

PROCEEDINGS

A meeting of the Lancaster City Council was held in the Town Hall, Morecambe, at 6.00 p.m. on Wednesday, 23 April 2025, when the following Members were present:-

Abi Mills (Mayor)

Suhir Abuhajar

Catherine Armistead

Matthew Black

Martin Bottoms

Gerry Blaikie

Roger Cleet

Brett Cooper

Roger Dennison

Tom Fish

Martin Gawith

Tim Hamilton-Cox

Chris Hanna

Paul Hart

Ross Hunter

Peter Jackson

John Livermore

Sarah McGowan

Paul Newton

Margaret Pattison

Catherine Potter

Sam Riches

Jackson Stubbs

Sandra Thornberry

Paul Tynan

John Wild

Jason Wood

Hamish Mills (Deputy Mayor)

Joanne Ainscough

Mandy Bannon

Phillip Black

Louise Belcher

Keith Budden

Ruth Colbridge

Maria Deery

Gina Dowding

Andrew Gardiner

Alan Greenwell

John Hanson

Prof Chris Harris

Colin Hartley

Caroline Jackson

Kate Knight

Sally Maddocks

Isabella Metcalf-Riener

Andrew Otway

Sue Penney

Joyce Pritchard

James Sommerville

Paul Stubbins

Sue Tyldesley

David Whitaker

Nick Wilkinson

123 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Phil Bradley, Dave Brookes, Claire Cozler, Jack Lenox, Jean Parr, Sarah Punshon and Robert Redfern.

124 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2025 were signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

125 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Cooper declared an interest in the motion on notice (item 14) in view of his position as Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and being a member of a political group with a seat on the Cabinet. This was not an interest which would prohibit Councillor Cooper from taking part.

126 ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor thanked Councillors and officers for their support during her Mayoral year with regard to her cancer diagnosis and subsequent treatment. She especially thanked her Deputy Mayor, Councillor Hamish Mills, for chairing the Council meetings in her absence.

The Mayor informed Councillors that her final fundraiser as Mayor would be a sponsored walk up Clougha Pike on Sunday 27 April for Cancer Care. Anyone wishing to join the Mayor would be welcome.

127 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.

128 PETITIONS AND ADDRESSES

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

129 LEADER'S REPORT

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

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

130 MAYOR'S ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with Part 1, paragraph 7.1(i) of the Constitution, the Mayor presented her Annual Report for 2024/25. The report contained contributions from the Deputy Mayor and

the Assistant Deputy Mayor.

Councillor Pattison, the Mayor-elect, thanked the Mayoral team for the excellent work and fundraising they had undertaken throughout 2024/25.

Resolved:

That the report be received.

131 CABINET ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with Part 2, Section 4 paragraph 3.1(j) of the Constitution, the Leader and each Member of Cabinet had produced a written progress report for 2024/25. The Leader presented her annual report and answered a number of questions.

Councillors Jackson (Peter), Dowding, Maddocks, Hart, Hamilton-Cox, Wilkinson, Bottoms and Tyldesley then presented their annual reports and responded to Members' questions.

In response to a question from Councillor Cleet, Councillor Caroline Jackson agreed to supply a written update on Lune House and Derby House on the Mainway site following a meeting of the Mainway Project Board, which was scheduled for 25 April 2025.

Resolved:

That the reports of Cabinet Members Councillors Jackson (Caroline), Jackson (Peter), Dowding, Maddocks, Hart, Hamilton-Cox, Wilkinson, Bottoms and Tyldesley, be received.

132 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with Part 2, Section 5 paragraph 9.13 of the Constitution, the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2024/25 had been published and was presented to Council by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Cooper and the Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel, Councillor Hunter.

Resolved:

That the Overview & Scrutiny Annual Report for 2024/25 be received.

133 AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

In accordance with Part 3, Section 5 paragraph 6.30 of the Council's Constitution, the Chair, Councillor Stubbins, presented the 2024/25 Annual Report of the Audit Committee and responded to questions from Councillors.

Resolved:

That the Audit Committee's Annual report for 2024/25 be received

134 DELOITTE EXTERNAL AUDITORS ANNUAL REPORT FINANCIAL YEARS 2020-21 TO 2022-23

The Chair of the Audit Committee introduced the External Auditors report for the financial years 2020/21 to 2022/23.

The report explained that the External Auditors were required to complete a Value for Money (VfM) assessment as part of the audit of the accounts. The National Audit Office (NAO) Code of Practice regulations set out how the auditor was required to report whether an authority had put in place proper arrangements to secure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its use of resources. The Audit Committee had considered the Annual Audit Report at its meeting on 19th March 2025 and referred it on to Council for noting ahead of publication on the Council's website.

Resolved:

That the External Auditors report for the financial years 2020/21 to 2022/23 be noted.

135 MOTION ON NOTICE TO AMEND THE CONSTITUTION TO ENCOURAGE NON-CABINET GROUPS HOLDING SCRUTINY CHAIR POSITIONS

(During this item, Councillor Hunter declared an interest as he held the role of Chair of the Budget and Performance Panel and was part of the Liberal Democrat Group which had two Councillors serving on the Cabinet. This was not an interest which would prohibit Councillor Hunter from taking part.)

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

"To amend the Constitution Part 2, 2.5 clauses 9 and 10 to take effect from annual business Council on 12 May 2025

To ADD to both clauses 9 and 10:

"The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received)."

The current clauses currently state:

"9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be appointed by Council annually. However, only non-Cabinet Councillors are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet.

10 Budget and Performance Panel

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of Budget and Performance Panel will be appointed by Council annually. Only non-Cabinet members are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet. "

If the amendment is approved by Council, these clauses will then read ...

“9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be appointed by Council annually.

However, only non-Cabinet Councillors are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet.

The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received).

10 Budget and Performance Panel

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of Budget and Performance Panel will be appointed by Council annually. Only non-Cabinet members are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet.

The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received).”

A preamble to the motion explained the purpose:

“This proposed amendment to the Constitution below is intended to encourage opposition groups to nominate and hold Scrutiny Chairs. Scrutiny plays an important role in being a critical friend to any administration. The Local Government Association (LGA) describes this ‘critical friend’ role as being necessary “... for scrutiny to be effective ... identifying where decisions could be improved and how to prevent mistakes being made or repeated. Scrutiny is, by its nature, political; that is, it is driven by politicians whose insights are a fundamental part of scrutiny’s work to review decisions which are themselves political and may be politically contentious.”

Where political groups who are actively involved in the executive by holding portfolios on the Cabinet, public perception may question this ‘critical friend’ role and perhaps ask if Scrutiny in practice at Lancaster is Cabinet groups marking their own homework.

Public perception should have full confidence in our formal scrutiny processes.”

The Monitoring Officer had drafted an officer briefing note which accompanied the motion on the agenda.

Councillor Wood responded to questions from Councillors about the motion before a lengthy debate began.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Mayor called for a vote. Councillor Phil Black called for a recorded vote in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 19.4

The votes were recorded as follows:-

For the motion: Councillors Ainscough, Armistead, Belcher, Black (Matthew), Black (Phil), Budden, Cleet, Colbridge, Cooper, Gardiner, Gawith, Hanna, Hanson, Harris, Hartley, Knight, Livermore, Mills (Hamish), Newton, Pattison, Penney, Potter, Stubbs, Thornberry, Whitaker, Wild and Wood.(27).

Against the motion: Councillors Abuhajar, Blaikie, Bottoms, Deery, Dennison, Dowding, Fish, Hamilton-Cox, Hart, Hunter, Jackson (Caroline) Jackson (Peter), Maddocks, Pritchard, Riches, Sommerville, Tyldesley and Tynan (18).

Abstentions: Councillors Bannon, Greenwell, McGowan, Metcalf-Reiner, Mills (Abi), Otway, Stubbins and Wilkinson (8).

Resolved:-

To amend the Constitution Part 2, 2.5 clauses 9 and 10 to take effect from annual business Council on 12 May 2025

To ADD to both clauses 9 and 10:

"The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received)."

So that the information says:

"9 Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee will be appointed by Council annually.

However, only non-Cabinet Councillors are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet.

The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received).

10 Budget and Performance Panel

Composition: Nine Councillors in political balance.

Members of the Committee shall not be members of the Cabinet.

The Chair of Budget and Performance Panel will be appointed by Council annually. Only non-Cabinet members are entitled to vote for the Chair.

The Chair and Vice Chair shall not be members of the largest political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet.

The Chair shall not be a member of any political group which has Councillors on the Cabinet (except where no nominations from non-Cabinet groups are received).

136 APPOINTMENTS AND CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

No changes were reported.

137 QUESTIONS UNDER COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 12

The Mayor advised that one question had been received by the Chief Executive in accordance with Council Procedure Rules. The question was from Councillor Cleet to Councillor Bottoms, as follows:

Now that Place Capital has decided not to develop Centenary House on Regent Road in the West End of Morecambe can the cabinet member for the regeneration of Morecambe give an update to the future of this dilapidated council owned building?

Councillor Bottoms responded:

“Regarding the council's plans for Centenary House, we are continuing to progress the work to deal with structural issues at Centenary House and the original aim to make it an attractive proposition for a housing developer.

The Brownfield Land Release Funding that the council secured can only be spent on the structural issues identified in the bid that make redevelopment of this property uneconomic. Unfortunately, there are no resources allocated to improving the appearance of Centenary House.

We are working with the appointed contractor, Seddon Construction, to obtain quotations and price the next phase of work. The priorities to address are:

- Stopping water ingress via the roof that has damaged the structure. Replacement roof coverings and rainwater goods. The roofing works will also need to upgrade the thermal performance of the roofs.
- Stopping and managing water ingress in the basement that has damaged the structure. Replace waterproofing over the section of the basement that projects beyond the Westminster Road building elevation. Install cavity wall drains, floor channels and sumps to manage water ingress through the basement walls and floor.
- Ventilate basement to manage moisture and corrosion risk.
- Renew protective coverings for all structural steel.
- Replace rotten roof timbers and address identified structural deficiencies.
- Repair damaged concrete floors.
- Replace failed concrete lintels, both internal and external
- Remove asbestos containing soffits and flues once scaffold for roof is erected.
- Structural works to steel and timber floor supports to prevent the risk of disproportionate collapse.”

Mayor

(The meeting finished at 7.50 p.m.)

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