

COUNCILLOR GRANVILLE MORRIS, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 14th December 2016

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Morris (in the Chair)
Councillors Aldred, Ashworth, A. Barnes, L.Barnes, Bromley, Cheetham, Crawforth, James Eaton, Janet Eaton, Graham, Haworth, Johnson, Kempson, Kenyon, Lythgoe, MacNae, Marriott, McMahon, Neal, Oakes, Procter, Roberts, Robertson, Serridge, Smallridge, Stansfield and Walmsley.

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Chief Executive
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
George Taylor, Mayor's Attendant
John Illingworth, Mayor's Attendant

ALSO PRESENT: 4 members of the public

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors Essex, Farrington, Fletcher, Lamb, Shipley, Smith and Steen.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28th September 2016 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

4. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made.

5. Communications from the Mayor, the Leader or Head of Paid Service

The Mayor and Head of Paid Service had no communications to report.

The Leader of the Council informed that health colleagues had made the Council aware of plans that would have a significant impact on residents, and there would be a full briefing for members in the New Year. The NHS had recently been asked to put together sustainability and transformation plans (STPs) for all areas of the country. Lancashire and South Cumbria was one of 44 STP footprints looking at how to provide

better care going forward for the next 5 years. This contained 33 organisations made up of councils, partners and local sector organisations, one of which was Pennine Lancashire. The organisations were trying to work out how they could continue to deliver health services over the next 5 years, whilst addressing Lancashire's funding gap which was expected to be around £550m. Lancashire and South Cumbria had submitted their plan to meet deadlines with NHS England. More detailed delivery plans which would be a bit clearer and would be made public. There would be conversations with public, staff and stakeholders, and there had been a recent event in Haslingden. There were health challenges as well as a need to be realistic about the case for change. There would be a significant impact for residents, and more would be understood once the delivery plans were seen.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

6. Local Plan Update

The Council considered the Local Plan Update. The Leader of the Council, Councillor A.Barnes, introduced the report and informed members of the following:

- The next stages in the process.
- The outline of the timetable from two meetings ago.
- Whilst gathering the evidence base, the timetable had been knocked off course.
- Some evidence had come in later than anticipated.
- There was a need to revisit the timescales and therefore the timetable had changed.
- It was a sensitive document that was being considered.
- The cross party working group had taken ownership with the plan.
- The delay in the evidence base had impacted on the timetable and a flavour of the evidence base progress was detailed at 5.2.
- The report outlined the actions that officers intended to take.
- There would be a consultation in May with members.
- The Council would also be talking to as many members of the public as possible.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- In relation to the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment there was a significant reminder of what can happen with weather vulnerability and how it impacts on people.
- Delighted with work so far in relation to floods.
- There was unanticipated risk, and incidents of this nature took a long time for other agencies to come into play.
- Some agencies were not as accessible as we would like them to be.
- There were still elements within the valley that needed more looking at where currently there was not enough expertise to get things done.
- Residents need to be able to give their input, as they can inform how things are in their areas.
- There was co-operation across parties with their involvement in the Local Plan.
- The recommendation at 1.2 may benefit from another person in case there is any disagreement.
- When the public are consulted they want to be listened to, it is their concerns we need to take into consideration as they are the people on the ground.
- There was a need to preserve the hamlets and regenerate the towns.
- Replicating the success in Whitworth with projects to build on brownfield sites.

- Recommend developers build on brownfield sites first before they can consider other areas.
- Section 5.3 mentions a drop-in session in the Council Chamber, could this be extended to other areas in the borough?
- 5.2 bullet point 7 mentions 24 sites under threat from developers. Councillors need to make residents aware of where these sites are, and information needs to be given at the consultation.

In response to questions from members, the Leader of the Council confirmed that there would be more than one consultation session. It was a sensitive document with impacts throughout the borough, so although resources were always an issue, the Council would want as much consultation as possible. The Leader of the Council thanked the planning team for their hard work on the Local Plan.

Resolved:

1. That Council supports the publication of the draft Local Plan in mid-2017 for public consultation purposes.
2. All future minor amendments to the Plan to be delegated to the Planning Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

The Local Plan is a key policy document for the Borough. It is important that it is evidence based to support the choices that will need to be made

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. Public Meetings: Committee Schedule 2017/2018

The Council considered the Committee Schedule report, which detailed public meetings for 2017/2018.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- The number of in-year changes made to the schedule.

Resolved:

That members agree the Committee Schedule containing dates of public meetings for 2017/2018 as detailed at Appendix 1.

Reason for Decision

It is important to agree a committee schedule in order to ensure that the Council can effectively conduct its business.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. Urgent Decisions

The Mayor reported that the Cabinet had not taken any urgent decisions since the last meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE CABINET AND OTHER COMMITTEES

9. Appointment of the Director of Communities

Councillor A.Barnes moved and Councillor Marriott seconded that Samantha Plum be appointed as the Director of Communities, subject to HR policies and clearances being completed.

In considering the recommendation members discussed the following:

- Information about the person being appointed.
- Pay scale of the position.
- Summary of the role.
- Comparison with the previous role.

In response to questions, the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive informed members of some of the appointee's previous employers and roles, and that details of pay scale and a summary of the role would be confirmed to members following the meeting. The role was slightly different to the previous Director of Customer and Communities role and a brief comparison with the previous vacant director position would be provided.

Resolved:

That Samantha Plum be appointed as the Director of Communities, subject to HR policies and clearances being completed.

Reason for Decision

To appoint a new director as recommended by the Appointments and Appeals Panel.

Alternative Options Considered

None

10. Constitution Review

The Council considered the recommendation of the Governance Working Group regarding the proposed changes to the Constitution in relation to the Cabinet Member Role Descriptions and the granting of a general dispensation.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Could we ensure that the change would be an insertion into the Constitution and not a complete re-write?

In response to the question, the Portfolio Holder for Legal and Democratic Services, Councillor Oakes, confirmed that it would be an insertion of the amended wording.

Resolved:

1. Council agree to include the following wording at Part 2 Page 14 as recommended by the Audit and Accounts Committee and detailed at Appendix A:
 - To ensure the identification of risk in any project the Council undertakes. In order to facilitate identification of risk, members will find a checklist in the Risk

Management Strategy which can be found here:

http://www.rossendale.gov.uk/downloads/download/210/other_financial_strategies

2. Council agree to grant a general dispensation to all members of the Council for a period of 4 years as detailed in Appendix B.

Reason for Decision

The Council is required by law to implement a Constitution and it is in the interests of the Council to regularly review and update the document.

Alternative Options Considered

None

11. Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2017-2018

The Council considered the recommendation of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee in relation to the Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2017-2018. The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Health, Councillor Ashworth, introduced the report and informed members of the following:

- The scheme had to be approved on a yearly basis.
- There had been no changes in continuing to support those of working age.
- If government requirements reflected they got 100% rebate, then they got it.
- There were some changes identified at 5.6 which related to a number of housing benefit changes contained within the welfare reform changes. These had been reflected in the scheme to keep them parallel.
- The Housing Benefit and Council Tax awards had been mirrored.
- Some changes only affect new claimants.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Were there further costs to authorities?
- Central government had informed Shire counties that they were entitled to increase Council Tax by 3% to provide for adult social care.
- There was a concern that by 2020 this would be a cost that the people of Rossendale would have to face.
- It would have a major impact on people already struggling to pay their bills.
- There were concerns around proposed increases to fund adult social care being pushed back to local councils.
- A 3% increase would not address the crisis especially in areas like Lancashire with a lot of "A" band properties.
- Could we remind members of the exact figure that the borough lost last year on the Council Tax Scheme, which was around £800k?
- The council have to try to get small amounts of money off people who can't afford it.

In response to questions, the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Resources, Councillor Marriott, informed that as the number of pensioners increased the costs would rise as they got 100% rebate. The Chief Executive informed that the figure lost on the Council Tax Scheme would be checked and circulated to members.

Resolved:

That Full Council approve the Local Council Tax Support (CTS) Scheme for 2017/18 as set out in the report.

Reason for Decision

It is proposed to continue with the scheme approved in December 2013, but including benefit uprating for 2017/18, and the various changes outlined in order to maintain the prevailing Housing Benefit regulations as the underlying basis for the scheme.

Alternative Options Considered

None

The Mayor wished a Merry Christmas and a peaceful New Year to everyone in the borough, including colleagues and officers.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.15pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date