

EXECUTIVE DECISIONS TAKEN BY CABINET PORTFOLIO HOLDER OR DELEGATED OFFICER  
NOTICE OF DECISION

**TITLE OF DECISION: Continued financing of Demolition Contractor for major incident**

<b>NAME OF DECISION TAKER:</b>	<b>MARK DAVIES</b>
<b>POSITION AND RESPONSIBILITY HELD:</b>	<b>CHIEF EXECUTIVE</b>
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**Details of Decision:**

Pursuant to the urgency provisions contained within the Constitution to authorise the continued procurement of a demolition contractor as part of the major incident response at the THINK Skips site, Europa Way, Lancaster.

**Reasons for the decision:**

Following the major incident at THINK Skips Ltd, Lancaster on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2023, a multi agency response has been formed to manage the response to the fire. The main partners are Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Environment Agency, Lancashire County Council, Lancashire City Council, Lancashire Police, UK Health and Security Agency, Lancashire Police.

Lancaster City Council does not have any direct responsibility for the site, which is privately owned. The responsibility for this rests with the owners of the site, who are currently in administration. The Environment Agency have an ongoing criminal investigation into the activities at the site, including the previous operations and waste storage. As a result of this incident there will be further consequences for the owners.

In the meantime the incident is already causing significant economic, social and environmental impacts. If prolonged it also has the potential to cause significant health impacts from the smoke.

In order to reduce these impacts the best course of action is to adopt an offensive approach to tackling the blaze by removing all waste from inside the building. The cost of doing this is approximately £900,000. Of which £262,000 has already been contributed by the Council in a previous urgent decision.

Without funding to support clearance Lancashire Fire and Rescue will revert to a defensive approach which will mean the blaze could last for months and the risk of further fires will remain.

An urgent decision is required to ensure the team undertaking the works continue on site and remove as much waste as possible before the holiday break. Thus mitigating the worst health impacts at a time when many more residents will be at home.

Partners have discussed funding options available. Government support has been requested and a response is awaited.

In any emergency the main priority is the safety and wellbeing of our residents. The longer the fire continues the greater the risk to residents. Furthermore the greater the risk to the 50 or businesses who operate from the same area, many of which are already experiencing significant loss of income/ increase in costs. There are also significant impacts to the environment to be considered, particularly because of the proximity to the River Lune.

The Chief Executive is empowered to authorise any action reasonably necessary to protect the health, safety or welfare of individuals or the safety of property.

The continued urgent works associated with the major incident require an additional financial contribution of up to (£650k) and will come from the Council's reserves. Efforts will continue to seek contributions from partners and the Government to offset this cost to Lancaster City Council. (At this stage however no offer of contribution has been forthcoming following requests to partners)

Without this urgent intervention from Lancaster City Council the clearance efforts will stop and the blaze will continue.

The Leader, portfolio holder and s151 Officer have all been consulted and agree with this approach.

For the avoidance of doubt, this further financial commitment will ensure all waste is removed from site, resulting in the conclusion of the fire and ensuring the site is secured. It does not include the demolition of the remaining buildings on the site.

The primary concern continues to be to support the effective management of a major incident and the potential impact on the wider community. All avenues to recover costs will continued to be pursued as a matter of priority.

**IS THE DECISION URGENT**

**YES**

**THIS IS A LIVE MAJOR INCIDENT REQUIRING DYNAMIC DECISION. THIS IS SUPPORTED BY LANCASHIRE FIRE & RESCUE.**

I can confirm that this decision is urgent as any delay likely to be caused by the Call-in process would seriously prejudice the Council's or the public's interests and therefore is not subject to Call-in. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee has been consulted . I hereby agree both that the decision proposed is reasonable, in all the circumstances, and to it being treated as a matter of urgency.

Chief Executive

**SIGNATURE OF DECISION TAKER:**

Mark Davies

**DATE:**

15/12/23

**REF NO.**

UB136

**DATE DECISION TAKEN:**

15/12/23

**IMPLEMENTATION DATE ( publication day + 5 working days):**

**DATE DECISION PUBLISHED:**

15/12/23

Immediate: Call-in waived