



Council Minutes

The minutes of the Council meeting of Wyre Borough Council held on Thursday, 25 January 2024 at the Council Chamber - Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde.

Council members present:

Councillors Robinson, Catterall, Amos, Baxter, Berry, Belshaw, Birch, Bolton, Bowen, Bridge, Cartridge, Collinson, Duffy, Ellison, Fail, Fielding, Higginson, Higgs, Ibison, Jackson, Le Marinel, Leigh, Livesey, Martin, McKay, Minto, Nicholls, Preston, Raynor, Rendell, Rimmer, Rushforth, Smith, Sorensen, C Stephenson, B Stephenson, Swatton, Swift, A Walker, C Walker and Wells

Absent- apologies received:

Councillors Lady D Atkins, Sir R Atkins, Beavers, Blair, Kay, Meekins, Moliner, Thewlis and Vincent

Officers present:

Rebecca Huddleston, Chief Executive
Mark Billington, Corporate Director Environment
Marianne Hesketh, Corporate Director Communities
Clare James, Corporate Director Resources and Section 151 Officer
Bethan McDonough, Senior Communications Officer
Peter Foulsham, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager
Marianne Unwin, Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager (Temporary)
Joanne Billington, Head of Governance and Business Support
Jane Collier, Human Resources Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
Solomon Mattatia, Corporate Apprentice
Adam Whitehurst, Human Resources Administrator

2 members of the public attended the meeting.

46 Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meeting of Council held on 25 January 2024 were **confirmed** as a correct record by those who were in attendance.

47 Declarations of Interest

The Mayor noted that the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Members to enable participation in the debate and vote on item 10, Members' Allowances Scheme.

Joanne Billington, Mark Billington, Clare James and Marianne Hesketh declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 15, Corporate Management Team Restructure, because they were each directly affected by the proposed restructure and stated that they would leave the meeting before that item was considered.

48 Announcements

The Mayor announced that she would be hosting a charity race night at Garstang Golf Club on Saturday 6 April 2024 to raise money for her Mayor's Charities. She encouraged councillors to attend and sponsor a horse.

49 Public questions or statements

None received.

50 Questions "On Notice" from councillors

None received.

50a Leader of the Council (Councillor Vincent)

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Vincent, submitted a report.

In the absence of Councillor Vincent, Councillor Berry introduced the report.

Councillor Berry responded to questions from Councillor B Stephenson regarding an update on the theatres review and the cost of the exercise conducted by GJG Consulting. Councillor Berry agreed to ask officers for the cost, which would be provided to Councillor B Stephenson after the meeting.

Councillor Berry responded to a question from Councillor Cartridge about the benefits of the Lancashire Devolution Deal.

Councillor Berry responded to questions from Councillor Higginson regarding a Council vote on the draft Devolution Deal and the inclusion of the Poulton to Fleetwood railway line under the new powers to improve and better integrated local transport section of the deal.

Councillor Berry reiterated that the council was taking the right approach in reviewing the theatres, and that any recommendations would be addressed with an open mind.

The report was noted.

51 Executive reports

51a Resources Portfolio Holder (Councillor McKay)

The Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor McKay, submitted a report.

Councillor McKay introduced her report.

Councillor McKay responded to a question from Councillor Baxter regarding the collection of unpaid council tax and the impact of the closure of Blackpool Magistrates' Court owing to the discovery of RAAC (reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete).

Councillors Fail and Sorensen questioned whether the council should have an obligation to spend new homes bonus monies on infrastructure and to offset the impact of housing development on communities. Councillor McKay answered the concerns, confirming that the council operated with a tight budget and that the money spent was in the best interests of residents to keep crucial services running.

The report was noted.

51b Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder (Councillor Bridge)

The Street Scene, Parks and Open Spaces Portfolio Holder, Councillor Bridge, submitted a report.

Councillor Bridge introduced his report.

The report was noted.

51c Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder (Councillor Le Marinel)

The Planning Policy and Economic Development Portfolio Holder, Councillor Le Marinel, submitted a report.

Councillor Le Marinel introduced his report.

Councillor Duffy raised concerns about several issues at Fleetwood Market such as unfinished doors and windows, unsafe electric cables and lack of heating. She requested that the service charge for traders at Fleetwood Market be reduced, and that the Portfolio Holder accompany her on a visit to the Market. Councillor Le Marinel confirmed that he had recently visited the Market and witnessed the issues with the heating; he explained that work was ongoing to improve this. He also clarified the occupancy rate, the discounted rent offer and service charge arrears.

Councillor Le Marinel responded to a question from Councillor Fail regarding the housing type figures shown in the Authorities Monitoring report for 2021/22.

Councillor Le Marinel responded to a comment from Councillor Fielding regarding the scrutiny of planning applications particularly a consideration on the impact of flooding.

Councillor Le Marinel responded a question from Councillor A Walker regarding the installation of telecommunications infrastructure.

The report was noted.

51d Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder
(Councillor Berry)

The Neighbourhood Services and Community Safety Portfolio Holder, Councillor Berry, submitted a report.

Councillor Berry introduced his report. He updated members about a community meeting on 28 February 2024 at 7pm-9pm at the North Euston hotel, Fleetwood. This meeting intended to explore ways to work collaboratively across different agencies and services for the benefit of the community.

In response to a question from Councillor Swatton regarding the bathing water results, Councillor Berry confirmed that the data was received from the Environment Agency (EA). Councillor Berry welcomed additional data to support the work of the EA.

Councillor Rushforth praised the response of the Neighbourhood Policing Team following an incident. She updated members of the police surgeries that took place at Hope Community Care Hub, Bethnal Church, Preesall.

Councillor Berry responded to comments from Councillor Minto about the council's out of hours emergency service.

Councillor Berry responded to a follow up question from Councillor Swatton regarding the risk of E.coli in the bathing waters at Cleveleys and Fleetwood.

The report was noted.

51e Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder
(Councillor Bowen)

The Leisure, Health and Community Engagement Portfolio Holder, Councillor Bowen, submitted a report.

Councillor Bowen introduced her report and updated members on the review of Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre.

Councillor Bowen responded to questions from Councillor Fail regarding the future of the theatres.

In response to a question from Councillor Rushforth about the demands on the Environmental Health team, Councillor Bowen provided an update on the department's current staffing challenges and the steps taken to manage the workload.

Councillor B Stephenson made comments relating to the Marine Hall and Thornton Little Theatre.

The report was noted.

52 The introduction of council tax long-term empty premiums

The Resources Portfolio Holder, Councillor McKay, and the Corporate Director Resources (S.151 Officer) submitted a report seeking the approval of the implementation of the long-term empty council tax premiums to be charged by the council.

In response to a question from Councillor Baxter, Councillor McKay clarified that this report intended to assist in reducing the number of long-term empty homes in the borough by bringing them back on the market. She encouraged councillors to report homes within their wards which they knew were empty.

Councillor Birch explained the importance of councillors reporting long-term empty homes.

Councillor Fail supported the motion to encourage councillors to report long-term empty homes. He suggested that the council ought to monitor this work and review the proposal after 12 months. Councillor McKay confirmed that this was a new proposal and would be closely monitored.

Councillor Rushforth welcomed the proposal. She also discussed challenges with collecting council tax from static caravans that should be registered as a sole residence. Councillor McKay agreed to investigate this matter with officers.

Councillor Sorensen suggested that the council ought to utilise their social media platforms to promote the proposal and receive feedback from residents. Councillor McKay agreed to explore all avenues to communicate the proposal.

Councillor Berry commented on the debate and expressed his support for the proposal.

The following recommendation was **approved**, unanimously:

That a long-term empty homes premium be introduced from 1 April 2024 in line with legislation to charge the following:

- 100% premium on properties empty for at least one year;
- 200% premium on properties empty for at least 5 years, and;

- 300% premium on properties empty for at least 10 years.

53 **Mayoralty Working Group - final report**

The Chair of the Mayoralty Working Group, Councillor Collinson, and the Chief Executive, Rebecca Huddleston submitted a report which included the recommendations of the review of the Mayoral function carried out by the Mayoralty Working Group.

Councillor Collinson introduced the report and thanked the members of the Mayoralty Working Group and the officers who supported their work.

The following amendment, was proposed by Councillor Fail and seconded by Councillor Duffy:

That the report be referred back to the working group to consider additional options including transitioning from Mayor to a Chair.

Members debated the proposed amendment.

Following debate, the amendment proposed by Councillor Fail was **lost** (by 13 votes to 26, with 1 abstention).

The following second amendment was proposed by Councillor Fail and seconded by Councillor Duffy:

That the report be referred back to the working group in order to reconsider recommendations about the number of events each Mayor is expected to attend and the selection process.

Members debated the proposed amendment.

Councillor Bridge moved that the question be now put. This was seconded by Councillor Berry. The Mayor took the view that sufficient consideration had been given to this debate, therefore allowed Councillors Duffy, who had reserved her right to speak, and Fail the right to reply to the debate before moving to the vote.

The amendment proposed by Councillor Fail was **lost** (by 13 votes to 26, with 1 abstention).

Members continued to debate the original motion.

The following recommendations were **approved** (26 votes to 13, with 2 abstentions):

- That the Mayoral Protocol be amended to emphasise that attending events and fundraising are the choice of each individual Mayor and not a requirement of all Mayors. It is proposed that this amendment to the Mayoral Protocol be accepted.

- That there must be greater commitment from councillors to support the Mayor particularly regarding fundraising and attendance at events.
- That if the Mayor decides to fundraise, the Mayor may nominate several councillors, in addition to family and friends, to be appointed as their Fundraising Support Group. There is an expectation that this will include at least two current councillors. It is proposed that this amendment to the Mayoral Protocol be accepted.
- That the selection method will include the opportunity for any councillor to express interest in being the Mayor. This expression of interest will be submitted to the Chief Executive. It will be considered by a panel made up of the Leader of the Council, the Leader of the main Opposition Group and the Chief Executive, who will chair the panel. If the panel members decide to do so, they may nominate a substitute. The proposal for Mayor will be considered by Full Council at the Annual Meeting.
- That the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) consider the conclusions and recommendations of the Mayoralty Working Group when reviewing the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's Special Responsibility Allowances at a future review meeting.

54 Members' Allowances Scheme

The Corporate Director Resources (Section 151 Officer) submitted a report for the approval of the recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) in relation to the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme ("the Scheme") following the review completed in December 2023.

Councillor Le Marinel read out a statement on behalf of the Leader of the Council, Councillor Vincent.

Councillor Higginson raised a point of order and asked the Mayor if, constitutionally, a statement could be read out by a member not present. The Mayor ruled that Councillor Le Marinel continue reading the statement.

Councillor Berry introduced the report. He reminded members that the recommendations were proposed by the Independent Remuneration Panel. He explained that additional information that supported the Panel's recommendation had been published as a supplement to the original agenda. He confirmed that the Deputy Leader only attended meetings or events on the Leader's behalf if the Leader also had an engagement at the same time and that his employment had no bearing on the Leader role.

Following debate, the recommendations were **approved** (26 votes to 0, with 15 abstentions):

- That the Basic Allowance paid to each Councillor be increased by 3.88% from £4,728 per annum to £4,911 per annum, with effect from

16 May 2024. Note – this percentage multiplier formula reflects the uplift of staff allowances as agreed in the 2023 staff pay award. This is the same method to increase the members Basic Allowance as was used last year.

- That the multiplier for the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Deputy Leader be amended from 0.5 x Basic Allowance to 1 x Basic Allowance.
- That the multiplier for the SRA paid to the Chair of the Audit and Standards Committee be set at 1.5 x Basic Allowance, in line with comparable committees.
- That the method used for the remaining SRAs for members of the Executive, Group Leaders or Chairs of Committees continue to be based on the various current multipliers of the Basic Allowance for each of the posts as set out in Part 6.01 Section A of the Constitution.
- That the SRAs paid to the Mayor and Deputy Mayor be increased by 3.88%, the same uplift as the Basic Allowance.
- That an in-depth review of the Mayor's and Deputy Mayor's allowances be carried out as part of the IRP review process at an agreed time in the future.
- That the Lead Members for Climate Change, Mental Health and Armed Forces be paid the same SRA as the Lead Members for Children and Young People and Older People, and that the fixed sum be £250.
- That all other elements of the Council's Members' Allowances Scheme remain unchanged.

55 Periodic report - Planning Committee

The Chair of Planning Committee, Councillor Rendell submitted a report inform the Council of the current position on issues being dealt with by the Planning Committee.

Councillor Rendell introduced his report.

Councillor Fielding asked about the percentage of applications decided under delegated authority and how that compared to other Lancashire Authorities. Councillor Rendell agreed to provide Councillor Fielding with a written response.

Councillor Berry thanked Councillor Rendell and the members of the Planning Committee for their hard work.

The report was noted.

56 Periodic report - Lead Member for Children and Young People

The Lead Member for Children and Young People, Councillor Baxter, submitted a report to update the Council on some activities he and Councillor Kay had been involved in over the last year.

Councillor Baxter introduced his report. He thanked Councillor Kay for all the work she had done during her time as the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

Councillors Wells and Le Marinel praised the Local Democracy Week events. Councillor Wells suggested that any future events ought to be shared with all councillors in advance.

Councillor Berry thanked Councillor Baxter for taking up the role and acknowledged Councillor Kay's outstanding accomplishments, notably the Wyre Beat event.

The report was noted.

57 Periodic report - Lead Member for Mental Health

The Lead Member for Mental Health, Councillor Robinson, submitted a report to update the Council on work conducted and supported by the Lead Member for Mental Health.

Councillor Robinson introduced her report.

Councillor Berry thanked Councillor Robinson for her work to improve and promote good mental health.

The report was noted.

58 Periodic report - Lead Member for Armed Forces

The Lead Member for Armed Forces, Councillor Le Marinel submitted a report to inform the Council of the current position on various issues relating to the Armed Forces Covenant and Community.

Councillor Le Marinel introduced his report. He added that on 5 February 2024 the council was hosting a small reception for a Nuclear Test Veteran who had just received his Nuclear Test medal to celebrate his service.

Councillor Collinson updated members about the veterans' breakfast club in Garstang.

Councillor Berry thanked Councillor Le Marinel for his work and acknowledged the importance of supporting the armed forces community. Councillor Le Marinel also thanked Councillor Beavers and the Fleetwood Town Council for their work to support veterans in Wyre.

The report was noted.

Joanne Billington, Mark Billington, Clare James and Marianne Hesketh left the room.

59 Senior Leadership Team restructure

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Vincent, and the Chief Executive, Rebecca Huddleston submitted a report to seek the approval of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) restructure to ensure that it is best able to further improve our services and deliver the Council's priorities and commitments.

In the absence of Councillor Vincent, Councillor Berry introduced the report.

Councillor Fail supported the recommendations and expressed the importance of staff retention.

Councillor Berry responded to a question from Councillor Belshaw regarding loss of jobs.

Councillor Berry responded to a question from Councillor A Walker regarding pay policy.

The following recommendations were **approved** (40 vote to 0, with 1 abstention):

- To approve the proposed changes to the Council's Senior Leadership Team (SLT), as set out in this report and shown in Appendix A.
- To authorise the Chief Executive to make any final minor amendments, in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

60 Notices of Motion

None received.

The meeting started at 7.00 pm and finished at 9.12 pm.

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