

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 17th September 2014

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

**In Attendance: Mrs H Lockwood, Chief Executive
Mr S Sugarman, Director of Business
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Essex, Farrington, Morris, Sandiford and D. Smith
2 members of the public
0 member of the press**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were apologies for absence from Councillor Lamb and Councillor Serridge.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2014 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 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5.1 There were no questions from members of the public.

6. UNIVERSAL CREDIT – SUPPORT MECHANISMS

6.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report which advised Members of the proposed partnership agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions and progress made with the roll-out of Universal Credit.

6.2 The Leader of the Council noted that the scheme would be rolled out in small numbers at first and that the Council was best placed to work with the Department for Work and Pensions to ensure smooth transition and support for residents. It was noted that members had received a training session on this matter.

- 6.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The training session provided to members had been informative. It was noted that most benefit claimants were in work.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Council would endorse the entering into a Delivery Partnership Agreement (DPA) in relation to Universal Credit (UC) with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and that delegated powers would be given to the Director of Business in order to make the final contractual arrangements.
3. That all future member amendments to the Delivery Partnership Agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions are delegated to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal and Licensing.

Reason for Decision

To enable to Council to roll out Universal Credit via a Delivery Partnership Agreement with the Department for Work and Pensions.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNTS

- 7.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the reports which advised Members of the exact definitions of council tax empty property discounts, which had been set using local, discretionary powers. The report noted that there were no changes proposed to the definitions adopted by Council on 26th February 2014 and the report merely provided clarification and clear definitions.

- 7.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that the Council did have discretionary powers in some circumstances and that in some cases, empty homes funding could assist.
 - It was noted that this was a new scheme with little feedback available at present.

Resolved:

1. That the Policy with regard to Council Tax Discounts be adopted.
2. That all future minor amendments to the Policy be delegated to the Head of Customer Services and ICT in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal and Licensing.

Reason for Decision

To provide clarification and guidance on council tax discounts.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. NON-DOMESTIC RATE WRITE OFFS

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which sought Members' approval to write off £30,783.15 in respect of irrecoverable non-domestic rates debts.
- 8.2 The Leader of the Council noted that this was a technical write-off and that debts would continue to be pursued.
- 8.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- A member made reference to a debt regarding a developer. The Leader of the Council stated that this was not in the write-off report and that this could be discussed with the Head of Finance outside of the meeting.

Resolved:

1. That £30,783.15 of irrecoverable non-domestic rate debts be written off.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to make prudent financial decisions.

Alternative Options Considered

None

9. ACTIVE EAST UPDATE

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health introduced the report which updated Cabinet on the aims, progress to date and proposed outcomes of the Active East Project.
- 9.2 The Project was intended to encourage physical activity and wellbeing within the two most deprived wards in Rossendale, being Irwell and Worsley. Community engagement would take place and it was emphasised that this project was designed to focus on those who do not normally take part in physical activity and to encourage them to develop sustainable ways to improve their wellbeing.
- 9.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:
- It was noted that the scheme would be of benefit to public health in the long term.
 - Concerns were raised regarding the condition of some paths in Victoria Park with regards to the 'Pram Walks'.

Resolved:

1. That the Update is noted.
2. That the allocation of £20,000, from Rossendale Borough Council's Director's reserves, be approved to the Active East Project, to be used to fund further activities.

3. That all future negotiations and minor amendments to the strategy and programme to be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to support the Active East Project.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 UPDATE

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which updated Members on the current financial position of the Council.
- 10.2 It was noted that budget was in line with expectations, with a £43k variance. Movements would be made to reserves to support the revenue budget. Staffing levels were at 162, with 2 posts currently vacant. Interest rates had currently fallen with a rise not anticipated in the near future.
- 10.3 The Portfolio Holder noted that the Pavilion project at Marl Pits was almost complete and that there was a favourable variance on the collection fund for rates and the NDR fund.
- 10.4 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
 - Comments were made with regards to licensing income and the number of taxi drivers and the Leader of the Council noted that drivers were subject to extensive checks.

Resolved:

1. That the report is 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 6.50pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE