

COUNCILLOR COLIN CRAWFORTH, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 28th February 2018

PRESENT: The Mayor Councillor Crawford (in the Chair)
Councillors Aldred, Ashworth, A. Barnes, Cheetham, James Eaton, Essex, Fletcher, Haworth, Johnson, Kempson, Kenyon, Lamb, Lythgoe, MacNae, Marriott, McMahan, Neal, Oakes, Procter, Robertson, Serridge, Shipley, Smallridge, Smith, Steen and Walmsley.

IN ATTENDANCE: Stuart Sugarman, Chief Executive
Clare Birtwistle, Legal Services Manager (Monitoring Officer)
Phil Seddon, Head of Finance (S151 Officer)
Cath Burns, Director of Economic Development
Carolyn Sharples, Committee and Member Services Manager
George Taylor, Mayor's Attendant

ALSO PRESENT: 4 members of the public
1 press

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors L.Barnes, Bromley, Janet Eaton, Farrington, Graham, Hughes, Morris, Roberts and Stansfield.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on the following dates be signed by the Mayor as a correct record:

- 13th December 2017
- 20th December 2017

3. Urgent Items of Business

There were no urgent items of business.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

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

The Mayor informed that the Mayor's Ball was on 24th March and reminded that tickets were on sale.

POLICY AND BUDGET FRAMEWORK ITEMS

6. 2018/19 Corporate Priorities, Council Tax and the Medium Term Financial Strategy

The Mayor reminded members that a named vote was required for this item.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Alyson Barnes, informed that it was a good time to reflect on the coming year ahead when setting the budget. The Council was still £3 million a year worse off than in 2010 and Rossendale was the smallest district council in the North West with a small budget of £9.5 million. There was a need to protect the vulnerable and safeguard services. The Council had done as much as it could to bring in investment into the town centres. The work done in Bacup and Rawtenstall had been incredibly challenging, but there were merits with bringing investment into the borough. On the completion of schemes such as Bacup THI, Spinning Point, the cycleway and housing schemes there would be around £20 million brought into the valley. The Leader of the Council thanked pride groups for their work clearing litter. The Council had managed to tighten up governance and performance frameworks in relation to Empty Homes and there had been no jobs lost, services cut or Council Tax increased as a result. The costs for the Empty Homes had been met through the reserves set aside and in year savings and she was satisfied that when looked at as a whole it would be bringing investment in.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services, Councillor Andrew Walmsley, outlined the report and drew member's attention to the technical resolution at Appendix 4 and the amended recommendation following the Cabinet meeting. Members were asked to note the assumptions of the Medium Term Financial Strategy on page 4. The assumptions were based on a maximum of a 3% rise and the use of £800k reserves. The £550k costs share element for waste was no longer there in 2018/19 and the decision by the Secretary of State to refuse the Scout Moor expansion had cost the Council £600k per annum in business rates. This £1.15 million would have gone a long way to bridge the gap and more. In 2017/18 the threshold for raising Council Tax was 1.99% but the government was expecting tax payers to contribute more and had raised the threshold to 2.99%. The Portfolio Holder thanked the S151 Officer and the budget holders for reviewing their budgets to make savings. He asked members to note the comments of the S151 Officer at section 6 of the report and asked members to support an increase of 2.99% in order to bridge the funding gap.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Thanks to finance officers for completing the work.
- Ensuring every penny is accounted for.
- Ending support for PCSO's.
- Reducing services further.
- It will cost £2 million a week when we leave the EU which will be a burden for younger generations.
- Complained in the past about getting only half of 1%
- Impact of the collapse of Corillion owing £5 million.
- Concern about families who struggle.
- Loss of New Homes Bonus to adult social care.

- Utilities have increased.
- The empty homes scheme was down to a couple of people who were no longer with the authority.
- Appreciation to staff for hard work and dedication.
- Employing more people at high salaries.
- Tabling a copy of the income analysis with a rounded view of expenditure in the borough.
- £3 million lost each year, over 7 years this adds up to £21 million.
- Reduction in the number of Housing Benefit claimants when they move into work.
- Unemployment is less than the national average.
- Expenditure on Housing Benefit has reduced from £25 million to £18 million.
- Reduction in the revenue support grant has gone from £5 million to zero.
- Government has decided to reduce the revenue support grant and grant an increase in business rates.
- The Council never submitted an application for 100% business rate retention.
- Other grants have increased such as the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- Other areas have lower Council Tax.
- Other district councils across England are sharing services and creating joint back office functions.
- The Operations cross party working group last met in March 2017.
- Join Bury Council and lower Council Tax.
- Remind members of Internal Audit Report findings relating to Empty Homes, and re-send to all members to make them fully aware of the findings.
- Government were just customers of Corillian similar to the Council with AAW.
- Need to be constructive, make suggestions and work together.
- Over 300 houses in East Lancashire have been uprated after being empty for a number of years.
- Being able to contain spending and looking for additional sources of revenue.
- Districts had previously been cooperating on a Combined Authority, but this was no longer the case.
- The income analysis tabled earlier was meaningless without the supporting spreadsheets.
- No constructive comments had been received regarding the budget.
- The Council was one of the last authorities to provide funding for PCSOs.
- Elements within the income analysis were ring fenced for specific purposes and could not be spent elsewhere.
- The DFG was ring fenced and not an income stream.

In response to a question, the Mayor agreed that the Internal Audit Report dealing with the empty homes project would be re-sent again to all councillors to ensure they were fully aware of the details.

Councillor Essex moved an amendment, which was seconded by Councillor Steen:

That the council tax payers be sent a financial report on the Empty Homes Scheme with the 2018 council tax letter.

Members discussed the amendment as follows:

- Not sure how it could be seen as an amendment to the budget.
- Does not form part of the budget process.
- Police had not concluded their investigation.
- There were cost implications.
- Was it Constitutional?

In response to questions, the Monitoring Officer confirmed that it had been proposed as an additional recommendation to the report.

Members continued to discuss the amendment as follows:

- Could the statutory deadlines be met?
- Statutory Officer comments had not been received on the amendment.
- If the amendment was agreed, councillors would be fettering the Police investigation.

In response to questions, the S151 Officer confirmed that it would not be practical or even possible to do what the amendment proposed and this would need to be considered when voting on the amendment.

Councillors Essex, Steen and Cheetham requested a recorded vote. Voting took place on the amendment as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Aldred	Against
Cllr Ashworth	Against
Cllr Alyson Barnes	Against
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Crawforth	Against
Cllr Jimmy Eaton	Abstain
Cllr Essex	For
Cllr Fletcher	Against
Cllr Haworth	For
Cllr Johnson	Against
Cllr Kempson	For
Cllr Kenyon	Against
Cllr Lamb	Against
Cllr Lythgoe	Against
Cllr MacNae	Against
Cllr McMahon	Against
Cllr Marriott	Against
Cllr Neal	Against
Cllr Oakes	Against
Cllr Procter	Against
Cllr Robertson	Against
Cllr Serridge	Against
Cllr Shipley	For
Cllr Smallridge	Against

Cllr Smith	Against
Cllr Steen	For
Cllr Walmsley	Against
Total For	6
Total Against	20
Total Abstentions	1

The amendment was lost and members were asked to vote on the recommendations originally proposed at the meeting.

Voting took place on the recommendations as follows:

Name	Vote
Cllr Aldred	For
Cllr Ashworth	For
Cllr Alyson Barnes	For
Cllr Cheetham	Against
Cllr Crawforth	For
Cllr Jimmy Eaton	Against
Cllr Essex	Against
Cllr Fletcher	For
Cllr Haworth	Against
Cllr Johnson	For
Cllr Kempson	Against
Cllr Kenyon	For
Cllr Lamb	For
Cllr Lythgoe	For
Cllr MacNae	For
Cllr McMahon	For
Cllr Marriott	For
Cllr Neal	For
Cllr Oakes	For
Cllr Procter	For
Cllr Robertson	For
Cllr Serridge	For
Cllr Shipley	Against
Cllr Smallridge	For
Cllr Smith	For
Cllr Steen	Against
Cllr Walmsley	For
Total For	20
Total Against	7
Total Abstentions	0

Resolved:

1. Council approves the 2018/19 Council Tax Band D of £266.17 (being an increase of 2.99%).

2. Council approves the use of £796,000 from the Transitional Reserve and £800,000 from the Business Rates Retention reserve to support the 2018/19 annual budget.
3. That Council approves the saving of £33,000 regarding PCSOs
4. Council approves a net revenue budget for 2018/19 of £10,032,000.
5. Council approves Fees and Charges as noted in Appendix 1.
6. Council approves the technical resolution at Appendix 4.
7. Council freezes all Members allowances for 2018/19.

Reason for Decision

To enable the Council to set a balanced budget for 2018/19.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. Capital Resources and Capital Programme 2018/19

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services, Councillor Walmsley, outlined the report which asked members to consider the Capital Strategy for the coming three years, propose a capital expenditure programme, and advise members on the various sources of capital funding and their impacts. The affordability of the fleet replacement and allowances for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were highlighted. Project work was noted such as Spinning Point, Bacup Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI), Whitaker Heritage Lottery Fund, Rossendale Leisure Trust, Stubblee Park, Healey Dell and Waterfoot public open space. Resources were available to meet capital needs up to 2021 then there would be a need to take out further external borrowing after looking at each business case.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Support all items.
- Thanks to officers and members for their work over the last 12 months.
- Can members vote as there was no risk assessment in the document?
- Thanks for S106 money from the Orama Mill development in being able to make improvements on Healey Dell.
- Monies raised in Whitworth being spent in Whitworth.
- Need a conversation about play parks in Whitworth.
- Whitworth has the advantage of the Town Council to help obtain funding.
- It reflects the things the Council is doing, making a difference.
- Each individual project would be risk assessed and the relevant report would identify any relevant actions.
- Thanks to the Finance Team for a tremendous amount of work and keeping track of it on a day to day basis.
- Waterfoot public open space looks wonderful.
- Ring fencing of Capital for Compulsory Purchase Orders and taking an aggressive stance on vacant properties in order to contribute to the economy.

Councillor Essex raised a point of order that his question had not been answered. The Mayor confirmed that the question had been responded to during the debate and that the S151 Finance Officer also confirmed that members could vote on the item.

Resolved:

1. Members approved the Capital Strategy for 2018/19 and the medium term.
2. Members approved the affordable capital programme for 2018/19, as set out in Appendix 1, and approved the new capital expenditure projects totalling £1,443k.
3. Members agreed to delegate any minor amendments to the capital programme throughout the 2018/19 financial year as a result of new grant-funded community projects, to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services. Amendments would then be reported to Cabinet through the regular Financial Monitoring Reports.

Reason for Decision

To ensure that the Council carries out a sustainable capital programme for 2018/19.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Updates for 2018/2019)

The Council considered the Treasury Management Strategy and Treasury Management Practices (Updates for 2018/2018) report.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- A very full and thorough document.
- Was the authorisation of the additional borrowing for Spinning Point?

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services, Councillor Walmsley, confirmed that Spinning Point would be subject to separate officer/member considerations.

Resolved:

1. Members approved the revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement and the Treasury Management Policy and Practices.
2. Members delegated any further minor changes to the Head of Finance in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services.
3. Members authorised the Head of Finance to take advantage of any prepayment options offered, as noted in paragraph 5.9, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Customer Services.

Reason for Decision

To ensure continued compliance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's (CIPFA) revised Treasury Management Code of Practice and revised Prudential Code 2017, and continue to contain the Councils exposure to financial risk.

Alternative Options Considered

None

ORDINARY BUSINESS

9. Urgent Decisions

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

(The meeting commenced at 7.05pm and concluded at 8.10pm)

Signed.....

(Chair)

Date