

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

6.00 P.M.

22ND OCTOBER 2025

PRESENT:- Councillors Martin Gawith (Chair), Chris Hanna (Vice-Chair), Suhir Abuhajar, Maria Deery, Abi Mills, Sue Penney and Joyce Pritchard

Also in Attendance :-

Councillor Caroline Jackson – Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Housing and Homelessness

Councillor Sally Maddocks – Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services

Councillor Tim Hamilton-Cox – Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Finance and Property

Officers in attendance:-

Mark Davies

Chief Executive

Jenny Kay

Civic & Ceremonial Democratic Support Officer

26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th September 2025 were signed by the Chair as a correct record.

27 ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of Urgent Business.

28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations made.

29 PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY PROTOCOL

The Chair welcomed Councillor Sally Maddocks, Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services, to the meeting.

Members were reminded that at the January meeting of the Committee, the Draft Pre-Decision Scrutiny Protocol was considered. It had been agreed by the Committee that the Protocol should include provision for Cabinet papers to be circulated to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at the same time as for Cabinet before Cabinet briefings. If the Committee wished to receive a briefing on any of the Cabinet items, this would be requested and arranged before the Cabinet meeting the following week to allow any comments or concerns to be shared with Cabinet. This had now been included in the Draft Protocol.

The Committee discussed the importance of Pre-Decision Scrutiny and agreed to recommend the Draft Protocol to Cabinet for adoption.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That the Committee recommend the Draft Pre-Decision Scrutiny Protocol to Cabinet for adoption.

30

LGA CORPORATE PEER CHALLENGE FEEDBACK REPORT

The Chair welcomed the Chief Executive and Councillor Caroline Jackson Leader of the Council, to the meeting.

The Leader provided the Committee with an update on the Corporate Peer Review. Members were reminded that in April 2024, the City Council participated in a Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) with the aim of further improving the work undertaken by the Council. It was reported that detailed information and the views from more than 50 meetings, and over 130 colleagues including council staff, Councillors and external stakeholders was gathered as part of the review. The overriding view was that over the last two years the City Council had undergone a period of rapid improvement, was making real improvements for people and place and was well-placed for the future to deliver on the needs of its communities.

The Committee was advised that the CPC feedback report contained recommendations for continued improvement, which formed part of an action plan co-owned and reviewed monthly by the Senior Leadership Team. The first iteration of the action plan was published in September 2025.

It was reported that a progress review took place in January 2025 when four of the original review team visited again and spoke to staff and partners in a series of meetings and focus groups. This resulted in the draft progress review report being proved in March 2025. The review feedback was broadly themed under the key principles within the Council Plan 24-27, and praised the excellent progress made against the original recommendations as well as highlighting areas and suggestions that the peer review team deemed relevant. In particular, the team highlighted progress made on partnership working, the City Council's clear vision that prosperity must benefit the whole community, with an ambition to enable a low carbon future and the importance of the Fit for the Future programme which is aligned to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the Council Plan.

The Chair congratulated the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council for such a positive review.

The Committee agreed to request a further update on specific areas of the review which would be agreed by the Committee at a later date.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the Leader be thanked for her attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That the Committee request a further update on specific areas of the review which would be agreed by the Committee at a later date.

31 LGR - UPDATE

The Chief Executive provided an update on the current situation regarding the local Government Reorganisation proposals for Lancashire.

It was reported that there were five different options for the unitarisation of the County that were being developed into detailed cases for change. These include models proposing 2, 3, 4 (with two variations) and 5 unitary authorities. Independent consultants were supporting 4 out of the 5 cases for change, each supported by a dedicated working group and a nominated expert consultant. This ensured confidentiality and maintained the agreed "ethical walls" between the Councils. The Government had set rigid criteria which each proposal had to meet. Each business case was being progressed in line with the submission deadline of 28th November.

The Committee considered maps of the 5 options that were proposed.

The suite of documents that made up the joint evidence base had been agreed by all Lancashire Chief Executives and was being actively used within each of the options working groups to develop their respective business cases.

The City Council had established a cross party working group to oversee the piece of work which had instructed officers to work on all 5 options with no preferred option in place at present.

An Extraordinary Council meeting would take place on 26th November to agree the Council's preferred option, with a Cabinet meeting at the rise of the Council meeting to formally agree the option.

A discussion followed regarding the impact that Local Government Reorganisation would have on the Council in the immediate future years.

Resolved :-

- (1) That the Chief Executive be thanked for his attendance at the meeting.
- (2) That the update be noted.
- (3) That the Committee consider the City Council's preferred option for LGR at its November meeting.

32 FORTHCOMING KEY DECISIONS

The Forthcoming Key Decisions were noted.

33 CITY COUNCIL COMMISSIONED CONSULTATIONS

There were no consultations to consider.

34 WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered and agreed the updates provided in the Work Programme report.

It was agreed to invite the Lancashire Partnership Against Crime (LANPAC) to the November meeting of the Committee to provide a presentation to give an overview of LANPAC's work.

With regard to the response from Lancashire County Council in relation to the Work Programme item on Flooding in Lancaster, it was agreed that the Chair would liaise with officers to agree a suitable reply to the letter received from the County Council Cabinet Member.

Members discussed the Fit for the Future update and agreed that a Workshop should be arranged as soon as possible for Scrutiny Members and that all Councillors be invited.

Resolved :-

That the updates above were agreed.

35 DECISIONS THE CHAIR HAS BEEN CONSULTED ON

The Chair advised that he had no decisions to report.

Chair

(The meeting ended at 7.12 p.m.)

**Any queries regarding these Minutes, please contact
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