

Minutes of Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 10 October 2023, starting at 6.30 pm
Present: Councillor M Hindle (Chair)

Councillors:

S Hirst	K Horkin
T Austin	D O'Rourke
J Alcock	S O'Rourke
S Atkinson	M Robinson
S Bibby	J Rogerson
D Birtwhistle	G Scott
I Brown	N Stubbs
S Brunskill	K Barnsley
L Edge	D Brocklehurst
R Elms	R Corney
S Farmer	S Cowman
S Fletcher	R Ray
M French	L Jameson
J Hill	R Walsh

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

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PRAYERS

Canon Woodcock opened the meeting with prayers.

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received on behalf of Councillors S Hore, R Newmark and C McFall.

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DECLARATIONS OF DISCLOSABLE PECUNIARY, OTHER REGISTRABLE AND NON REGISTRABLE INTERESTS

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

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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SESSION

There was no public participation.

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TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND THE SPECIAL MEETING 11 JULY 2023

The minutes of the previous meeting and the Special meeting held on 11 July 2023 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

The Mayor reported on a wide range of events that he had attended since the last meeting, highlighting in particular a reception he had hosted for the Ukrainian residents of the Borough, in celebration of Ukrainian Independence Day. He had also had the pleasure of visiting and hosting a number of primary schools. The Mayor expressed his wish to consider the adoption of a Youth Council at some point in the future.

The Leader of the Council spoke about the outcome of the review by the Secretary of State in regards to the Haweswater Aqueduct Replacement Scheme (HARP). He explained that the Secretary of State had carefully considered the case against the call-in policy, and the application had been looked at in detail by the Department for Levelling up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) over an 18-week period. The Secretary of State had decided not to call in the application and was content that it should be determined by the local planning authority.

The Leader spoke about his meeting at Hellifield Train Station along with the Council's Director of Economic Development and Planning, The Minister of State at the Department of Transport Huw Merriman MP, Lord Alton, and representatives from Nigel Evans office, Lancashire County Council and North Yorkshire Council. The purpose was to present the benefits of the restoration of passenger services between Clitheroe and Hellifield, and the increased frequency of services between Manchester and Clitheroe. The Leader explained that he awaited a further meeting in Westminster and had asked the Minister to look again at the scheme.

The Leader noted that following public consultation the Council had adopted its new Economic Plan for 2023-2026 and he hoped this would provide a framework for continued prosperity in the Ribble Valley. He highlighted that in 2011 the Ribble Valley was the sixth most prosperous place in Lancashire, and that 10 years later was the most prosperous, and had been the only district in Lancashire to improve its ranking in the National Index.

The Leader noted that October 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of the conservation area in Clitheroe, and the importance of handling the investment in Clitheroe Market sensitively whilst mitigating any damage to stallholders businesses. He highlighted that a revival had been seen in the Market since the Pandemic.

The Leader spoke about the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Council's investments that this had facilitated, which included Mardale Playing Fields, and a future project to make improvements to Castle Street in Clitheroe. He explained that the launch of the Rural England Prosperity Fund would deliver further investments of £433,000, which could be used across a variety of rural projects including community energy schemes, community gardens and the installing of EV charging points for the local community.

The Leader also spoke about the Council's investment of over £300,000 to purchase temporary accommodation in both Longridge and Clitheroe, which would help homeless people and families, with short term accommodation. The Household Support Fund 4 scheme would also bring £240,000 of support to the Borough's qualifying residents who would now qualify with a combined income of up to £50,000, noting in addition that the Council was the third fastest in the North-West for processing new housing benefit claims.

The Leader finished his update by commenting on the Red Arrows flyover during the successful Clitheroe Food Festival.

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LEADER'S QUESTION TIME

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Stewart Fletcher, believed that following emails to Members there may be some confusion regarding the proposed changes to Clitheroe Market. He asked if the Leader believed it would be beneficial for the Council to hold a public meeting or arrange a further press release so that residents and stallholders alike felt consulted and informed.

The Leader thanked Councillor Fletcher for his question. He noted that the Council had been awarded Government funding for capital projects, which included approximately £2million under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. He added that Policy and Finance Committee had agreed £800,000 of that funding would be spent on Clitheroe, with one of the schemes being to improve the very successful Clitheroe Market. He agreed with Councillor Fletcher that arranging a future press release on progress would be eminently sensible and added that a full report on the scheme would go to the next Policy and Finance Committee. This would set out the scheme that the Council would recommend for tender, and Market Traders would continue to be kept informed. He felt it was vital that the funds allocated were spent within the financial year, if at all possible, to avoid any risk that the funds may be lost.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Fletcher noted that a number of the concerns were around pop-up stalls and asked if priority could be given to permanent stallholders.

Councillor Atkinson responded saying he was sure this was something Officers could examine.

Next Councillor Fletcher stated that a building in Longridge that had been a hive of community activity for over 25 years was now occupied by a pet shop, and that a proposal had been given to RVBC by a local charity to turn the building into a Community Hub. He asked the Leader to enlighten members on the procurement process of buildings owned by the Council, how the winning bid was determined, and what weight was given to what the councils assets are proposed to be used for?

The Leader set out the process in regards to the stated building. In September 2022, Policy and Finance Committee had accepted the recommendation from the Longridge Assets Working Group to offer the former over-60s club premises for rent on the open market. At the Committee, Members were also informed that the Working Group had requested that Officers approach the Town Council to ask whether they had any thoughts on what the building could be used for, which led to some of the Town Councillors visiting the premises. Following this correspondence Longridge Community Action had expressed an interest in the building.

Policy and Finance Committee had agreed for the Director of Economic Development and Planning to obtain an updated valuation of the Over 60s club and procure services to market it for rent and authorised the Chief Executive to agree a suitable rental value for the Over 60s Club to take it to market and to agree to a reasonable offer for the property.

Following this resolution, the property was revalued, and the services of letting agent were procured to market the property for rent. At Committee in January 2023, Members were advised that there had been some interest in the building however to date no formal offer had been received. The interest was from Longridge Community Action Group who sent a proposal to the letting agent in November 2022. This proposal did not set out how much the group would pay for renting the building and

the information was therefore requested by the letting agent however no response was ever received. In February a Limited company offered to lease the building for the advertised rent and a lease was progressed on those terms. Only one formal offer was received for the over 60s club which met the marketed rental amount for the property and the offer had been accepted by the Chief Executive under the delegation from Policy and Finance Committee. The Leader concluded by advising that when premises became vacant a report was presented to the appropriate Committee who would consider what direction to authorise officers to take.

Finally, Councillor Fletcher quoted David Attenborough saying “If we have not taken dramatic action within the next decade, we could face irreversible damage to the natural world and the collapse of our societies.” Councillor Fletcher felt that the Council’s response to international concerns on climate change had been rated as very poor in comparison with other councils, stating that in 2019 Friends of the Earth had rate RVBC as last but one in their league table of performance on climate change, and in 2022 Lancs Live rated RVBC as 302nd out of 318 Councils. He advised Members that Lancaster was rated 8th by Lancs Live with their spending being 30p per person on environmental issues, which was just 8p more than RVBC. He asked that, given the success of the recent Ribble Valley summit on Climate and Nature, did the Leader believe that the Climate Change Working Group should invite members of local environment groups to support its work.

The Leader responded noting the datasets upon which Friends of the Earth had chosen to base their opinion, which in their view were appropriate to measure the approach to climate change. He added that he felt, given the datasets, that it wasn’t surprising that the Ribble Valley came towards the bottom of the table along with other rural areas such as Craven and Richmondshire, and a number of the other Lancashire districts. He informed Members that those near the top included Camden, Salford, Greenwich, and Milton Keynes, and he therefore queried if the right data sets were picked. The Leader added that, since the Friends of the Earth data was published, the Council had created a Climate Change Working Group, published a Climate Change Strategy, developed a Climate Change Action Plan, and widened the Climate Change Working Group membership to include representatives from all parties on the Council. He felt that those elected representatives would represent the views of their constituents when working on Climate Change issues.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Fletcher asked if the Climate Change Working Group would be meeting in the near future.

The Leader responded noting that he would request that a report be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

COMMITTEE MINUTES

1. Council – 11 July 2023
2. Special Council – 11 July 2023
3. Community Committee – 22 August 2023
4. Licensing Sub Committee – 24 August 2023
5. Planning & Development Committee – 24 August 2023
6. Personnel Committee – 30 August 2023

7. Health & Housing Committee – 31 August 2023
8. Licensing Committee – 5 September 2023
9. Policy & Finance Committee – 12 September 2023
10. Parish Councils Liaison Committee – 14 September 2023
11. Planning and Development Committee – 21 September 2023
12. Licensing Sub-Committee – 22 September 2023
13. Accounts & Audit Committee – 27 September 2023
14. Economic Development Committee – 28 September 2023

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the above committees be received with the exception of Minute number 346.

Minute 346 – Member Representation on Ribble Valley Tourism Association.

RESOLVED:

That the Council approve the recommendation by Economic Development Committee to nominate Councillor J Alcock as the representative for the Ribble Valley Tourism Association and appoint that Member to the RVTA as an outside body.

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NOTICE OF MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR KARL BARNESLEY

A notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Karl Barnesley and seconded by Councillor Mark French that:

This Council Notes

1. The Living Wage is set by the Living Wage Foundation currently calculated to £10.90 per hour (Outside of London).
2. The National Living Wage, a separate concept, which is set by the Government, is the top age band of the National Minimum Wage Structure and is currently set at £10.42 per hour.
3. The Ribble Valley Pay Policy Statement currently sets the pay of its lowest paid workers at National Living Wage rates as opposed to Living Wage Foundation Rates.
4. Across the country there are 12,500 recognised Living Wage employers; 1250 of which are in the North West, including neighbouring Borough Councils such as Rossendale, South Ribble, Bury and Burnley Boroughs. Several Town Councils are recognised as well as Lancashire. County Council and the office of the Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner.
5. “The basic intuition behind the Living Wage is a simple one: to determine the wage rate necessary to ensure that households earn enough to reach a minimum acceptable living standard as defined by the public.” (Cominetti & Murphy, Resolution Foundation, 2022)

This Council Believes

1. The Living Wage as set by the Living Wage Foundation is the truest reflection of a wage which is necessary to meet the cost of living.
2. The Living Wage is the most accurate calculation of wages in balance with the cost of living, enabling food, energy and accommodation security.
3. Low pay is now becoming an existential crisis for local government: to continue delivering services for the public, local authorities need workers to deliver those services. But with pay continuing to fall in real terms, local authorities are struggling to recruit and retain staff.
4. The mark of a responsible employer is to pay its staff a wage they can live on.

This Council Resolves

1. To adopt the Living Wage Policy for the lowest paid members of Council Staff both full time and part time aged 18+
2. To make appropriate steps to become accredited by the Living Wage Foundation as a Living Wage Employer.

A recorded vote was requested for all proposed motions on the agenda and the appropriate number of Councillors supported this.

The Leader, Councillor Stephen Atkinson requested that Officers refer to the Council's Standing Orders for clarification on dealing with matters that may fall within the remit of a Committee. The Council's Head of Legal and Democratic Services explained to Members the terms of standing order 9.5, and in particular, that if the motion fell within the terms of reference of a Committee, it could be referred to that Committee or such other Committee as the Council decides, or it could be dealt with at the meeting it is moved, if the Mayor considers it appropriate and convenient to do so.

The Leader, Councillor Stephen Atkinson, proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

The Councils pay offer for 2023/24 that has been accepted by Union, which is the trade union who represents the lowest paid employees, is significantly above both the National Living Wage and the UK Living Wage. Therefore:

1. The Council urges all Councillors that may have influence over the GMB Union to encourage them to accept the 9.4% increase to the Councils lowest paid employees as soon as possible so this can be paid to employees in their next wage; and
2. The Council's Personnel Committee evaluates the lowest pay grades of the Council to see if they are reasonable, taking into account:
 - The Councils Job Evaluation Scheme and pay differentials between different skills and responsibilities
 - The National Pay Agreement agreed by the Trade Unions; and
 - The Council's financial position

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Stuart Hirst.

Members debated the amendment. A recorded vote was taken on the amendment.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
J Alcock	X			
S Atkinson	X			
T Austin	X			
J Atherton				
C Barnsley		X		
D Brocklehurst			X	
S Bibby	X			
D Birtwhistle	X			
I Brown	X			
S Brunskill	X			
R Corney		X		
S Cowman	X			
L Edge – Dep Mayor	X			
R Elms	X			
S Farmer	X			
S Fletcher		X		
M French		X		
M Graveston		X		
G Hibbert		X		
J Hill		X		
M Hindle - Mayor	X			
S Hirst	X			
S Hore				X
K Horkin	X			
L Jameson		X		
G McCrum		X		
C McFall				X
R Newmark				X
D O'Rourke			X	
S O'Rourke		X		
M Peplow		X		
R Ray		X		
M Robinson		X		
J Rogerson	X			
G Scott	X			
K Spencer		X		
L Street			X	
N Stubbs		X		
R Walsh	X			
A Wilkins-Odudu		X		
Total Votes Cast	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
	17	16	3	3

The amendment was carried.

A recorded vote was taken on this as the substantive motion.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
J Alcock	X			
S Atkinson	X			
T Austin	X			
J Atherton				
C Barnsley		X		
D Brocklehurst		X		
S Bibby	X			
D Birtwhistle	X			
I Brown	X			
S Brunskill	X			
R Corney		X		
S Cowman	X			
L Edge – Dep Mayor	X			
R Elms	X			
S Farmer	X			
S Fletcher		X		
M French		X		
M Graveston		X		
G Hibbert		X		
J Hill		X		
M Hindle - Mayor	X			
S Hirst	X			
S Hore				X
K Horkin	X			
L Jameson		X		
G McCrum		X		
C McFall				X
R Newmark				X
D O'Rourke		X		
S O'Rourke		X		
M Peplow		X		
R Ray		X		
M Robinson		X		
J Rogerson	X			
G Scott	X			
K Spencer		X		
L Street		X		
N Stubbs		X		
R Walsh	X			
A Wilkins- Odudu		X		
Total Votes Cast	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
	17	19	0	3

The substantive motion was lost.

The original motion proposed by Councillor Karl Barnsley and seconded by Councillor Mark French then became the substantive motion and a recorded vote was taken.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
J Alcock		X		
S Atkinson		X		
T Austin		X		
J Atherton				
C Barnsley	X			
D Brocklehurst	X			
S Bibby		X		
D Birtwhistle		X		
I Brown		X		
S Brunskill		X		
R Corney	X			
S Cowman		X		
L Edge – Dep Mayor		X		
R Elms		X		
S Farmer		X		
S Fletcher	X			
M French	X			
M Graveston	X			
G Hibbert	X			
J Hill	X			
M Hindle - Mayor		X		
S Hirst		X		
S Hore				X
K Horkin		X		
L Jameson	X			
G McCrum	X			
C McFall				X
R Newmark				X
D O'Rourke	X			
S O'Rourke	X			
M Peplow	X			
R Ray	X			
M Robinson	X			
J Rogerson		X		
G Scott		X		
K Spencer	X			
L Street			X	
N Stubbs	X			
R Walsh		X		
A Wilkins- Odudu	X			
Total Votes Cast	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
	18	17	1	3

The motion was carried, it was therefore;

RESOLVED THAT THE COUNCIL:

1. Adopt the Living Wage Policy for the lowest paid members of Council Staff both full time and part time aged 18+; and
2. Agree to take appropriate steps to become accredited by the Living Wage Foundation as a Living Wage Employer.

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NOTICE OF MOTION IN THE NAME OF COUNCILLOR MALCOLM PELOW

A notice of motion was proposed by Councillor Malcolm Peplow and seconded by Councillor Gaye McCrum that:

The Martholme Greenway runs along the track-bed of a former railway line to the south of the villages of Read and Simonstone and has the potential to connect to the existing Padiham Greenway that continues to Burnley to the East and to cross the Martholme Viaduct and continue all the way to Great Harwood to the Southwest.

Ribble Valley residents view access to nature as one of the most important issues of making somewhere a good place to live and the level of traffic as one of the issues that most needs improving (source - Ribble Valley Citizens' Panel and 2018 Perception Survey).

A future active travel route along the Martholme Greenway would meet four out five of this Council's Ambitions set out in its Corporate Strategy 2019-23. How many other projects reach this many Ambitions on our Strategy?

1 – efficient services based on identified customers needs. How much more efficient can we be than to enable the future possibility of an active travel route that would encourage people to leave their cars at home, reduce traffic on our roads and create a wildlife corridor that is safe for everyone to access without the Council having to spend a penny of our Council Taxpayers' money? All this Council needs to do is to keep the possibility of this Greenway open for future generations to enjoy.

2 – to sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley. An active travel route that passes over the iconic landmark of Martholme Viaduct and through our beautiful countryside will bring more people into our Borough and increase its prosperity.

3 – to help make people's lives safer and healthier. Ribble Valley Residents will be able to travel safely at extremely low cost to Padiham or Burnley to the East or Great Harwood to the West while exercising and maintaining good health.

4 – to protect and enhance the existing environmental quality of our area. Martholme Greenway would enable residents to travel carbon-free and emission-free, giving us cleaner air and adding to our other efforts to reduce climate change. Former railway lines provide excellent wildlife corridors and help nature to thrive.

RECOMMENDED THAT COUNCIL:

1. Recognises and applauds the work of the Martholme Greenway group and its volunteers for the work they undertake in maintaining and improving the footpath on both sides of the Martholme Viaduct and over the Viaduct itself.

2. Support route of the Martholme Greenway and the aspiration for the former railway line to be reopened as an active travel corridor to connect Great Harwood and Padiham.
3. Publicise on Ribble Valley Borough Council's website, Lancashire County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans Engagement Stage 2 consultation which is open to public comments

The matter was debated, and Members spoke in support of the proposal. The challenges of the project were discussed, and it was felt that should these be overcome, the route would be an asset to the Ribble Valley, and encourage health and wellbeing.

It was clarified that as members had supported a recorded vote on all motions proposed on the agenda that the vote would be recorded. A recorded vote was therefore taken.

Councillor	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
J Alcock	X			
S Atkinson	X			
T Austin	X			
J Atherton				
C Barnsley	X			
D Brocklehurst	X			
S Bibby	X			
D Birtwhistle	X			
I Brown	X			
S Brunskill	X			
R Corney	X			
S Cowman	X			
L Edge – Dep Mayor	X			
R Elms	X			
S Farmer	X			
S Fletcher	X			
M French	X			
M Graveston	X			
G Hibbert	X			
J Hill	X			
M Hindle - Mayor	X			
S Hirst	X			
S Hore				X
K Horkin	X			
L Jameson	X			
G McCrum	X			
C McFall				X
R Newmark				X
D O'Rourke	X			
S O'Rourke	X			
M Peplow	X			
R Ray	X			

M Robinson	X			
J Rogerson	X			
G Scott	X			
K Spencer	X			
L Street	X			
N Stubbs	X			
R Walsh	X			
A Wilkins- Odudu	X			
Total Votes Cast	For	Against	Abstain	Apologies
	36	0	0	3

The Motion was carried, it was therefore;

RESOLVED THAT COUNCIL:

1. Recognises and applauds the work of the Martholme Greenway group and its volunteers for the work they undertake in maintaining and improving the footpath on both sides of the Martholme Viaduct and over the Viaduct itself.
2. Support route of the Martholme Greenway and the aspiration for the former railway line to be reopened as an active travel corridor to connect Great Harwood and Padiham; and
3. Publicise on Ribble Valley Borough Council's website, Lancashire County Council's Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans Engagement Stage 2 consultation which is open to public comments.

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EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

None.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm

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