

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 2nd August 2006

**PRESENT: Councillor Ruddick (in the Chair)
Councillors Challinor, Driver, Farquharson and Graham**

**IN ATTENDANCE: George Graham, Executive Director of Resources
Linda Fisher, Head of Legal and Democratic Services
Phil Seddon, Head of Financial Services
Heather Moore, Committee Services Manager
Anita Tittensor, Customer Services Manager
Steve Jackson, Housing Market Renewal Manager**

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors A. Barnes, Entwistle, Gill, Robertson,
Sandiford, Lamb and Lynskey
3 Members of the Public
1 Representatives from the Press**

1. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Chair reported the death of Sheila Turner who had worked for Rossendale since 1990. A letter of condolence had been sent to members of her family on behalf of the Council.

Members stood to observe a moments silence as a mark of respect.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

3. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 5 July 2006 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

4. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

The Chair agreed that additional information relating to Minute Number 8 (Housing Market Renewal Programme) be raised as a matter of urgency by reason that the Agreement was required to be signed on Friday.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services informed the meeting that it had been confirmed today by Elevate that agreement had been reached in respect of the Funding Agreement for 2006/07 and that the submission had been approved by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). All Council Partners

would be asked to sign the agreement prior to its submission to the DCLG which would enable formal approval letters to be sent out next week, following which the contracts for the new phases of works would be signed.

Decision Made:

To authorise the Head of Legal and Democratic Services to sign the Elevate Funding Agreement on behalf of the Council.

Reason for Decision:

To ensure that the Council can access the funds required to deliver the Housing Market Renewal Programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None. The funding agreement is the continuation of a long process of negotiation between all the Elevate partners and the Government and all alternatives have been exhausted.

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Christine Lamb, who was in attendance at the meeting, declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute Number 8 (Housing Market Renewal Scheme), as she resided in the area of the proposed project. Councillor Christine Lamb left the meeting during the discussion of and consideration of the item.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions raised under this item.

7. REVENUE, BENEFITS AND CUSTOMER SERVICES CONTRACT

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and E-Government presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which outlined proposals to enter into a ten year contract with Capita for the delivery of the Council's Revenue, Benefits and Customer Contact Services.

The Chair of Policy Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee reported that Members of that Committee had considered the report and endorsed the proposal and the negotiations that had taken place. Further, the Committee requested that the Cabinet ensure that all matters relating to staff be dealt with in accordance with the Best Value Code of Practice on Workplace Issues.

In response, the Chair reported that discussions were ongoing with staff and the Trade Union in respect of transfer matters.

The Executive Director of Resources reported the receipt of a letter from Unison which indicated an objection to timing rather than the principle of the proposal. He

informed the meeting that Capita had applied to the Lancashire Pension Service for admitted body status and delays would be attributable to the administering authorities in progressing the matter.

Members conveyed concerns to the Cabinet in respect of the following matters

- Pensions
- Wages
- Transport

The Chair reported that those issues relating to pay and pensions were being addressed and Capita were developing a proposal in respect of transport arrangements.

Decisions Made:

1. That the negotiations which have taken place between the Council and the preferred supplier Capita be approved.
2. That the Council enters into partnership with Capita for the provision of the Revenue, Benefits and Customer Contact Centre for a period of 10 years.
3. That the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council be authorised to agree any financial or contractual issues which are required to be settled before contract completion.
4. That £100k be released from the Council's earmarked reserves to represents a contribution towards a document imaging system which forms a part of the contract.

Reasons for Decisions:

Capita have been identified as the most economically advantageous supplier of the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services in partnership with the Council. The decision will increase the Council's capacity to deliver through effective partnerships and will ensure continuous provision of high quality public services built upon the foundations of Finance, Risk, Performance, Procurement and Human Resources Management.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

The alternatives available are either:

Not to award the contract, which would leave the Council exposed to the risks which led it to embark on the procurement process in the first place.

To award the contract to another bidder which, given that Capita emerged as the preferred bidder in an open procurement process, would undermine that process.

N.B. Councillor Christine Lamb left the meeting prior to consideration of the following item of business.

8. HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2006/07 SCHEME DETAILS

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented the report of the Chief Executive which outlined the Housing Market Renewal Programme for 2006/07 together with details of the scheme and location of the proposed face-lifting and block repair projects to be carried out under the partnering contract entered into with Craig Hambling Limited.

Decisions Made:

1. That the proposals detailed in the report at paragraphs 4.4 to 4.8 be approved.
2. That the Contract agreements for Phase 5 face-lifting works and Phase 1 Block Repair work be delegated to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services.
3. That delegated authority be given to the Head of Service for Economic Regeneration and Strategic Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Regeneration to select and approve reserve schemes where appropriate.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council is committed to delivering a programme focussing on retention and renewal of existing housing stock. The decision ensures that the programme will continue to be delivered and identifies additional areas for investment through the identification of reserve schemes.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

9. ANTI MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which outlined proposals for the adoption of an Anti Money Laundering Policy and Guidance Note.

Decision Made:

That the Anti Money Laundering Policy and Guidance Note be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

High standards of ethical governance are an important element of the Council and adoption of the Policy and Guidance Note will provide clarification in terms of officer responsibilities.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

10. CORE STRATEGY PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT AND RAWTENSTALL AREA ACTION PLAN REVISED PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented the joint report of the Deputy Chief Executive and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided an update on the current situation and proposed action in respect of taking forward the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report and the Rawtenstall Area Action Plan Revised Preferred Options Report in light of recent comments received by the Government Office for the North West.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services reported on a proposal to produce an addendum report to the Core Strategy and the Area Action Plan which would enable the Council to progress to the submission stage without the need to significantly alter the Preferred Options reports.

Decisions Made:

1. That a combined addendum document be produced for the Core Strategy Preferred Options Report and Rawtenstall AAP Revised Preferred Options Report which addresses Government Office for the North West's reservations in terms of clarifying the options open to consultation, with an aim to publish this for consultation for a six week period to allow comments to be made.
2. That authority be given to the Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and the Deputy Chief Executive to approve the combined addendum report to go out for consultation.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Core Strategy and Rawtenstall Area Action Plan have significant positive implications on the regeneration of the Borough. By delegating the decision to approve the combined addendum this will allow the consultation to take place more promptly.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

11. CUSTOMER STANDARDS MONITORING FRAMEWORK AND MYSTERY SHOPPING

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and E-Government presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which outlined the framework for monitoring the Council's Customer Service Standards together with proposals for a rolling programme of mystery shopping.

The Chair of the Policy Development Overview and Scrutiny reported that Members of that Committee had considered the report and welcomed the framework and recommended that the Cabinet approve the approach to monitoring the customer service standards, including monitoring the framework for the Customer Services Standards together with the Internal and External Audit methods used to monitor the Customer Service Standards.

Decisions Made:

1. That the approach to monitoring the customer service standards outlined in this report including the monitoring framework for the Customer Services Standards (Appendix 1) and the Internal and External Audit methods used to monitor the Customer Services Standards (Appendix 2) be approved.
2. That a rolling programme of Mystery Shopping activity be undertaken in order to support the monitoring of the Customer Services Standards.

Reasons for Decisions:

A framework for monitoring the Customer Service Standards is vital in order to ensure that the standards are followed and to learn from the feedback provided so that the Council can continue to improve its services.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to monitor the customer service standards. This option would not enable the Council to respond to changing customer needs and demands.

To scale down the Customer Service Standards. This option would be easier and cheaper to monitor, however, the standards have only recently been launched and still need time to embed themselves. It is also important to encourage a strong focus from all employees around delivering on a set of corporate standards.

12. NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTION OPTIONS

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and E-Government presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which outlined options for distribution arrangements of Council information.

The Chair of the Policy Development Overview and Scrutiny reported that Members of that Committee had considered the report and were recommending approval to the distribution hierarchy, the recommended forms of distribution and option 4b(ii)

that being the preferred method of distribution, subject to the successful completion of negotiations with a distributor. Further, the Committee were also recommending approval to the completion of an Officer Scheme of Delegation Form for all types of distribution.

Decisions Made:

1. That the distribution hierarchy and recommended forms of distribution set out in Table 2 of the report be approved.
3. That the options appraisal for newsletter distribution set out in Table 3 of the report be noted.
4. That Option 4b(ii) be the Council's preferred method of distribution, subject to the successful completion of negotiations with a distributor.
5. That an Officer Scheme of Delegation Form be completed for all forms of distribution, noting the classification that the distribution falls into (essential, highly desirable, desirable) and the reasons for the chosen method.

Reasons for Decisions:

Communication with local people is vital if the Council is to secure communication objectives and successfully deliver the Corporate Improvement Plan. Effective distribution methods will help the Council to promote the Borough.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Ten options have been considered including options involving Council staff, delivery companies and the Post Office. In addition, some options combine more than one type of distribution. The ten options considered were:

- Option 1a Postcode Districts (big areas)
- Option 1b Postcode sectors (smaller areas)
- Option 2 Borough map
- Option 3a Addressed postal delivery (Mailsort 1400)
- Option 3b Addressed postal delivery (franked mail)
- Option 4a(i) Custom delivery rounds
- Option 4a(ii) Custom delivery rounds
- Option 4b(i) Custom delivery rounds with stamped mail infill
- Option 4b(ii) Custom delivery rounds with stamped mail infill
- Option 5 Postal walking rounds

13. ADVICE FOR COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEDIA

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and E-Government presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provided information on communicating with the media.

The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and E-Government reported that the communications advice for handling the media was one of the actions referred to in the recently approved Communications Action Plan.

The Chair of the Policy Development Overview and Scrutiny reported that Members of that Committee had considered the report Committee and were recommending approval of the advice.

Decisions Made:

That the Advice for Communicating with the Media be adopted.

Reasons for Decisions:

Advice on how to handle the media is required in order to ensure that the Council maximises the potential benefits of its media coverage and minimises the impact of negative media coverage.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

By not adopting the advice, the Council could face a greater risk of misunderstandings leading to potentially harmful damage to its reputation.

14. USE OF COUNCIL LAND FOR GROUNDWORK SITE IMPROVEMENTS

The Portfolio Holder for Street Scene and Liveability presented the report of the Head of Street Scene and Liveability which outlined proposals for the improvement of several areas of land which were currently owned and maintained by Rossendale Borough Council but which were perceived to be of poor environmental quality and would benefit from enhancement as detailed below.

Name of site	Proposal
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blackthorn Estate	Alleygating
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Longholm / Balladen Woodlands• Staghills Wood	Woodland management funded by English Woodland Grant Scheme
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sunnyside Park	Playground enhancement to be developed within the Play Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Snighole Park	Play ground and general park enhancement

Decisions Made:

1. That in principle approval be given for Street Scene and Liveability and Groundwork Rossendale to consult the local community and other stakeholders, to devise detailed project plans and to commence fund raising.

2. That the final costed proposal for the sites be brought back to the Cabinet for approval.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council is committed to improving the area of open space within the Borough and this project contributes to that priority. The decision also encourages community involvement in the local environment.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

15. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Financial Services which provided an update on the General Fund estimates for 2006/2007, the Capital Programme and Treasury matters.

The Head of Financial Services informed the meeting that the overall forecast was showing a full year surplus of £78k. He indicated that some risk remained in areas of Street Scene and Liveability, Housing Benefits subsidy claims and Job Evaluation costs.

Decisions Made:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the following virements from Corporate Resources be approved (specifically gains on capital financing charges):

Street Scene and Liveability	£109k
Legal & Democratic Services	£ 6k
Community & Partnerships	£ 47k

Reasons for Decisions:

The decision to utilise a portion of the recurrent under spend on capital financing will address recurring issues within the above budgets.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Decision Made and Reason for Decision:

That the public and press be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves disclosure of exempt information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

17. LAND ADJACENT TO 35 NORTHFIELD ROAD, RISING BRIDGE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which provided additional information in respect of the application to purchase/lease Council owned land.

The Chair reminded the meeting that consideration of the matter had been deferred on 7th June 2006 to allow for further consultation to be carried out and he indicated that this had now taken place.

Decisions Made:

That the application be refused.

Reasons for Decisions:

To retain the ownership of the land on the grounds of its amenity value to the neighbourhood.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.15pm)