



Minutes of the Council meeting held at the Civic Centre, Poulton-le-Fylde on Thursday 16 October, 2014.

Councillors present:

The Mayor, Councillor Shewan

Councillor Anderson	Councillor R Gandhi	Councillor Ormrod
Councillor E Anderton	Councillor Gibson	Councillor Robinson
Councillor M Anderton	Councillor Hargreaves	Councillor Smith
Councillor Balmain	Councillor Henderson	Councillor B Stephenson
Councillor Bannister	Councillor Hewitt	Councillor E Stephenson
Councillor Beavers	Councillor Hodgkinson	Councillor Swift
Councillor Berry	Councillor Jones	Councillor T Taylor
Councillor B Birch	Councillor Kay	Councillor V Taylor
Councillor C Birch	Councillor Lawrenson	Councillor Treece-Birch
Councillor Bowen	Councillor Lees	Councillor Turner
Councillor Bridge	Councillor Martin	Councillor A Vincent
Councillor Catterall	Councillor MacNaughton	Councillor M Vincent
Councillor Collinson	Councillor McCann	Councillor Walmsley
Councillor R Duffy	Councillor Moon	Councillor Williams
Councillor M Gandhi	Councillor Murphy	Councillor Wilson

Apologies: The Deputy Mayor (Cllr Rogers), Councillors Amos, Lady Atkins, Brooks, I. Duffy, Greenhough, McKay, Newsham and Pimbley.

Officers present:

Garry Payne (Chief Executive)
Philippa Davies (Corporate Director, Resources)
Michael Ryan (Corporate Director, People and Places)
Nikki Wilcock (Communications Manager)
Roy Saunders (Democratic Services and Scrutiny Manager)
Peter Foulsham (Democratic Services Officer)

Also present: 28 members of the public and 1 representative of the press.

COU.47 Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 4 September 2014 be confirmed as a correct record.

COU.48 Declarations of Interest

None.

COU.49 Announcements

The Mayor reminded Members that the Festival of Remembrance was taking place at 7.30pm on Saturday 8 November at the Marine Hall.

He said that he would like to take this opportunity to ask Councillors, if they possibly could, to donate raffle prizes for forthcoming Mayor's Charity Events including the festival of remembrance and the Mayor's Ball. He said that any such donations would be much appreciated and would be a significant help in raising funds for a very worthy cause.

The Economy Portfolio Holder (Councillor Murphy) announced that the Rossall Observatory Building had received the Small Project Award at the Institution of Structural Engineers 2014 North West Awards. He presented the certificate to the Mayor.

COU.50 Presentation

None

COU.51 Public Questions, Statements and Petitions.

The Mayor reported that nominations had been received under Procedural Rule 9 from two members of the public, Mr Philip Howarth and Mrs Ethel Brookes, who wished to make a statement about the proposed closure of the Poulton Community Welfare Centre, otherwise known as the Teanlowe Day Centre, Queensway Poulton-le-Fylde.

Mr. Howarth made a presentation to the Council. He said that, with the support of Ethel Brookes, the Chairperson of the Centre Committee, he was speaking on behalf of the 100 volunteers and approximately 150 centre users. More than 500 people had already signed a petition in support of keeping the centre open. He said that Lancashire Age UK had also expressed a willingness to have a role in the future operation of the day centre.

Mr. Howarth said that there was a significant demand for the facilities provided by the day centre and that the growing elderly population in the area would inevitably lead to a further increase in demand.

He said that the Council had described the day centre as an “under performing asset” which had been very discouraging to the volunteers and users of the centre, which was open 6 days a week from 10am to 1pm.

He said that the Council's real concern was that the building did not generate income in rent or rates and that maintenance costs were incurred. He said, however, that the Committee had spent £6,500 in the past 3 years fitting a new kitchen and carpet, paid for cleaning and made a contribution towards utility bills.

He said that a Council official had refused to provide him with the maintenance figures or an assessment of potential rental income. The same Council official had also referred to the possibility of the day centre relocating to a different site and had mentioned the Civic Centre as a possibility. He said that this was unbelievable because the centre had been purpose built about 40 years ago on its current site because it was in the very centre of Poulton, on flat land with disabled access, in very close proximity to the services and shops used by elderly people.

Mr Howarth commented that there was no other suitable site available for the day centre. He referred to the Social Care Act 2012 which he said required Wyre Borough Council to have a social care policy and asked to be provided with a copy after the meeting.

Users of the centre were split equally between male and female and about 70% were living alone.

He said that the facilities provided by the centre were a significant help to a number of people suffering from loneliness, depression and dementia. He said that if the centre closed the additional cost to the Council, the National Health Service and other public sector providers would be significantly greater than the income received from rent and rates from an alternative occupier.

He suggested, as a way forward, that representatives of the Council should sit round a table with Lancashire Age UK, the Committee and any other potential users to consider how increased and better use could be made of the centre. He said that the involvement of Lancashire Age UK was a wonderful opportunity for the Council and all residents of the Borough. He said, for example, that it might be feasible to allocate part of the building for retail use whilst retaining the day centre. He said, however, that the fight to keep the centre open would continue until the notice to terminate the lease was withdrawn. He said that he did not intend to present the petition containing 500 signatures against closure at this stage but, if necessary, he would return to the next Council meeting with an increased number of signatures.

(The Mayor said that Mr Howarth had been given more than the 5 minutes specified in the Council's Constitution to make his statement but, as Mrs Brookes had indicated that she did not wish to speak, he had allowed Mr Howarth extra time).

The Resources Portfolio Holder (Councillor A Vincent) responded to the statement made by Mr. Howarth. He explained that the delivery of social care services was not a statutory responsibility of Wyre Borough Council but, in this area, was part of the remit of Lancashire County Council. He said that a day centre for elderly people would not normally be run or supported by a district council. He acknowledged that, historically, the centre had been built in 1972 by the former Poulton-le-Fylde Urban District Council and when Wyre Borough Council had been established in 1974, it had taken on responsibility for the building.

He said that he had every sympathy with the day centre management committee. He pointed out, however, that the Council was operating in extreme financial conditions and had cut its budget by 42% in recent years whilst still managing to freeze the council tax for the benefit of all local residents. He said it was inevitable that the Council would have to look for further savings in the future. He stressed though, that the Council was prepared to form partnerships to maintain and improve the efficiency of service delivery wherever possible. He said that the willingness of Lancashire Age UK to be involved in the future operation of a day centre was very interesting and he would be happy to talk to them.

Councillor Vincent said that the Centre had cost the Council approximately £19,000 in the last financial year and that the estimated rental value of the premises was between £30,000 and £35,000 per annum. He said that a 1% increase in the Council Tax generated approximately £60,000, which hopefully explained why the Council had to review this as an asset. The Council had to consider possible development opportunities, particularly as a wider re-development of the Teanlowe Centre was currently taking place. He said that a "soft marketing" exercise had been carried out but no specific interest had so far been expressed. He stressed that the Council had no immediate intention to close the day centre. He said, however, that he could not make any guarantees that it would not have to close in the future.

Councillor Vincent said, in conclusion, that he would be happy to meet with representatives of the day centre management committee and Lancashire Age UK to discuss future options.

Mr Howarth asked, in a short supplementary statement, to be given a detailed breakdown of how the cost of £19,000 had been calculated and also asked if the costs for the Civic Centre could be provided to him.

Councillor Vincent said that he would arrange for both sets of figures to be provided to Mr Howarth.

COU.52 Questions “On Notice” from Councillors

None.

COU.53 Executive Reports

(a) Leader of the Council

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Gibson) submitted a report.

He said that since his report had been written, the Police and Crime Panel had been informed that the Deputy Policy and Crime Commissioner for Lancashire was being investigated by the Independent Police Complaints Commission following allegations of misconduct. He said that limited information had been provided to the Police and Crime Panel and that the allegation had been reported in a national Sunday newspaper prior to the agenda papers being published.

Councillor Gibson said that he agreed with the comments made by Councillor T Taylor that it was not acceptable for residents of Fleetwood to have to wait 3 weeks for an appointment with their General Practitioner, but he pointed out doctors services were not a Council responsibility.

The Chief Executive advised, following comments made on a review of polling stations required as a consequence of proposed ward boundary changes, that it was his responsibility as Returning Officer for local elections to undertake such a review of polling stations and it was not within the remit of the Leader of the Council.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(b) Resources Portfolio Holder

The Resource Portfolio Holder (Councillor A Vincent) submitted a report.

Councillor A Vincent provided an update on the negotiations taking place on local government pay, referred to in paragraph 3.2 of his report. He said that there had been an increased pay offer which would amount to approximately 2.2% over 2 years. The Unions had called off the strike day scheduled for 14 October to enable their members to be consulted.

Councillor E Anderton welcomed the unqualified audit report received by the Council and congratulated the finance officers on their efficient management of the Council's accounts. However, she expressed some concern that there was an outstanding action point from 2012/13 concerning the lack of a definitive central list of fixed assets. She said that she was aware that there had been some staff sickness in the Estates Team and asked whether that team was sufficiently resourced.

Councillor A Vincent confirmed that there had been some sickness in the Estates Team and that had inevitably had some impact on the work of the team. He said it was correct that a definitive list of assets was not yet complete, but hoped that it would be finalised soon. He said he was not familiar with the details of the computer system used by the Estates Team referred to by Councillor E Anderton, but said that he would obtain information about the implementation of the system from the Director of People and Places and provide a written response to Councillor E Anderton.

Councillor A Vincent said that he would provide a written response to Councillor Hewitt on the cost of the training sessions to be provided to all third tier managers as referred to in Paragraph 3 of his report.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(c) Street Scene Portfolio Holder

The Street Scene Portfolio Holder (Councillor V Taylor) submitted a report.

Councillor V Taylor said that the restoration works to the war memorial in the Memorial Park at Fleetwood would hopefully be completed in time for the remembrance parade to be held on 11 November.

Councillor V Taylor said, in response to questions from Councillor B Stephenson about the lack of bins at Wesley Court in Fleetwood, that the need for further bins in the area was being assessed and he would have a response soon.

Councillor B Birch said that, having recently walked around Memorial Park, he had some concerns about the quality of work on the renewed rendering to the archway which, in his view, was substandard. Councillor V Taylor said that she would ask the relevant officers to check that the work was being carried out properly.

Councillor MacNaughton referred to problems with fly-tipping in Saltash Road in Burn Naze. He acknowledged that the tipping was on private land, but asked if there was anything the Council could do to improve the situation for local residents. He asked, for example, whether concrete blocks could be provided to prevent vehicular access. Councillor V Taylor said that she doubted whether it would be possible to provide concrete blocks, but said that she would ask the Council's officers to investigate. She urged Councillor MacNaughton to encourage local residents to report all incidences of fly-tipping so that they could be recorded on the Council's CRM system and be responded to.

RESOLVED that the reported be noted.

(d) Economy Portfolio Holder

The Economy Portfolio Holder (Councillor Murphy) submitted a report.

He said that a lot of effort had gone into the bid for Coastal Communities Funding referred to in paragraph 2.1 of his report and he expressed disappointment about the way the scheme had been referred to in a recent Labour Party newsletter, which did not acknowledge the involvement of Wyre Council.

Councillor Murphy said that he shared some of the frustrations expressed by Councillor M Anderton about seeing boats return to Marine Lake. He hoped that it would be resolved fairly soon.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(e) Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder

The Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder (Councillor Berry) submitted a report.

Councillor Berry said, in response to comments made by Councillor B Stephenson, that he had not at any time said that free parking would be provided at the Jubilee Gardens car park. He said, however, that he would ask the Council's officers to consider other potential uses for that car park, which he acknowledged had not been well used.

Councillor Berry said, in response to a question from Councillor M Anderton, that the workshop event planned for 23 October about proposals for the lagoon area behind the Rossall sea defences, referred to in paragraph 2.3 of his report, would be open to invited residents and would be held at the Marine Hall.

The Chief Executive advised that the Council's Constitution (paragraph 11.3 of the Council Procedure Rules) stated that:

“Any Member of Council may ask a question or make a comment to the Leader or the relevant Portfolio Holder on the contents of their report or on any issue which falls within their area of responsibility. A maximum of 10 minutes will be allocated for questions or comments to and responses by each Member of the Cabinet.”

In his view, reference to “Any Member” meant that the Leader of the Council was not precluded from asking a question or making a comment on the report of the Neighbourhood Services Portfolio Holder. However, the Mayor declined to call the Leader to speak because he said that, in his view, the purpose of the Executive Member reports was to enable non-executive Members to hold the Cabinet to account and he did not think it was fair for the very limited time available to be taken up by one member of the Cabinet asking questions of another.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

(f) Leisure and Cultural Portfolio Holder

The Leisure and Cultural Portfolio Holder (Councillor Bowen) submitted a report.

Councillor Bowen said in response to a question from Councillor Lees that she did not know how many times the open theatre area at the Marine Hall had been used, but she would find out and send a written response to him.

RESOLVED that the reported be noted.

COU.54 Localised Council Tax Support

The Resources Portfolio Holder (Councillor A Vincent and the Corporate Director of Resources submitted a report on proposed arrangements for the continuation of the current Localised Council Tax Support Scheme, which had originally been implemented on 1 April 2013.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the current Localised Council Tax Support Scheme be continued into the 2015/16 financial year with the additional maximum percentage contribution from working age claimants being no more than 8.5%.
- (2) That the original policy be confirmed, recognising that it included a number of specified amounts used to calculate entitlement

which might change in line with up-ratings published by the Department of Work and Pensions, that there might also be minor adjustments to the scheme should further guidance be received from the Department for Communities and Local Government and that the roll-out of Universal Credits would ultimately replace existing benefits.

COU.55 Appointments to Committees 2014/15

The Leader of the Council (Councillor Gibson) and the Chief Executive submitted a report on changes to the political balance of the Council and proposed consequential changes to appointments to Committees. The Leader thanked Cllr MacNaughton for his involvement to date.

RESOLVED

- (1) That the resignation of Councillor MacNaughton from the Conservative Group be noted.
- (2) That Councillor McKay be appointed to the Audit Committee, in place of Councillor MacNaughton, for the remainder of the 2014/15 Council year.
- (3) That Councillor C Birch be appointed to the Licensing Committee, in place of Councillor MacNaughton, for the remainder of the 2014/15 Council year.
- (4) That Councillor Jones be appointed as the Shaping Your Neighbourhood Leader Member for Thornton, in place of Councillor MacNaughton, for the remainder of the 2014/15 Council year.

COU.56 Ethical Standards – Appointment of an Independent Person

The Chairman of the Standards Committee (Councillor B Birch) and the Monitoring Officer submitted a report on arrangements for the appointment of an Independent Person to meet the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

RESOLVED that Mr Tony Mozley be appointed as the Council's Independent Person for ethical standard issues, on an interim basis, until a more permanent appointment could be made.

COU.57 Notices of Motion

- (1) The “bedroom tax” and the “Affordable Homes Bill”

Councillors Beavers, Martin, E Anderton, M Anderton, Smith and E Stephenson submitted the following Notice of Motion, in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Council Procedure Rules:

“Wyre Borough Council believe that the government’s Single Persons Discount commonly referred to as the ‘Bedroom Tax’ is an unnecessary burden on hard-working families and is having devastating consequences on those affected by its implementation in Wyre.

This Council supports the ‘Affordable Homes Bill’ currently passing through Parliament, and welcomes it as a first step towards the abolition of the ‘Bedroom Tax’. Council notes with concern, however that Members of Parliament for Wyre Eric Ollerenshaw, Ben Wallace and Paul Maynard all voted against it during the second reading.

This Council registers its opposition to the Single Persons Discount ‘Bedroom Tax’ and resolves to call on the Secretary of State for the Department of Works and Pensions, Rt Hon Ian Duncan Smith MP, and all Wyre MPs, to support the Affordable Homes Bill as a first step towards its abolition.”

Councillor Beavers and Councillor Martin, as the proposer and seconder of the motion, sought the consent of Council to withdraw their motion but, following a vote, consent to withdraw the motion was not granted, 14 Members voting in favour and 38 against.

Councillor Beavers then proposed and Councillor Martin seconded an amendment to replace the words “*single persons discount*” in the first line of the motion with the words “*spare room subsidy*”.

However, the amendment was not carried, 12 Members voting in favour and 34 against. The original motion submitted was therefore then debated.

Following the debate, the Councillors voted as follows:

In support of the motion 13
Against the motion 33

RESOLVED that the motion was not supported.

2. A Local Plan for Wyre

Councillors Martin, B Stephenson, E Stephenson and Treece-Birch submitted the following notice of motion, in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Council Procedure Rules:

"The current lack of a Local Plan is leaving our borough wide open to planning applications which potentially fail to meet the needs of our community but rather seem to meet the profit margins of developers.

This Council asks all members to support the Local Plan timetable and ensure adequate resources be made available if required.

Failure to deliver according to the timetable will potentially mean we fall short in delivering the best outcomes for our residents, that is we could fail to deliver the right homes in the right places."

The motion was formerly proposed by Councillor Martin and seconded by Councillor B Stephenson.

Following a debate Councillor B Stephenson, supported by Councillors Beavers, Treece-Birch and Martin requested a recorded vote under Paragraph 19.4 of the Council Procedure Rules.

The following Members voted in support of motion:

Councillors E Anderton, M Anderton, Beavers, R Duffy, Martin, Shewan, Smith, B Stephenson, E Stephenson, T Taylor and Treece-Birch.

The following Members voted against the motion:

Councillors Anderson, Balmain, Bannister, Berry, B Birch, C Birch, Bowen, Bridge, Catterall, Collinson, M Gandhi, R Gandhi, Gibson, Hargreaves, Henderson, Hewitt, Hodgkinson, Jones, Kay, D. Lawrenson, MacNaughton, McCann, Murphy, Ormrod, Robinson, Swift, V Taylor, Turner, A Vincent, M Vincent, Walmsley, Williams and Wilson.

Councillor Lees abstained.

The motion was therefore lost by 33 votes to 11 with 1 abstention.

RESOLVED that the Motion was not approved.

The meeting started at 7.00 pm and finished at 9.10 pm

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