

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 11th February 2015

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

In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Interim Chief Executive
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance
Mr S Jackson, Head of Health, Housing and Regeneration
Mr M Kay, Rossendale Leisure Trust
Mrs J Cook, Committee Officer

Also Present: Councillors Crawforth, Essex, Howarth, Kempson, Morris, Sandiford and D Smith
3 members of the public
1 member of the press

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

1.1 There were no apologies for absence; all Cabinet members were present.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th November 2014 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor Essex queried paragraph 5.2 of the minutes and Councillor Barnes noted that each project had its own arrangements in place and that relationships with all partners would be kept under review.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

3.1 There were no urgent items of business.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 Councillor MacNae declared an interest in item 8 in that he was a former national officer of the British Mountaineering Council and continued to carry out consultancy work for the same. Councillor MacNae would leave the Chamber for this item and it would be presented by Councillor Jackson.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

5.1 Mrs Freeman asked how many of the Cabinet members had read the full business case regarding the Vertical Playground. It was confirmed that 4 had done so and

the Leader of the Council noted that she and the Portfolio Holder met with the Leisure Trust on a monthly basis.

5.2 Councillor Essex asked whether the Council would be providing further information on AAW. The Interim Chief Executive stated that a press release and more information to members would be issued shortly.

6. 2015/16 CORPORATE PRIORITIES, BUDGET, COUNCIL TAX AND THE MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which sought Cabinet's recommendation to Full Council for the 2015/16 Corporate Priorities, the Budget, Council Tax setting and the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

6.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the Council was operating to a reduced net revenue expenditure in line with its efficiency agenda and highlighted the cost pressures and investment not included in the previous core budget.

6.3 The Portfolio Holder noted the key assumptions in the underlying budget estimates:-

- 0% Council Tax rise for 2015/16.
- The Council would be looking to find a 'top up' authority willing to form a partnership to maximise business rates retention.
- The new homes bonus would continue to be transferred into the transitional reserve.
- A neutral financial impact was estimated following the end of the current Capita contract in October 2016. Should the Council choose to extend the contract for a further 3 years, there would be a c.£1m additional saving to the Council.
- The Council Tax base had increased by 5.9% to 19,303.
- Members attention was drawn to Appendix 1 which outlined the risk analysis of the budget and to Appendix 2 which outlined the proposed fees and charges for 2015/16.

6.4 Councillor Serridge and Councillor MacNae noted that Appendix 2 would require amending as follows and noted the input of Overview and Scrutiny Committee in this matter:

- The proposed reduction in taxi licensing fees would be frozen, pending a review.
- In terms of Cemeteries, the proposed increases would be amended to reflect inflation:-
 - Vase/plinth/tablets – proposed rise of 96%
 - Garden of remembrance/Whitworth Ashes (reserving space)– proposed rise of 548.15%
 - Garden of remembrance/Whitworth Ashes (internment of ashes) – proposed rise of 104.88%
- The Events charge would remain at £21 pending a review of this matter.

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

- Discussion took place on statistics published by the Department for Communities and Local Government and interpretation of spending power.
- It was noted that the Whitworth Garden of Remembrance was a new project.
- The importance of consulting with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was noted.
- It was noted that it was important to review cemetery fees.
- The Council Tax collection fund figure was clarified.

Resolved:

1. That the Corporate Priorities are recommended to Full Council as follows:-
 - **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 meet the needs of local people.
 - **Clean Green Rossendale:** This priority focuses on clean streets and town centres 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 recommends to Council the use during 2014/15 of £180,000 from the Transitional Reserve to support the 2015/16 annual budget.
4. That as a consequence of the above, Cabinet recommends to Council a net revenue budget for 2015/16 of £8,901,000.
5. That Cabinet recommends to Council to freeze Council Tax and that the Band D equivalent for 2015/16 remains at £253.40.
6. That Cabinet recommends to Council the changes to Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 2 of the committee report with the following amendments:-
 - The proposed reduction in taxi licensing fees would be frozen, pending a review.
 - In terms of Cemeteries, the proposed increases would be amended to reflect inflation:-
 - Vase/plinth/tablets – proposed rise of 96%
 - Garden of remembrance/Whitworth Ashes (reserving space) – proposed rise of 548.15%
 - Garden of remembrance/Whitworth Ashes (internment of ashes) – proposed rise of 104.88%
 - The Events charge would remain at £21 pending a review of this matter.
7. That Cabinet recommends to Council 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 the Council to set a balanced budget for 2015/16.

Alternative Options Considered:

None

7. CAPITAL RESOURCES AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2015/16

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which provided information on the capital resources available for 2015/16 and sought Cabinet's recommendation on the proposed capital expenditure programme to Full Council.
- 7.2 The Portfolio Holder drew members' attention to the Council's larger projects, being typically over £10k in value, and the sources of grant and capital funding.
- 7.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that there was no guarantee of disabled facilities grants (DFG) in forecast budgets. The Leader of the Council noted that she supported DFG.

Resolved:

1. That Members considered the potential resources for 2015/16 and the medium term.
2. That the affordable capital programme for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1 of the committee report is recommended to Full Council for approval.
3. That Members considered the additional capital programme requirements, especially the results of the 2012/13 Stock Condition Survey, in order to provide any additional recommendations during 2015/16 to Council members on the prioritisation of further investment, should additional resources materialise during 2015/16.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council carries out a sustainable capital programme for 2015/16.

Alternative Options Considered

None

Note: Councillor MacNae left the Council Chamber during consideration of Item 8.

8. LEISURE INVEST TO SAVE PROJECT/VERTICAL PLAYGROUND – HASLINGDEN SPORTS CENTRE

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Housing and Environmental Health introduced the report which sought funds of £275k from the Council to support the delivery of a key leisure project in the Borough, being a vertical playground at Haslingden Leisure Centre.
- 8.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the business case addressed any concerns she had about the marketing of the project and that there was a dedicated sum of money to address this. It was anticipated that this project would bring in more visitors to the Borough.
- 8.3 It was noted that this matter would need to go to Full Council and the recommendation would be amended accordingly.

- 8.4 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The Leader of the Council stated that there was enough information to enable Full Council to make a decision in February and that the parking concerns would be investigated.

Resolved:

1. That Council is recommended to note the positive progress and opportunities brought about for Rossendale through strong partnership work.
2. That Council is recommended to approve financial support to the project as detailed within paragraph 5.13 of the committee report, being £275,000.
3. That Council is recommended to resolve that all future negotiations and minor amendments to be delegated to the Head of Finance and Property Services.

Reason for Decision

To assist the Council in achieving one of its key Corporate Priorities, being 'Regenerating Rossendale'.

Alternative Options Considered

None

Councillor MacNae returned to the Council Chamber.

9. TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES (UPDATES FOR 2015/16)

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which sought Cabinet's recommendation of the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices to Full Council. It was noted that there was a requirement to update the strategy and practices annually.
- 9.2 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The increase in reserves was commended.
 - The Head of Finance and Property Services agreed to respond directly to Cllr Essex regarding the increase in reserves for the year.

Resolved:

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

Reason for Decision

To ensure the Council continues to comply with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's Code of Practice on Treasury Management.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. ALLOCATION OF ROSSENDALE COUNCIL AND NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM GRANTS 2015/16 AND 2016/17

10.1 The Leader of the Council introduced the report which sought members' approval of the Council and Neighbourhood Forum Grants for 2015/16 and 2016/17.

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

- It was noted that the grant funding allocation had not been made by a cross-party group.
- It was noted that the focus was on financial inclusion groups.
- It was noted that organisations such as the CAB were able to benefit from other funding streams and that its move to the Stubblelee offices had enabled them to save money on rental expenditure.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approves the allocation of Rossendale Council Grants of £35,000 to Rossendale Citizens Advice Bureau and £12,000 to Rossendale Credit Unions to support financial inclusion services in 2015-16 and 2016-17.
2. That Cabinet approves the allocation of £13,000 to support Neighbourhood Forum grants in 2015-16 and 2016-17.
3. That all future minor amendments to the grants process are delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council has a robust grants process and that financial inclusion services are supported.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. INVESTMENT IN CYCLE ROUTES IN ROSSENDALE

11.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which sought members approval for proposed investment in cycle routes in Rossendale.

11.2 The Portfolio Holder informed members that the investment would focus on two routes, being National Cycle Route (NCN6) which ran largely from Ramsbottom to Accrington and the other route was the corridor along the Rawtenstall-Bacup-Rochdale railway line. The routes would provide safe cycling routes and it was anticipated that this would bring more visitors to the area.

11.3 It was noted that resources would be required to ensure capacity within the Planning Unit and some small parts of land would be put into the project. It was noted that c£4m of funding had been accessed. The Portfolio Holder noted the hard work by officers.

- 11.4 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- It was noted that the funding for this was the second announcement of growth funding for Rossendale in the past few weeks.

Resolved:

1. That members supported the proposed investment and the Council's active engagement in scheme delivery.
2. That all future minor amendments to the implementation of the project be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to support the development of the Strategic Cycle Network.

Alternative Options Considered

None

12. INVESTMENT IN ROSSENDALE MUSEUM

- 12.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Tourism and Leisure introduced the report which sought members approval for investment of £45,000 in the Whitaker (Rossendale) Museum to undertake repairs and improvements to the Museum building.
- 12.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that the work carried out by the Whitaker Group had produced a spectacular rise in footfall (96%) where other museums had seen a decline. The Whitaker Group had requested an investment of £45k to undertake repairs and improvements to the building and would provide £10k of funding themselves.
- 12.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- Museums in other districts were keen to learn from the Whitaker's example.
 - It was confirmed that the visitor numbers were provided by the Lancashire County Council Museum Service figures, which would have been audited.
 - There was an inventory of museum artefacts available for members to view. It was noted that this was in the form of a database which was too large to put on the Council's website.

Resolved:

1. That the contents of the report were noted, particularly the success of the Whitaker.
2. That members approved a budget of £45,000 to undertake repairs and improvements to the Museum building.
3. That all future negotiations and minor amendments be delegated to the Director of Business in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to support the Whitaker Museum.

Alternative Options Considered

None

13. LEAVENGREAVE PLAYING FIELD

- 13.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which sought members approval for the grant of a lease of Leavengreave Playing Field to Whitworth Sports Council Ltd. It was noted that this was an opportunity to support the Sports Council.
- 13.2 The Portfolio Holder for Customers, Legal and Licensing requested that the following amendments be agreed:-
- Paragraph 1.1 be amended to delete the sentence 'with provision for the lease to terminate if the tenant has not built a synthetic pitch on the land by February 2020.
 - Paragraph 5.1, third paragraph down be amended to remove '(in the form of a synthetic pitch)' and the sentence 'If no work is completed, then the lease would terminate' be changed to if no work is 'started'.
 - Paragraph 5.1 fourth paragraph down be amended to state 'The grant of a lease will enable the tenant to apply for grant funding for improvements to Leavengreave pitch'.
 - Paragraph 5.1 eighth paragraph down be amended and the word 'completed' be replaced with 'started.'
- 13.3 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- The lease should not be unrealistic.

Resolved:

1. To approve the grant of a lease of Leavengreave Playing field to Whitworth Sports Council Ltd, on the basis set out in paragraph 5.1 of the committee report and with the amendments set out at paragraph 13.2 above.
2. That all future minor amendments to the terms of the proposed lease to be delegated to the Property Services Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

To enable Whitworth Sports Council to progress the development of the playing field.

Alternative Options Considered

None

14. FINANCIAL MONITORING 2014/15 UPDATE

- 14.1 The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources introduced the report which updated members on the current financial position of the Council.

- 14.2 The Portfolio Holder noted that 4 posts had been removed, which dropped the number of FTEs to 158.2 and there were currently 5 vacant posts. It was noted that approximately £200k (later confirmed by Councillor Lamb to be an estimated £300k) was expected to be raised by the sale of the old refuse fleet.
- 14.3 The Portfolio Holder noted the new capital projects approved during Quarter 3:-
- One property purchase under the Mortgage Rescue Scheme
 - Renewable energy projects at leisure facilities
 - Investment in Ski Rossendale
 - Western Park enhancements
 - Veterans in Communities minibus
- 14.4 It was noted that the Dog Warden Service was facing a projected underspend of £5.9k and it was noted that this could be utilised to tackle dog fouling. The Leader of the Council stated that a pilot scheme was being undertaken in Whitworth.
- 14.5 Members were invited to comment on the report and the following comments were made:-
- Discussion took place on the disposal of the refuse fleet and a breakdown of costs would be provided to Cllr Kempson.
 - Dog fouling complaints could be raised with officers.
 - Reference was made to an NHS contract cancellation and it was noted that some residents would struggle to safely dispose of contaminated medical waste. This also raised safety concerns for staff. The Leader of the Council confirmed that information was being gathered on this matter and would be made available to members.
 - Discussion took place on the Council Tax matters.
 - The Leader of the Council noted that members could raise issues and concerns with officers and councillors outside of the Cabinet meeting.

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 7.50pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE