

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, 15th November 2006

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

**IN ATTENDANCE: Carolyn Wilkins, Chief Executive
Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive
George Graham, Executive Director of Resources
Liz Murphy, Head of Human Resources
Bill Lawley, Interim Legal and Democratic Services Manager
Heather Moore, Committee Services Manager**

**ALSO PRESENT: Councillors A. Barnes, D. Barnes, Crosta, Dickinson,
Entwistle, C. Gill, P. Gill, Haworth, Lamb, Lynskey, Morris,
Neal, Starkey, Sandiford, Robertson and Swain,
Approximately 40 Members of the Public
2 Representatives from the Press**



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Councillor Farquharson.

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. CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

The Leader of the Council reported on the proposed Rossendale Health Campus. He informed the meeting that he had signed the Council's statement of support together with the Leader of the Opposition and the Chief Executive which would be submitted to the North West Strategic Housing Authority for consideration.

He informed the meeting that the Council was a member of the Rossendale Development Committee and would continue to work with partners and the wider community to actively pursue the project. The initial bid would be submitted to the North West Strategic Housing Authority for consideration in December 2006.

4. URGENT ITEM OF BUSINESS

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

5. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members of the Cabinet and other Elected Members which were present at the meeting were asked to consider whether they had an interest in any matters to be discussed at the meeting and the following interest was declared.

Councillor Morris declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute Number 7 (Car Parking Options) by virtue that he owns a business in Haslingden. Councillor Morris left the meeting prior to consideration of the item.

The Interim Legal and Democratic Services Manager vacated the meeting during consideration of Minute Number 15 (Development Control).

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

A number of questions were raised by members of the public in respect of Minute Number 7 (Car Parking Options).

In response to a question about the Council's budget, the Leader of the Council confirmed that £30k per annum was available over the next 5 years for large scale capital works to Council car parks. He further reported that there was currently £5k revenue budget available for other minor works. He highlighted that the revenue budget was determined by Council annually as part of the budget setting process.

In response to a request to submit a petition, the Leader of the Council declined its receipt and reported that significant consultation had already been undertaken through Area Forum meetings and public meetings.

Several concerns were raised from the floor in respect of proposals to charge for parking.

7. CAR PARKING OPTIONS

The Cabinet considered the report of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee which outlined recommendations for the management of car parks in Rossendale.

Councillor Sandiford, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee presented the report and outlined the background of how the Review Team had been established and the options which had been considered as part of that review.

Decisions Made:

1. That disc parking be extended throughout the Borough.
2. That the Head of Economic Regeneration and Strategic Housing be requested to consult Ward Councillors asking them to check whether the proposed classifications of the car parks in their Wards are suitable.

3. That action be taken with a view to the prohibition of parking by Hackney Carriages and/or Private Hire Vehicles on short stay car parks between the hours of 8am to 6pm.
4. That in line with Lancashire County Council's Mobility Guidelines additional disabled parking spaces be increased, subject to a more detailed report to be presented to the Cabinet.
5. That the Review Team continues to meet and establish Terms of Reference to include:
 - Investigation of options in terms of residents parking schemes
 - Monitor disc parking scheme and consider whether length of stay is appropriate to each individual car park
 - Investigate alternative revenue sources
 - Identification of new car parks
 - Investigation of options for additional facilities for cycle, motorcycle and coach and bus parking for the Borough
6. That previous resolutions relating to the Management of Car Parks in the Borough be rescinded.

Reasons for Decisions:

Disc parking should improve the management of those car parks where no enforcement is currently undertaken.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Charging for parking.

8. STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Chief Executive which set out a proposed way forward for the Council in strengthening its Community Leadership role.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee informed the Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Policy Task Group had considered the report and were recommending approval of the Policy Statement and Action Plan subject to the inclusion of Members' comments at the Member Development Session on 6th November 2006.

Decisions Made:

That the Community Leadership Policy Statement and Action Plan be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

Community Leadership is a key role for the Council and improving our approach is central to the next stage of the Council's improvement journey.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to approve the Policy Statement would mean that the Council was not fully engaged with local communities and does not fully act as champion and advocate for the Borough and its people.

9. CAPACITY BUILDING MODEL: PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships presented the report of the Chief Executive which set out a proposed way forward for the Council in improving its approach to working in Partnership as part of developing the capacity building model of Local Governance.

He informed the Cabinet that strong partnership working was essential in achieving the Council's objectives and delivering the Council's approach to capacity building.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee informed the Cabinet that the Overview and Scrutiny Policy Task Group had considered the report and were recommending approval of the Policy Statement and Action Plan.

Decisions Made:

That the Partnership Policy Statement and Action Plan be agreed.

Reasons for Decisions:

Partnership working is a central element of the Council's approach to capacity building and is crucial to the delivery of sustained improvements.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to approve the Policy Statement which could mean that the Council would not deliver on its ambitions.

10. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY AND TOOLKIT

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships presented the report of the Head of Community and Partnerships which outlined proposals to adopt the Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy and Toolkit which had been developed for the Council by Rossendale Enterprise Anchor Limited (REAL).

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships reported that the Council had appointed the Community Network to undertake the review of the Council's current and recent practices around engagement and involvement.

The meeting discussed the provision of neighbourhood notice boards and the Executive Director of Resources was requested to take this forward for consideration within the budget process.

Decisions Made:

That the Community Involvement and Engagement Strategy and Toolkit be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Strategy and Toolkit outlines the Council's strategic approach to community engagement in Rossendale to empower local communities and to shape service delivery and improvement.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to approve the Strategy and Toolkit which could be detrimental to the Council's ability to improve and deliver against the Corporate Improvement Plan and the Community Strategy.

11. ANTI FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management presented the report of the Executive Director of Resources which outlined proposals to adopt the Anti Fraud and Corruption Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Finance and Risk Management reported that the Strategy set out the Council's specific policies towards the prevention, detection, notification and investigation of fraud and corruption and outlined the responsibilities of Members, Manager and Officers.

Decisions Made:

That the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council has, and is continuing to develop a strong approach to corporate governance and the adoption of the Strategy will ensure the Council embeds high standards of ethical governance.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

Not to approve the Strategy could represent a risk to the Council in terms of retaining public confidence and the Council's stance on such matters would be unclear.

12. GAMBLING POLICY

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which outlined the Statement of Gambling Policy as required under the Gambling Act 2005.

The Leader of the Council reported that the Statement would provide clarity to licensing customers on the principles to be applied under the Gambling Act 2005.

Decisions Made:

That the Cabinet recommends the approval of the Statement of Gambling Policy to Full Council.

Reasons for Decisions:

Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005 requires that the Licensing Authority prepares and publishes a three year Licensing Policy.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

13. EMPTY PROPERTIES POLICY STATEMENT AND ACTION PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented the report of the Executive Director of Resources which outlined proposals for consultation on the Empty Properties Statement and Action Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration reported that the Policy aimed to address empty properties as an economic issue and would ensure that action could be taken across Council services to reduce the number of empty properties in the Borough.

Decisions Made:

That the Policy Statement and Action Plan be approved for consultation and that any changes following the consultation be delegated to the Head of Economic Regeneration and Strategic Housing in consultation with the Portfolio Holders for Regeneration and Street Scene and Liveability.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Policy Statement and Action Plan signifies the Council's determination to deliver step change in this area.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

14. PAY AND WORKFORCE STRATEGY AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Member Development presented the report of the Head of Human Resources which outlined proposals for the adoption of the Pay and Workforce Strategy and the Workforce Development Plan.

The Cabinet Member for Human Resources and Member Development reported on the key priorities of the Pay and Workforce Strategy as set out below.

Developing the Organisation
Developing leadership capacity
Developing workforce skills and capability
Resourcing Local Government
Pay and Rewards

Decisions Made:

That the Pay and Workforce Strategy and Workforce Plan be agreed.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Strategy and Plan will enable a planned approach to be taken in terms of people, skills and numbers.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

N.B. The Interim Legal and Democratic Services Manager left the meeting prior to the consideration of the following item of business.

15. DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration presented the report of the Deputy Chief Executive which provided an update on progress made in respect of Development Control performance management together with recommendations for the future approach of the Development Control Service.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration reported that an improvement plan was being developed to transform the service and in-house planning services would provide maximum local control.

Decisions Made:

1. That the Development Control Service be retained as an in-house function with a further detailed assessment in 12 months.
2. That the Interim Head of Service arrangement be continued until September 2007.

3. That the development of a select list of specialist planning support be approved.

Reasons for Decisions:

The implementation and performance management of the improvement plan will ensure sustained improvement is achieved. The Interim Head of Planning arrangement will ensure continuity and allow improvements to be taken forward.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

External options.

16. ENVIRONMENT INSPECTION

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability presented the report of the Head of Street Scene and Liveability which detailed the outcome of the Audit Commission's Environment Inspection.

The Cabinet Member for Street Scene and Liveability reported that the inspection took place in February 2006 and concluded that the Council's approach to Environmental Services was fair with promising prospects for improvement. She informed the meeting that since the inspection further significant improvements had been made, particularly the new refuse fleet which had been commissioned.

Decisions Made:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the contribution made by staff to improve the service be acknowledged.

Reasons for Decisions:

The recommendations within the Audit Commission's report have informed the development of the improvement plan which will ensure that service delivery is improved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

17. CRIMINAL RECORDS BUREAU CHECKS

The Leader of the Council presented the report of the Head of Legal and Democratic Services which outlined the recommendations of the Standards Committee to undertake Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) Disclosure Checks for Elected Members and to approve the Members' CRB Guide.

The Leader of the Council informed the meeting that the voluntary scheme was an additional measure which any Councillor could elect to undertake to further demonstrate their integrity.

Decisions Made:

1. That the report be noted and the Members' CRB Guide be approved.
2. That a copy of the Guide be forwarded to each Member.
3. That Members be requested to undergo a Criminal Records Bureau check.

Reasons for Decisions:

The introduction of the voluntary scheme will assist Elected Members in understanding the role of the Council in reducing risk.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

18. ROSSENDALE PARTNERSHIP PERFORMANCE

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships presented the report of the Head of Community and Partnerships which outlined the Performance Management Assessment that the Local Strategic Partnership (Rossendale Partnership) had recently completed with Government Office North West.

The Cabinet Member for Community and Partnerships reported that the Rossendale Partnership was awarded green status which was the highest rating available. He highlighted that green status ranked the Partnership as one of the top performing Local Strategic Partnerships (LSP) in the country and the only non Neighbourhood Renewal Funded (NRF) to have achieved green status.

Decisions Made:

That the report be noted.

Reasons for Decisions:

The Council is working effectively in partnership to deliver better outcomes for local people and this is evident following the recent assessment of the Local Strategic Partnership.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected:

None.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 8.45pm)