cllr De Souza	For
Cllr James Eaton	For
Cllr Janet Eaton	For
Cllr Essex	For
Cllr Farrington	For
Cllr Fletcher	For
Cllr Graham	For
Cllr Haworth	For
Cllr Hughes	For
Cllr Kempson	For
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Knowles	For
Cllr Lamb	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr McMahon	For
Cllr Marriott	For
Cllr Morris	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Oakes	For
Cllr Procter	For

Cllr Robertson	For
Cllr Sandiford	For
Cllr Serridge	For
Cllr Shipley	For
Cllr Smallridge	For
Cllr D. Smith	For
Cllr M. Smith	For
Cllr Steen	For
Total For	34
Total Against	0
Total Abstentions	0

Resolved:

1. That Council:
 - Authorise the publication of the formal Notice of Withdrawal of draft Local Plan Part 2 “Lives and Landscapes.”
 - Agree the Local Development Scheme (LDS) as the timetable for the production of the new Local Plan.
 - Note the implications of the preparation of Full Objectively Assessed Need (FOAN) Housing figures for Rossendale.
 - Notes the intention to issue a “Call for Development Sites.”
2. That Council gives a commitment that no currently used sports, play or recreational pitches will be considered as potential sites for housing.
3. That Council commits to write to the Prime Minister and our Members of Parliament, detailing this Council's concerns and objections to the outrageous and unrealistic quota of houses that has been forced onto Rossendale by the government, and ask for a full review of this ridiculous position where we are now being told we need to find sites to build another 5000 houses in our borough.

Reason for Decision

The production of a new Local Plan and CIL requires that the necessary legal and procedural requirements are put in place. The preparation of a formal Withdrawal Notice and Local Development Scheme will enable this. Preparation of a FOAN for the Borough enables the Council to quantify and plan for new housing and the “Call for Sites” will provide a further opportunity to identify additional suitable sites for new dwellings and other uses.

Alternative Options Considered

None

13. SENIOR MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Council considered the report on Senior Management Restructure.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Delighted to see someone responsible for HR.
- Not being informed of personnel changes.
- 6.2 says that savings identified in the report will be made in this budget.

- Was the management cost for 2016/2017 less favourable than 2015?

In response to a question from Councillor Essex, Councillor Marriott agreed to provide a response.

Resolved:

1. Members agreed the new structure as attached at Appendix B and as detailed in the report subject to job evaluation.
2. Any changes necessary as a result of the new structure to the Council's Constitution in relation to Director and Proper Officer posts be delegated to the Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To maintain an up to date Senior Management Team structure with strong management and leadership skills to support the long term stability and growth of the Council. To make changes to the Council's Constitution to reflect the changes to Chief Officers and Statutory Officers.

Alternative Options Considered

None

14. URGENT DECISIONS

The Mayor reported that the Cabinet had not taken any urgent decisions since the last meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES

N.B. Councillor Kenyon left the meeting during the consideration of the following item of business.

15. Recommendation of the Licensing Committee: Hackney Carriage Vehicle Intended 'Use' Policy

The Council considered the Hackney Carriage Vehicle Intended 'Use' Policy. The Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democratic Services, Councillor Serridge, informed that this was a unanimous recommendation from the Licensing Committee.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Thanks to all officers involved.
- One of the more challenging policies.
- Intense debate and consultation.
- Licensing issues were now being addressed.
- Further improvements could be made with an area test.

Resolved:

Full Council agree to: -

1. Adopt the Hackney Carriage Intended 'Use' Policy at Appendix A

2. Delegate all future amendments to the Hackney Carriage Intended 'Use' Policy to the Licensing Committee, and amend the Constitution at Part 3 section 7.2 to include this delegation in the Terms of Reference of the Licensing Committee.
3. Approve that delegation be given to Licensing and Enforcement Manager following consultation with the Chair or Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee, for the refusal of an application for the grant, renewal, transfer or new owner application on the grounds that the vehicle is not to be predominantly used in the Borough in line with the Council's Intended 'Use' Policy.

Reason for Decision

The aim of the legislation (Town Police Clauses Act 1864) is to provide a local control over hackney carriages and their drivers, for the protection of the public. This implies that in general the licensing system should operate in such a way that the authority licensing hackney carriages is the authority for the area in which those vehicles are principally used. The case law is at odds with the aim of the legislation, and the Hackney Carriage Intended 'Use' policy seeks to bring control back to Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered

None

N.B. Councillor Kenyon returned to the meeting.

16. Recommendation of the Governance Working Group: Constitution Review

The Council considered the Constitution Review report. The Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democratic Services, Councillor Serridge, informed that this was a unanimous recommendation from the Governance Working Group.

In considering the recommendation members discussed the following:

- Notification of gifts and hospitality.
- Had members who had been on the Flying Scotsman notified the Monitoring Officer accordingly?

In response to a question from Councillor D. Smith, the Monitoring Officer agreed to confirm and provide a response.

Resolved:

That Council agree to make the following amendments to the Constitution:

- Amend the Licensing and Enforcement Delegations as detailed in Appendix A with the inclusion of the Intended Use Policy delegations.
- Amend the Code of Conduct for Members' as detailed in Appendix B.
- Formalise the Local Plan Steering Group and amend part 3 section 11 to include its terms of reference as detailed in Appendix C.

Reason for Decision

The Council is required by law to implement a Constitution and it is in the interests of the Council to regularly review and update the document.

Alternative Options Considered

None

17. Recommendation of the Appointments and Appeals Committee: Appointment of the Director of Business

The Council considered the Appointment Committee's recommendation on the appointment of the Director of Business. The Leader of the Council, Councillor A. Barnes informed that the Appointments Committee had selected Sarah Davies.

In considering the recommendation members discussed the following:

- Welcomed the appointment.

Resolved:

That Sarah Davies be appointed as the Director of Business, subject to HR policies and clearances being completed.

Reason for Decision

Recruitment to vacant director post.

Alternative Options Considered

None

12. NOTICE OF MOTION

Councillor Knowles moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Ashworth:

The Council notes that proposed changes to cap housing benefit to the level of Local Housing Allowance will have a massive detrimental impact upon those living in supported housing.

The proposed change will affect the lives of hundreds of thousands of people who totally depend on this specialist housing, and many are the most vulnerable people with nowhere else to turn – older people, the homeless, those with dementia, people with mental health problems, ex-veterans and women fleeing domestic violence.

According to the National Housing Federation, this change would hit vulnerable people by an average of £68 a week and at least 82,000 homes for these groups would be forced to close. In a recent survey by Inside Housing magazine 95% of supported housing providers would be forced to wind up housing schemes for the most vulnerable if the planned benefit cut goes ahead.

The cut will link the amount of housing benefit to the level of Local Housing Allowance but rents in supported housing are typically much higher than this due to the care element provided. Discretionary Housing Payments will go nowhere near addressing this shortfall leaving tenants with huge arrears if the benefit is capped.

Although the measure is not due to be fully implemented until April 2018, the government has failed to understand that it has a profound impact now, today. New

homes for supported housing, partly funded by capital investment from the government, will now not be built because no provider can risk the cost of new building unless they are confident the rent will cover the cost. Existing homes will begin to close very soon as contracts for the provision of care and support services, which usually last three to five years, are renegotiated. No organisation can possibly sign such a contract unless they have a reasonable expectation that they will be able to pay the price.

This measure will therefore result in redundancies, a sharp fall in the construction of desperately needed bed spaces, and the most vulnerable members of society having to find accommodation in the private sector at a far greater cost to the public purse.

The Council urges the Government to address this issue as a matter of great urgency.

In moving and seconding the motion Councillors Knowles and Ashworth discussed the following:

- Changes introduced to the Housing Bill.
- Massive impact on the people of the borough.
- Capping Housing Benefit to the level of Housing Allowance for the under 35's in social housing.
- Focus on proposed changes to supported housing.
- It doesn't recognise that rents are higher because of care.
- Impact on the vulnerable, those suffering domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse.
- Elderly on the streets is not far-fetched.
- Residents can quickly build up arrears.
- Option one would be to use Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP).
- This is administered by the local council.
- It would be onerous and difficult for people to apply.
- Option two would be to leave supported housing and go into private care or hospital beds.
- The estimated cost of private care was £500-£800 per week and the estimated cost of hospital care was £2,500 - £3,500 per week.
- It was better value for people to stay in social housing.
- It would be introduced in 2018, but it fails to recognise that contracts for supported housing were usually signed for 5 years, so the impact could be sooner.
- Existing provisions could close and there would be lack of new developments.
- Individuals would not be able to meet their arrears.
- Press the government to review the proposed change.
- Changes would be to everyone's detriment.
- How would local authorities deal with DHP?
- Don't know where we are going with this.
- Pushing care onto authorities.

In considering the motion members discussed the following:

- Whole agenda for reform was a massive issue.
- Impact on vulnerable people in society.
- DHP was a short term fix.
- Impact for around 200 residents.

- Scaremongering.
- Aligning rules to ensure the vulnerable receive the appropriate protection.
- Listening to concerns raised.
- Changes would only apply to new people from April 2016-April 2018 and details were still being fully considered.
- There would be a full review and would be reported back in due course.
- Affordable, sustainable solutions.
- Social tenants average rent is double those in the private sector.
- The point of the review is to address this issue.
- DHP would get a further £70 million for 2018-2020 to support the transition.
- £50 billion spend each year on benefits.
- Funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant has increased by nearly 80%.
- £400 million on 8,000 homes for the elderly or adaptations for houses for people with disabilities.
- Government was working with these sectors to ensure essential services were met.
- Government tax the most vulnerable members of society.
- Homelessness was up 50% since 2010.
- Knock on effect of people being made homeless.
- Putting in transitional funding to relieve suffering caused by policies.
- Housing Bill welcomed by very few people.
- Disruption to people's housing arrangements.
- Storm brewing in relation to young people.
- M3 project was created to support young people.
- Larger number of young people not accessing benefits would result in increased numbers of homeless.
- Care providers under enough pressure.
- Similar situation in childcare.
- Legislation is asking childcare provides to take more children and without adequate funding.

As the meeting had been in session for 3 hours the Mayor asked members to vote on whether to continue with the meeting.

Resolved:

That the meeting continue.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- National Association of Local Councils had being doing a piece of work.
- Do need to be concerned if it is impacting so badly in Rossendale, homeless need support.
- Young mothers having to work 30 hours rather than 15 hours, or lose Working Family Tax Credit.
- Losing the family union.
- Always wise to know what the future could be.
- Change in lifestyles and seeing family break-ups.
- Ensuring quality of life.

- Society as a whole destroying childhood.
- Hoping to improve the quality of life for those less able to cope, or not able to cope.
- 1,400 children in the care of the local authority and numbers are not decreasing.
- Took a stance in respect of under 35's.
- It will result in additional homelessness.
- Changes to supported housing is a step too far.
- Impact on most vulnerable members of society.
- If housing providers can't find people who can afford the rent, they can't provide the houses and will pull existing sites.
- Solution is not to put the change through.

Resolved:

That Council urges the Government to address this issue as a matter of great urgency.

Reason for Decision

To request government to reconsider the proposed changes of capping housing benefit to the level of Local Housing Allowance.

Alternative Options Considered

None

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and concluded at 9.35pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date