

Minutes of Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 12 October 2021, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chair)

Councillors:

J Alcock	S Hore
S Atkinson	K Horkin
D Berryman	A Humphreys
S Bibby	G Mirfin
A Brown	D O'Rourke
I Brown	S O'Rourke
L Edge	D Peat
R Elms	S Rainford
S Farmer	J Rogerson
K Fletcher	J Schumann
S Fletcher	G Scott
M French	R Sherras
G Hibbert	R Thompson
J Hill	R Walsh
M Hindle	
B Holden	

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

Not in attendance: Councillor D Birtwhistle

The Deputy Mayor opened the meeting by sending the Council's best wishes to the Mayor who was currently unwell.

350 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend Swindells opened the meeting with prayers.

351 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors A Austin, R Bennett, S Brunskill, B Buller, S Carefoot, J Clark, R Newmark and M Robinson.

352 DECLARATIONS OF PECUNIARY AND NON PECUNIARY INTERESTS

Councillor Mirfin declared an interest in respect of his role as a Trustee of Whalley Old Grammar School.

Councillor Horkin declared an interest in respect of ownership of properties and businesses in the Ribble Valley.

353 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

Mr R Hailwood presented a petition on behalf of the Clitheroe Town Wells Group regarding the town's three wells. The group requested that the Borough Council take three steps to secure the lasting future of the wells:

1. Refer the petition to Community Services Committee at the next available opportunity.
2. Consider two possible legal bases for making valid the ownership of the Heald and St Mary's Wells.
3. Consider the economic, community, heritage and tourism benefits of adopting the three wells.

The Leader thanked Mr Hailwood for the petition and proposed that the petition be referred to Community Committee for further consideration as requested with the addition that both new and existing evidence be taken into account when considering the legal position. The proposal was seconded by the Deputy Leader, Councillor S Hore.

354 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 August 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

355 MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Deputy Mayor reported on events that he had attended since the last meeting on behalf of the Mayor. He had attended two community events, a proms concert at Longridge and a Clitheroe Town Service at St Paul's.

356 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader of the Council, Councillor S Atkinson began by welcoming two newly appointed Councillors to the Council, Councillor G Hibbert and Councillor K Fletcher.

The Leader was pleased to report that in the recent Lagatum Institute Prosperity Survey, Ribble Valley's overall prosperity had improved moving from sixth place to become the county's most prosperous district. He acknowledged the hard work of the Lancashire Enterprise Partnership in seeking opportunities to promote investment in Lancashire and was pleased with the recent announcement that the UK Cyber Security Centre would be located at Samlesbury. This would mark a £5b investment over the next 8 years, the creation of up to 3,000 highly skilled jobs and, with supporting industries, the impact on the local economy could be hugely significant.

The Leader went on to report on the work that was underway to improve pay and conditions for all staff. The Council would be looking to change the pay line and it was hoped this would also help to address ongoing recruitment and retention difficulties.

Next the Leader reported that he had recently met with a number of East Lancashire MPs and had voiced his concern regarding the lack of executive housing in the rest of East Lancashire, which had resulted in migration to the Ribble Valley and had increased the pressure on housing in the borough. He had offered solutions to encourage building of housing in more deprived areas in other districts, which he hoped could be addressed in the levelling up debate.

Finally, the Leader confirmed that the Council had also created and adopted a climate change strategy. He believed this was a realistic strategy that would benefit the borough.

LEADER'S QUESTION TIME

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor S Fletcher, noted the recent Government announcement of a new Household Support Fund and asked how much of the £500m that was available would be allocated to Lancashire and specifically to residents of the borough.

The Leader thanked Councillor Fletcher for his questions and confirmed that the Household Support Fund was to provide small grants for food, clothing and utilities and was intended as a lifeline for those at risk of struggling to keep up with their bills over the winter as other support measures were removed. The fund would be administered by County Councils and Unitary Authorities from October 2021.

The Leader understood that at least 50% of the total funding had to be spent on families with children and then in terms of the type of support available, the expectation was that the fund would primarily be used to support households in the most need with food, energy and water bills.

He reported that the Government had awarded Lancashire County Council £9.6m but at this stage it was not certain how much of that would be allocated to Ribble Valley residents.

Next Councillor Fletcher welcomed the draft Ribble Valley Borough Council Climate Change Strategy that had been produced and acknowledged the work of officers and Members in creating that document. He asked if the Leader could explain the key steps that had been taken so far regarding the strategy and the timetable in place to ensure that the Council met the stated aspiration of being a carbon-neutral borough by 2030.

The Leader confirmed that the Climate Change Strategy had been adopted at the last Policy and Finance Committee. The Council had already commissioned independent experts to assess the Council's carbon footprint prior to the strategy being completed and that had been a key measure of both the current position and how far the Council had to go. The Leader said that it was clear from the work done so far that for the Council to achieve its carbon-neutral objective, much would depend on the Government's approach to energy decarbonisation.

The Climate Change Working Group, together with officers, would now be tasked with looking at the action plans and devising a timetable and implementation plan that would make the goal of being carbon-neutral a reality.

Finally, Councillor Fletcher noted that young people throughout the borough were frequently priced out of home ownership in their own community and asked if the Leader would agree that the upcoming review of the Local Development Plan must secure and increase the portion of affordable housing in any future developments and also that those developments be distributed appropriately throughout the borough, with due consideration being given to the maintenance of the borough's remaining green spaces.

The Leader confirmed that the new Local Plan would be supported by a comprehensive evidence base which would establish the housing needs within the borough. This need would include affordable housing and special housing, along with the distribution of housing across the borough. Suitable policies would be developed to ensure that new housing developments were delivered within the right location and within an appropriate mix of housing. The plan would also seek to protect the intrinsic beauty of the valley and locate new development within sustainable locations.

358 REVIEW OF POLITICAL BALANCE AND MEMBERSHIP ON COMMITTEES FOR 2021/22 FOLLOWING THE TWO BY-ELECTIONS IN CLITHEROE

Consideration was given to the written report of the Chief Executive regarding a review of political balance and Committee membership arrangements for the municipal year 2021/2022 following two recent by-elections in Clitheroe.

RESOLVED: that the allocation of seats as outlined in Appendix A and the appointment of Members to Committee as set out in Appendix B of the report be approved.

359 COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Accounts and Audit committee – 28 July 2021
2. Planning & Development committee – 29 July 2021
3. Community Services – 24 August 2021
4. Planning and Development committee – 26 August 2021
5. Personnel committee – 1 September 2021
6. Health and Housing committee – 2 September 2021
7. Licensing committee – 7 September 2021
8. Economic Development committee – 9 September 2021
9. Policy & Finance committee – 14 September 2021
10. Parish Councils Liaison committee – 16 September 2021
11. Planning and Development committee – 23 September 2021
12. Accounts and Audit committee – 29 September 2021

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above committees be received.

360 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 7.48 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Michelle Smith michelle.smith@ribblevalley.gov.uk.