

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 12th February 2014

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (in the Chair)
Councillors Jackson, Lamb, MacNae, Marriott and Serridge**

**In Attendance: Mrs H Lockwood, Chief Executive
Mr S Sugarman, Director of Business (in part)
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance and Property Services
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

Also Present: Councillor Farrington

**3 members of the public
0 members of the press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 All Cabinet members were present.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 27th November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

3.1 There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 No declarations of interest were made.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5.1 No questions were asked.

6. 2014/15 REVENUE BUDGET AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which outlined proposed revenue budget and level of council tax for 2014/15, together with implications for the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6.2 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined each recommendation and noted that the budget had been reduced by £1.5m, however more savings were required. It was noted that the use of reserves had been recommended for

Haslingden town centre regeneration, drainage and flood prevention schemes and to support the 12 month apprentice scheme.

- 6.3 The Portfolio Holder noted that it was recommended that a net revenue budget for 2014/15 be set and that the 2014/15 council tax be frozen.
- 6.4 The Leader of the Council noted that the council was resilient in hard times and it was pleasing that reserves were available to support other projects. It was noted that the Council was working well with other authorities such as United Utilities, the Environment Agency and Lancashire County Council. The Leader of the Council recorded her thanks to all staff for their work in providing a balanced budget.
- 6.5 Members were invited to comment on the report; however no comments were made.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet reconfirms and recommends to Council the following Corporate Priorities:-
 - **Regenerating Rossendale:** This priority focuses on regeneration in its broadest sense, so it means supporting communities that get on well together, attracting investment, promoting Rossendale, as well as working as an enabler to promote the physical regeneration of Rossendale.
 - **Responsive Value for Money Services:** This priority is about the Council working collaboratively, being a provider, procurer and a commissioner of services that are efficient and that meet the needs of local people.
 - **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centre and well managed open spaces, whilst recognising that the Council has to work with communities and as a partner to deliver this ambition.
2. That Cabinet recommends to Council the additional costs for 2014/15 as noted in paragraph 5.3 of the committee report.
3. That Cabinet notes the savings for 2014/15 as noted in paragraph 5.4 and detailed further in paragraph 5.6 of the committee report.
4. That Cabinet recommends to Council the use during 2014/15 of:
 - £29,000 from the Transitional Reserve to support the 2014/15 annual budget
 - £177,000 from the Directors Reserves to support the investment initiatives noted in paragraph 5.3 of the committee report
 - £20,000 from the Directors reserve to support the Area Forums as noted in paragraph 5.3
5. As a consequence of the above, Cabinet recommends to Council a net revenue budget for 2014/15 of £8,904,000.
6. That Cabinet recommends to Council to freeze Council Tax and that the Band D equivalent for 2014/15 remains at £253.40.
7. That Cabinet recommends to Council the changes to Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 2 of the committee report.
8. That Cabinet recommends to Council the annual inflation increase to Member Allowances is not applied.

9. That Cabinet recommends to Council the changes to Council tax discounts and premiums as noted in paragraph 5.12 of the committee report.
10. That Cabinet approves a local discretionary scheme for NNDR in relation to retail relief as per paragraph 5.13 for 2014/15 and 2015/16. Any other changes to be delegated to the Head of Finance and Property Services in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources.
11. That the Head of Finance and Property Services be instructed to prepare the technical resolutions necessary to give effect to these proposals.

Reason for Decision

To enable a balanced and robust budget for 2014/15 to be delivered.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. TREE MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Development Control outlined the report which proposed the introduction of a Tree Management Policy which would provide clarity to staff and to service users. It was noted that the Tree Team consisted of 2 members of staff.
- 7.2 The Portfolio Holder outlined the objectives of the policy. The Policy set out the priorities for service requests and clarified what the Council would and would not do free of charge.
- 7.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
 - The Policy was enlightening.

Resolved:

1. That the Tree Management Policy be approved and implemented.
2. That all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Parks and Open Spaces Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the health and safety of employees and visitors, to ensure a fair and clear decision making process and provide clear information regarding the responsibilities of the Council.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2014/15)

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources outlined the report which recommended to Council approval of the updated Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices. It was noted that Internal Audit had

recommended two minor amendments were to include a reference to repaying the public works loan board (paragraph 2.1) and a correction to the Cabinet's role in scrutinising (paragraph 5.1).

8.2 The Leader of the Council noted that it was a robust document and vitally important to manage resources. The Leader noted her thanks to the Head of Finance and his team.

8.3 Members were invited to comment on the report; no comments were made.

Resolved:

That Cabinet recommends to Full Council approval of the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices.

Reason for Decision

To ensure the continued compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME

9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which outlined the Capital Resources and Capital Programme for 2014/15 and noted amendments to the original recommendations to Full Council as follows:-

1. Members consider the potential resources for 2014/15 and the medium term.
2. Members recommend the approval of the affordable capital programme for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1.
3. Members delegate the allocation of any additional resources up to £400k during 2014/15 to the Head of Finance and the Portfolio Holder, having regard to capital receipts available. Any additional allocations to be reported to Members via the Council's regular financial reporting framework.

9.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:

- Clarification was given regarding the capital receipts and sale of assets.
- It was good to see the use of match funding regarding playground projects.
- It was noted that the current economic situation would reflect what could be raised from capital sales.

Resolved:

1. Members consider the potential resources for 2014/15 and the medium term.
2. Members recommend the approval of the affordable capital programme for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1.
3. Members delegate the allocation of any additional resources up to £400k during 2014/15 to the Head of Finance and the Portfolio Holder, having

regard to capital receipts available. Any additional allocations to be reported to Members via the Council's regular financial reporting framework.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council meet the proposed affordable capital programme for 2014/15 and up to 2016/17.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. UPDATE ON CHANGES TO GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Operational Services and Development Control introduced the report which provided an update to Cabinet regarding proposed changes to the grounds maintenance schedule. It was noted that three members of staff would be lost from the amenity grounds maintenance aspect of the service. In addition one tractor driver was retiring and would not be replaced.
- 10.2 The Portfolio Holder outlined the proposed changes and noted the areas that would remain high priority, such as parks and formal/memorial gardens and cemeteries and closed churchyards. Areas such as highway verges would be cut in strips nearest to the immediately adjacent roads, rather than whole verges. It was noted that staff were reviewing land and leases to establish liabilities for maintaining land.
- 10.3 The Portfolio Holder noted that very positive consultation had taken place with community and sports group and that arrangements were underway for these groups to take over some or all of the grounds maintenance. The Portfolio Holder also noted the appendices attached to the report which outlined the list of maintained areas, proposed changes, lists of planters and troughs and the citizen's panel response.

Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-

- Members noted their thanks to staff and community groups in the borough for rising to the challenge and making significant savings. The Leader of the Council noted that she would write to the community groups to thank them for their positive contribution.

Resolved:

That the proposed changes to the grounds maintenance schedule be approved.

Reason for Decision

To enable changes to the grounds maintenance schedule.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2013/14 UPDATE

- 11.1 The Portfolio Holder for Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which provided members with an update on the final financial monitoring period of 2013/14 since the last report in November 2013.
- 11.2 Members attention was drawn to the table on page 26 of the report which demonstrated the staffing reductions within the organisation.
- 11.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
 - The use of apprentices would assist in mitigating the loss to the local economy in the current financial climate.
 - It was noted that there was a £33k positive variance on bad debt provision on local council tax benefit.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report are noted.

Reason for Decision

To continue robust monitoring of the council's finances.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and closed at 7.05pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE