



MINUTES

Council

Date:	Monday, 15 February 2021
Venue:	Via Zoom
Members Present:	Mayor (Councillor Angela Jacques) Deputy Mayor (Councillor Richard Redcliffe) Councillors Ben Aitken, Frank Andrews, Peter Anthony, Mark Bamforth, Brenda Blackshaw, Paula Brearley, Julie Brickles, Karen Buckley, Alan Clayton, Delma Collins, Peter Collins, Chris Dixon, Sue Fazackerley MBE, Ellie Gaunt, Brian Gill, Shirley Green, Noreen Griffiths, Peter Hardy, Will Harris, Gavin Harrison, Paul Hayhurst, Karen Henshaw, Paul Hodgson, John Kirkham, Matthew Lee, Cheryl Little, Michelle Morris, Kiran Mulholland, Ed Nash, Sally Nash-Walker, Jayne Nixon, Linda Nulty, David O'Rourke, Bobby Rigby, Michael Sayward, Vince Settle, Elaine Silverwood, John Singleton JP, Roger Small, Ray Thomas, Tommy Threlfall, Stan Trudgill, Viv Willder, Michael Withers.
Officers Present:	Allan Oldfield, Tracy Manning, Ian Curtis, Sharon Wadsworth, Katharine McDonnell, Hannah Kirk, Kassie Naravassi and the Reverend Christopher Scargill.

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. There were no declarations of interest on this occasion.

2. Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 7 December 2020 were agreed as a correct record.

3. Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor advised that it had been nice to take part in the virtual Holocaust memorial event, held on the 27th January 2021, hosted by the synagogue in St Annes. The mayor also hosted a virtual Covid Heroes evening, held on 4th February 2021, to pay tribute to the volunteers in the community for the work they had done and were continuing to do to help the public during the pandemic.

4. Chief Executive's Communications

The Chief Executive had none on this occasion.

5. Questions from Members of the Council

Two questions had been received from Members of the Council.

Councillor Brian Gill asked

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“Over recent months, it has become noticeable that dog fouling has become an increasing issue, especially around the popular attractions in our Borough. Whilst most dog owners act in a responsible way, the disrespect for the ‘bag it and bin it’ rule seems to have become more apparent due to the increase in dog ownership resulting from lockdown measures.

This increase in fouling also coincides with the decision by the Council to remove the over zealous contracted enforcement agency.

Can the Council please inform our residents when appropriate enforcement is to be reintroduced as clearly the current arrangements and signage do not provide sufficient deterrent.

At the same time, could the Council reinforce the issue of littering, which would help out those members of the public who have been so conscientious and responsible in their continued collection of bags full of discarded waste.”

Councillor Roger Small responded, advising that there had been a national increase in dog fouling and littering in general and it was not an isolated issue to the local area. The environment team were currently in the process of recruiting enforcement officers to help tackle the issues raised. Councillor Small thanked the army of volunteer litter picking groups for the tremendous work in helping to keep their community and environment clean. Reports of dog fouling or litter can be reported at listening@fyld.gov or 01253 658658 where teams will be dispatched to deal with complaints.

Councillor Gill thanked Councillor Small for his response.

Councillor Matthew Lee asked

“Despite the ongoing Coronavirus Pandemic, the Government has just confirmed that it intends to still hold local elections at the beginning of May.

Whilst I am encouraged by the current Covid vaccine rollout and grateful for the incredible work being undertaken by the NHS, I believe that there are far too many uncertainties to guarantee that this date in May will be safe.

We are currently in Lockdown, 6th May is only 11 weeks away and the entire electorate will be asked to leave their homes to either post their votes or, even worse, descend en masse to a local Polling Station. There is no better way to spread the virus than to make an entire community descend on a single central location on the same day. As such, this will deter many of the more vulnerable member of our community from voting at all.

Furthermore, all these votes will then need to be counted manually by members of our staff. This is not only an unacceptable health risk to those involved in the count but a massive increase in workload on a workforce which has already had to endure unprecedented disruption in the workplace. Even if the Pandemic ended today, it would be doubtful that this Council and its staff would be back to 100% efficiency and have all its backlogs cleared by May.

I would like to ask if this Council is confident that we can guarantee the health and safety of the electorate, our staff and volunteers if the voting goes ahead in May and if not, shouldn't we make our concerns known to the Government?”

Councillor Karen Buckley responded, advising that Government had confirmed that the May polls would go ahead as planned, with council, Mayoral and Police and Crime Commissioner elections taking place alongside a number of local by-elections, and referendums in some areas. Many of these polls were delayed from last year and the Government feels it is important for our democracy that the elections take place even during the pandemic.

Additional funding will be available to local authorities to meet the costs of solutions required to allow these elections to proceed safely. The Electoral Commission had also provided specific guidance for running elections during the pandemic. Staff who must work in proximity to each other during the run-up to the election will work within bubbles and will also undertake weekly lateral flow tests. PPE equipment had been ordered jointly across the Lancashire councils with appropriate risk assessments being put in place to ensure that our polling stations are COVID- secure for our voters.

Every confidence was expressed that the council's officers would operate with the utmost professionalism and put staff and public safety first whilst allowing the democratic process to continue.

Councillor Lee thanked Councillor Buckley for her response.

6. Questions from Members of the Public

No questions had been received from members of the public on this occasion.

7. Financial Forecast Update 2020/21 to 2024/25 (Position as at January 2021)

Councillor Karen Buckley, Leader of the Council, provided the latest update to the financial forecast. She advised that since the update was last presented to Council in December the Local Government Finance Settlement had been announced, the impact of which had been reflected in the update.

As expected, it was a single year roll over settlement for 2021/22. The government had also announced a further delay to the Fair Funding review, which was a review into the future of local government funding. The Fair Funding Review had previously been delayed by Brexit negotiations and was now delayed due to the pandemic.

The single year settlement confirmed the continuation of business rate pooling, and that all existing Lancashire pool members, including Fylde, had indicated that they wished to remain in the pool for 2021/22.

A single year settlement for New Homes Bonus (NHB) had also been confirmed, which had permitted Fylde to confirm the 5% allocation to Town & Parish Councils for the coming year, this amounted to £58k.

Additionally, the settlement provided a Lower Tier Services Grant, for borough and district councils, which amounted to £379k for Fylde. Government were awarding this grant to ensure the council's spending power remained at the current assumed level. He advised this was calculated on the assumption that Council Tax was increased to the maximum permitted level (without the need for a referendum), which for Fylde was £5 for a Band D property or 2.5%. This grant, together with an additional covid support grant of £392k was reflected in the update.

The updated forecast projected a surplus of £1.5m for 2020/21 and a surplus of £2m for 2021/22 before a deficit for 2022/23, and beyond, due to uncertainty surrounding the future of local government funding.

Councillor Vince Settle seconded the proposal.

It was RESOVLED:-

1. To approve the updated financial forecast; and
2. To note that following the confirmation of the amount of New Homes Bonus grant to be received for 2021/22, allocations of a proportion of this grant to town and parish councils have been calculated in the total sum of £58,049 in accordance with the decision of the Finance and Democracy Committee on this matter at the meeting of 23rd November 2020.

8. Appointment of Independent Persons

Councillor John Singleton, advised that following the death of Mr Mozley in May, a new Independent Person had been recruited and Council's approval for the appointment was sought.

He advised that the role was a statutory one required as part of the standards process. The council was also requested to consider confirming the term of office for the existing two Independent Persons for a further three-year term. The roles were shared with Blackpool Council under a previously approved sharing arrangement.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Ellie Gaunt.

It was RESOLVED:

1. To recommend to Council that Mr Peter Clements be appointed to the role of Independent Person;
2. To agree to appoint Mr Peter Clements, Mr Brian Horrocks and Mrs Helen Broughton as statutory Independent Persons pursuant to Section 28 (7) of the Localism Act 2011, for a period of 3 years until 31 March 2024; and
3. To confirm the continuation of the sharing arrangement with Blackpool Council for the use of the Independent Persons.

9. Corporate Plan 2020-2024 Prioritisation and Delivery

Councillor Karen Buckley introduced an update on the Corporate Plan, as approved at Council on 19 October 2020, incorporating a proposed prioritisation and delivery plan for the Corporate Plan 2020-2024. She advised that committee chairmen and lead officers had considered the priority for each objective and had set a realistic completion date over the four-year period of the plan.

Councillor Buckley advised that the Corporate Plan took into consideration emerging legislation, policy and changes in resources and responsibilities and was informed by partners, elected members and external organisations. The COVID pandemic had led to a change in resource allocation, responsibilities and priorities for the period of the pandemic and for some time after.

Councillor Roger Small seconded the proposal.

It was RESOLVED to approve the priority order and the proposed completion dates for the outcomes in the Corporate Plan 2020-2024 as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report.

10. The Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021

Councillor Karen Buckley presented details of the Pay Policy Statement for Fylde Council, which was required to be adopted annually. She advised that the Policy Statement was in line with the Localism Act and guidance from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government. Following publication of the agenda papers the Treasury, on Friday, 12th February 2021, issued a mandatory direction to disapply the Exit Payment Cap Directions 2021. In light of the new guidance the paragraph on p.39 of the pay policy statement headed “Redundancy Payments, Severance Payments and Retirement” was to be amended to state the previous policy as follows: *All employees including Chief Officers are entitled to redundancy payments and pension release in accordance with the Council’s Redundancy and Retirement Procedure. Where the proposed severance package is more than £100,000, the decision will be ratified by full Council.*

Councillor Vince Settle seconded the proposal, and it was RESOLVED to approve the Pay Policy Statement 2021, as set out in the appendix to the report, with the required statement on Gender Pay Gap information, subject to the alteration to the paragraph headed “Redundancy Payments, Severance Payments and Retirement” as stated above.

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