

Council Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting held on Thursday, 9 January 2020 at the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Councillors present:

The Mayor, Councillor Ann Turner and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor Barry Birch.

Councillors I Amos, R Amos, Armstrong, Lady D Atkins, Sir R Atkins, Ballard, Baxter, Beavers, Berry, C Birch, Bowen, Bridge, Cartridge, Catterall, Collinson, Cropper, E Ellison, P Ellison, Fail, Fairbanks, George, Henderson, Holden, Ibison, Ingham, Kay, Le Marinel, Leech, Longton, Minto, Moon, Orme, O'Neill, Stirzaker, Swales, S Turner, A Vincent, Matthew Vincent, M Vincent, D Walmsley, L Walmsley and Williams.

Apologies: Councillors Gerrard, McKay, Raynor, Robinson, Smith and Webster.

Officers present:

Garry Payne, Chief Executive
Mark Billington, Corporate Director Environment
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities
Clare James, Corporate Director Resources and Section 151 Officer
Roy Saunders, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Peter Foulsham, Scrutiny Officer.

Also present: Alderman Irish and five members of the public.

50 Confirmation of minutes

Agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 November be confirmed as a correct record (by 33 votes to 6).

51 Declarations of Interest

The Chief Executive informed Council that he had been made aware that the proposers of the Notice of Motion set out under agenda item 14 intended to alter it slightly to make it clear that the intention was to request the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to call upon the Government to reconsider transitional pension age arrangements for women *born in the 1950's*, on or after 6 April 1951. As

a consequence of that alteration, the potential impact of any possible change to the transitional pension age arrangements which might be made by the Government in response to lobbying, would be less for women councillors born from 1 January 1960 onwards (or for male councillors with a spouse or partner born in the 1960's) than would have been the case with the original motion.

Councillors Michael Vincent, A Vincent, Berry, Ballard, Matthew Vincent, Minto, I Amos, C Birch, Cropper, P Ellison, B Birch, R Amos and L Walmsley all declared pecuniary interests in Agenda item 14 (Notice of Motion on State Pension Age for Women) because either they themselves, a spouse or a parent were born after 5 February 1951 and before 1960. They all indicated that they would leave the Chamber before that item was discussed.

Cllr Moon declared a personal (non-pecuniary) interest in agenda item 14, because his sister was born in the 1950's.

Cllr Fail declared a personal (non-pecuniary) interest in agenda item 14. He said: *"The motion to be debated on at Item 14, is in essence a call for the Government to reconsider transitional arrangements to State Pension for those born in the 50s but after 5 April 1951. As my common law wife falls into this bracket it may be seen that I would indirectly gain from the Government agreeing to compensation. However, the financial benefit would be minimal and consequently my consideration of the request for the Government to re-look at the transitional arrangements is 100% based on the impact on the general public, not on the impact on my household. Furthermore, the reconsideration would be made by the Government and not this Council. Therefore, there is no prejudicial interest on my part."*

52 Announcements

The Mayor announced:

1. That tickets were still available for The Mayor's Civic Dinner to be held at 7.00 pm on Friday 28 February 2020 at The North Euston Hotel, Fleetwood.
2. That a Spring Concert by the Blackpool Male Voice Choir would be held at St Nicholas' Church, Fleetwood on Saturday 21 March 2020 at 7.30 pm (tickets on sale from Andrea Mullin at £8 each).
3. That a Mayor's Charity Golf Day was being organised by Cllr Moon on Monday 6 April 2020 at Knott End Golf Club (interested participants to contact Cllr Moon for details).
4. That an "Angel Card Reading Evening" being organised by Cllr Berry's wife Joan, would be held at The Cube in Poulton at 7pm on Wednesday 5 February 2020 (tickets on the door).
5. That the Mayor Elect for 2020/21 was Councillor Barry Birch.

Cllr Birch said that it would be an honour to perform the role and announced that the Deputy Mayor would be Cllr Andrew Cropper.

53 Public questions or statements

None received.

54 Questions "On Notice" from councillors

None received.

55 Executive Reports

a) Leader of the Council (Councillor Henderson)

The Leader of the Council (Cllr Henderson) submitted a report).

When introducing his report, Cllr Henderson provided an update on the Economic Prosperity Board meeting held on 7 January 2020.

There were no questions or comments to Cllr Henderson.

Agreed that the report be noted.

b) Resources Portfolio Holder (Councillor A Vincent)

The Resources Portfolio holder (Cllr Vincent) submitted a report.

There were no questions or comments to Cllr Vincent.

Agreed that the report be noted.

c) Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder (Councillor Bridge)

The Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder (Cllr Bridge) submitted a report.

Cllr Bridge responded to a question from Cllr Fail.

Agreed that the report be noted.

d) Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder (Councillor Michael Vincent)

The Planning and Economic Development Portfolio Holder (Cllr Michael Vincent) submitted a report.

Cllr Michael Vincent said he would provide a written response to a question from Cllr Stirzaker about the accessibility of the arts studio above Fleetwood Market for disabled members of the community.

Agreed that the report be noted.

- e) Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (Councillor Berry)

The Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder (Cllr Berry) submitted a report.

Councillor Berry said that, since his report had been written, an email had been received from the Environment Agency congratulating the Council on the completion of the Rossall sea defenses project, £6m under budget. Cllr Berry congratulated Carl Green and his team, particularly Mike Wilkinson and Kath Pye, for their committed work on this project.

Cllr Berry also said, in response to a question from Cllr Beavers, that he would ask the Corporate Director Communities if an officer could attend a drop in session for vulnerable people run by the Mustard Seed Group in Fleetwood on Monday evenings.

Agreed that the report be noted.

- f) Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder (Councillor Bowen)

The Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder (Cllr Bowen) submitted a report.

Cllr Bowen said that the events scheduled for the second evening of the Garstang Victorian Festival on 10 December 2019, referred to in paragraph 3,1 of her report, had unfortunately had to be cancelled because of bad weather.

Cllr Bowen also referred to the forthcoming launch of the Wyre Community Lottery on 22 January and urged councillors to encourage deserving community groups to apply for funding from the proceeds of the lottery.

There were no questions or comments to Cllr Bowen.

Agreed that the report be noted.

56 Planning Committee Periodic Report

The Chairman of Planning Committee (Cllr Moon) submitted a report on issues dealt with by the Committee during the period between 1 April 2018 and 30 November 2019.

Agreed that the report be noted.

57 Membership of Committees

The Leader of the Council (Cllr Henderson) and the Chief Executive submitted a report on adjustments required to the membership of committees for the remainder of the 2019/20 municipal year, following a change in the political balance of the Council

Agreed (unanimously):

1. That the revised political balance calculations set out in the report be noted.
2. That Cllr George (Brexit Group) be appointed to the Licensing Committee in place of Cllr Webster (Conservative Group).
3. That Cllr Fairbanks, Cllr Gerard, Cllr O'Neil and Cllr Williams (Brexit Group) would remain on the existing Committees they had been appointed to (as members of the former UKIP Group).

58 Local Council Tax Support Scheme

The Resources Portfolio Holder (Cllr A Vincent) and the Corporate Director Resources submitted a report on proposals for the continuation of the Localised Council Tax Support Scheme.

Agreed (unanimously):

1. That the current Localised Council Tax Support Scheme be continued into the 2020/21 financial year, with the additional maximum percentage contribution from working age claimants being no more than 8.5%.
2. That the current policy be confirmed, recognising that it includes a number of specified amounts used to calculate entitlement, which may change in line with up-ratings published by the Department for Work and Pensions: recognising also that there might be minor adjustments to the scheme should further guidance be received from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and that the roll out of Universal Credit (UC) would ultimately replace existing social benefits.

59 Treasury Management Activity April 2019 - September 2019

The Resources Portfolio Holder (Cllr A Vincent) and the Corporate Director Resources submitted a report on the overall position and activities in respect of Treasury Management for the first half of the financial year 2019/20.

Agreed (unanimously) that the annual report on Treasury Management Activity for the first half of the 2019/20 financial year be noted.

60 Calendar of Meetings 2020/21

The Leader of the Council (Cllr Henderson) and the Chief Executive submitted a report on the programme of meetings involving councillors for 2020/21. Cllr Henderson pointed out when introducing the report, that the proposed date for the full Council meeting in September 2020 was Thursday 17 September, not Wednesday 16 as incorrectly stated in the report.

Agreed (unanimously) that, subject to the inclusion of a full Council meeting on 17 September 2020, instead of 16 September, the Calendar of Meetings for 2020/21 set out in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

61 Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy and Action Plan 2020 - 2024

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder (Cllr Berry) and the Corporate Director Communities submitted a report on a proposed Homelessness and Rough Sleeper strategy, in accordance with the requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017.

Agreed (unanimously) that the Homelessness and Rough Sleeper Strategy 2020 – 2024, attached as Appendix to the report, be approved.

62 Notices of Motion

Councillors Swales, Beavers, Longton and Stirzaker submitted a Notice of Motion, under Paragraph 14 of the Council Procedure Rules, on changes to the state pension age for women, as set out under agenda item 14.

Cllr Swales proposed and Cllr Beavers seconded the motion, but in doing so slightly altered it, by inserting the words “*in the 1950’s*” after the word “*born*” in line second line of the first paragraph of the motion, to make it clear that the motion referred to the impact of the transitional pension age arrangements for women born in the 1950’s on or after 6 April 1951, so that the motion read as follows:

“The Council calls upon the Government to make fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born in the 1950’s, on or after 6th April 1951, who have unfairly borne the burden of the increase to the State Pension Age (SPA) with lack of appropriate notification.

Hundreds of thousands of women had significant pension changes imposed on them by the pension Acts of 1995 and 2011 with little or no personal notification of the changes. Some women had only two years notice of a six-year increase to their state pension age. It should be noted that Wyre residents have been disproportionately affected by these two Acts compared to other authorities. Its proportion of residents in the 60-64, and 65-69 age groups is significantly higher than the overall proportion in each of Lancashire, the North West, and England.

Many women born in the 1950s are living in hardship. Retirement plans have been shattered with devastating consequences. Many of these women are already out of the labour market, caring for elderly relatives, providing childcare for grandchildren, or suffer discrimination in the workplace so

struggle to find employment.

Women born in this decade are suffering financially. These women have worked hard, raised families and paid their tax and national insurance with the expectation that they would be financially secure when reaching 60. It is not the pension age itself that is the dispute; it is widely accepted that women and men should retire at the same time.

The issue is that the rise in the women's state pension age has been too rapid and has happened without sufficient notice being given to the women affected, leaving women with no time to make alternative arrangements.

Therefore, the Council requests the Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Work & Pensions to call upon the Government to reconsider transitional arrangements for women born on or after 6th April 1951, so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make alternative arrangements."

Cllr Henderson proposed and Cllr Bowen seconded an amendment to delete and insert words to the motion, so that it read as follows:

"This Council asks that the Government undertakes an urgent review of the transitional state pension arrangements for all women aged between 60 and 69. Wyre has a high number of residents within this age bracket. Limited notice of the changes was given and many of these women were unable to make alternative arrangements prior to the changes taking effect, possibly leading to financial hardship.

This Council requests that the Chief Executive writes to the Prime Minister and the secretary of State for Work and Pensions to call upon the Government to do all it can to mitigate the impact of these changes."

During the course of the ensuing debate Cllr Henderson agreed, with the consent of Council, to accept an alteration suggested by Cllr Stirzaker, to insert the words "*born on or after 6th April 1951,*" after the word "*women*" in the second line of the amendment.

The amendment, including the agreed alteration, was CARRIED (by 22 votes to 6)

Cllr Fail then proposed and Cllr Beavers seconded a further amendment to add to the end of the amendment which had been carried, words from the final sentence from the original motion, as follows:

"so that women do not live in hardship due to pension changes they were not told about until it was too late to make alternative arrangements"

However, the amendment was LOST (by 17 votes to 10)

The substantive motion, i.e., the amended version of the original motion, was

then APPROVED (unanimously), as follows:

“This Council asks that the Government undertakes an urgent review of the transitional state pension arrangements for all women born on or after 5th April 1951, aged between 60 and 69. Wyre has a high number of residents within this age bracket. Limited notice of the changes was given and many of these women were unable to make alternative arrangements prior to the changes taking effect, possibly leading to financial hardship.

This Council requests that the Chief Executive writes to the Prime Minister and the secretary of State for Work and Pensions to call upon the Government to do all it can to mitigate the impact of these changes.”

The meeting started at 7.00 pm and finished at 8.05 pm.

NOTE: An audio recording of this meeting is available on the Council’s website via the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-aZZB9Y4nJQ>