

MINUTES OF: THE CABINET

Date of Meeting: Wednesday 12th September 2018

**Present: Councillor A Barnes (Chair)
Councillors Ashworth, Lamb, Oakes and Walmsley**

**In Attendance: Mr S Sugarman, Chief Executive
Ms S Plum, Director of Communities
Ms C Birtwistle, Monitoring Officer
Mr P Seddon, Head of Finance
Mr M Coogan, Strategic Housing Manager
Ms H Mullins, Housing and Regeneration Project Officer
Miss G Ashton, Committee and Member Services Officer**

**Also Present: Councillors Essex, Haworth and Robertson
1 member of the press
3 Members of the public**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Councillor MacNae, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration and Tourism.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 4th July 2018 were agreed as a correct record.

3. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

- 3.1 There were no urgent items.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

- 5.1 Referring to the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, a member of the public asked if there were problems with referrals and backlogs. The Leader of the Council advised that there was a small backlog, however there were problems with referrals as there were insufficient NHS Occupational Therapists. The member of public added that the Royal British Legion's Occupational Therapists could provide assistance. The Leader of the Council advised that this would be considered and thanked the member of public for her suggestion.
- 5.2 In relation to Spinning Point Phase 2, a member of public asked if the Leisure Trust were funding the proposed Spa facility. The Leader of the Council advised that this

was not covered by any of the agenda items but thanked the member of public for his question.

6. RBC ENFORCED SALES POLICY AND PROCEDURE

- 6.1 The Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing, Communities and Customer Service outlined the report and advised that this was a new Policy which would assist Officers in the recovery of appropriate charges. It was acknowledged that this would increase the work of the Legal Team but would help the Council realise debts on empty properties.
- 6.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
- The Policy was welcomed but a caring approach was needed for those who were genuinely vulnerable.
 - Anything to reduce the number of derelict properties was positive.
 - Did the Policy capture all debt.
- 6.3 In response to the question asked, the Portfolio Holder advised that anything with a land charge was covered by the Policy.
- 6.4 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
- How many properties were affected.
- 6.5 The Housing and Regeneration Project Officer advised that 14 properties had been affected.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approved the Enforced Sales Policy and Procedure.
2. That all future minor amendments to the Enforced Sales Policy and Procedure be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision:

To enable the Council to recover outstanding debts and address issues with problematic long term empty properties.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

7. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT POLICY 2018/19

- 7.1 The Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing, Communities and Customer Services outlined the report which asked Members to adopt the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy. The Policy included more flexible ways to release money to a wider range of residents and the maximum grant funding had been increased. The website was in the process of being updated to include useful links on a number of web pages. The use of Royal British Legion Occupational Therapists would be welcomed and a joined up approach with the LCC Disability Champion should also be considered.

- 7.2 The Leader of the Council suggested that the press write an article to highlight the changes and remit of the Policy so that residents were aware of the funding available. She also suggested that information be circulated to Members so that they could publicise the funding with their constituents.
- 7.3 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
- The report was welcomed as grants were needed for vulnerable residents.
 - Timescales for the completion of works was queried.
 - Occupational Therapist referrals were having an impact on delays.
- 7.4 The Portfolio Holder and Strategic Housing Manager advised that the turnaround for minor alterations was one month, however large extensions had to go through the Planning process which took longer.
- 7.5 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
- This was a good news item and it was hoped the press would write an article.
 - The Government had increased NHS funding by 8%.
 - The use of Royal British Legion OTs was a good idea.
 - A reduction in form filling and red tape would be welcomed.
 - Why had a threshold of £7,000 been introduced.
- 7.6 The Strategic Housing Manager advised that the national report had suggested a £6,000 threshold, however since then inflation had risen. The team had also reviewed the jobs completed and 80% had been under £7,000 so the threshold covered most standard jobs.

Resolved:

1. That Cabinet approved the new Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, along with the appendices.
2. That all future minor amendments to the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2018/19 be delegated to the Director of Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

Reason for Decision:

To allow the Council to improve health outcomes of disabled residents in Rossendale.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

8. EXCESS WINTER DEATHS TASK AND FINISH GROUP REPORT

- 8.1 The Portfolio Holder for Regulatory Services outlined the main points and asked Members to endorse the recommendations contained within the report. 'Scrutiny in a day' had been used and would be used again where relevant. It was suggested that the formal response be taken to the next Overview & Scrutiny meeting. She thanked the Members involved in the Task and Finish Group and the partners in attendance.

- 8.2 Cabinet Members were invited to comment on the report:
- The Portfolio Holder for Health, Housing, Communities and Customer Services said she would ensure the recommendations were taken forward.
 - The use of 'scrutiny in a day' had been effective and should be used more often.
- 8.3 There were no questions from Elected Members.

Resolved:

1. That Members endorsed the recommendations at section 4 of the report.
2. That a formal response from the Cabinet be taken to the next Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

Reason for Decision:

For the recommendations to be taken forward.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

9. CONTRACT RENEWAL: REVENUES, BENEFITS, CUSTOMER CONTACT, OUT OF HOURS AND SUPPORTING ICT SYSTEMS

- 9.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources outlined the main points from the report which included the intended process for the tendering of the service contract. It therefore sought approval for Officers to seek tenders. This was the Council's largest single service contract and would be challenging to be brought back in-house.
- 9.2 There were no comments from Cabinet Members.
- 9.3 There were no comments from Elected Members.

Resolved:

1. That Members noted the contents of the report and granted approval to Officers to seek tenders for the provision of Revenues, Benefits, Customer Contact, Out of Hours and supporting ICT systems.

Reason for Decision:

For the Council to seek tenders.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

10. FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT 2018/19 Q1

- 10.1 The Portfolio Holder for Resources outlined the main points of the report which asked Members to note the content and approve the application of £660k of capital receipts to reduce the annual MRP charge. Quarter 1 showed a £23k variance against the £10m budget.
- 10.2 There were no comments from Cabinet Members.

- 10.3 Elected Members were invited to comment on the report:
- It was an excellent report and the small surplus was good news.
 - Could clarification be provided on the comment “the concern lies in the impact upon alternative aspirations for the use of those resources” from page 24 of the Financial Monitoring Report.
 - How was the Local Government Pension spend to be reduced.
 - Were there plans to spend the monies in the Employment & Transport reserves.
- 10.4 The Head of Finance clarified that the quote about “alternative aspirations” was in regard to other investment opportunities and returns, such as those from Spinning Point Phase 2.
- 10.5 The Leader of the Council advised that a review had been requested in relation to the shortfall in the Local Government Pension fund. The issue was also to be discussed at the District Leaders Group meeting.

In relation to the Employment & Transport reserves, the Leader of the Council advised that the monies would be used for regeneration projects.

Resolved:

1. That Members noted the contents of the report.
2. That Members approved the proposal to apply £660k of capital receipts to reduce the annual MRP change by £145k.

Reason for Decision:

For the robust monitoring of the General Fund, MTFs and the control of risks and to reduce revenue costs.

Alternative Options Considered:

None.

The meeting commenced at 6.30pm and concluded at 7.10pm

_____ CHAIR _____ DATE