

## COUNCILLOR JUDITH DRIVER, MAYOR

**MINUTES OF:** THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

**DATE OF MEETING:** 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024

**PRESENT:** The Mayor Councillor Driver (in the Chair)  
Councillors Ashworth, A. Barnes, S. Barnes, Belli, Bleakley, Cheetham (part), Gill, Hancock, Harris, Harrison, Hodgkiss, Holland, Looker, Lythgoe, McInnes, McMahon, Neal, Norton, Payne, Royds, M. Smith, S. Smith, Walmsley and Woods.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Rob Huntington, Chief Executive / Head of Paid Service  
Clare Birtwistle, Head of Legal Services / Monitoring Officer  
David Smurthwaite, Director of Economic Development  
Darren Kershaw, Mayor's Attendant  
Phillip Veevers, Mayor's Attendant

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:** 1 press

### 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors Adshead, Bauld, Eaton, Kenyon and Procter.

### 2. Minutes

#### **Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

### 3. Urgent Items of Business

There was one urgent items of business regarding the position of Deputy Mayor. The current Deputy Mayor, Councillor Annie McMahon would be stepping down at the end of the meeting and Councillor Michelle Smith had been proposed to fulfil the role for the remainder of the term.

#### **Resolved:**

That Councillor Michelle Smith be appointed as the Deputy Mayor for the remainder of the term.

### 4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 5. Communications from the Mayor, the Leader or Head of Paid Service

The Mayor updated members on the Civic Harvest Sunday event on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at St Mary's Church Rawtenstall at 3pm and asked that those interested to contact the Civic Services Officer to assist in catering numbers.

The Head of Paid Service had no communications.

The Leader of the Council provided the following updates:

There would be changes to the Cabinet now that Councillor Michelle Smith would be the Deputy Mayor and Mayor next year, these were as follows:

- Councillor Walmsley had stepped into the role of Deputy Leader.
-

- Councillor Harris would be joining Cabinet and taking over the Economic Development portfolio.
- The Leader of the Council would cover the Planning portfolio.
- Councillor Lythgoe would cover Licensing and Enforcement.

---

**N.B.** Councillor Cheetham entered the meeting.

---

The Leader informed that there had been a government announcement relating to the Combined Authority (CA) for Lancashire. Following the proposal being submitted in March 2024, government had stated that the tests had been met for implementation. The necessary regulation to provide establishment would be laid before Parliament in the New Year. The County CA would receive powers to improve the integration of local transport and transport functions, to exercise compulsory purchase powers, it would receive a fully devolved adult education budget for 2026/27, and £20m capital funding in the current spending period. It was the first step in the devolution journey with deeper devolution expected in Autumn 2025.

### **ORDINARY BUSINESS**

#### **6. Rossendale LUF Regeneration Programme – Outline Execution Plan – Interim Report (Capital Regeneration Projects)**

The Council considered the Rossendale LUF Regeneration Programme – Outline Execution Plan – Interim Report (Capital Regeneration Projects).

In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:

- There was a need to keep on top of costs and procurement.
- In relation to Union Street Bacup, Lancashire County Council (LCC) had raised some concerns and the Council was working with them. The response would be fed back.
- In relation to transferring Rawtenstall market traders onto the town square, the Council was still working through this and would provide feedback when more was known.
- The pool at Whitworth was closed at the time the funding was applied so the Council had not been in a position to apply for Whitworth.
- There were multiple schemes with tight timelines, but they were significant projects in the borough which were most welcome.

#### **Resolved:**

Full Council noted the progress to date on the delivery of the projects within the Levelling Up/Capital Regeneration Programme.

#### **Reason for Decision**

Successful completion of the programme would support Rossendale to have a Thriving Local Economy and in turn support our Economic Development Aspirations.

#### **Alternative Options Considered**

None.

### **NOTICES OF MOTION**

#### **7. Notice of Motion**

Councillor Samara Barnes moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Danielle Ashworth:

*This Council notes:*

*Swifts are an iconic migratory species that grace our skies each summer with their thrilling acrobatic flight displays, they have nested alongside us for centuries, thus providing*

*opportunities for people to engage with nearby nature, which is now well recognised to be of great value to our well-being.*

*Swifts and House Martins are “building-dependent” species, House Sparrows and Starlings partially so. However, as the new Biodiversity Net Gain Metric does not consider buildings as habitat, provision for them is not counted within the metric. It is, however, encouraged by the Design Codes thus these species require specific inclusion within Local Planning Policies.*

*A further challenge in that modern housing is designed to ensure properties lack any gaps or spaces, such as would be used as for breeding sites by urban bird species and bats too. When combined with the continued reduction of potential nest sites on existing buildings caused by refurbishment and repairs, this overall loss of breeding opportunities has resulted in a long-term dramatic decline of urban birds. Swifts, House Sparrows, House Martins and Starlings, all now red-listed, by the British Trust for Ornithology, indicating species of high conservation concern. Thus, without proactive policy we stand to lose many species, causing further deprivation of nature in urban areas.*

*It has been recognised that integrating nest bricks into the structure of the new buildings is a much-preferred solution over bird boxes; they are a permanent feature of the building, require zero maintenance, are aesthetically integrated within the design, less vulnerable to vandalism and have better thermal regulation with future climate change in mind.*

*Furthermore, analysis of breeding records from new housing estates built with integrated Swift bricks has shown that these spaces are readily used by both Swifts and other urban bird species, particularly House Sparrows; thus, Swift bricks are a universal nest brick for small bird species.*

*Best-practice guidance has recently been made available with the publication of British Standard BS42021:2022 Integral Nest Boxes – selection & installation for new developments*

<https://knowledge.bsigroup.com/products/integral-nest-boxes-selection-and-installation-for-new-developments-specification-1/standard>

*This Council resolves to:*

- 1. Ensure the inclusion of swift bricks on in future developments via the ‘Residential Alterations Supplementary Planning Document,’ (SPD) which provides more detailed guidance on residential building works.*
- 2. Rossendale Borough Council will lobby housing associations who have stock in the borough to include Swift bricks in any future development and any re-roofing scheme that happen in the borough (especially if there is evidence of existing nests).*
- 3. Pledge ongoing commitment to this scheme by accepting that best practice, in the form of British Standard 42021:2022, should be proposed and adopted within any new Local Plan that the council adopts going forward.*

*In response to questions from members it was confirmed that:*

- It would apply to new builds and not retrospectively, but it could be implemented if there was a desire to do so.*
- It did not affect the insulation of a property.*
- Swift stones were available in all building type materials.*
- Officers had confirmed that this could be included in an SPD and implemented.*

**Resolved:**

*This Council resolves to:*

1. Ensure the inclusion of swift bricks on in future developments via the 'Residential Alterations Supplementary Planning Document,' (SPD) which provides more detailed guidance on residential building works.
2. Rossendale Borough Council will lobby housing associations who have stock in the borough to include Swift bricks in any future development and any re-roofing scheme that happen in the borough (especially if there is evidence of existing nests).
3. Pledge ongoing commitment to this scheme by accepting that best practice, in the form of British Standard 42021:2022, should be proposed and adopted within any new Local Plan that the council adopts going forward.

### **Reason for Decision**

To support the motion.

### **Alternative Options Considered**

None.

## **8. Notice of Motion**

Councillor Scott Smith moved the following motion, which was seconded by Councillor Alan Woods:

- *The Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit may result in more than 11,000 of our residents in Rossendale, who badly need the money to stay warm this winter, not being eligible to receive the payment.*
- *Many of our residents do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.*

*Council resolves to:*

- *Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.*
- *Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the Government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.*
- *Write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK themselves.*
- *Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Rossendale are supported in claiming their entitlement.*

An amendment to the second resolution was moved by Councillor Harris and seconded by Councillor Alyson Barnes as follows:

*Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging that future reviews of pensions and other benefits results in income levels that meets recipients' day to day needs and keeps them out poverty. This regular income should not rely on top up payments.*

In response to the amendment, members noted the following:

- The Pension Credit application process was weighty, and some people were unaware of how to apply, but there was help to residents and people should be applying for what they are entitled to.
- It was important to provide practical support to claim Pension Credits.

- Highlighting the help of Rossendale Valley Energy in the borough was also important.
- Action to tackle fuel and food poverty was needed.
- Having to apply for benefits produced gaps.

Members voted on the amendment becoming the substantive motion.

A recorded vote was requested by Councillors S Smith, Woods and Hodgkiss.

Voting took place as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Vote</b>
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr Alyson Barnes	For
Cllr Samara Barnes	For
Cllr Belli	For
Cllr Bleakley	For
Cllr Cheetham	Against
Cllr Driver	For
Cllr Gill	For
Cllr Hancock	For
Cllr Harris	For
Cllr Harrison	For
Cllr Hodgkiss	Against
Cllr Holland	Against
Cllr Looker	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr McInnes	For
Cllr McMahan	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Norton	For
Cllr Payne	For
Cllr Royds	For
Cllr Michelle Smith	For
Cllr Scott Smith	Against
Cllr Walmsley	For
Cllr Woods	Against
<b>For:</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Against:</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Abstentions:</b>	<b>0</b>

The amendment was carried and became the substantive motion.

**Resolved:**

Council resolves to:

- Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.
- Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging that future reviews of pensions and other benefits results in income levels that meets

recipients' day to day needs and keeps them out poverty. This regular income should not rely on top up payments.

- Write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK themselves.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in Rossendale are supported in claiming their entitlement.

**Reason for Decision**

To support the amended motion.

**Alternative Options Considered**

None.

**(The meeting commenced at 6.46pm and concluded at 8.00pm)**

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date .....