

PROCEEDINGS

A meeting of the Lancaster City Council was held in the Town Hall, Morecambe, at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 31 January 2018, when the following Members were present:-

Roger Mace (Mayor)	Carla Brayshaw
Jon Barry	Sam Armstrong
June Ashworth	Lucy Atkinson
Alan Biddulph	Eileen Blamire
Dave Brookes	Tracy Brown
Abbott Bryning	Nathan Burns
Susie Charles	Darren Clifford
Ian Clift	Claire Cozler
Sheila Denwood	Rob Devey
Charlie Edwards	Kevin Frea
Andrew Gardiner	Nigel Goodrich
Mel Guilding	Janet Hall
Tim Hamilton-Cox	Janice Hanson
Colin Hartley	Brendan Hughes
Caroline Jackson	Joan Jackson
Andrew Kay	Ronnie Kershaw
Geoff Knight	Terrie Metcalfe
Abi Mills	Rebecca Novell
Jane Parkinson	Jean Parr
Margaret Pattison	Robert Redfern
John Reynolds	Sylvia Rogerson
Ron Sands	Elizabeth Scott
Susan Sykes	Malcolm Thomas
Oscar Thynne	Andrew Warriner
David Whitaker	Anne Whitehead
John Wild	Nicholas Wilkinson
Peter Williamson	Phillippa Williamson
Peter Yates	

96 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from the Deputy Mayor Councillor Bateson, and Councillors Helen Helme and James Leyshon.

97 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 December 2017 were signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

98 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Monitoring Officer explained that, with regard to item 9, the Review of Council Tax Charging Policy for Empty Homes, the Standards Committee had met on 18 January 2018 and agreed to grant dispensations to all Councillors under Section 33 of the Localism Act. This was to enable the Council to be quorate to make decisions about the Charging Policy at this meeting.

Members were therefore advised to make their declarations in relation to this item in the normal way. However, with the dispensation now in place, they would no longer be precluded from taking part in the debate or voting.

Members advised of the following interests:

The Mayor and Councillors Sykes, Parkinson, Wilkinson, Wild and Caroline Jackson all declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in relation to item 9 as landlords of properties in the district. (Minute No. 103 refers.)

Councillor Clifford declared an interest in relation to Item 10, recommendation (ii) the setting of a council tax level, as Section 106 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 would preclude him from taking part in debate or voting on that issue. (Minute No. 104 refers.) Councillor Clifford also declared a disclosable pecuniary interest, on behalf of all the Labour Members, in item 9. The interest was in relation to an empty property in Lancaster owned by the local Labour Party.

99 ANNOUNCEMENTS MAYORAL CHARITY EVENT FOR VALENTINES

The Mayor announced that he would be hosting a Valentine's Soiree on the evening of Friday 16 February at Lancaster Town Hall. Tickets were on sale from the Mayor's Secretary priced £26, which included a three course meal and live music.

100 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11

The Mayor advised that no questions had been received from members of the public in accordance with the provisions of Council Procedure Rule 11.

101 PETITIONS AND ADDRESSES

The Mayor informed Members that no petitions or requests to address Council had been received from members of the public.

102 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader presented her report updating Members on various issues since her last report to Council and responded to questions from Councillors.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

103 REVIEW OF COUNCIL TAX CHARGING POLICY FOR EMPTY HOMES

A number of disclosable pecuniary interests had previously been declared in relation to the following report, for which dispensations had been granted. During the course of the item, Councillor Charles arrived and declared a disclosable pecuniary interest as a landlord, which was also covered by the dispensation. (Minute 98 refers.)

The Chief Officer (Resources) submitted a report presenting options for reducing various council tax discounts applicable to empty homes, in line with the discretions available to local authorities.

Councillor Whitehead, seconded by Councillor Blamire, proposed:

- “(1) That option 2B of the report, to reduce existing six month discount arrangement for Class C empty properties to one that provides 100% discount for up to one month, be approved
- (2) That the Chief Officer (Resources) be authorised to finalise the Council's Empty Homes Council Tax Charging Policy for 2018/19 and make all other necessary arrangements for its implementation in the next financial year.”

Following debate, a vote was taken on the proposition, which was clearly carried.

Resolved:

- (1) That option 2B of the report, to reduce existing six month discount arrangement for Class C empty properties to one that provides 100% discount for up to one month, be approved
- (2) That the Chief Officer (Resources) be authorised to finalise the Council's Empty Homes Council Tax Charging Policy for 2018/19 and make all other necessary arrangements for its implementation in the next financial year.

104 BUDGET UPDATE 2018/19 TO 2021/22

Councillor Clifford, having previously declared an interest in relation to recommendation (ii) of the following item under Section 106 of the Local

Government Finance Act 1992, did not take part in debate or vote on that issue.

The Mayor reminded Members that recommendation (1)(ii) in the report regarding the setting of a City Council tax increase was a budget decision, hence a recorded vote would need to be taken on that particular proposal.

A report from Cabinet, introduced by Councillor Whitehead, updated Councillors on the latest position regarding the development of the budget and policy framework for 2018/19 to 2021/22. The report sought approval for the level of council tax increase for 2018/19 together with targets for subsequent years, subject to local referendum thresholds.

Members asked a number of questions, which Councillor Whitehead and the Chief Officer (Resources) responded to.

Councillor Whitehead, seconded by Councillor Bryning, invited constructive feedback on the proposals in the report and proposed:

“That recommendations (i) and (ii), as set out in the report, be approved.

During debate, the following issues were raised as ‘feedback’.

- That funds be made available for ‘secondary parks’ such as Scotch Quarry to address infrastructure and litter picking issues. The suggestion was for a £30,000 fund.
- That £20,000 be allocated to distribute to people in need via the Citizens’ Advice Bureau and that the funds be administered by way of a voucher system, not cash.
- That Cabinet seek to reduce the anticipated spend on consultants in 2018/19.

Councillor Edwards, seconded by Joan Jackson, put forward an amendment for recommendation (ii):

“That Council Tax for 2018/19 be frozen, with a year on year target of 0% for future years.

The Mayor called for a vote on the amendment. The required number of Councillors requested a recorded vote at that point, in accordance with Council procedure rule 19.4. The votes were recorded as follows:

For the amendment:

Councillors Ashworth, Charles, Edwards, Gardiner, Goodrich, Guilding, Jackson (Joan), Knight, Parkinson, Rogerson, Sykes, Thomas, Wild, Williamson (Peter) Williamson (Phillippa) and Yates (16).

Against the amendment:

Councillors Armstrong, Atkinson, Barry, Biddulph, Blamire, Brayshaw, Brookes, Brown, Bryning, Burns, Clifford, Cozler, Denwood, Devey, Frea, Hall, Hamilton-Cox, Hanson, Hartley, Hughes, Jackson (Caroline), Kay, Kershaw, Metcalfe, Mills, Parr, Pattison, Redfern, Reynolds, Sands, Scott, Thynne, Warriner, Whitaker, Whitehead, Wilkinson (36).

Abstentions:

Councillors Mace and Novell (2).

The amendment was clearly lost.

A recorded vote was then taken on the original proposition:-

For the amendment:

Councillors Armstrong, Atkinson, Biddulph, Blamire, Brayshaw, Brookes, Brown, Bryning, Burns, Clifford, Cozler, Denwood, Devey, Frea, Hall, Hamilton-Cox, Hanson, Hartley, Hughes, Kay, Kershaw, Metcalfe, Parr, Pattison, Redfern, Reynolds, Sands, Scott, Thynne, Warriner, Whitaker, Whitehead, Wilkinson (33).

Against the amendment:

Councillors Ashworth, Charles, Edwards, Gardiner, Goodrich, Guilding, Jackson (Joan), Knight, Parkinson, Rogerson, Sykes, Thomas, Wild, Williamson (Peter) Williamson (Phillippa) and Yates (16).

Abstentions:

Councillors Barry, Jackson (Caroline), Mace, Mills and Novell (5).

The proposition was clearly carried.

Resolved:

- (1) That, having considered the information provided at Annexes 1 and 2 of the report in respect of the budget, Council:
 - (i) approves the 2017/18 Revised Budget, with the net overspending of £222K being met from balances;
 - (ii) approves a City Council tax increase of 2.99% for 2018/19, together with a year on year target of 2.99% for future years, subject to Government confirming local referendum thresholds.

105 AUDIO RECORDING OF COUNCIL MEETINGS

Council considered a report of Cabinet, seeking a decision regarding audio recording of council meetings.

Councillor Blamire, seconded by Councillor Hartley, proposed that the recommendations, as set out in the report, be approved.

There was no debate and a vote was taken on the proposition, which was unanimous.

Resolved:

- (1) That an audio-minutes function be added to the current committee management software system, to enable
 - live audio streaming of meetings, and:
 - an audio archive of meetings to be created and made publicly available on the Council's website
- (2) That the system is used initially on a trial basis, with any longer term arrangement being subject to the budget.
- (3) Subject to the budget being approved, that the Democratic Services Manager be authorised to continue with the service after the trial period.

106 DESIGNATION OF MONITORING OFFICER

The Chief Officer (Legal and Governance) and the Democratic Services Manager left the Council Chamber at this point, both having an interest in the following report.

The Chief Executive submitted a report regarding the appointment of Monitoring Officer.

Councillor Clifford, seconded by Councillor Pattison, proposed the recommendation set out in the report.

Members asked that thanks be recorded to Estelle Culligan for her work as Monitoring Officer whilst in post as Chief Officer (Legal and Governance).

A vote was then taken on the proposition, which was clearly carried.

Resolved:

That the Democratic Services Manager, Debbie Chambers, be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer, with effect from 24 February 2018.

The Chief Officer (Legal and Governance) and the Democratic Services Manager returned to the Council Chamber.

107 WARD COUNCILLORS SPEAKING AT PLANNING

Council considered a report of the Monitoring Officer. The report asked Members to consider the recommendation of Council Business Committee to increase the time limit for Ward Members speaking at Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee from three to five minutes.

Councillor Peter Williamson proposed:

"That the time limit for Ward Members speaking at Planning and Highways Regulatory Committee meetings be increased from three to five minutes."

Councillor Charles seconded the motion.

The motion was debated for some time and was lost when put to the vote.

108 COMMUNITY WEALTH-BUILDING AND LOCAL PROCUREMENT

The Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning) submitted an interim report, for noting, to provide an update on investigations and proposed activities to develop local procurement practices working with anchor institutions, local businesses and communities, as part of the Council's approach to Community Wealthbuilding.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

109 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR ELECT

The Chief Executive advised that she had contacted Councillor Janice Hanson, being the most senior Member of the City Council, who had indicated that she did not feel able to accept an invitation to be Mayor at the present time.

The Chief Executive had therefore spoken to Councillor Andrew Kay, being the next most senior Member of the City Council and he had indicated that he would be happy to accept the office of Mayor if offered by the Council.

It was then moved by Councillor Brown and seconded by Councillor Edwards:

“That Councillor Andrew Kay be invited to hold the office of Mayor of the City of Lancaster for the Municipal Year 2018/19.”

A vote was taken on the motion which was clearly carried.

Resolved:-

That Councillor Andrew Kay be invited to hold the office of Mayor of the City of Lancaster for the Municipal Year 2018/19.

110 APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Mayor asked if there were any proposals for appointments to Committees, or amendments to memberships of Committees.

Councillor Clifford, for the Labour Group, asked that Councillor Reynolds be appointed as named substitute for the Audit Committee, and Councillor Redfern be appointed to the Budget and Performance Panel. Councillor Brown seconded the proposal.

The appointments were clearly carried when put to the vote.

Resolved:

That:

- Councillor Reynolds be appointed named substitute for the Audit Committee.
- Councillor Redfern be appointed to the Budget and Performance Panel.

111 QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 (Pages 9 - 10)

The Mayor advised that four questions had been received by the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rules as follows:

- (1) Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hanson regarding the Great Northern Forest.
- (2) Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hughes regarding the ‘floodline’ point of contact for residents affected by flooding.
- (3) Councillor Williamson to Councillor Blamire regarding payments made for an interim Legal Services Manager.
- (4) Councillor Williamson to Councillor Blamire regarding the appointment of the interim Legal Services Manager.

Details of the questions and answers, together with any supplementary questions and responses, are appended to the minutes.

112 MINUTES OF CABINET

Council considered the Cabinet minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2018. There were no questions.

Resolved:

That the minutes be noted.

Mayor

(The meeting finished at 9.10 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these minutes,
please contact Debbie Chambers, Democratic Services - telephone (01524) 582057 or email
dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk**

1. **Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hanson**

Why is Lancashire not involved in the Great Northern Forest?

ANSWER

This has only just been announced by the Prime Minister not long ago. The principal aim of the concept appears to be the re-introduction of afforestation into the major urbanised belt of the UK between Liverpool and Hull. In short, the principal urban belt in the north. Most of Lancashire sits above that belt and is characteristically more rural and sitting outside that major belt of urban conurbations.

The emphasis of the project will be to increase tree cover around major conurbations to 20%. There will also be a focus on river valleys, where there are benefits for flood prevention and soil loss.

Supplementary: *In view of the benefits for river valleys and flooding, could a special application be made to government to be included in those areas?*

Response: Councillor Hanson agreed that, yes, it could.

2. **Question from Councillor Caroline Jackson to Councillor Hughes**

What progress has been made since the floodline was set up last month? I'm thinking, for example, about the number of contacts it has had and the number of blocked gullies that have been reported, etc.

ANSWER

Immediately following the floods on 22nd Nov the City Council set up a dedicated email address and mobile phone number that residents affected by flooding could contact. Besides this the Council website provided links to other partners (Environment Agency, County Council) and comprehensive advice. The dedicated email address has so far received 64 emails and the mobile number over 60 calls (Total duration of calls received / made on the mobile – 5 hours 23 minutes 58 seconds). The majority of contacts were in relation to request to remove soiled household items, and general advice. Contacts that weren't the direct responsibility of the City Council (eg blocked gullies, blocked culverts, damaged roads) were then referred directly to the relevant agency for action. Providing direct access to the Council in this way following the flooding has proved to be extremely successful and was very much welcomed by those who contacted us. It worked well having one point of contact.

Supplementary: *Of the number of blocked gullies that have been reported, how many have been cleared?*

Response: Responsibility for surface water drainage systems rests with Lancashire County Council. As previously stated we have made it straightforward for residents to report problems for us to pass on to the County Council. The County Council has provided an update on gully emptying following the floods – they have attended to

4000 gullies in the District since the floods so far and have increased capacity by using sub-contractors. I have also requested a meeting with the responsible Cabinet Member at County, Councillor Iddon. There has been no reply so far, but I will phone and chase that up with him.

3. Questions from Councillor Peter Williamson to Councillor Blamire

Question 1: *It is understood that this Council has recently been paying £81 per hour for an Interim Legal Services Manager.*

Did the Council Leader agree to this level of hourly payment?

ANSWER

All Chief Officers, including the Chief Executive, have delegated responsibility for the appointment of permanent or temporary posts (below JNC Chief Officer level) within their service and to determine commencing salary. This post was an interim Legal Services Manager, who then took on the additional duties of Monitoring Officer. At the time, the Council did not have a permanent Chief Officer for Legal and Governance or a Legal Services Manager.

Question 2: *Why was an Employment Committee not set up to oversee this appointment?*

ANSWER

The appointment did not require the approval of any Council Committee and the majority of the cost was offset by the Chief Officer vacancy position.

Supplementary: The hourly rate equates to a rate of pay of £176k per annum. Are there any other employees, agency staff or consultants receiving a similar rate of pay?

(Answer to be provided in writing)