

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 18th October 2006

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

**IN ATTENDANCE: Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive
George Graham, Executive Director of Resources
Phil Seddon, Head of Financial Services
Andrew Buckle, Head of Customer Services and E-Government
Bill Lawley, Interim Legal and Democratic Services Manager
Heather Moore, Committee Services Manager**

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors A. Barnes, C. Gill and P. Gill
1 Representative from the Press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Smith.

2. MINUTES

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 19 October 2006 be signed by the Chair as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

The Chair reported that there were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Challinor declared a personal interest in Minute Number 8 (Strategic Review of Leisure) by virtue that he was a Council representative on the Board of Rossendale Leisure Trust.

5. CABINET PORTFOLIOS

The Leader of the Council outlined proposals for the revision of the Portfolios and Role Descriptions following the agreement of Full Council to increase the size of the Cabinet to 8 Members.

The Leader of the Council outlined the amendments to the Portfolios including the creation of a Community and Partnerships Portfolio and a Policy and Performance Portfolio and he proposed to allocate the Portfolios as detailed below.

Councillor Challinor – Regeneration and Deputy Leader
Councillor Driver – Street Scene and Liveability
Councillor Essex – Policy and Performance
Councillor Farquharson – Customer Services
Councillor Graham – Human Resources and Member Development
Councillor Ormerod – Finance and Risk Management
Councillor Smith – Community and Partnerships

Decisions Made:

1. That the changes to the Portfolios as set out in Paragraph 4.4 of the report be approved.
2. That the allocation of Portfolios as set out in Paragraph 4.5 of the report be noted.
3. That the new and revised Role Descriptions attached to the report be approved.

Reasons for Decision:

To increase and clarify the political accountability of specific service areas.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions raised under this item.

7. IT STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Customer Services presented the report of the Head of Customer Services and E-Government which recommended approval of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Strategy.

The Head of Customer Services and E-Government presented the key priorities identified in the Strategy as detailed below:

- Review of the existing Sungard Vivista contract
- Implementation of a corporate intranet
- Implementation of a Community Portal
- Investment in hardware
- Upgrading of the email system

- Upgrades to key pieces of software
- Implementation of the Local Land and Property Gazetteer
- Improvements to the systems supporting mobile and remote working

Decisions Made:

That the ICT strategy be adopted and the following specific actions be agreed:

- Purchase of 9 new servers
- Enter into a Microsoft enterprise agreement
- Implementation of new mobile working solution including wireless routers for Members
- Improve storage by implementing new SAN (Storage Area Network)
- Implementation of new Anti virus / Anti spam solution to remove the problems with junk mail and viruses
- Implementation of mobile working through RSA and Blackberries
- Creation of a Local Land and Property Gazetteer for Rossendale
- Implementation of new Rossendale corporate intranet
- Consolidation action of existing IT suppliers by developing strategic relationships with the following Jadu, Northgate, Integralis, Civica and Map info
- Implementation EDRM for Revenues and Benefits with a view to roll out corporately
- Establishment of a corporate ICT board, to be chaired by the Executive Director of Resources, as a custodian of the ICT strategy which will over see ICT delivery for Rossendale and will be supported by an operational ICT group

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council needs to take action to improve the ICT infrastructure.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Taking no action which would run the risk of disruption to the service provision due to the inadequacies of the central infrastructure.

8. STRATEGIC REVIEW OF LEISURE

The Cabinet considered the report of the Head of Community and Partnerships which detailed the findings of the strategic review of leisure.

The Executive Director of Resources reported that the review focused on three aspects of leisure provision in Rossendale as set out below.

- The context of current supply and demand
- An assessment of Rossendale Leisure Trust
- Options for future delivery

He outlined the key findings of the report and he informed the Cabinet that a number of options were available which would need to be supported by robust revenue and capital financial modelling.

Decisions Made:

1. That the conclusions of the analysis phase of PMP's work be noted.
2. That officers in consultation with the Leisure Trust work up fully costed options and financial models for consideration at a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decisions:

The potential options need to be supported by robust revenue and capital financial modelling so that Elected Members and the Leisure Trust can be reassured as to the potential risk exposure.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

9. REGULATION OF INVESTIGATORY POWERS ACT (RIPA) POLICY

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which recommended approval of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Policy.

The Principal Solicitor informed the Cabinet that the Council had recently been inspected by the Surveillance Commissioner, Lord Colville and the current Policy had been amended to reflect Lord Colville's recommendations.

Decisions Made:

1. That the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act (RIPA) Policy be approved.
2. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to arrange training for all relevant staff on the Policy and on how to complete the forms.
3. That the Council has just one Policy dealing with RIPA to ensure Departments act consistently.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Policy will allow the Council to comply with the Legislation and will ensure that procedures are applied consistently throughout the Council.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

10. CAPITAL STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented the report of the Head of Financial Services which outlined the draft Capital Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management reported that the Strategy was a key corporate document and the officers from the Government Office for the North West (GONW) had awarded the Strategy as “Good” which was the highest rating available.

Decisions Made:

That the Capital Strategy be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Capital Strategy sets out Rossendale’s plans for investing in both its own assets and in those of its partners with the aim of delivering high quality, effective services to its residents.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

To not adopt the Strategy which would compromise the Council’s improvement programme.

11. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented the report of the Head of Financial Services in respect of the discretionary discounts given in relation to Council Tax on second homes and empty homes.

The Cabinet considered the current arrangements for second homes Council Tax exemptions together with empty unfurnished properties Council Tax discounts.

The Head of Financial Services reported that additional revenue generated from second homes would, under an agreement between the County Council and all the Districts in Lancashire, be reinvested into the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) and the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP).

Decisions Made:

That as part of the budget proposals to be considered by the Full Council, the Policy on Council Tax discounts be amended so that second homes (furnished properties) be eligible for a 10% Council Tax discount and that no Council Tax discount be given to empty unfurnished properties.

Reasons for Decisions:

The proposal will encourage occupancy of properties and will increase financial resources.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

12. FINANCIAL MONITORING

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented 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 Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management reported that while there had been significant changes within the forecast, including in relation to previously reported risks around Benefits Subsidy, the Council continued to forecast a modest underspend for the year.

Decisions Made:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for Decisions:

It is important that the Cabinet considers regular financial monitoring information.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

13. RISK MANAGEMENT

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented the report of the Head of Financial Services which provided an update on the status of the Council's identified risks together with details of the further development of its Risk Management framework.

The Head of Financial Services informed the Cabinet that the risk registers would be transferred onto the Council's Covalent Performance Management system and reporting tools would be used to feedback progress to both Elected Members and the Senior Management Team.

Decisions Made:

1. That the transfer of the function and role of the Operational Risk Management Group to the Senior Management Team be agreed and the necessary changes to the Risk Management Strategy be made.
2. That the Risk Management Strategy be amended so that the Cabinet is the Member body receiving regular reports from officers on risk management issues.
3. That changes to the Risk Management Strategy be delegated to the Head of Financial Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Risk Management.

Reasons for Decisions:

The continued use and reporting via the Covalent system will enable the Council to progress and embed Risk Management throughout the organisation. The transfer of the risk management function to the Senior Management Team will ensure that a project approach can be adopted to manage and identify new and emerging risks.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

14. THORN BANK WOODLAND

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability presented the report of the Head of Street Scene and Liveability which outlined proposals to improve Thorn Bank Woodland and to work in partnership with Burnley Probation Services to deliver woodland management training for young offenders.

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability reported that a successful bid for £15,000 funding had been secured from the English Woodland Grant Scheme for woodland management and pathway improvements. She informed the Cabinet that the project would

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability reported that the Council would need to identify a budget for ongoing maintenance costs from 2008 which were estimated to be in the region of £2,000 per annum.

Decisions Made:

That full approval for the scheme be granted and a maintenance budget be established for the woodland from 2008.

Reasons for Decisions:

The project will improve Thorn Bank Woodland and also promote partnership working between many organisations.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to approve the scheme.

15. AMENDMENT TO THE MEMBERS' PLANNING CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which outlined proposals to amend the Members' Planning Code of Good Practice.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration reported that the amendment would ensure that Members had to provide Planning reasons to support a request for a report to be considered by the Development Control Committee.

Decisions Made:

1. That the amendments to the Planning Code of Good Practice be approved.
2. That the Head of Legal and Democratic Services be requested to review the Members' Planning Code of Good Practice and to submit a further report to a future meeting of the Cabinet.

Reasons for Decisions:

The amendment to the Members' Planning Code of Good Practice will reduce risks in terms of potential legal challenge.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.40pm)