

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 29th November 2017

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Lamb, Oakes and Walmsley**

**In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Chief Executive
Mrs S Plum, Director of Communities
Mrs C Birtwistle, Monitoring Officer
Mrs J Crawford, Finance Manager
Mrs N Hopkins, Planning Manager
Miss G Ashton, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Bromley, Haworth, Morris, Robertson, Serridge
and Stansfield
1 member of the press
5 members of the public**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor MacNae.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 13th September 2017 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

3.1 There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5.1 Mr John Atherton had submitted his question in writing prior to the meeting, which asked what would happen to Brownfield sites identified by the Planning Department as being unviable. Without development these sites would deteriorate. Most residents would agree that more funding should be directed to these sites and any sources of funding should be accessed.

The Leader of the Council asked the Planning Manager to respond to Mr Atherton's question. She advised that the Local Planning Authority considered over 300 sites and a significant number were Brownfield sites. Tests had to be completed to consider whether sites were sound and viable and a number of Brownfield sites

were discounted as they would not meet these tests. Meetings were to take place with the Environment Agency and LCC to identify whether specific site issues could be overcome. Homes England offered funding streams but only if there was guaranteed housing delivery. Sites would be redeveloped wherever possible.

At the last meeting it was suggested writing to the MP to outline the issues and concerns with developing some Brownfield sites. The Leader of the Council would follow this up.

- 5.2 Mr Frank Rogers had submitted his question prior to the meeting, which referred to a statement in the Finance Report regarding Phase Two of the Spinning Point project. He asked how much additional new money Council Tax payers would have to pay to fund Phase 2 of Spinning Point.

The Leader of the Council advised that a decision had not been made regarding the Council's involvement in Phase 2. In due course Officers would bring a report to members to consider investment, risk and revenue returns as a result of developing Spinning Point Phase 2. The strategy was no different from those being made by many Councils across the UK and fitted with the Council's priority for regeneration and the need to become more commercially minded.

- 5.3 Mr Michael Pickup had submitted his question prior to the meeting, which asked what feedback and support had been received from Rossendale employers regarding the Rossendale Works – Employability Proposal.

The Leader of the Council advised that this was a small employability pilot project in partnership with an existing provider. It would work with Rossendale employers to generate work placement opportunities for residents. The Lancashire LEP identified that 5,000 jobs would be created across the region in the next 10 years and demand from Rossendale employers was expected to rise by 4%. The project would support businesses in accessing their growing demand for labour and would promote economic growth.

- 5.4 Mr Cuan Hoare had submitted his question prior to the meeting, which referred to point 5.11 of the Finance Report in relation two partners having to find a total of £125k each in relation to Phase 2 of Spinning Point. Companies House records indicated that the three original partners still had equal liability and shareholding. He asked what the current status and liabilities of the RTB Partnership Limited were and its individual equal shareholders.

The Leader of the Council advised that in relation to Phase 1 of Spinning Point, the Council had a lease agreement with TGH and a fixed price contract was in place with Barnfield to complete Phase 1. The Council would own all of Phase 1. In relation to Phase 2, the Council had not yet determined how the project would be split and would be subject to a further report to members. TGH had stated that they did not wish to share in the retail/leisure development but may be interested in taking the housing element in any final scheme. It was noted that the last published account for 31st March 2017 were available to view on the Companies House website.

6. CHARGING FOR REQUESTED FOOD HYGIENE RATING SCHEME RE-INSPECTIONS

6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operations outlined the report which asked members to agree the implementation of a cost recovery fee in relation to food hygiene rating re-inspections which had been made at the request of food business operators.

6.2 There were no comments from Cabinet Members.

6.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:

- The recovery costs varied between Councils.
- Was the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme voluntary or statutory.
- 427 businesses had a rating of '5' and only 13 had a rating of '1' or '2'.

The Leader of the Council explained that the fee was on a cost recovery basis and was a standard check which was completed on food business operators. However it was not a mandatory requirement to display the certificate.

Resolved:

1. That members agreed to the application of charges for re-inspections made at the request of food business operators to re-assess the food hygiene rating.
2. That members agreed for the cost recovery charge of £140 to be set with effect from 1 January 2018.
3. That delegated authority for further minor amendments and finalising the administration details of the scheme was given to the Director of Communities and the Head of Operations, working in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

The application of charges for these areas of Environmental Health Services would allow for some cost recovery.

7. AMENDMENTS TO THE COUNCIL'S SELF BUILD AND CUSTOM HOUSE BUILDING REGISTER

7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services outlined the report which asked members to agree changes to the Self Build and Custom House Build Register application form and set a fee to cover the Council's costs for maintaining the register.

7.2 There were no comments from Cabinet Members.

7.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:

- Why were costs being charged if Government funding was available.
- Had there been any Self Builds.
- Would Council owned land be sold at a special rate or market price.

The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services advised that the fee charged would be for maintaining the register and completing financial checks etc. The Government funding would be used for legal fees etc.

The Planning Manager advised that there had been no Self Builds.

The Leader of the Council confirmed that Council owned land would be sold at market price for Self Builds.

Resolved:

1. That changes to the Council's Self-Build and Custom House Building Register application form, to require details of financial solvency, add a local connection criterion be approved, and that a fee be set to cover the Council's costs.
2. That all future minor amendments to the policy/strategy/and changes to the application form to be delegated to the Planning Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

By making the application process more rigorous, the Self Build/Custom Housing Building Register would more closely reflect true demand in Rossendale. Given that the legislation allowed the Council to charge a fee, it would seem fair that some of the costs of administering the Register was recouped by the Council, especially given the additional time and cost involved in checking finances.

8. DRAFT LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services outlined the contents of the report. A consultation on the draft Local Plan had taken place for 11 weeks between July and October and 1773 responses had been received. She advised that it was not just the number of responses received that was important but the level of weight given to the planning issues raised. A copy of the Brownfield register would be published by 31st December 2017. The draft Local Plan would be published in Spring 2018 and it was hoped the Inspector would approve the plan in 2019. Once approved, it would be adopted in 2020.
- 8.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - There had been challenges with the consultation.
 - Infrastructure was a key factor.
- 8.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - Greenbelt concerns had not been dealt with properly.
 - Support was needed from developers.
 - It was difficult to give residents what they wanted as well as deliver what the Council needed to.

The Leader of the Council formally thanked the Planners and the Planning Team for their hard work in drafting the Local Plan.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report were noted.

Reason for Decision

To ensure all members were kept updated.

9. BEREAVEMENT CHARGES

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operations outlined the report which asked members to recommend that Council approve an increase in charges for Bereavement Services from 1 January 2018. She accepted that the increases were an emotive subject but were needed so that the Council could cover its costs and also invest in cemeteries and maintain standards.
- 9.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - Charges were not made for the interment of still born babies or children under 14 years as in other Councils.
- 9.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - It was affecting people at a low time in their lives.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet recommends Council agree and approve the recommendations for increased charges for Bereavement services, from 1st January 2018
2. That Cabinet recommends Council agree to introduce an annual appraisal of the Bereavement charges made by the authority, to allow investment required by the service and to inform fees and charges made by the authority for bereavement services in future years.

Reason for Decision

The proposals bring charges for the authority's Bereavement Service in line with required levels of investment and with charges made by neighbouring Councils, allowing sustained levels of investment. Use of the Council's cemeteries had remained at a steady level over recent years, including burials of deceased persons from outside the borough.

10. ROSSENDALE WORKS – EMPLOYABILITY PROPOSAL

- 10.1 The Leader of the Council outlined the report which asked members to authorise the creation of the Rossendale Work Employability Proposal which was a pilot project working with Sports England.
- 10.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - Any innovation to give people an advantage should be invested in.
 - Working with employers and planning ahead was a positive step.
 - There were similar projects outside the borough and it was important that we were working with employers in Rossendale.

10.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:

- Anything to get people into work was good.
- What was happening with Apprenticeship schemes.

The Leader of the Council advised that the Apprenticeship levy had reduced. There was currently one Apprentice working for the Council with the possibility of two more in the Operations team. She would discuss the issue with the HR Manager.

It was noted that the Apprenticeship levy was being spent on the training of existing staff.

Resolved:

1. That the creation of the Rossendale Works employability proposal be authorised.
2. That £50,000 be allocated from the Employment and Transport Reserve (£25,000 per year) for an initial 2 year pilot period.

Reason for Decision

The proposal would establish a Rossendale Work employability project in partnership with Lancashire Sport.

11. EXPLANATION ON THE ENERGY EFFICIENCY SCHEMES AVAILABLE TO RESIDENTS IN ROSSENDALE

11.1 The Portfolio Holder for Health and Housing outlined the report which asked members to support the Council's involvement in the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) programme and Energy Efficiency Schemes. Residents interested would contact one provider, who would then take them through the process. Affordable Warmth monies under £30K would have to go to tender which would take 2-3 weeks to go through.

11.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:

- Could the report be presented to Cabinet Members earlier in the year.
- Could 2-3 case studies be included in next year's report.
- The scheme needed to be marketed well.
- The scheme should be continuous throughout the year.

11.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:

- What did Affordable Warmth include.
- Would there be 'cold calling'.
- Was a set amount of money available.
- The report should have been available at an earlier meeting.
- The scheme should be marketed properly and residents signposted to the correct place to obtain advice.

The Portfolio Holder provided clarification on the issues raised and advised that some information wasn't available until later in the year but hoped next year's report would be presented at the September Cabinet meeting. She confirmed that no 'cold calling' would take place.

Resolved:

1. That members supported that Council's involvement with the Cosy Homes in Lancashire (CHiL) programme and Energy Efficiency Schemes.

Reason for Decision

CHiL and the Affordable Warmth Fund offered a large sum of money to address fuel poverty issues. There were significant benefits for Rossendale residents because of the nature of the housing stock.

12. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2017/18 AS AT END SEPTEMBER 2017

- 12.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services outlined the report which asked members to note the contents of the report and to agree the use of £50,000 from the Employment & Transport Reserve to support the cost of taking Phase 2 of the Spinning Point development to planning application stage. He highlighted a number of key points including further savings to the Medium Term Financial (MTF) Strategy and the Council's Strategy to be more commercially aware. There was a favourable variance in financial monitoring which had reduced from the first quarter. Fleet replacements had been delayed which had increased maintenance costs. There had been a net increase in software costs which was to ensure robust IT systems each year. The Council needed to look at ways to generate income.
- 12.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - The Council needed to look at commercial opportunities to generate income.
- 12.3 Other Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
 - Could the accounts for Whitaker museum be made available to members.

The Leader of the Council advised that the accounts for the Whitaker museum were only available to board members and the Head of Finance.

Resolved:

1. That members noted the contents of the report.
2. That members agreed the use of £50,000 from the Employment & Transport Reserve to support the cost of taking Phase 2 of the Spinning Point development to planning application stage.

Reason for Decision

Robust monitoring of the General Fund and MTFS was essential to control risk.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.35pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE