

Minutes of Council

Meeting date Tuesday, 17 September 2024

Committee Members present: Councillor Gordon France (Mayor), Councillor Alistair Morwood (Deputy Mayor) and Councillors Sarah Ainsworth, Aaron Beaver, Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Michelle Brown, Mark Clifford, Margaret France, Danny Gee, Tommy Gray, Russ Green, Christine Heydon, Alex Hilton, Terry Howarth, Hasina Khan, Samir Khan, Michelle Beach, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe, Matthew Lynch, Pauline McGovern, June Molyneaux, Dedrah Moss, Beverley Murray, Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Jean Sherwood, Chris Snow, Craige Southern, Kim Snape, Ryan Towers, Jenny Whiffen, Neville Whitham, Alan Whittaker, Katie Wilkie, Joan Williamson and Peter Wilson

Committee Members present virtually (non-voting): Councillors Irene Amahwe and Zara Khan

Officers: Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Chris Moister (Director of Governance/Monitoring Officer), Gayle Wootton (Director of Planning and Property), Caroline Wolfenden (Director of Change and Delivery) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic Services Team Leader)

Apologies: Councillor Samantha Martin and Arjun Singh

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

32 Declarations of Any Interests

The Monitoring Officer, Chris Moister, advised that there was no requirement for members to make a declaration of interest in the Notice of Motion regarding the Winter Fuel Allowance as a decision was not being made in respect of this matter, only to lobby the Government on the matter.

Councillor Alan Platt declared a pecuniary interest in item 11. Notice of Motion as Chair of the Governance Committee.

33 Minutes

Resolved (unanimously) that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 16 July 2024 be approved as a correct record for signature by the Mayor.

34 Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor updated members on fundraising activities and charity events, including their sponsored swim at Brinscall Baths.

35 Public Questions

There were no public questions for consideration.

36 Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Task and Finish Groups

Members considered a general report of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 August, the Overview and Scrutiny Performance Panel held on 31 July and Task Group update.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Debra Platt proposed the report and the Vice Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Roy Lees seconded, and it was **Resolved (unanimously) that the report be noted.**

37 Governance Committee

Members considered a general report of the Governance Committee meeting held on 31 July.

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Councillor Alan Platt proposed the report and the Vice Chair of Governance Committee, Councillor Mark Clifford seconded, and it was **Resolved (unanimously) that the report be noted.**

38 Governance Committee Annual Report

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Councillor Alan Platt, presented the report of the Head of Audit and Risk.

The Annual Report demonstrated accountability to the public and stakeholders for the important role carried out by the Committee and its contribution to the Council's overall governance arrangements.

The Chair of the Governance Committee, Councillor Alan Platt proposed the report and the Vice Chair of Governance Committee, Councillor Mark Clifford seconded, and it was **Resolved (unanimously) that the Governance Committee Annual Report be noted.**

39 Acceptance of Wolfson Foundation Funding of £100K

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson, presented the report of the Director of Change and Delivery.

The purpose of the report was to advise of the council's successful bid to the Wolfson Foundation to support West Wing Renovations to Astley Hall and to seek approval to accept a grant of £100,000.

External funding opportunities for capital projects in the museums sector were scarce. The council had spent significant time working in partnership with The Friends of Astley Hall to prepare an eligible bid.

The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Alan Platt congratulated the officers in securing the external funding. He queried if the project was likely to slip over the budget. Councillor Wilson explained that to mitigate the risk, a contingency of 10% had been built into the budget in addition to the £177,000. The costs were also devised with the input of a Conservation Officer with experience in these types of renovation work. Cost estimates and a schedule of works had been received, which provided additional reassurance that the budget and level of contingency was set at a reasonable level. Any request for additional budget would be brought back to Council.

In response to a query Councillor Wilson noted there was an ongoing schedule of works and also routine maintenance. If further information was required this could be provided on request.

The Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson proposed, and Councillor Sarah Ainsworth seconded and it was **Resolved (unanimously)**

- 1. To accept grant funding of £100,000 from the Wolfson Foundation to carry out renovations to the West Wing of Astley Hall.**
- 2. To approve an increase in the capital budget at Astley Hall for an amount equivalent to the grant sum to reflect the receipt.**

40 Local Authority Housing Fund - Grant Acceptance

The Executive Member (Homes and Housing), Councillor Terry Howarth, presented the report of the Director of Planning and Property.

The purpose of the report was to accept Local Authority Housing Grant of £654,000 and approve the budget.

Part of this funding was for the purchase of three residential properties for the Afghanistan Refugee Resettlement Programme. These would be 2/3 bedroom properties dispersed around Chorley close to local amenities on affordable rents.

The other part was for converting commercial units at 17-23 Gillibrand Street into three residential units for temporary accommodation for larger families.

An amendment to recommendation 6 was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition to add the words 'in accordance with standing orders and the financial regulations of the council', and this was accepted as part of the substantive motion.

The Executive Member (Homes and Housing), Councillor Terry Howarth, proposed and the Deputy Portfolio Holder, Councillor Kim Snape seconded, and it was **Resolved (unanimously)**

- 1. To accept the LAHG funding.**

2. To approve the establishment of a new capital programme budget to commence acquisition of housing stock and repairs to 17 – 23 Gillibrand Street.
3. To approve the future Acquisitions for three Afghanistan resettlement properties.
4. To approve the acceptance of the grant for three new Afghanistan refugee families following the acquisition of three new properties.
5. To delegate the decision to award the contract for the repairs to Gillibrand Street to the Executive Member for Resources'.
6. To authorise the Executive Member for Housing to take further decisions on the acquisitions of refugee properties, in accordance with standing orders and the financial regulations of the council.

41 Questions Asked under Council Procedure Rule 8

No questions were asked.

42 To consider the Notices of Motion given in accordance with Council procedure Rule 10

Councillor Alan Platt declared a pecuniary interest as Chair of the Governance Committee and left the room.

Councillor Debra Platt proposed and Councillor Craige Southern seconded the Notice of Motion.

Members debated the Notice of Motion and noted that the council offered assistance with the processing of claims via Citizens Advice Bureau and Chorley Buddies. The council also had a cost of living action plan and part of this included the evaluation and monitoring of the effectiveness of measures. The council would promote the update of pension credits and other relevant schemes. The additional number of residents signed up to these following this Notice of Motion would be circulated to members in the future.

The Executive Leader, Councillor Alistair Bradley proposed and the Deputy Leader, Councillor Peter Wilson seconded an amendment, and it was **Resolved (unanimously)**

This council notes the Labour government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Allowance only to pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits such as Pension Credit, as announced recently by Chancellor Rachel Reeves. Chorley Council recognises that this decision was taken as part of measures to tackle the £22bn 'black hole' in the public finances left by the previous Conservative government.

The council acknowledges the significant role that Winter Fuel Allowance played in helping older residents in Chorley and across the UK to afford their heating bills during the winter months and the additional strain the removal of this allowance will place on vulnerable pensioners and those who do not claim or are not entitled to Pension Credit.

Therefore, the council resolves to undertake the following in support of our residents:

- **Bring forward a council led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible for Pension Credit, working with partners, charities and community organisations to ensure all eligible pensioners claim their entitlement.**
- **Continue Chorley's Council's ongoing work to support people with their fuel bills and assist those who are vulnerable during the winter months through schemes such as the**
 - o **Affordable Warmth Grants,**
 - o **Warm/Welcome Spaces Scheme,**
 - o **UKSPF Cost of Living Grants**
- **The Leader of the Council is to write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer to outline the concerns of councillors and members of the public in Chorley about the impact of this decision and urge the government to extend further targeted financial support to the most vulnerable groups who are impacted by this decision.**

Mayor

Date