

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 6th December 2023

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Lythgoe, McInnes and Oakes**

**Rob Huntington, Chief Executive
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal (Monitoring Officer)
Clare Law, Head of People and Policy
Karen Spencer, Chief Finance Officer (Section 151 Officer)
Andy Taylor, Head of Environmental Services
Kelly Jenkinson, Housing Renewal Manager
Anne Storah, Principal Planner (Forward Planning)**

Also present: 1 member of the public

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was noted that Councillor Hughes had resigned as a member of Rossendale Council.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor A Barnes declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in the Home Improvement Agency element of item 7, Disabled Facilities Grant Policy Review.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No written questions had been submitted.

6. UPDATE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Leader gave a brief overview of the items discussed at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13th November 2023.

7. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY REVIEW

The Lead Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to approve the Housing Assistance Policy 2023, to replace the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2020-22. To delegate authority for the procurement of a Home Improvement Agency and any future minor amendments to the policy.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- Thanks to the Housing Renewal Manager for all her work on the policy.
- The policy would not be applied retrospectively to applications already received.

Resolved:

Cabinet agreed to:

1. Approve the Housing Assistance Policy 2023, replacing the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2020-22.
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development, Head of Legal Services and Lead Member to procure a Home Improvement Agency.
3. Delegate any future minor amends and changes to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member.

Reason for Decision:

The Housing Assistance Policy is designed to support residents of Rossendale by providing comprehensive housing assistance, ensuring accessibility, safety, and comfort for all. The policy replaces the previous Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, expanding its scope to maximise spend and offer increased support to Rossendale residents.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

8. ANNUAL AIR QUALITY REPORT 2023

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to note the contents of the report.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- It was an important issue that the Council took seriously, which was evident in the successes achieved.
- Issues of concern were investigated and it was determined where to monitor.
- The wording around the use of more natural household sprays needed to be reviewed.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the contents of the report.

Reason for Decision:

Success in improving the air that we breathe relies on action by a wide range of organisations and individuals and continued work across the authority and in partnership with other public and private organisations is central to achieving this.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

9. AUTHORITY MONITORING REPORT FOR 2022-2023 INCORPORATING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

The Lead Member for Planning, Licensing and Enforcement outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to note the contents of the report, agree the Local Development Scheme, consider updating the Statement of Community Involvement and to delegate minor changes to the Authority Monitoring Report to the Lead Member and Head of Planning.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- The Principal Planner was thanked.
- Members to be encouraged to keep knowledge up to date and receive a copy of the report for them to review and digest.
- Pleased to see the Hot Food Policy included.

- Keeps the Local Plan alive.

Resolved:

Cabinet:

1. Noted the contents of the Rossendale Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) for 2022-23, which reports on planning related data for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023.
2. Agreed the Local Development Scheme, which provides a timetable for additional guidance including Supplementary Planning Documents.
3. Considered updating the Statement of Community Involvement, unless changes proposed in the Government's planning reform indicate otherwise.
4. Delegated minor changes to the Authority Monitoring Report, including the incorporated Local Development Scheme, to the Lead Member and the Head of Planning.

Reason for Decision:

It is still considered too early to identify trends that may indicate the planning policies are not being implemented effectively, or failing to meet their intended outputs. Work will continue with colleagues particularly in Economic Development to keep the review of the Local Plan policies under review.

The Local Development Scheme will be kept under review, in light of the changes proposed by DLUHC, and will be reviewed accordingly in time.

The Council is legally required to review the Statement of Community Involvement within five years of it being adopted. Given that further changes are expected to come forward, especially promoting digitalisation within planning, it is considered that a light-touch review will be undertaken initially with other changes addressed later.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

10. PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT Q2 2023/24

The Lead Member for Environment and Corporate Services outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to note and consider the Council's performance as detailed in the report.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- The Head of People and Policy was thanked.
- Keen to use as a management tool and not just reporting.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the content of the Performance Management Report Q2 2023/24.

Reason for Decision:

Monitoring the Council's performance will enable Cabinet to identify and consider any actions, projects, performance measures or corporate risks requiring further action.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 2023/24

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to note the content of the Quarter 2 Financial Monitoring report.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- Thanks to the Chief Finance Officer and the Finance team.
- Is there comparable data for all authorities?
- Most authorities have a funding gap but some have greater reserves.
- A need to write to MPs more than we actually do, to put pressure on Government to provide funding.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the content of the Q2 Financial Monitoring report.

Reason for Decision:

To note the Quarter 2 monitoring report.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

12. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY UPDATE

The Lead Member for Resources outlined the report, which asked Cabinet to note and consider the contents of the report.

Cabinet members were invited to comment on the report:

- The impact of the pay award was noted.
- Would the retained Business Rates remain the same? Review may be pushed back due to likely Parliamentary Election next year.
- The Leisure Trust was a risk and was being closely monitored.
- The importance of our Health Plan was noted.
- Thanks again to the Finance team.

Resolved:

1. Cabinet noted the contents of the Medium Term Financial Strategy update.

Reason for Decision:

To consider and monitor the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

13. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Resolved:

That public and press be excluded from the following item of business under Section 100 (A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 since the item involved the likely disclosure of exempt information under Part 1 Paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

14. BUSINESS CASE FOR COUNCIL OWNED SUPPORTED ACCOMMODATION

The Lead Member for Communities, Health and Wellbeing outlined the report. Cabinet members commented on the report. Thanks were expressed to the Head of Housing and Regeneration.

Resolved:

1. The report was agreed.

Reason for Decision:

To agree the report.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

The meeting concluded at 7.39pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE