

## PROCEEDINGS

A meeting of the Lancaster City Council was held in the Town Hall, Morecambe, at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 22 January 2025, when the following Members were present:-

Hamish Mills (Deputy Mayor)	Suhir Abuhajar
Joanne Ainscough	Mandy Bannon
Matthew Black	Phillip Black
Martin Bottoms	Louise Belcher
Gerry Blaikie	Phil Bradley
Dave Brookes	Keith Budden
Roger Cleet	Ruth Colbridge
Brett Cooper	Roger Dennison
Gina Dowding	Tom Fish
Andrew Gardiner	Martin Gawith
Alan Greenwell	Tim Hamilton-Cox
John Hanson	Chris Hanna
Prof Chris Harris	Paul Hart
Colin Hartley	Caroline Jackson
Peter Jackson	Jack Lenox
John Livermore	Sally Maddocks
Sarah McGowan	Paul Newton
Andrew Otway	Jean Parr
Margaret Pattison	Sue Penney
Catherine Potter	Joyce Pritchard
Sarah Punshon	Robert Redfern
Sam Riches	Grace Russell
James Sommerville	Jackson Stubbs
Paul Stubbins	Sandra Thornberry
Sue Tyldesley	Paul Tynan
David Whitaker	John Wild
Nick Wilkinson	Jason Wood

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from The Mayor and Councillors Catherine Armistead, Claire Cozler, Maria Deery, Ross Hunter, Kate Knight and Izzy Metcalf-Reiner.

**79 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 were signed by the Deputy Mayor as a correct record.

**80 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members advised of the following interests at this stage:

Councillor Matt Black declared an interest in relation to Item 9, the Budget and Policy Framework report, in view of his employment as a firefighter with Lancashire Fire and Rescue. (Minute No. 85 refers.) This was not a prejudicial interest in regard to setting the City Council element of the Council Tax.

Councillor Pattison declared an 'other' interest as defined in the Councillors Code of Conduct, in relation to Items 11 and 13 which referenced Local Government Reorganisation in view of her membership of the Lancashire Combined Authority. (Minute Nos 87 and 89 refer.)

Councillor Hartley declared an 'other' interest, as defined in the Councillors Code of Conduct, in relation to Item 13, the motion on notice regarding Heysham 1 and 2 Power Stations as members of his family were employed at the Power Station. (Minute No. 88 refers.)

**81 ANNOUNCEMENTS FORMER COUNCILLORS KEN BROWN, BOB CLARK AND REVENUES AND BENEFITS OFFICER JENNY LAWTON**

The Deputy Mayor made several announcements.

Members were informed that tickets were still on sale for the Mayor's Burns Night Cèilidh, available from the Mayor's office.

The Deputy Mayor reminded all present that a Holocaust Memorial service would be taking place in the Garden of Remembrance at Lancaster Town Hall on Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 6pm.

Councillors received the sad news of three recent deaths.

Former Councillor Ken Brown had passed away on New Year's Eve. Ken was elected to the City Council for Heysham in February 2004 and served until May 2011. He was also a County Councillor for Heysham.

Former Councillor Bob Clark passed away on 14 January 2025 aged 76. Bob represented Bulk ward from 1991-1999. He was also a County Councillor.

Sadly, the Council also lost a long serving Officer over the Christmas period. Jenny Lawton, who had worked in Revenues and Benefits for 34 years, firstly for the Council and

latterly for the Shared Service with Preston, passed away aged 53 following a short illness.

*Members stood in a minute's silence in their memory.*

## **82 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 11**

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

## **83 PETITIONS AND ADDRESSES**

No petitions had been submitted for the meeting.

There were two speakers who had registered to speak in accordance with Council Procedure Rules 13 about 5G phone masts and microwave radiation.

Mr Chris Dealtry addressed Council first, then Ms Paula Baker made her address. The text of both addresses had been circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting.

The Deputy Mayor thanked both speakers and called upon Councillor Tyldesley, the Cabinet Member with particular responsibility for Planning to respond to the points raised.

Councillor Tyldesley responded and thanked Mr Dealtry and Ms Baker for speaking to Councillors.

## **84 LEADER'S REPORT**

The Leader presented her report updating Members on various issues since her last report to Council. She, and other Cabinet Members then responded to a number of questions from Councillors.

The Leader agreed to supply a list in writing of the current memberships of the current 'Fit for the Future' groups to Councillor Belcher. She also agreed to find out where the order of service for the recent Royal Visit was produced in response to a question from Councillor Budden.

### ***Resolved:***

That the report be noted.

## **85 BUDGET & POLICY FRAMEWORK UPDATE 2025/26 – 2029/30**

Councillor Hamilton-Cox, Cabinet Member with particular responsibility for Finance and Property, presented a report of Cabinet providing an update on the Council's budget strategy for 2025/26 and financial outlook up to 2029/30. Slides were shown in the Chamber to assist with presentation of the budget information.

The report specifically considered the budget and Council Tax proposals for 2025/26 and recommended that Council approve a 2.99% increase to the Band D Council Tax as the Lancaster City Council element of the Council Tax charge for 2025/26.

Members asked a number of questions, which Councillor Hamilton-Cox responded to.

Council noted the proposed revenue budget for 2025/26, as set out in the report.

Councillor Hamilton-Cox, seconded by Councillor Dowding, proposed:

“(1) That Council approves a City Council Tax increase of 2.99% to the Band D Council Tax (from £256.63 to £264.30), together with a year on year target of the maximum allowable under the Government’s local referendum thresholds for future years.”

Debate followed on the proposal.

At the conclusion of the debate, a recorded vote was taken on the proposition as required by legislation and Procedure Rule 19.7 in the Council’s Constitution. The results of that vote were recorded as follows:

**For:** Councillors Abuhajar, Ainscough, Bannon, Belcher, Black (Matthew), Black (Phil), Blaikie, Bottoms, Brookes, Budden, Cleet, Colbridge, Cooper, Dennison, Dowding, Fish, Gardiner, Gawith, Greenwell, Hamilton-Cox, Hanna, Hanson, Harris, Hart, Hartley, Jackson (Caroline), Jackson, (Peter), Lenox, Livermore, Maddocks, McGowan, Mills (Hamish), Newton, Otway, Parr, Pattison, Penney, Potter, Pritchard, Punshon, Redfern, Riches, Russell, Sommerville, Stubbs, Stubbins, Thornberry, Tyldesley, Tynan, Whitaker, Wild, Wilkinson and Wood (53)

**Against:** Councillor Bradley (1)

**Abstentions:**

There were no abstentions.

**Resolved:**

(1) That Council approves a City Council Tax increase of 2.99% to the Band D Council Tax (from £256.63 to £264.30), together with a year on year target of the maximum allowable under the Government’s local referendum thresholds for future years.

***(Council adjourned in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 10  
for a ten minute comfort break at this point (7.50pm).  
Council reconvened at 8.00pm)***

## **86 ADOPTION OF THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY REVIEW OF THE LANCASTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN**

Councillor Dowding, Cabinet Member with particular responsibility for Climate Action, presented a report of Cabinet seeking a Council resolution to formally adopt the Climate Emergency Review of the Lancaster District Local Plan. This report described the processes that led to the preparation of Plan documents, including independent Examination, and the final processes for formal adoption of the Development Plan Documents (DPDs).

Councillor Dowding proposed the recommendations set out in the report, seconded by Councillor Tyldesley.

There was a short debate before the proposition was put to the vote and was clearly carried.

**Resolved:**

- (1) That Council adopts the Climate Emergency Review of the Lancaster District Local Plan, comprised of the partially reviewed Part One: Strategic Policies & Land Allocations Development Plan Document [DPD] and the partially reviewed Part Two: Development Management DPD, as formal components of the statutory Development Plan for Lancaster District.
- (2) That the necessary measures are undertaken to publicise their adoption in accordance with national legislation recommendation.

**87 MOTION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

***(During the following item Councillor Whitaker declared an 'other' interest, as defined in the Councillor Code of Conduct, as a Morecambe Town Councillor)***

The following motion of which notice had been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15 was moved by Councillor Maddocks and seconded by Cllr Joyce Pritchard.

"Lancaster City Council notes:

1. The Government's White Paper published on 16 December sets out its intention to abolish county and district councils, including Lancaster City Council, and create unitary councils with populations of around half a million people.
2. The proposal drawn up by one of Lancashire's MPs which was supported by a number of Lancashire MPs, is to create 3 or 4 unitary councils in Lancashire. In this proposal Lancaster City Council area would be merged with the existing Blackpool unitary and Wyre district councils, (and possibly with Fylde district council). A conflicting proposal, from the Labour leader of Preston council, would merge Lancaster district and Ribble Valley within a 3-council unitary.
3. That with regard to the above different proposals circulated by Labour MPs and councillors from elsewhere in Lancashire, Lancaster City Council leadership has not been involved in discussions or asked for its views before publication.
4. That the UK already stands out in Europe as having a very high local authority population size.
5. Lancaster City Council previously supported the creation of a Bay Unitary Authority, backed by councillors from all 5 political groups on Lancaster City Council, which would have served a smaller population of 300,000 that better reflected community identity. This was rejected by Government in July 2021.
6. That previously in November 2023, the Government announced it had negotiated a Level 2 devolution deal with Lancashire County, Blackpool, and Blackburn with Darwen Councils. This deal is set to transfer new powers and funding to the Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA), in a deal that includes £20 million of capital funding to invest in local priorities and the devolution of the Adult Education Budget.
7. That this Level 2 Devolution deal is currently being progressed through Parliament.

Lancaster City Council believes:

1. That devolution of powers and resources from Whitehall to Lancashire is welcome in principle, but accountability to residents, working arrangements with existing councils and the protection and enhancement of existing local services and decision making all require consideration and agreement involving elected representatives in the county at all levels;
2. The new White Paper's insistence of another level of re-organising local councils will not give time for the agreed proposals for a CCA across Lancashire to bed in;
3. That whilst the Labour manifesto pledged to create Strategic Authorities, the plans to reorganise district and borough level councils into large unitaries was not an election pledge. There is little evidence that such reorganisation will deliver better services or enhance local decision making.
4. That reorganisation ensuing from the December 2024 White Paper will have significant short- and medium-term financial costs, not savings, contrary to what government claims; and that it will be highly disruptive for the staff who deliver services;
5. That local services and facilities are best provided by truly local councils sensitive to the needs of local residents. The proposals will create a massive democratic deficit, with power being centralised further away from residents and do not reflect the identity and interests of local communities and would bring less responsiveness and less accountability;
6. That attention which would otherwise be focused on solving problems affecting our local residents will be diverted into Local Government Reorganisation discussions.

Council, therefore, resolves:

- (1) To oppose the current basis of local government reorganisation in Lancashire, and its insistence on creating unitary councils required to service huge populations of around 500,000 people.
- (2) To push for and plan for a 'referendum' or meaningful far-reaching consultation on the matter to ascertain the views of local people before any specific realignment of district councils takes place which affect Lancaster City Council's residents. The wording and details of any such referendum or consultation shall be agreed by this council at a later date.
- (3) To mandate the Leader of the Council and the executive to build on existing arrangements with Lancashire authorities where shared services deliver better value for money, and to develop a shared vision for the future.
- (4) To send a letter requesting that our two MPs work alongside the City Council to achieve the best possible outcome for local people with respect to the future structure of local governance."

Councillor Maddocks responded to questions from Councillors.

A full briefing note had been provided by the Chief Executive to provide background

information to assist the debate.

An amendment to the motion had been submitted by Councillor Gawith and circulated in advance of the meeting.

Councillor Gawith proposed his amendment, seconded by Councillor Ainscough:

“Lancaster City Council recognises the good work carried out by Council Officers and the valuable services this Council provides. As Councillors we also recognise that the majority of complaints received from residents relate to the following service areas, young peoples schooling and education, potholes and road maintenance, and adult care; none of these are the responsibility of this Council.

1. The Government's White Paper published on 16 December sets out its intention to abolish county and district councils, including Lancaster City Council, and create unitary councils with populations of around half a million people.
2. Current proposals being considered are:
  1. A single unitary authority for Lancashire
  2. Two unitary authorities, East and West Lancashire
  3. Three unitary authorities
  4. Four Unitary authorities(such as Lancaster, Preston and Ribble Valley).
3. This Council believes that the City Council and political parties should act in best interests of residents by ensuring the outcome has the greatest financial stability combined with proper political accountability. Political parties and authorities must discuss all possible options with other partner organisations.
4. This Council recognises that across Europe strategic decisions are taken by regional authorities, far larger than our current district Councils. This enables economies of scale that UK residents are being denied.
5. Lancaster City Council previously supported the creation of a Bay Unitary Authority, backed by councillors from all 5 political groups on Lancaster City Council, which would have served a smaller population of 300,000 that better reflected community identity. This was rejected by Government in July 2021.
6. That previously in November 2023, the Government announced it had negotiated a Level 2 devolution deal with Lancashire County, Blackpool, and Blackburn with Darwen Councils. This deal is set to transfer new powers and funding to the Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA), in a deal that includes £20 million of capital funding to invest in local priorities and the devolution of the Adult Education Budget.
7. That this Level 2 Devolution deal is currently being progressed through Parliament.

Lancaster City Council believes

3. That devolution of powers and resources from Whitehall to Lancashire is welcome in principle, and accountability to residents is paramount.
2. The new White Paper ensures that all areas of the country will have the greatest opportunity to have financially sound, all service authorities, ensuring that no communities are left behind.

3. There is clear evidence across the country that unitary authorities are growing economically and providing far better services to local residents (consider the transport solutions in Manchester, Sheffield etc)
4. Local services must be provided in a cost-effective manner alongside real accountability to our residents.

Council, therefore, resolves

1. To work with other local authorities and partner agencies to create the most effective authorities that can deliver the full range of local authority services.
2. To continue to work with existing Lancashire authorities to improve shared services.
3. To support the formation of a Lancaster Town Council and any other non parished communities are made parishes (eg Heysham) and work alongside any unitary authority to enable true localism and generate real political entrepreneurship in Lancaster.
4. To send a letter requesting that our two MPs work alongside the City Council to achieve the best possible outcome for local people with respect to the future structure of local governance.”

There was extensive debate on the amendment.

At the conclusion of the debate on the amendment a vote was taken and the amendment fell with 24 votes ‘for’ and 30 votes ‘against’. There were no abstentions.

No further amendments were proposed. Extensive debate on the original motion followed.

A vote was taken on the original motion, which was carried with 30 Councillors voting ‘for’ and 24 Councillors voting ‘against’. There were no abstentions.

***Resolved:-***

- (1) To oppose the current basis of local government reorganisation in Lancashire, and its insistence on creating unitary councils required to service huge populations of around 500,000 people.
- (2) To push for and plan for a ‘referendum’ or meaningful far-reaching consultation on the matter to ascertain the views of local people before any specific realignment of district councils takes place which affect Lancaster City Council’s residents. The wording and details of any such referendum or consultation shall be agreed by this council at a later date.
- (3) To mandate the Leader of the Council and the executive to build on existing arrangements with Lancashire authorities where shared services deliver better value for money, and to develop a shared vision for the future.
- (4) To send a letter requesting that our two MPs work alongside the City Council to achieve the best possible outcome for local people with respect to the future structure of local governance.



**88 MOTION TO SUPPORT THE DECISION TO LOCATE THE NEW ROYAL LANCASTER INFIRMARY IN SOUTH LANCASTER**

The Deputy Mayor informed Councillors that Agenda Item 12, the motion to support the decision to locate the new Lancaster Royal Infirmary in south Lancaster had been withdrawn by Councillor Phil Black and Councillor Parr.

**89 MOTION OF SUPPORT FOR THE EXTENSION OF POWER GENERATION AT HEYSHAM 1 & 2 POWER STATIONS**

The following motion of which notice had been given to the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 15 was moved by Councillor Phil Black and seconded by Councillor Louise Belcher:-

“This Council welcomes last month’s announcement that following a detailed technical review of the power stations, EDF’s licensee board has decided to extend generation dates for Heysham 1 by one year to 2027 and Heysham 2 by two years to 2030.

This decision is great news for Heysham and the wider local community. The power stations are a provider of high skill, high wage jobs, and the extension of the generating life of the power stations secures employment for more than 1,500 staff and contractors. The power stations are anchor institutions, with supply chains and spending power boosting the local economy. They are also a major source of business rate revenue for the Council, whose significant contributions help secure a higher standard of local services and protect more Council jobs than would otherwise be possible.

This decision is also excellent news nationally. Extending the generating lives of the Heysham stations will bolster the UK’s security of supply and support plans for the rapid expansion of renewables by helping to maintain grid stability. Nuclear power is a low carbon source of energy, and a key element of the Government’s strategy to provide clean power by 2030. Ensuring the baseload with nuclear power also helps limit the UK’s dependence on imported gas, a regrettable situation which has caused an energy crisis and led to inflated household bills.

Council has confidence in the safety considerations underpinning this decision. We note that ongoing generation from the stations will ultimately depend not on decisions by EDF, but on the outcome of future inspections, the results of which are reviewed by the independent regulator, the Office for Nuclear Regulation.

Looking to the future, Council notes that Heysham is a location earmarked by the Government for the potential siting of one or more Small Modular Reactors (SMR), that EDF is an approved development partner for these new technologies, and that the first reactors of this type are intended to be delivered by 2029. Council supports bringing ‘New Nuclear’ to Heysham and welcomes the continuation of the benefits this would bring to both our residents and the rest of the UK.

Council resolves that:

- (1) The Chief Executive will write to the Secretary” of State for Energy and Climate Change, Cat Smith MP and Lizzi Collinge MP, welcoming the generating life extensions to Heysham 1 & 2, and conveying our support for bringing New Nuclear to Heysham.

- (2) That we publicise these views via our various communications channels.
- (3) That a full response to any consultation on New Nuclear is prepared on behalf of the Council by Business Committee at the appropriate time.”

An officer briefing note had been circulated with the agenda to aid the debate.

An amendment to the motion, in the form of an addendum to resolution (1) was moved by Councillor Gardiner. This was accepted as a friendly amendment by the proposer and his seconder:

“To add the words “and a timeline for this project to achieve, so we can plan for the future engineers and the stability of the Council” after “New Nuclear for Heysham””  
With the agreement of the meeting and his seconder, Councillor Phil Black accepted this as a friendly amendment.

Councillor Dowding put an amendment to remove the following portions of text from the motion: the entire paragraph beginning “Looking to the future” from the preamble and the words “and conveying our support for bringing New Nuclear to Heysham” from resolution (1).

Councillor Fish seconded the amendment.

At the conclusion of a lengthy debate a vote was taken on the amendment put forward by Councillor Dowding. The amendment fell, receiving 23 votes ‘for’ 25 votes ‘against’ and 2 abstentions.

Councillor Stubbins proposed a further amendment to the motion’s preamble, which Councillor Sommerville seconded.

“That the sentence “Council has confidence in the safety considerations underpinning this decision” be removed”.

There was a short debate before a vote was taken on Councillor Stubbins’ amendment. With 17 Councillors voting for the amendment, 27 voting against and 4 abstentions, the amendment fell.

There was then debate on the original motion. When put to the vote, the motion was carried with 32 votes ‘for’, 13 votes ‘against’ and 5 abstentions.

**Resolved:-**

- (1) The Chief Executive will write to the Secretary” of State for Energy and Climate Change, Cat Smith MP and Lizzi Collinge MP, welcoming the generating life extensions to Heysham 1 & 2, and conveying our support for bringing New Nuclear to Heysham and a timeline for this project to achieve, so we can plan for the future engineers and the stability of the Council.
- (2) That we publicise these views via our various communications channels.
- (3) That a full response to any consultation on New Nuclear is prepared on behalf of the Council by Business Committee at the appropriate time.

**90 LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION**

The Chief Executive introduced his report regarding Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The purpose of the report was for Council to consider establishing a new LGR Working Group to respond to the re-organisation issues raised in the Government's English Devolution White Paper, published on 16 December 2024.

The Chief Executive responded to questions.

Councillor Caroline Jackson proposed the following, seconded by Councillor Wilkinson.

"That a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Working Group of nine Councillors be established to reflect political proportionality with named substitutes."

Councillor Phil Black proposed an amendment:

"That the MBIs be included in the Group. That the Green Group give up one of their seats to the MBI group to effect this".

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Whitaker.

After some discussion, and in view of the late hour, the amendment was withdrawn by Councillor Black and his seconder.

The Deputy Mayor called for a vote on the original proposition, which was clearly carried when put to the vote.

Groups were asked to provide names of Councillors for the working group.

The Green group put forward Councillor Caroline Jackson (the names of the three other Members and substitutes to be confirmed to Democratic Support following the meeting).

The Labour group put forward Councillors Wood, Parr and Phil Black.

The Liberal Democratic group put forward Councillor Peter Jackson with Councillor Greenwell as the named substitute.

The Conservative group put forward Councillor Gardiner with Councillor Budden as the named substitute.

The Deputy Mayor asked for nominations for a Chair. Councillor Dowding nominated Councillor Caroline Jackson, seconded by Councillor Hamilton-Cox.

Councillor Harris nominated Councillor Phil Black, seconded by Councillor Whitaker.

A vote was taken on the nominations. With 27 votes for Councillor Caroline Jackson and 23 votes for Councillor Phil Black, Councillor Caroline Jackson was appointed Chair of the LGR working group.

***Resolved:***

- (1) That a new Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Working Group of nine Councillors be established to reflect political proportionality with named substitutes.
- (2) That the members of the Working Group be Councillors Jackson (Caroline), Black (Phil), Jackson (Peter), Gardiner, Wood and Parr with Councillors Budden and

Greenwell as named subs. The names of the other three members for the Green Group (and named substitutes for the Green and Labour groups) to be notified to Democratic Support following the meeting.

- (3) That Councillor Caroline Jackson be appointed Chair of the LGR Working Group.

***(At the conclusion of this item there was a further comfort break in accordance with the Constitution. It was agreed that this be ten minutes rather than thirty minutes. Council adjourned at 10pm and reconvened at 10.10pm.)***

## **91 APPOINTMENT OF MAYOR-ELECT**

The Chief Executive reported that he had contacted Councillor Pattison, the most senior Member of the Council eligible to be invited to become Mayor in accordance with the Constitution. Councillor Pattison had indicated that she would be happy to accept such an invitation.

It was then moved by Councillor Gawith and seconded by Councillor Cleet:

“That Councillor Pattison be invited to hold the office of Mayor of the City of Lancaster for the Municipal Year 2025/26.”

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

***Resolved unanimously:***

That Councillor Pattison be invited to hold the office of Mayor of the City of Lancaster for the Municipal Year 2025/26.

## **92 APPOINTMENTS TO AN OUTSIDE BODY - LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION COASTAL SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP**

The Senior Manager, Democratic Support and Elections, had submitted a report asking Council to consider nominating a Councillor for appointment to the Local Government Coastal Special Interest Group (LGA Coastal SIG). The report explained that the basis of this appointment had been determined by Council in May 2024 as one which should be filled by nomination and voting at full Council.

Councillor Brookes proposed that the basis of appointment be reconfirmed as nomination and voting at full Council. Councillor Peter Jackson seconded the proposition which was clearly carried when put to the vote.

The Deputy Mayor called for nominations.

Councillor Maddocks nominated Councillor Bradley. The nomination was seconded by Councillor Hamilton-Cox.

Councillor Phil Black nominated Councillor Hartley seconded by Councillor Potter.

Councillor Bradley received 28 votes. There were 19 votes for Councillor Hartley. The Deputy Mayor declared Councillor Bradley appointed.

***Resolved:***

That Councillor Bradley be appointed to the LGA Coastal Group until the next Council

elections due to be held in 2027.

**93 APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

No changes were reported.

**94 QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12 (Pages 14 - 17)**

The Deputy Mayor advised that three questions had been received by the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rules. Two were from Councillor Whitaker to Councillor Maddocks about properties on Yorkshire Street, Morecambe, and one was from Councillor Ainscough to Councillor Peter Jackson regarding Salt Ayre Leisure Centre.

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

**95 MINUTES OF CABINET**

The Deputy Mayor informed Councillors that the set of Cabinet minutes under consideration were from the meeting on 3 December 2024, not the meeting on 22 October, as incorrectly stated on the agenda frontsheet.

Council considered the minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 3 December 2024. There were no questions for the Leader.

***Resolved:***

That the minutes be noted.

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Mayor

(The meeting finished at 11.40 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these minutes,  
please contact Debbie Chambers, Senior Manager, Democratic Support & Elections/Deputy  
Monitoring Officer - email [dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk](mailto:dchambers@lancaster.gov.uk)**

**Questions and Answers from Councillors at the Council meeting held on 22 January 2025****Councillor Whitaker asked Councillor Maddocks:**

*The state of Properties on Yorkshire Street especially 52-58 has been a major concern for many years under successive administrations and there have been numerous complaints from residents and businesses, but nothing has been done to address this issue.*

**Question 1**

*I would like to ask The Cabinet member what action can the Council realistically take to bring the owners of these dangerous dilapidated properties to account for them to take responsibility and bring these properties up to a respectable standard?*

**Question 2**

*In accordance with public interest how many complaints have been forwarded about these properties?*

**Supplementary Question for Question 2**

*What dates have these complaints made?*

**Councillor Maddocks replied:**

I would like to thank Councillor Whitaker for his questions.

With regard to the first question, there are various powers that local authorities have that can be used to prompt the owners of derelict buildings to take action.

Where a building is considered to be affect public amenity and is so untidy to warrant action, there are provisions under the Town and Country Planning Act.

Where a building is considered dangerous following a risk assessment carried out by qualified structural engineers, then action can be pursued under the Building Act.

Where buildings have lesser issues, such as broken doors and windows, but the structure might not be untidy or dangerous, there is potential recourse under the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act.

There are also provisions under the Environmental Protection Act if the property is deemed to be causing environmental problems to adjoining properties.

I am aware that in Autumn last year Councillor Whitaker attended a meeting of the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee, where the general issue of dilapidated buildings was discussed. I understand that Members of the Committee discussed how the Council might tackle this issue using a combination of the powers that I have mentioned, in a collaborative manner. The Committee considered that this should be explored further. As Cabinet Member for Enforcement, I should be pleased to meet with Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to explore this further, if the issue is part of their Work Programme for the year ahead.

With regard to your second question, regarding how many complaints have been received, the Councillor has provided the address details of one property, namely 52-58 Yorkshire Street, and so I can provide details of the complaints received for that property.

As far back as 2009 the Council pursued action against the then owner following the receipt of a complaint, and that resulted an improvement to the condition of the property including external painting. The case was closed in June 2009. Planning permission was granted earlier that same year for the demolition of the shops and the construction of a 2-storey building to accommodate 3 shop units at the ground floor and 2 flats at the first floor. The applicant did not implement this permission.

A further planning application was submitted in 2017, but the applicant failed to pay the application fee, so the proposal was not determined and the application was returned to the applicant.

In 2019 the Building Control Team investigated complaints regarding dangerous roof tiles, which was subsequently remedied, and a similar issue in 2022 was also resolved. The Council's Environmental Protection Team were also involved.

A Community Protection Warning was served by Environmental Protection in 2021 following complaints about pigeon infestation and dereliction. The local planning authority received a similar complaint at the same time. The joint action appeared to have the effect of minor improvement being carried out to the property. However a further complaint was received in 2022 regarding the roof and the issue of pigeons. A Section 215 Untidy Land Notice was served and the Council's Unbugged Team also attended to address the issue of pigeon infestation.

Since then the property has changed hands and a new enforcement investigation was commenced in November 2024 following the receipt of two complaints towards the end of last year. The new owner appears to be responding to our officer's communications and is showing intent to resolve the issue, but I cannot divulge specific details of those conversations at this stage. However, if the new owner fails to improve the condition of the properties then the Council can serve a formal notice to require improvements to the building.

In conclusion I would advise Councillor Whitaker to continue liaising with the Planning Enforcement Team regarding the latest investigation; and I look forward to discussing the more general issue of enforcement regarding dilapidated buildings with the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, if the matter is within their forthcoming Work Programme.

**Councillor Ainscough asked Councillor Peter Jackson:**

*Within the Corporate Fees & Charges 2025/26 report for Cabinet, section 3.3 , it discusses the specific challenges that Salt Ayre Leisure Centre, like many other public leisure facilities face and highlights the specific vulnerabilities that the Centre faces as energy costs continue to increase and the amount of disposable income residents have, which in turn directly affects membership levels.*

*However, over the last 12 months, SALC has gone through a complete management restructure and anecdotally, over those last 12 months, Labour Councillors have received an*

*increasing number of complaints about the cleanliness, customer service standard and heating.*

*Access to the centre is problematic, the entrance road is riddled with very large potholes which doesn't give the best impression of a centre that is well cared for and when the recycling centre is busy no one can get access because the road gets so backed up.*

*In addition, there are problems within the centre, such as a broken lap timer in the pool that has needed fixing for an exceptionally long time, that feeds into the narrative of lack of care.*

*Could Councillor Jackson please advise what work has been done with the County Council to improve access to the facilities, especially fixing the potholes and whether the new management team have been tasked with ensuring that all the little niggles on site are brought up to standard or budget proposals made to tackle them in a timely fashion.*

**Councillor Peter Jackson responded:**

SALC management restructure was undertaken and implemented in January 2024. Since March 2024, the senior management of the centre has seen a significant amount of staff turnover. Active recruitment has resulted in us welcoming a new Membership Experience Manager since November 2024 and recruitment is ongoing for a Commercial Venues & Leisure Manager.

In regard to the operational matters raised, I can assure the Councillor that daily and overnight deep cleaning regimes are in place across the centre to ensure the facilities are at the desired standards for all users. In the last twelve months, the number of cleaning hours across the business has increased from 122 per week to 137 hours per week.

We are proud that SALC is one of the first fully decarbonised leisure centres in the Country following the investment in air source heat pumps and solar array. We are aware that there was a small period when heating systems had been broken, but these were swiftly dealt with and protocols are in place to deal with any future breakdowns.

The centre sees over 800,000 through its doors annually, and we are committed to ensuring they all receive the best level of customer experience. Whilst not aware of the specific concerns about customer experience, I can assure the Councillor that the facility continues to strive towards excellent customer service to all its visitors daily.

The centre has a customer feedback system where comments and queries are monitored daily. In the period from April 2023 to March 2024, 2209 visitors fed back on their experience at the centre. Each question is measured between 0 and 10, with 10 being excellent. When asked the question, how likely are you to recommend SALC to friends and family, 86.9% scored between 8 and 10, with 57% (1253) scoring the centre 10.

In October 2024, correspondence was shared with County Council Highways who confirmed that the road is adopted and the responsibility of Lancashire County Council as the highways authority. Officers at Highways confirmed that the stretch of road has been passed across to the asset management team for consideration as a resurfacing scheme, and we await to hear an outcome.



Should centre users contact any Councillor regarding this matter, I would urge them to report the matter to Council Highways directly. We will of course continue to work with County Highways to achieve the correct outcome.

Regarding the access issues compounded by the Household Waste and Recycling Centre, officers are in regular dialog with contacts from highways and the HWRC to look at suitable solutions. We fully appreciate this can be frustrating for users, but would highlight that these cases are mainly problematic around times such as Christmas, Easter and bank holidays.

The lap timer has been obsolete for several years but remains in situ due to the cost of removal. On quotation in the last year a replacement would cost in the region of £120,000.

Officers have discussed this matter with swimming clubs in the pasts, which has led to one swimming club purchasing their own timing system for training and galas. As part of this, SALC allocates storage space for the club.

Investment in the centre's facilities will continue and money is currently allocated across the capital programme for investment in the pools moveable floor. In relation to on going repairs and maintenance, officers will always look to react at the earliest opportunity to keep the centre a welcoming space in order to protect the member experience and financial income streams.