

COUNCILLOR COLIN CRAWFORTH, MAYOR

MINUTES OF: THE COUNCIL OF THE BOROUGH OF ROSSENDALE

Date of Meeting: 21st March 2018

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

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

ALSO PRESENT: 12 members of the public
0 press

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received for Councillors L.Barnes, Farrington, Graham and Hughes.

2. Minutes

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28th February 2018 be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

3. Urgent Items of Business

The Chief Executive informed members that there was one urgent item of business regarding Councillor Dorothy Farrington who had failed to attend a meeting of the Council since 27th September 2017, where she attended the Licensing Committee. The Local Government Act 1972 stated that when a Council member fails to attend any meeting for six consecutive months from the date of the last attendance, they cease to be a member of the authority unless the Council approves their reasons prior to the expiry period. The reason for non-attendance was owing to ill health, and members were asked to vote on accepting Councillor Farrington's reasons for non-attendance.

Resolved:

The reasons for non-attendance were accepted.

Members wished Councillor Farrington a speedy recovery.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Morris, Shipley, Stansfield, A.Barnes and Procter declared non-pecuniary interests in minute 7 as they were part of the Haslingden Task Group.

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

There were no communications.

ORDINARY BUSINESS

6. NNDR Policy - inward investment and business expansion

The Council considered the NNDR Policy - inward investment and business expansion report. The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Leisure and Tourism, Councillor MacNae, introduced the report and brought members attention to the following:

- This step brings us in line with other authorities.
- Business rates are a competitive environment.
- To tempt businesses into the area, Council's need a competitive offer.
- 1384 businesses currently benefitted from small business relief.
- It was important for the continued success of the town centres.
- Attracting businesses in would help support businesses to grow, create jobs and would encourage occupation of derelict sites and buildings.

N.B. Councillor Serridge left the meeting.

The Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Leisure and Tourism continued to bring members attention to the following:

- Business rates were a crucial part of medium and long term growth.
- It was about building a base to increase the economic environment.
- It was a crucial part of the armoury to compete and bring the right businesses here.

Resolved:

1. That Council notes and approves the proposed NNDR relief policy and process.
2. Council delegates authority for NNDR relief application decisions to the panel within the parameters outlined in the report.
3. That a list of successful NNDR relief applicants be listed in future Economic Development Directorate update reports for member's information.
4. Members to allow minor alterations to the policy to be made by the Economic Development Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision

The NNDR relief policy will target expanding and inward investment businesses. It will encourage growth with the associated benefits of raised living standards and job opportunities. The increased property investment will in the medium term increase NNDR returns in the Rossendale area.

Alternative Options Considered

None

7. Haslingden - External Funding

The Council considered the Haslingden - External Funding report.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor A.Barnes, introduced the report and brought members attention to the following:

- The report was looking to ensure there was match funding, staffing and structures in place should the Council be successful in its funding Townscape Heritage (TH) bid.
- There would be limited time during the next phase, so there was a need to get permissions in place.
- Bacup THI had been successful and had seen significant improvements from this type of funding.
- Some work had already been done in Haslingden.
- This was the last round of TH funding available.
- If the bid was unsuccessful funding would be looked for elsewhere.

N.B. Councillor Serridge returned to the meeting.

In considering the report members discussed the following:

- Work already done had been mentioned, but not seen any improvements.
- Thanks to officers for the report.
- Suggestion for this was made early on in the Task Group.
- Good idea to go out for funding.
- There were differences in the funding when compared with Rawtenstall.
- Funding already in place was gratefully received.
- Thanks to regeneration officers.
- Task Group changes and membership should be democratic.
- It would bring £2.4 million in addition to the money left.
- Hope the bid was successful.
- Not invited MP to the membership on Bacup THI board.
- Haslingden had £39 million SRB funding in the 1990's.
- £30 million had been brought to Whitworth in the last 30 years.
- Getting responsible developers to transform brownfield sites.
- There was a new buzz in the town as more people were coming to shop in Haslingden.
- Urge members to support to ensure it works in Haslingden.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the positive comments and informed that if members wanted to see improvements, they must work at it. They were working to draw in as much investment as possible. There had been a positive meeting with Heritage Lotteries and she had spoken to them directly about Haslingden. Initially there had been £100k set aside for Haslingden which was not enough to deliver a large scale scheme such as in Rawtenstall or Bacup, however they had tackled smaller issues such as hanging baskets, Christmas lights, shop front improvements, town trail map

and town clean ups. The Council wanted to see something bigger and if the bid was successful the same impact would be seen as in Bacup.

Resolved:

1. Subject to receiving Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) approval: To approve £160,088 of new match funding from the employment and transport reserve to support the Haslingden Townscape Heritage (TH) project through its lifetime. To allocate all existing Haslingden Task Force funding circa £62,000 to the Haslingden TH Board; of which £40,000 will be used as RBC match funding and £22,000 will remain to cover existing funding commitments.
2. Subject to receiving HLF approval: To approve the creation of a TH Project Officer role (grade 6) for the full length of the Haslingden TH funding bid with a break clause in the contract subject to the HLF delivery phase decision.
3. Subject to receiving HLF approval: To approve the proposed changes to governance for Haslingden Taskforce and its reconstitution as the Haslingden TH Board, adoption of the Terms Of Reference which have been previously agreed by HLF and the Taskforce (contained in the background document). Council delegates all project spend circa £2,636,385 of which £200,088 is RBC to the reconstituted Haslingden TH Board.
4. Subject to receiving HLF approval: Members to delegate authority to the Economic Development Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder to enter into a grant funding agreement with HLF for phase 1 and 2 as detailed in this report.

Reason for Decision

To enable the delivery of the Haslingden TH project subject to HLF funding being awarded.

Alternative Options Considered

None

8. Urgent Decisions

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

NOTICE OF MOTION

9. Councillor Shipley moved the following motion which was seconded by Councillor Steen:

This council has no confidence in the leader of the council and calls for her to step down and resign her position until such time that the findings of the investigation into the loss of £5 million and the AAWW Empty Homes scandal are made public.

In considering the motion members discussed the following:

- It was concerning a particular individual who worked for the Council at that time.
- There was a failure to keep members informed.
- Motion was not about empty homes, but a personal attack.
- Have confidence in the Leader.

- Remind members that the empty homes scheme and expression of interest was conceived under the previous administration.
- There had been no elaboration on the motion.
- Police would be asked to speak to councillors regarding an update on the investigation.
- Personal abuse was unacceptable.

Councillor Eaton raised a point of order regarding members' behaviour.

The Mayor reminded members regarding unacceptable behaviour.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- The Leader worked hard and deserved members support.
- Rights and responsibilities.
- Concerns were raised to the former Cex and ignored.
- If there is no money the only place it can come from is the taxpayer.
- Leader and Cabinet are responsible and officers carry out the policies.
- Lost £4.5 million.
- Take responsibility for administration.
- Misrepresentation of the audit report; information was not passed to elected members by the officers managing the project.
- Scrutiny is the job of all councillors.
- No risks identified in the 2010 indicators, or the report to Cabinet when it sought approval of the accountable body.
- Risk was to be shared with other authorities but indemnity was never sought by the former Cex.
- Audit report identifies that controls were overridden or disregarded.
- What needs to be asked is whether we could have done anything differently.
- Audit is always about historical events, not what is happening at the time.
- In November 2015 no elected member received any information about a problem with the scheme.
- AAW ceased trading January 2015.
- Scheme was providing homes for families in need across 5 areas in East Lancs.
- It was welcomed in East Lancs' and those Councils voted it in.
- If AAW had not gone into liquidation and members had been kept informed, would we still be in this situation?
- Not any fault of this Council.
- Council didn't owe £4.5 million in January 2015.
- Need professionalism in commerce and business.
- Whistleblower was from another Council.
- Checks and balances shouldn't be in one person's hands.
- Asked at O&S for an external independent audit.

In response to a question the Mayor informed that there was a Police investigation. The Chief Executive informed that LCC were external to the Council and they had been instructed to undertake the audit investigation in 2015.

Members continued to discuss the following:

- Had the audit been honest and critical?
- Getting another viewpoint.
- Independent investigation was being conducted by the Police.
- This was a criminal investigation not an administrative or financial investigation.
- There had been no clarification on the motion.
- The Leader had full support of her group.

The Leader of the Council informed that there would be an update report for members and that the Police would be invited to update members also.

Councillor Serridge moved and Councillor MacNae seconded to put the vote now.

The Mayor clarified that members were being asked to vote on the notice of motion and read out the notice.

A named vote was requested by Councillors Shipley, Steen and Stansfield.

Name	Vote
Cllr Aldred	Against
Cllr Ashworth	Against
Cllr Alyson Barnes	Against
Cllr Bromley	Against
Cllr Cheetham	For
Cllr Crawforth	Against
Cllr Jimmy Eaton	Abstain
Cllr Janet Eaton	Abstain
Cllr Essex	For
Cllr Fletcher	Against
Cllr Haworth	Abstain
Cllr Johnson	Against
Cllr Kempson	Against
Cllr Kenyon	Against
Cllr Lamb	Against
Cllr Lythgoe	Against
Cllr MacNae	Against
Cllr McMahan	Against
Cllr Marriott	Against
Cllr Morris	For
Cllr Neal	Against
Cllr Oakes	Against
Cllr Procter	Against
Cllr Roberts	Abstain
Cllr Robertson	Against
Cllr Serridge	Against
Cllr Shipley	For
Cllr Smallridge	Against
Cllr Smith	Against
Cllr Stansfield	Abstain

Cllr Steen	For
Cllr Walmsley	Against
Total For	5
Total Against	22
Total Abstentions	5

Resolved:

The motion was lost.

Reason for Decision

To reject the motion.

Alternative Options Considered

None

(The meeting commenced at 7.30pm and concluded at 8.35pm)

Signed.....
(Chair)

Date