

## Council

Tuesday, 30th January 2024, 6.30 pm  
Council Chamber, Town Hall, Chorley and YouTube

I am now able to enclose, for consideration at the above meeting of the Council, the following reports that were unavailable when the agenda was published.

<b>Agenda No</b>	<b>Item</b>	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	(Pages 71 - 76)
	The minutes of the extraordinary meeting on 17 January.	
<b>5</b>	<b>Executive Cabinet</b>	(Pages 77 - 78)
	The report from the 18 January meeting.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Groups</b>	(Pages 79 - 82)
	The report from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 25 January.	

Chris Sinnott  
Chief Executive

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**Minutes of Council**

**Meeting date Wednesday, 17 January 2024**

**Committee Members present:** Councillor Tommy Gray (Mayor), Councillor Gordon France (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Michelle Brown, Mark Clifford, Alan Cullens, Karen Derbyshire, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Christine Heydon, Terry Howarth, Hasina Khan, Michelle Beach, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Samantha Martin, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Aidy Riggott, Jean Sherwood, Craige Southern, Arjun Singh, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker, Joan Williamson and Peter Wilson

**Members present virtually (non-voting):** Councillors Samir Khan and Pauline McGovern

**Officers:** Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Dave Whelan (Head of Legal and Procurement) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic Services Team Leader)

**Apologies:** Councillor Alex Hilton, Zara Khan and Chris Snow

A video recording of the public session of this meeting is available to view on [YouTube here](#)

## 66 Declarations of Any Interests

No declarations of interests were made.

## 67 Lancashire Devolution Deal

The Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley, presented the report of the Chief Executive which presented a summary of the proposals to create a combined county authority (CCA) and a devolution deal for Lancashire, and to agree the principles of a response to the consultation.

Councillor Bradley expressed his disappointment by the need for this extraordinary meeting of the Council. He personally had done a great deal of work to progress devolution in Lancashire, and so was disappointed not to be able to support the current proposals.

His aspiration was for a devolution deal similar to that within Manchester and Liverpool. A number of authorities within Lancashire had expressed similar views.

At the start of 2022, the councils of Lancashire (including districts, the county council and unitary councils), agreed an outline proposal for a deal for Greater Lancashire. It was acknowledged that this had been challenging in some authorities.

They did this with the intention that it might provide the basis for discussions with the government in creating a devolution deal for the county. The deal included agreement to a series of principles for working together. These were set out in the report.

Since then, the position had changed. In May 2023 the upper tier authorities in Lancashire (being Lancashire County Council, Blackpool Council and Blackburn with Darwen Council), announced that they were in discussions with the government with the aim of creating a devolution deal for Lancashire.

The intention was that the deal would be a 'level two' deal under the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, with a Combined County Authority which can only include upper tier authorities.

The proposals were now the subject of a consultation, and Councillor Bradley encouraged all members and residents to participate in the consultation process.

Councillor Bradley detailed the proposals which were set out within the report. The proposed consultation response from the Council was also detailed within the report.

Specific concerns about the proposals included

- management of future rounds of the UKSPF
- how the £6 million of capital investment will benefit the whole of the county area
- the need for proposals to be more detailed in recognising the nuances and needs of local areas
- the governance arrangements proposed

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson, supported the comments made by the Leader and noted the proposals were 'light touch' and did not include substantial capital investment across the county.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Alan Cullens, noted it was not possible to change the legislation relating to this. The proposals included £20 million of capital investment and if the deal was rejected there would be no devolution for Lancashire for the foreseeable future.

Views were expressed that any proposals for a directly elected Mayor for Lancashire would not be supported, but this was not currently a proposal. The Police and Crime Commissioner was directly elected for the whole of Lancashire, but a Mayor would have a substantial budget and power in the hands of one person. It was felt by some that Chorley would benefit from the jobs created by the capital investments proposed.

Members debated the proposals, including Councillors Karen Derbyshire, Adrian Lowe, Craige Southern, Pauline McGovern, Aidy Riggott, Mark Clifford.

Supporting points made by the Leader, members expressed concerns relating to the loss of UKSFP funding from the Districts, that the proposals did not go far enough, the potential for further devolved functions and consolidated funding was ambiguous and that the deal was unambitious.

Members of the Opposition highlighted the UKSPF funding would be administered by the Combined Authority and that the consultation was being undertaken by Lancashire County Council.

Disappointment was expressed that the proposals were not supported and built on, following the collaborative work associated with Lancashire 2050 and joint working undertaken regarding UKSPF funding.

Chorley was represented by County members in addition to Borough Councillors. There were opportunities for Chorley with the proposals and work had been positive between partners in delivering functions in the proposals previously. Additional funds were proposed for Cosy Homes as part of the deal.

In response to a query from Councillor Aidy Riggott the Executive Leader noted a letter had been received from the Shadow Minister which echoed the concerns raised and considered future options.

There were also 'worked up' schemes, such as Coppull Railway Station and the Town Centre regeneration scheme which will benefit from the levelling up fund looking to the future. These could benefit from future devolution proposals.

The Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley proposed and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson seconded, the recommendation within the report.

A request was made by Councillor Alistair Bradley, seconded by Councillor Peter Wilson, under the Council Procedure Rule 17(2) for a recorded vote.

For: Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Michelle Brown, Mark Clifford, Karen Derbyshire, Gordon France, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Tommy Gray, Christine Heydon, Terry Howarth, Hasina Khan, Michelle Le Marinel, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Samantha Martin, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, Jean Sherwood, Arjun Singh, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker, Joan Williamson, Peter Wilson

Against: Alan Cullens, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Aidy Riggott, Craige Southern

Abstention: None

It was **Resolved (32:5:0)**

- 1. That the council agrees that the response set out at paragraphs 23 to 25 should form the basis of Chorley Council's response to the consultation.**
- 2. That the Chief Executive be asked to share the council's response to the consultation with local MPs representing the borough.**

**Proposed response**

23. Chorley Council recognises that devolution has the potential to secure significant benefits for Lancashire, bringing decision making and accountability closer to residents. Other areas of the north west, most notably Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region, have already benefited from their devolution deals.

24. Effective devolution should encourage strong economic growth and increased productivity, alongside better health and wellbeing and strengthened public services.

25. Unfortunately, the proposals currently being consulted on are unlikely to lead to those benefits and so Chorley Council cannot support them. The council has some specific concerns about the proposals. These are set out below, referencing the relevant section of the consultation being referred to:

- a. The proposals for management of future rounds of the UKSPF in section one fail to recognise the success of the current round that is currently managed by district councils. Changing it to a more remote body with limited infrastructure to manage successful community schemes will make future success less likely. Chorley Council believes that responsibility for future rounds of UKSPF should remain with district councils.
- b. The provision of £6 million of capital investment to Samesbury Enterprise Zone and £6 million to the Blackburn Technology Innovation Quarter (section one) is welcome investment in the county, but are small scale and limited in geographic impact. The council believes that the upper tier authorities proposing the creation of the CCA need to more clearly explain how future investment will be secured and prioritised, identifying how investment will benefit the whole of the county area.
- c. The devolution of adult education and the core Adult Education Budget at section two is welcome, but the proposals beyond that are currently vague and undeveloped. The partners involved in the CCA need to more clearly explain how skills of a large and diverse county area will be served by programmes that are developed.
- d. The proposals at section three demonstrate the importance for partners who are constituent members in recognising the nuances and needs of local areas, as it makes special arrangements for Blackpool Transport Services. This is important in a county the size of Lancashire, but fails to recognise the particular needs of other areas such as Chorley. The borough of Chorley borders Greater Manchester, and so any devolution deal and CCA need to clearly recognise the importance of cross-border travel to be successful. In addition, the borough has experienced significant growth over the last 15 years. As an area of growth, it has significant needs to strengthened public transport, such as an additional railway station in Coppull and strengthened bus services. The current proposals do nothing to address this and so needs to be strengthened.
- e. Expanding eligibility criteria for Cosy Homes in Lancashire through an additional £2 million of funding at section four is supported, but it must be recognised that the scale of funding is extremely small across the whole county.
- f. The proposals across sections five, six and seven do not appear to add anything that is not already in place across the council. While opening the potential for further discussions with the government and its agencies may be positive, it is not possible to support something with no detail. As with the other sections of the proposals, Chorley Council would welcome

devolution in these areas, but the current proposals need to be stronger and more ambitious to realise Lancashire's potential.

- g. Section eight sets out the governance arrangements for the CCA and devolution deal. Chorley Council does not support the governance arrangements proposed.

They fail to recognise the important role of district councils in understanding and representing local communities. While the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act sets out the rules for membership, the constituent members could provide full voting rights within the CCA constitution to encourage district engagement. In addition, the CCA partners should clearly set out a more comprehensive plan for ensuring that the new arrangements will not just make local government in Lancashire even more complex and confusing for residents, businesses and communities.

Chair

Date

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**Executive Cabinet**

1. Any Cabinet recommendations on the reports that require Council decisions appear as separate items on the agenda.

**General Report of the Meeting Held on 18 January****Draft 24/25 Budget Update**

2. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Finance which set out the council's draft budget for 2024 and 2025, in addition to the forecast for 2025 and 2026. The information reflects the information contained within the provisional Local Government Financial Statement.
3. The Council is in a good position and is not currently at threat of bankruptcy or a Section 114 notice. The council will be able to continue to deliver services, address the needs of residents and achieve our corporate priorities. For 2025 and 2026, the council faces a budget gap of £1.5m, however, this will be approached through efficient saving, investment, and cooperation with partners. We approved the recommendations within the report.

**Payment Strategy**

4. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital which set out the proposed payment strategy which will encourage on demand methods of payments that is easy and intuitive for users. Cash payments will still be accepted at Union Street and the 69 establishments across the borough that accept payment on behalf of the council. We approved the recommendations within the report.

**Updated Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) Delivery Approach 2024-25**

5. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member for Early Intervention, presented the report of the Director of Communities which sought approval to deliver the Holiday Activity and Food (HAF) programme by maintaining the management fee to fund dedicated resources within the Communities team, and to commission HAF delivery partners through a tiered grant funding approach. We approved the recommendations within the report.

**Approval for the Contract Award Procedure for ICT Hardware, Software and Support Services**

6. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member for Resources presented the report of the Director of Customer and Digital which set out the proposed shared procurement for ICT hardware, software, support and to seek agreement to the shared costs and assessment criteria. We approved the recommendations within the report.

**Recommendations**

7. To note the report.

Councillor Alistair Bradley  
Executive Leader

MP

## **Overview and Scrutiny – Report to Council – Part Two**

1. This report summarises the business considered at the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 25 January 2024.

## **Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 25 January 2024**

### **Health Scrutiny Update**

2. Councillor Margaret France provided an update from the Lancashire County Council Health Scrutiny Committee.
3. She reported on the following:
  - NHS Lancashire Place Update and Future Arrangements
  - NHS Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care Board – Recovery and Transformation
  - Concern was expressed by the Committee about NHS dentist provision in Lancashire.
  - Achievements on the work of the Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board's priorities – Healthy Hearts, Happier Minds and Best Start in Life. It was noted that Chorley had a particular issue in terms of suicide risk.

### **Draft Budget 2024/25**

4. Councillor Peter Wilson, Executive Member (Resources) attended the meeting to present the report on the Draft Budget 2024/25 which had been considered and agreed at Executive Cabinet on 18 January 2024.
5. The report set out the draft budget position for the council for 2024/25 and the forecast for 2025/26, reflecting the information contained within the Provisional Local Government Financial Settlement announced on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023.
6. The the budget consultation process had now started which included the following proposals:
  - A proposed 2.99% increase in council tax in 2024/25 with no proposed cuts to services;
  - A forecast balanced budget for 2024/25, based on a 2.99% increase in council tax as noted above and the use of £0.365m of reserves;
  - A forecast budget shortfall for 2025/26 of £1.575m, to be addressed through the development and delivery of the council's savings programme
  - Proposals for the labour administration to invest in the priority areas identified in the report.

7. Councillor Wilson highlighted the investments referenced on page 58 which generate net income for the Council, such as the Market Walk Shopping Centre, Primrose Gardens, Strawberry Meadows and Tatton Gardens.
8. It was noted in the report that the figures in the report may be subject to change, pending receipt of the Final Local Government Financial Settlement announcement which is due from Government in early February 2024.
9. Councillor Wilson highlighted paragraph 27 of the report which stressed the fact that the Council has only received a one year settlement. In the absence of any figures or framework from Government, it is almost impossible to prepare a credible financial strategy beyond 31 March 2025 with any degree of confidence in the underlying assumptions. It was therefore difficult to develop the Medium Term Strategy in this context.
10. He also referred to financial risks and uncertainties which would have an impact on the Council's budget such as staffing costs following an agreed pay award.
11. Councillor Wilson addressed a query about Council Tax debt. He stressed that the Council have a very broad package which aims to investigate the reasons for non-payment of council tax, for example mental health issues. Individuals may be referred to services such as social prescribing to help address those issues.
12. Councillor Wilson responded to two issues raised by the Chair, in relation to energy costs and impact on projects for the area. Councillor Wilson indicated that hopefully energy costs would reduce, however they were unlikely to return to rates of 12 months ago. In relation to projects, e.g. arising from the Levelling Up Funding, these are still on track and would not be adversely impacted.
13. Finally, Councillor Wilson indicated that due to the financial challenges being faced by the Council, the Executive Cabinet would be looking closely at all areas of the Council in the next twelve months and suggested that scrutiny would have a key role in that process.

### **Youth Diversionary and Outreach Services**

14. Councillor Bev Murray, Executive Member (Early Intervention) presented a report of the Director of Communities providing an overview of youth diversionary and outreach support services in the borough, including:
  - Tackling anti social behaviour – engagement of the Public Protection Team
  - INSPIRE Youth Zone Detached Outreach Programme
  - Children and Family Wellbeing Detached Service
  - Lancashire Violence Reduction Network

- Preston North End

15. Councillor Murray responded to questions from the Committee. Arising from the discussions it was agreed that details about the INSPIRE outreach programme (i.e. forthcoming planned activities in which areas) be communicated to members (e.g. via in the Know).
16. It was also suggested that INSPIRE be invited to jointly participate with the Council in local democracy week to engage with young people outside a school setting.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Task Group – Recruitment and Staff Retention**

17. Councillor Michelle Beach, Chair of the Recruitment and Staff Retention Task Group introduced and summarised the report, outlining their findings and conclusions, and final recommendations. She thanked all members of the Task Group and the officers for their hard work and support.
18. The Vice Chair, Councillor Ryan Towers, responded to a query about the Council's apprenticeship scheme. He explained that there had been a substantial increase in the number of apprentices since the first cohort and that a number of improvements had been made e.g. a dedicated training officer to ensure the requisite time allocation was met for completing personal development plans.
19. The Committee agreed that the report be recommended to Executive Cabinet.

### **Suicide Prevention and Bereavement Task Group**

20. It was noted that the next Scrutiny Task Group would look at Suicide Prevention and Bereavement. Members were asked to let Democratic Services know if they were interested.

### **Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme**

21. The Overview and Scrutiny Work Programme 2023/24 was presented for information.
22. The Committee agreed the following amendments to the programme:

1. That the Community Safety Partnership Update report be considered on 14 March 2024;
2. That, arising from discussion on Special Expenses at the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel on 23 November 2023, an update be provided on the outcome of that review as part of the Quarter 3 Performance Monitoring report at the next Panel meeting on 7 March 2024.

### **Town Centre Action Plan Update**

23. Councillor Alistair Bradley, Executive Member (Economic Development and Public Service Reform), presented a report providing an overview of the matters related to anti-social behaviour (ASB) in connection with Chorley Town Centre.
24. Councillor Bradley responded to questions on the report.
25. Arising from the discussion it was agreed in principle that a similar framework be applied to other urban hub areas in the borough, as anti social behaviour can be sporadic and move outside Chorley Town Centre. The Chair suggested that if there were patterns of anti social behaviour which related to the approval of planning applications (retail outlets, eating outlets etc) it may be possible to put something in place at the planning stage.
26. Following a resolution to exclude the public and press, members discussed matters relating to the appendix to the report in private session.

Councillor Aidy Riggott

Chair, Overview and Scrutiny Committee

CG