



Minutes of **Chorley Liaison**
Meeting date **Wednesday, 16 October 2024**

Members present: Councillor Kim Snape (Chair),
Lancashire County Councillors: Julia Berry and Alan Whittaker,
Chorley Borough Councillors (Chairs on Neighbourhood Area Meetings): Michelle Beach, Aaron Beaver, Alistair Bradley and Craige Southern
Town and Parish Councillors: Lynne Moores, Ken McCrea, Terry Dickinson, Stuart Clewlow, Alan Platt, Ian Horsefield, Alan Cornwell and Tim Blackburn (virtually)

Officers: Jennifer Mullin (Director of Communities and Leisure) and Ben Storey (Democratic and Member Services Officer)

Apologies: Councillor Tommy Gray (Vice-Chair)

Other Members: Councillors Dedrah Moss and Gordon France

23.8 Welcome by the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

23.9 Minutes

The minutes were approved as a correct record.

23.10 CC Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, has been invited to give an update on high school places within the Borough

The Chair welcomed County Councillor Jayne Rear, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, alongside the Head of Education Improvement and School Place Planning Manager at Lancashire County Council, to deliver a presentation and answer questions from members of the Liaison.

A number of key points were highlighted to the Liaison. These included improvements in achieving school preferences across Chorley, a lower pupil forecast in the coming years and lower birthrates that should help to maintain high school place capacity in the borough and mitigate for increases as a result of further housing development.

Responding to submitted questions around demand for high school places and places being reserved for what would of traditionally have been called 'feeder schools', it was noted that despite the county council's objections, Albany High School had changed

their admissions criteria last year to prioritise pupils from a number of primary schools across the county border in Bolton. However, as a result of further dialogue between Albany and the county council, there had been an increase in overall places to cover the shortages.

It was clarified that all the high schools in the Chorley area were academy trusts that can set their own criteria for admissions and don't align with the county council's admission criteria.

The Liaison was reassured that the School Place Planning team are continually monitoring a range of factors, including birth rates, population migration and new housing developments, to forecast demand for school places at all levels so that the county council meets its 'sufficiency duty' and ensure a school place for every pupil. Projections and forecasts are also shared with the Department for Education, along with plans to address any shortfalls in capacity that are identified. Academy Trusts do present challenges in meeting demand, but it was noted that many also work closely with the county council in finding solutions when required. It was confirmed that there were around 50 spare high school places in Chorley at Southlands High School but acknowledged recent Ofsted inspections would likely deter parent's preference until this improved. The priority would always be to drive improvement in schools underperforming before looking to temporary expansions at other schools.

Questions were asked why Chorley and South Ribble were treated as one area, when this is not replicated anywhere else in Lancashire. Members heard that local areas would be assessed, and where appropriate would consider cross district boundaries, such as in Buckshaw Village where the nearest schools were in South Ribble. In order to ensure adequate school places in areas close to neighbouring authorities, the county council would always work with them to find best solutions to meet demand.

Regarding SEND places in Chorley, Mayfield Special School is a 2-19 year old provision and is a General Learning Difficulty (GLD) school and has this year increased by 20 places with scope for further expansion if required. The other school in Chorley is Astley Park but due to constraints of the site, it would be difficult to expand any more. In addition, a new SEND unit has been established at St Jospeh's which accommodates children who can access some mainstream provision but still have special educational needs. Other units at Northbrook and Wellfields in South Ribble are also being considered and going through consultation process. In response to whether Astley Park Special School could be relocated to enable increase in capacity, it was noted that the cost to build a new school would be significant.

With regards to funding for SEND places, this is assigned by the Department for Education with a lot of work taking place to ensure a consistent approach to how funding is allocated across the county.

Further discussions centred around the provision for special educational needs up until the age of 25, education, health and care plans, supported internship programmes and improvements needed at college level for students with disabilities and special educational needs.

Further questions were welcomed, with members directed to contact County Councillor Jayne Rear on jayne.rear@lancashire.gov.uk

23.11 Item requested by Wheelton Parish Council: Sports and leisure provision

The Chair welcomed the Council's Director of Communities and Leisure, Jennifer Mullin to deliver a presentation on sport and leisure activity across the borough and answer questions from members of the Liaison.

An overview of the range and extent of leisure and sport provision across the borough was provided, with members also noting that regular assessments were carried out through work to inform the council's Open Space Sports and Recreation Strategy. The strategy would identify where any gaps or improvements are needed, inform decision making on investments and be incorporated as part of the new Central Lancashire Local Plan. Furthermore, a number of ongoing projects were highlighted to the Liaison.

Regarding outreach work, the council does not have a sports development team but the communities team lead on local schemes and activities, such as the Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme and other diversionary projects. Work around diversionary activities seeking to alleviate instances of anti-social behaviour was also supplemented by Youth Zone's and the council's Community Safety team. Further information on the diversionary work already being delivered by the Youth Zone was also requested following a spike in anti-social behaviour in a particular ward.

There was also a wide range of schemes and projects to promote health and wellbeing, the healthy weight programme, cancer rehabilitation sessions and work around men's mental health were noted as some examples of many more being delivered.

Responding to a query concerning the provision of outdoor gyms in the borough, it was acknowledged that this could be considered as part of the Open Spaces Strategy and if it met certain criteria, could be able to utilise Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Section 106 funds to deliver a project. Further clarification was provided on where these funds were received from and what it could be used for. It was confirmed that if a need could be evidenced as part of the strategy, then private clubs could utilise funding too.

On transport provision for outreach services in the rural areas of the borough, a number of initiatives had been attempted in the past with mixed success, however members were encouraged to liaise with the council and other partners over ways and projects that could be supported to help tackle anti-social behaviour. The Liaison also welcomed the suggestion of parish and town councils providing a list of sport and leisure provision within their areas so that it could be shared amongst members of the Liaison.

A number of questions were raised about Brinscall Baths and why, following its extensive refurbishment works, it was not open over weekends. In response, it was confirmed that the pool was currently closed at weekends but this was part of a planned phased re-opening programme to understand the demand at different times and days to ensure costs were managed and the facility was sustainable. Further consideration was also requested for greater investment by locating larger capital projects in the rural areas of the borough in the future.

Further discussions centred around delivery of projects with a suggestion of working with the council's communities team to identify sources of funding to support this. It was acknowledged that collaboration between parishes, the council and other groups

was a viable option where sharing resources could support the progression of desired projects, one example noted was a number of parishes sharing of SPiD units.

It was confirmed that there were no plans to close the pool at All Seasons as scheduled refurbishment work was focused on the gym and dry side changing rooms.

23.12 Questions from Members of the Liaison and the public

No questions were asked from members of the Liaison or members of the public.

23.13 Items for Future Meetings

Members noted requests already suggested for future meetings and welcomed a Police and Anti-Social Behaviour update in January 2025. The Liaison also endorsed an update on the town centre revival post Covid at a future meeting.

Following a request, a follow up on the borough's preparedness around climate change would be added and scheduled for a future meeting.

23.14 Any urgent business previously agreed with the Chair

Challenges around fuel poverty and the 'Warm Spaces' programme were highlighted to the Liaison with the following points noted:

- It would be useful for details on warm spaces to be circulated to parish and town councils once confirmed.
- There are discretionary funds available that can help around fuel poverty for those most in need – advise is to signpost any residents to the borough council.
- The council are looking for more warm spaces so parish and town council representatives are asked to contact the Communities team (communities@chorley.gov.uk) if they can make any spaces available, or know of other venues that could be suitable.

An update on cost of living support delivered by the council was circulated to parish and town clerks for wider distribution – the document can be found on the following link:

<https://democracy.chorley.gov.uk/documents/s177922/Cost%20of%20Living%20Support%20-%20October%202024.pdf>

Chair

Date