

Minutes of Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 12 December 2023, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor M Hindle (Chairman)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S Hirst
J Atherton	S Hore
S Atkinson	K Horkin
T Austin	L Jameson
K Barnsley	G McCrum
S Bibby	C McFall
D Birtwhistle	R Newmark
D Brocklehurst	D O'Rourke
I Brown	S O'Rourke
S Brunskill	M Peplow
R Corney	R Ray
S Cowman	M Robinson
L Edge	J Rogerson
R Elms	G Scott
S Farmer	K Spencer
S Fletcher	L Street
M French	N Stubbs
M Graveston	R Walsh
J Hill	A Wilkins-Odudu

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Economic Development and Planning, Director of Resources & Deputy Chief Executive and Head of Legal and Democratic Services

522 PRAYERS

Canon Woodcock opened the meeting with prayers.

523 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillor G Hibbert.

524 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Subject to amendments reflecting that Cllrs L Street, M Graveston and K Spencer attended, the minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

525 DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

There were no declarations of disclosable pecuniary, other registrable or non-registrable interests.

526 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

There was no public participation.

MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on a wide range of events that he had attended since the last meeting, highlighting in particular a very moving visit that he had made to East Lancashire Hospice and reminding Members of the incredible work that the organisation did.

He had been fortunate enough to attend the ordination of Bishop Philip North at Blackburn Cathedral, and had subsequently met with him at several events, where he had noted the Bishop's real focus on East Lancashire.

The Mayor had attended several events in Wiswell, Whalley and Billington over the Remembrance period, and particularly noted his visit to the war graves at Calderstones Cemetery in Whalley and the service that was held there.

Recently, the Mayor had attended the commemoration of the late Councillor Brian Holden at Mardale playing fields in Longridge. The Mayor felt it was a fitting tribute to a fellow Councillor who had given so much to Longridge and who would have been very proud to see the refurbishment that had taken place.

Finally, the Mayor wished everyone a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported that on Sunday 26 November 2023 he had attended the signing of the Lancashire Devolution deal at Lancaster Castle. District Councils were not formally part of the deal because the government precluded this, but the devolution deal was predominantly about upper tier functions such as adult skills and transport.

The Leader confirmed that the process would involve the creation of a combined County Authority for Lancashire and the members would be Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council. However, it was noted that Lancashire Districts would have two non-voting representatives who would be able to vote on areas that affect the districts. He felt the deal could have been better for Ribble Valley but that there were many positives including;

- No Financial Contribution
- No Liabilities
- Participating in transport & adult skills decisions for the first time
- And noted that that it looked like devolution would be achieved before the general election which should help maintain the two-tier system in Lancashire for the immediate future

The Leader noted that the Council had been advised in a ministerial teams meeting and policy statement that Councils would continue to receive the New Homes Bonus and the one-off funding guarantee next year. He felt this was a really significant statement and along with the £470,000 business rebate the Council had received from the Museum this would help support the forthcoming year's revenue budget.

It was noted that the provisional Financial Settlement should be published early next week and the Leader would be report to the next Council Meeting how that affects the revenue budget forecast for next year.

The Leader noted that the Mayor, along with Longridge Mayor Councillor Rogerson and a number of Members had attended the dedication of Mardale playing fields to the late Councillor Brian Holden. The project had been championed by Councillor Holden and had resulted in improvement in car parking, changing rooms and

drainage and was the first major project delivered from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The Leader noted the Council had promised to make the next major investment in Longridge, which had been done, and further schemes would be delivered, including a £100,000 Investment in the Whalley Grammer School Foundation facilities and, subject to costings, an event space and pump track in Longridge. He noted the Council were also making significant investments in Clitheroe Market and Castle Street.

The Leader reported that the fourth Household Support Grant scheme would by Christmas have delivered £240,000 to help over 700 households. He noted it had been oversubscribed therefore the funds had been allocated in line with the scheme which was on a first come first served basis.

The Leader reported that the Office for National Statistics Health Index provided a systematic and independent review of health in England. Ribble Valley continued to be one of the top 10 Healthiest Places in the country. The Health Index was split into three categories, which described health in its broadest terms:

- Healthy People,
- Healthy Lives and
- Healthy Places.

The Leader and the Chief Executive had attended the Ribble Valley launch of Operation Centurion by Lancashire Police which would see additional police patrols in antisocial hotspots in Clitheroe on Thursday, Friday and Saturday evenings. It was hoped that along with the Whalley, Clitheroe, and Longridge Pub Watch Scheme this would help to lower anti-social behaviour and crime in the Ribble Valley. He added that the Ribble Valley now had the lowest Violent Crime rate in England, and, if adjusted by population, the third lowest.

The Council continued to support the local economy with free parking in Clitheroe and Longridge on Saturdays in December before Christmas.

The Leader noted that he often spoken about how parishes, voluntary groups, and the council, were part of the glue that helped the Ribble Valley be the place that it was. He felt another part of that was tradition, which could be seen that evening in the way that decisions were taken in a respectful manner. He added that the biggest tradition in December was Christmas, which brought families together, excited children, and was a time of good will to all. He noted the many events in December that Members supported by giving their time and effort which included amongst others; Longridge Band playing Carols by the Tree, the Crib at the Castle Gates, and the Santa sleigh that travelled throughout the Ribble Valley raising funds for Local Charities.

The Leader concluded by adding that when we work together, focusing on local needs, we are happier and deliver more. He hoped that all would enjoy the buffet, wine, the school choir, and each other's company, wishing a Merry Christmas to the Mayor, all the staff, visitors, guests, and fellow Members.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stewart Fletcher outlined that the continuing cost of living crisis would inevitably lead to difficult decisions for struggling Ribble Valley families over Christmas. Agencies such as Citizen's Advice can give helpful guidance and fortunately, as was revealed at a recent PCL meeting, there were ways that we might assist them other than simply financial. He understood that providing a postal address in the Ribble Valley might be helpful and asked whether the Leader had considered approaching Citizen's Advice to explore this possibility.

The Leader thanked Councillor Fletcher for his question and advised that a postal address at St Mary's Centre was now being utilised so this issue had now been resolved.

Next Councillor Fletcher noted that as preparations are made to celebrate Christmas and we are particularly thinking about family and our youngsters, he would like to ask the Leader about how best this Council could ensure that the decisions made always consider the well-being of future generations, so that by meeting today's needs we do not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their own. He noted that his was particularly relevant as COP 28 works on vitally important agreements to keep to a maximum of 1.5C degrees of warming, and there are major concerns in the UK about homelessness and poverty.

Councillor Fletcher stated that in 2015, the Welsh Government passed the Well Being of Future Generations Act, which highlighted the importance of placing future generations at the centre of decisions and ensured they have a voice at policy level. He asked the Leader whether he thought that this Council should consider a similar inspirational approach?

The Leader advised that the Well Being of Future Generations Act promotes sustainable development and is a directive to public bodies in Wales to ensure that when decisions are taken they don't only take into account the present and the immediate future, but also take into account the longer term impact of any decisions.

He confirmed that Council's Corporate Plan was being reviewed and he was sure that the long-term preservation of the Ribble Valley and how we contribute to that would be an important part of the deliberations when Policy & Finance Committee considers that plan.

He also believed and hoped the Council would agree that it was important that all political parties, even those that are newly formed, should be encouraging young people to become involved in local politics to help shape the future of the Ribble Valley.

Councillor Fletcher followed with a supplementary question, asking whether an agenda item would be included at the next Economic Development Committee reflecting this and as to a change of name to Climate Change.

The Leader felt that this matter should be considered at a Working Group initially, to which Councillor Fletcher advised that it had already been raised in this forum.

Councillor Fletcher noted the financial assistance received from the Borough towards Christmas lighting represented only a tiny fraction of the expense incurred by the major service centres. In the case of Clitheroe only approximately 4%. He understood that even these payments have been delayed this year and asked the Leader to explain this decision.

The Leader advised that the Council has a very small Christmas Lights budget for grants to Parish and Town Councils to help contribute to the purchase of new lights. This year there were very few applications initially, so the Council extended the grant application deadline by a further 4 weeks, which did result in a delay in decisions being taken.

Councillor Fletcher noted that there had been two Christmas light switch ons in Clitheroe this year, but none in other areas of the Ribble Valley. His supplementary question was to ask whether consideration could be given to a Christmas light switch on in Longridge next year.

The Leader advised that this could be considered.

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CHANGES TO COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS 2023/24

The Chief Executive submitted a report revising the Council's current committee arrangements following a review of the political balance calculation.

The proposed changes were listed in the report along with the full proposed revised Committee Membership. However, an amendment was approved to reflect that Councillor D Brocklehurst would sit on Personnel Committee instead of Councillor L Jameson.

RESOLVED:

That the Council approve the changes to the membership of Committees with the Committee Membership now as follows:

COMMUNITY SERVICES (15)

CONSERVATIVE (6)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (2)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Jan Alcock (VC)	Mary Robinson	Karl Barnsley	Ryan Corney	John Atherton	Malcolm Peplow	
Stephen Atkinson	Donna O'Rourke	Lee Jameson		Lee Street		
Stella Brunskill		Kieran Spencer				
Sophie Cowman						
Ricky Newmark (C)						
Gary Scott						

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT (15)

CONSERVATIVE (6)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (1)
Tony Austin	Simon O'Rourke	Lee Jameson	Mark French	Jim Rogerson	Malcolm Peplow	Ian Brown
Sue Bibby (C)	Gaynor Hibbert	Kieren Spencer				
		Nick Stubbs				
Stella Brunskill (VC)						
Louise Edge						
Simon Hore						
Kevin Horkin						

HEALTH AND HOUSING (15)

CONSERVATIVE (6)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (2)	GREEN (0)	INDEPENDENT (1)
Jan Alcock	Donna O'Rourke	Rachael Ray	Ryan Corney	John Atherton		Ian Brown
Stephen Atkinson	Mary Robinson	Aaron Wilkins-Odudu		Lee Street		
Tony Austin (VC)		Nick Stubbs				
Steve Farmer						
Stuart Hirst (C)						
Charles McFall						

PERSONNEL (9)

CONSERVATIVE (4)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (1)	LABOUR (2)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (0)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Sue Bibby	Donna O'Rourke	Karl Barnsley	Stewart Fletcher	David Birtwhistle		
Rosie Elms (C)		Derek Brocklehurst				
Steve Farmer (VC)						
Simon Hore						

LICENSING (15)

CONSERVATIVE (6)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (1)
Rosie Elms	Simon O'Rourke	Kieren Spencer	Mark French	Jim Rogerson	Malcolm Peplow	Ian Brown (C)
Stella Brunskill (VC)	Gaynor Hibbert	Michael Graveston				
Steve Farmer		Derek Brocklehurst				
Ricky Newmark						
Gary Scott						
Robin Walsh						

POLICY AND FINANCE (15)

CONSERVATIVE (7)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (2)	GREEN (0)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Stephen Atkinson (C)	Simon O'Rourke	Aaron Wilkins-Odudu	Stewart Fletcher	David Birtwhistle		
Sue Bibby	Jonathan Hill	Lee Jameson		Jim Rogerson		
Louise Edge		Michael Graveston				
Stuart Hirst						
Simon Hore (VC)						
Kevin Horkin						
Ricky Newmark						

ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT (11)

CONSERVATIVE (5)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (1)	LABOUR (2)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Tony Austin	Jonathan Hill	Karl Barnsley	Stewart Fletcher	Lee Street	Gaye McCrum	
Stuart Hirst (VC)		Michael Graveston				
Charles McFall						
Ricky Newmark						
Robin Walsh (C)						

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (15)

CONSERVATIVE (7)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Jan Alcock	Gaynor Hibbert	Rachael Ray	Stewart Fletcher	David Birtwhistle (C)	Gaye McCrum	
Stephen Atkinson (VC)	Jonathan Hill	Michael Graveston				
Sophie Cowman		Aaron Wilkins- Odudu				
Louise Edge						
Rosie Elms						
Stuart Hirst						
Robin Walsh						

PARISH COUNCIL LIAISON (13) CHAIR - Parish Cllr Martin Highton

CONSERVATIVE (5)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT (2)	LABOUR (3)	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP (1)	GREEN (1)	INDEPENDENT (0)
Sophie Cowman	Mary Robinson	Karl Barnsley	Mark French	David Birtwhistle	Gaye McCrum	
Kevin Horkin	Simon O'Rourke	Nick Stubbs				
Charles McFall		Derek Brocklehurst				
Gary Scott (VC)						
Robin Walsh						

EMERGENCY (4)

CONSERVATIVE (2)	LIBERAL DEMOCRAT	LABOUR	PROGRESSIVE LIBERAL GROUP (1)	INDEPENDENT GROUP	GREEN	INDEPENDENT
Stephen Atkinson (C)		Lee Jameson	Stewart Fletcher			
Simon Hore (VC)						

1. Community Services – 17 October 2023
2. Planning & Development – 19 October 2023
3. Personnel – 25 October 2023
4. Health & Housing – 26 October 2023
5. Licensing Sub – 27 October 2023

6. Licensing – 31 October 2023
7. Economic Development – 2 November 2023
8. Policy & Finance – 7 November 2023
9. Parish Council Liaison – 9 November 2023
10. Licensing Sub – 16 November 2023
11. Accounts & Audit – 22 November 2023
12. Planning & Development – 7 December 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above committees be received.

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EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading

The meeting closed at 7.00 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Jenny Martin rebecca.tait@ribblevalley.gov.uk.