



MINUTES

Council

Date:	Monday, 12 February 2024
Venue:	Town Hall, St Annes.
Committee Members Present:	Mayor Councillor Cheryl Little Deputy Mayor Councillor Peter Anthony Councillors Frank Andrews, Karen Buckley, Edward Collins, Chris Dixon, Sue Fazackerley MBE, Joanne Gardner, Ellie Gaunt, Noreen Griffiths, Gavin Harrison, Paul Hodgson, John Kirkham, Jordan Ledger, Matthew Lee, Michelle Morris, Ed Nash, Jayne Nixon, Sandra Pitman, Richard Redcliffe, Andrew Redfearn, Vince Settle, William Taylor, Tommy Threlfall, Viv Willder, Michael Withers.
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Ross McKelvie, Colin Dockery, Katharine McDonnell, Kassie Navarasi and Sharon Wadsworth.
Other Attendees:	Councillors Mark Bamforth and Peter Collins (via remote access) ¹ Seven members of the public

Prayers were led by Lay Preacher, Ms Elizabeth O'Connor.

1. Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that any disclosable pecuniary interests should be declared as required by the Localism Act 2011 and any personal or prejudicial interests should be declared as required by the Council's Code of Conduct for Members.

Councillors Bamforth, Nixon and Pitman declared pecuniary interests in item 8, Council Tax Reduction Scheme 20245/25. They left the room for the duration of the item (Councillor Bamforth removed himself from the remote connection).

2. Confirmation of Minutes

RESOLVED: To approve the minutes of the Council meetings held on 18 December 2023, as correct records for signature by the Mayor.

3. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor thanked all the attendees at her recent Fine Dining fundraising event at Lytham Hall, she also asked that her thanks and appreciation be extended to the staff at Lytham Hall for a fabulous evening.

The Mayor announced her forthcoming fundraising events, a Cheese and Wine evening on 2nd March, her Mayoral Ball on 23rd March and a May the Fourth Be With You BBQ at Lytham Hall on 4 May.

The Mayor spoke about her recent attendance at a ceremony for Lancashire recipients of the King's Awards for Voluntary Service. She advised the award was the equivalent to an MBE, and was the highest honour to be given to local voluntary groups in the UK. She was delighted to report that two of the eight voluntary organisations

¹ Council procedure rule 2 allows a councillor to participate in a meeting remotely in certain circumstances. A remotely participating councillor is not deemed to be present at the meeting and may not move, second or vote on any matter.

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honoured where Fylde based, the United Youth Alliance, founded by Deborah Terras in 2018, and responsible for creating opportunities for young people, and the Friends of Newton Community Park, who had transformed a local park. She offered congratulations to both the organisations for being recognised for their work and being bestowed with the honour. The Mayor spoke of the great volunteer capital in Fylde with its abundance of community groups, and encouraged her fellow Councillors to consider future nominations for these groups. She requested that the link to the nomination website be inserted into the minutes. [The King's Award for Voluntary Service - official website \(dcms.gov.uk\)](https://dcms.gov.uk)

She concluded by sending the King well wishes on behalf of the borough following his recent cancer diagnosis.

4. Chief Executive's Communications

There were no communications on this occasion.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

Two questions had been received from members of the public.

The first was from Ms Daniels:

"Following the publication of the Scrutiny Committee's report on the upsurge of children's homes from 18 to 28 in the Fylde from September 2022 to September 2023, please can the Council advise on how many children's care homes are required in the Fylde area to support demand?"

The chairman of Internal Affairs Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Fazackerley, responded, advising that the recent scrutiny review had identified there was a significant oversupply of children's care homes for the required local need in Lancashire. Fylde Borough had seen the biggest growth of these facilities of any Lancashire borough. However, despite this apparent oversupply Lancashire County Council still had difficulties finding suitable placements for Lancashire children within Lancashire.

The opening of the homes was market led with no oversight of requirement of need by any public body. The majority of homes only take 1-2 children and therefore do not need planning permission. However if it were considered a material change, and a planning application was made, it was to plan for the minimum required need and a cap on the number of homes could not be used.

The second question was from Mr Cridland:

"My question is, will the Council be taking further steps beyond those in the Scrutiny Report, and if so what steps? I was one amongst the many members of the public who attended the last Scrutiny Committee meeting about Children's Care Homes in the Fylde. The report outlined the serious issues and problems that are developing and growing in the Fylde. It was a good report, but could have gone further. The recommendations felt inadequate in the face of the problems. I can think of several areas where Fylde Council could do a lot more than is proposed. So my question is, will the Council be taking further steps beyond those in the Scrutiny Report, and if so what steps?"

The lead member for social wellbeing, Councillor Dixon, responded, advising that a number of further steps had been taken since the publication of the report. The scrutiny report highlighted there were significant gaps in regulatory and legislative oversight. There was currently around four times the number of beds required to meet the needs of Lancashire children. However the County Council was still struggling to find appropriate places for Lancashire children as the operators of the care homes were accepting more lucrative placements from local authorities further afield.

Fylde responsibilities were only through the planning process, and at present national guidance was clear a full planning application was not required for small children's homes, unless there was an objection. However any objection must be considered in planning terms, and need cannot be considered as there is no defined term in the legislation.

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He advised the council was exploring if there was a better mechanism to deal with these applications, and was speaking to neighbouring authorities to examine their processes. Some have required that each application come before Planning committee, but the operators had advised they would soon be challenging that approach.

The reviews findings and concerns had been presented to Government and the council was awaiting a response.

In asking a supplementary question, Mr Cridland asked if Councillor Dixon thought there was democratic deficit in the council's inability to respond.

Councillor Dixon advised he had demonstrated what additional steps the council was taking.

6. Questions from Members of the Council

There were no questions from members of the council on this occasion.

7. Notice of Motion – Freedom of the Borough

Councillor Karen Buckley, council leader, proposed the following motion:

"I ask the Council to recognise the contribution that Sir Bill Beaumont GBE DL has made to services to rugby on an international stage following an illustrious career. As many members will know, Sir Bill played rugby for Fylde, for Lancashire and he became England captain in 1978.

He led England in 21 of his 34 caps with a particular highlight of his career in 1980 when he led them to their first grand slam since 1957.

After retiring from rugby he became a well-loved personality in the TV schedules as one of the team captains in the BBC's "A Question of Sport".

Sir Bill Beaumont has not only subsequently driven transformational governance reform in support of world rugby, but he has also driven improvements for player welfare and wellbeing.

Sir Bill has also made a great contribution to the local community, and he is involved in many charities both local, national and international. Sir Bill also supports the Lord-Lieutenant in her duties as His Majesty's representative in Lancashire where he acts as a Deputy Lieutenant at various events throughout the county.

This exceptional service to rugby was recognised with a knighthood in 2018, followed by his recent award for the Knight Grand Cross in this New Year's Honours list. I would like to propose that Fylde Council honours this fine Lancastrian, and Fylde citizen, by conferring on him the honour of freedom of the borough. I ask members to join me in supporting this motion."

Councillor Redcliffe seconded the motion and paid tribute to Sir Bill. Councillor Dixon also spoke in support of the motion.

It was unanimously RESOLVED to make arrangements to confer the honour of freedom of the borough on Sir Bill Beaumont GBE DL.

8. Council Tax Reduction Scheme 2024/25

Councillor Gaunt, lead member for finance and resources, introduced the report which set out the proposals in respect of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (CTRS) for 2024/25. She explained the scheme assisted people were on low incomes or claimed certain benefits to pay some of their council tax bills.

Councillor Gaunt advised that the consultation responses from the preceptors had been supportive of the proposed scheme and had suggested no amendments. The scheme proposed that the reduction made at the end of the assessment for working age claimants was again a 22.7% reduction.

She advised that the costs of the scheme meant that it would be broadly self funding, in that the level of support offered was in line with the level of grant funding offered by the government. The scheme proposed meant that the level of support provided in 2023/24 was retained for the 2024/25 CTRS.

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She concluded by advising that it was further proposed that the scheme for 2024/25 would continue to provide for an additional discretionary award which may also be granted in accordance with S13A (1) (a) or S13A (1) (c) of the Local Government Finance Act 2012.

Councillor Dixon seconded.

Having due regard to the equality analysis as detailed in section 5 of this report it was RESOLVED:

1. To approve the continuation of the existing CTRS scheme for 2024/25 as set out in section 3 of this report;
2. To approve the continuation of Discretionary Hardship Relief for 2024/25 to provide additional support for claimants in exceptional circumstances;
3. To approve, as necessary, that the financial implications are reflected in the council's revenue budget and financial forecast for 2024/25 onwards.

(Councillors Pitman and Nixon left the room for the duration of the item. Councillor Bamforth removed himself from the remote connection).

9. Medium Term Financial Strategy - Financial Forecast Update 2023/24 to 2027/28

Councillor Gaunt, lead member for finance and resources, introduced the update of the financial forecast for the council for the five years 2023/24 to 2027/28.

She explained that the main purpose of the updated forecast was to reflect the impact of the provisional 2024/25 local government finance settlement, details of which were announced on 18th December 2023. However it was a single year settlement and assumptions beyond the current year were difficult to forecast as a result.

She advised there was a forecast surplus of £425k for 2023/24 and a surplus of £266k for 2024/25, with sizeable deficits thereafter. These forecasts were with assumed increases of 2.99% per annum to council tax. Other updates to the forecast included the inclusion of a forecasted increased income from fees and charges taking effect from 2024/25, and favourable movements in investment interest receipts.

Councillor Withers seconded.

It was therefore RESOLVED to note and approve the implications of the updated financial forecast.

10. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2024-25

Councillor Redcliffe, deputy leader of the council, presented the report advising that the Localism Act required all local authorities to produce an annual pay policy statement. The statement provided details of the pay policy for Fylde Council. It set out the remuneration arrangements for chief officers, and the arrangements in place for all employees, with the objective of the statement to ensure that the council operated open, transparent, and fair pay policy arrangements.

Fylde Council was committed to paying all employees appropriately and fairly through the implementation of recognised job evaluation schemes. Pay scales for all employees at all levels were in the public domain, with data published for senior salaries in the interests of transparency. In all matters relating to pay and remuneration the council complies with all relevant employment legislation.

To reflect a recent legislative change, the gender pay gap information would be published online, to be updated each year.

Councillor Harrison seconded.

It was RESOLVED to approve the pay policy statement, included as Appendix 1 to the report, along with the required statement on gender pay gap information.

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