

Minutes of Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 11 October 2022, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor S Hirst (Chair)

Councillors:

T Austin	J Hill
J Alcock	K Horkin
S Atkinson	A Humpheys
R Bennett	G Mirfin
S Bibby	R Newmark
D Birtwhistle	D O'Rourke
A Brown	S O'Rourke
I Brown	D Peat
S Brunskill	M Robinson
S Carefoot	J Rogerson
L Edge	J Schumann
R Elms	G Scott
S Farmer	R Sherras
S Fletcher	R Thompson
M French	R Walsh

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 M Hindle

360 MINUTE SILENCE - IN REMEMBRANCE OF HM THE QUEEN, DOREEN TAYLOR, AND CARL ROSS

A minute's silence was held in respect of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Doreen Taylor, a past mayor and former councillor and Carl Ross, a former councillor all of whom had recently passed away.

361 PRAYERS

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

362 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors D Berryman, B Buller, J Clark, G Hibbert, B Holden, S Hore and S Rainford.

363 TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2022 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

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

Councillor K Horkin declared an interest in m209 – Clitheroe Food Festival as he owns businesses in Clitheroe.

Councillor D Peat declared an interest in m314 – Armed Forces Covenant and m317 – Concurrent Functions Grants.

365 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

There was no public participation.

366 MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on a wide range of events that he had attended since the last meeting, in particular those surrounding the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and the reading of the proclamation for the new King Charles III.

367 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader started by referring to the death of Her Majesty the Queen's death and the loss of the constant in our lives and the interview he had done for Radio Lancashire. He also complimented the Mayor on the reading of the Proclamation for King Charles III.

He went on to talk of the unsettling time for the Council with escalating costs of energy, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, changes to interest rates and the start of a wage inflation spiral and the challenges facing the country as a whole with the national debt.

The Leader informed Council that as a small district council we could help by our share of council tax remaining the lowest in Lancashire, the North West and the North of England. This would be despite our increase in energy costs particularly at the swimming pool and increasing the pay line in order to improve recruitment. He reported that we had recently recruited heads of service in HR, environmental health and planning.

He went on to remind Council that there would still be a shortfall of circa £1m assuming that core funding was not reduced by the government, and that we continued to receive New Homes Bonus, Business Rate Growth and increased returns on the council cash deposits. He confirmed that for the next financial year there would be no reduction in council services or staff.

The Leader informed Council that a response to the submission for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund should be received this month, and should it be successful, would likely be spent on capital projects providing a lasting legacy for our communities.

He informed Council that the Parliamentary Boundary review would shortly be taking place, and that he was also working with other Leaders on the Lancashire 2050 plan. Improvements were being made to our processes when making reasonable adjustments and a further grant had been offered to the Citizen's Advice Bureau subject to various conditions being met.

Lastly, the Leader referred to the Ukrainian families that are being supported in the Ribble Valley and how the Mayor had hosted a civic reception for them on Ukraine National Independence Day and a trip to Blackpool had been arranged. A touching letter of thanks and appreciation had been received on their behalf for our kind help and support.

LEADER'S QUESTION TIME

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stewart Fletcher asked the Leader if following the announcement from the new Prime Minister to end the moratorium on fracking, the Council should issue a statement indicating that we would not sanction this retrograde, damaging and unproductive practice in the Ribble Valley.

The Leader responded that his understanding was that this had been done in response to the energy crisis and that developers would only be given permission where there was local support. He also reminded members that applications for new licences would be considered by LCC and not this Council. However, he felt that the Government should ensure consultation was both transparent and meaningful and that local people would have their say.

Next Councillor Fletcher asked if following the new Chancellor's first intervention that had had such an immediate and catastrophic effect on the markets, and the proposed £18 billion cuts in public services, how this would affect services already under pressure in Ribble Valley.

The Leader commented that the cuts to public service was only media speculation and that the expected letter outlining changes to local government finance was yet to be received. He reminded members that although the budget forecast prepared by the Director of Resources showed a bleak picture that thankfully the Council had healthy levels of financial reserves to help weather any storm.

Finally, Councillor Fletcher asked the Leader what influence we could exert as a Council to ensure that the vacant premises in the town centre were taken up in a timely fashion by businesses that meet the needs of Ribble Valley residents.

The Leader responded that whilst retailers were still recovering from Covid and now faced with the increasing energy costs and shoppers having less disposable income, that our towns appeared to be more resilient than many. However, we would continue to encourage both businesses and shoppers into the town by events such as the Food Festival and Christmas market and hopefully using the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to improve the streetscape in the main towns.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Licensing sub-committee – 11 July 2022
2. Emergency committee – 3 August 2022
3. Licensing sub-committee – 10 August 2022
4. Community Services committee – 23 August 2022
5. Planning and Development committee – 25 August 2022
6. Personnel committee – 31 August 2022
7. Health and Housing committee – 1 September 2022
8. Licensing committee – 6 September 2022
9. Economic Development committee – 8 September 2022
10. Licensing sub-committee – 22 September 2022

11. Planning and Development committee – 22 September 2022

12. Policy and Finance committee – 27 September 2022

13. Accounts and Audit committee – 28 September 2022

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above committees be received with the exception of Minute number 314.

Minute 314 – Armed Forces Covenant

RESOLVED:

That the Council endorse the updated Armed Forces Covenant.

370

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items under this heading.

The meeting closed at 7.17 pm

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact the committee clerk, Olwen Heap olwen.heap@ribblevalley.gov.uk.