

Minutes of	Council
Meeting date	Wednesday, 28 February 2024
Committee members present:	Councillors Chris Lomax (Mayor), Peter Mullineaux (Deputy Mayor), Will Adams, Jacky Alty, Deborah Ashton, Hilary Bedford, Jane Bell, Damian Bretherton, Julie Buttery, Anielia Bylinski Gelder, Matt Campbell, Colin Coulton, Matthew Farnworth, Mathew Forshaw, Paul Foster, Peter Gabbott, Jasmine Gleave, Mary Green, Michael Green, Harry Hancock, Jo Hindle-Taylor, David Howarth, Clare Hunter, Lou Jackson, James Lillis, Keith Martin, Pete Pillinger, Lesley Pritchard, George Rear, Wesley Roberts, Colin Sharples, David Shaw, Margaret Smith, Phil Smith, Emma Stevens, Elaine Stringfellow, Caleb Tomlinson, Matthew Tomlinson, Angela Turner, Karen Walton, Ian Watkinson, Connor Watson, Kath Unsworth, Paul Wharton-Hardman and Haydn Williams
Committee members attended virtually (non-voting):	Councillors James Flannery and Nicky Peet
Officers present:	Chris Sinnott (Chief Executive), Chris Moister (Director of Governance), Louise Mattinson (Director of Finance and Section 151 Officer) and Coral Astbury (Democratic and Member Services Officer)
Public:	0

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

88 Minutes Silence

The Mayor invited Members to observe a minutes silence in memory of former Councillor Jenny Hothersall.

Councillors Margaret Smith, Karen Walton and David Howarth paid tribute and sent their condolences to family.

89 Congratulations

The Mayor explained that the Music in the Park event had recently won the Small Event of the Year award at the Lancashire Tourism Awards.

The Mayor thanked everyone involved in hosting the event.

90 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor James Flannery, James Gleeson, Will King, Nicky Peet and John Rainsbury.

Councillors James Flannery and Nicky Peet attended via Microsoft Teams.

91 Declarations of Interest

Councillor Damian Bretherton declared a personal interest on Item 12 as a small landlord.

Councillor Paul Foster declared a pecuniary interest on Item 11 as he is in receipt of a war pension. Councillor Foster indicated he would leave the meeting for the item and not participate in the debate or vote.

92 Minutes of meeting Wednesday, 31 January 2024 of Council

Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder indicated that she had followed up the issue of parking in Farington with Officers and advised that an email had been received from a Farington Parish Councillor and Officers had responded on the same day.

Councillor Karen Walton also advised the car park closed in Farington was designated hard standing land and was not classified as a car parking, the land had been closed due to health and safety issues.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the last meeting are agreed as a correct record for signing by the Mayor.

93 Mayors Announcements

The Mayor gave an update on his recent duties, including dementia alliance visits, Runshaw College Apprenticeship Award's Evening and his ABBA themed murder mystery event.

94 Urgent Decisions

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster, outlined the report and explained that only one decision had been taken since the last Council meeting.

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Neighbourhoods and Waste), Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder and subsequently,

Resolved:

Report was noted.

95 Cabinet

Members received a general report of the Cabinet held on 21 February.

It was proposed by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and seconded by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member (Neighbourhoods and Waste), Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder and subsequently,

Resolved:

Report was noted.

96 Governance Committee

Members received a general report of the Governance Committee held on 6 February.

It was proposed by the Chair of Governance Committee, Councillor Colin Sharples and seconded by the Vice-Chair of Governance Committee, Councillor Wesley Roberts, Councillor Wesley Roberts and subsequently,

Resolved:

Report was noted.

97 Scrutiny Committee

Members received a general report of the Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee held on 20 February.

It was proposed by the Chair of Corporate, Performance and Budget Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Will Adams and seconded by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Michael Green and subsequently,

Resolved:

Report was noted.

98 Questions to the Leader of the Council

Councillor Howarth asked the Leader for the cost of the advice the Council received from Barristers in relation to Pickering's Farm and if the advice could be made available to members. The Leader undertook to provide the cost of legal advice to Councillor Howarth outside of the meeting. In relation to the legal advice, Councillor Foster explained he would speak to the Monitoring Officer to ascertain if it was appropriate to share the advice with members.

Councillor M Smith asked if the Council were now able to assure the insurance companies that driving licences were being regularly checked. The Leader undertook to write to Councillor Smith with a detailed response the following day.

Councillor Howarth asked if there would be cross party involvement in the planning of the fiftieth birthday celebrations. Councillor Foster undertook to write to Councillor Howarth following the meeting.

A member of the public asked if the Council had an update on Leyland Festival achieving charitable status. The Leader explained that the authority had no control over Leyland Festival Committee and was one of the many organisations who support the committee. The committee would still be subject to due diligence and strict checks when awarded grant funding regardless of charitable status.

A member of the public asked if there were any plans for the Council to celebrate their fiftieth birthday with Schleswig-Flensburg. The Leader advised that plans were afoot to celebrate the authority's birthday and plans would be presented at a future Cabinet meeting by Democratic Services, hopefully including friends at Schleswig-Flensburg.

99 Questions to Cabinet Members

Cabinet Member (Finance, Assets and Public Protection)

Councillor Bretherton advised that a letter had been sent to the Leader regarding the condition of football pitches in the borough and if there were any plans to investigate the flooding and drainage. The Leader responded to the question and advised that he had received a letter from Councillor Campbell however it concerned car parking issues within the junior league. The Leader advised he would write to both ward councillors with a detailed response.

Councillor M Smith thanked the Cabinet Member for the plans to refurbish Longton Play Area and asked if there was a way to move the project forward quicker so the park could be refurbished in spring. Councillor Tomlinson advised that he was working in line with decision making processes and was unable to circumvent it.

Councillor M Smith asked if the audit report relating to IT Security and Driving Licences should be presented to the Shared Services Joint Committee (SSJC) as a shared service issue. Councillor Tomlinson advised the best way to monitor performance of a service would be through Scrutiny. SSJC was to ensure that shared services were operating correctly and to explore opportunities for expansion. Each authority has its own mechanisms for monitoring internal services.

Cabinet Member (Customer and Digital)

Councillor M Smith referred to the internal audit report on Physical and Environmental Controls in IT which had been presented to Governance Committee and asked the following:

1. Who would be responsible for recommendation 8 (Cooling) and how long would it be until this issue is rectified.
2. In relation to the amount of equipment stored at South Ribble, had any quotes for removing the excess equipment and how quickly will the equipment be disposed of, and the IT department cleared up.

Councillor Watkinson advised that he would have been grateful to receive these questions in advance and that security of the department was important. A written response would be provided outside of the meeting.

Cabinet Member (Planning, Business Support and Economic Development)

Councillor Wharton-Hardman asked if the Council had taken a decision to approve installation of a 5g mast in Farington via Officer delegated decision. Councillor Flannery explained that these decisions go through national planning processes and were not decided locally.

Cabinet Member (Communities, Leisure and Wellbeing)

Councillor Bretherton asked for an update on the refurbishment of the Leisure Centres, in particular the heating system at Leyland Leisure Centre. Councillor Hunter advised the decarbonisation project would be finished over the coming months.

100 Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/2025

Councillor Paul Foster left the meeting for this item and did not participate in the vote or debate.

The Cabinet Member (Customer and Digital), Councillor Ian Watkinson presented a report that sought approval for changing the amount of War pension income that is disregarded in the Council Tax Support Scheme and Housing Benefit modified scheme from 1 April 2024.

Councillor Watkinson explained that £290 was the current maximum amount that could be disregarded, and the report proposed increasing the disregard of war pension income to 100%. The changes would protect future claimants who may not receive help towards council tax.

The changes would also support the Royal British Legion campaign to ensure that war pension funds do not go towards means tested benefits.

Members made comments of support towards the proposed changes.

The Council's Member Champion (Armed Forces), Councillor Matthew Farnworth welcomed the changes to the policy and stated that no veterans should face disadvantage whilst providing public services. Councillor Farnworth advised there would be an inaugural meeting of Chorley and South Ribble Veterans and advised any member could get involved by contacting himself.

It was proposed by the Cabinet Member (Customer and Digital), Councillor Ian Watkinson and seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council, Councillor Aniela Bylinski Gelder and subsequently,

Resolved: (Unanimous)

The change to the Housing Benefit Modified Scheme to increase the disregard for War Pension income from £290 to 100% is approved.

The proposal to increase the disregard for War Pension income from £290 to 100% in the Council Tax Support Scheme is approved.

101 Council Tax Local Discounts & Premiums Policy

Councillor Paul Foster rejoined the meeting.

The Cabinet Member (Customer and Digital), Councillor Ian Watkinson presented a report that set out options for changes to amounts of local discounts and premiums in a revised Council Tax Local Discounts and Premiums Policy.

Councillor Watkinson explained that the authority had discretion to vary levels of premiums on properties. New powers had been introduced in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill and the report sought to reduce the period in which 100% discount is awarded and to decrease the amount of discount awarded for long-term empty property premiums.

Residents eligible for exemptions would not be affected and the proposals were to provide an incentive to owners of empty and second homes to bring them back into use.

In response to a member enquiry, Councillor Watkinson confirmed that the council had discretionary powers and exceptions would be made on a case by case basis.

It was proposed by the Cabinet Member (Customer and Digital), Councillor Ian Watkinson and seconded by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and subsequently,

Resolved: (Unanimously)

The following amounts of council tax local discounts on empty and substantially unfurnished properties are approved from 1 April 2024:

- a. 100% discount for up to three months
- b. 50% discount for three to six months
- c. 0% discount for six to twenty four months

The period after which a long term empty premium applies is amended from two years to one year from 1 April 2025.

A council tax premium of 100% on second homes is approved from 1 April 2025.

The Government's proposed exceptions when empty homes and second homes council tax premiums should not be applied are mirrored in the revised Local Discounts and Premiums Policy.

102 Revenue Budget 2024/25 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme 2024-2027

The Cabinet Member (Finance, Assets and Public Protection), Councillor Matthew Tomlinson presented a report that sought approval of the Cabinet's Budget Strategy and proposals for the Revenue Budget 2024/25 together with the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and Capital programme for 2024-2027.

Councillor Tomlinson introduced the report and thanked Cabinet Members, the Labour Group and Officers during the budget setting process. Councillor Tomlinson thanked all staff for their everyday work and for going the extra mile to provide services.

Councillor Tomlinson explained that the administration were committed to an ambitious programme of transformation and listed several achievements over the last four years. The budget would be an exciting programme of delivery building on the achievements of the past five year. Projects such as Leyland Town Deal, Jubilee Gardens and play area refurbishments would continue. There would also be £3 million of investment within the leisure centres and innovative working with partners through social prescribing. Councillor Tomlinson stated the budget had something for all residents.

Councillor Tomlinson advised the budget was balanced with no need to draw on cash reserves, the general reserve remained higher than the required £4 million and there was a budget pressure reserve to protect the authority from unforeseen financial crises. For the first time in four years there was a proposed increase of 2.99% in Council Tax, which had already been assumed by the government when calculating the core funding.

Councillor David Howarth on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, seconded by Councillor Angela Turner proposed an amendment to the budget:

Other Parks and Open spaces.

Hurst Grange Park paths and ponds. £15,000 to replace Trim Trail equipment.

Add - Ecology and diversity budget to maintain ponds and wildlife corridors. £25,000.

To be funded from the uncommitted balance of £120,000 in the 'Parks - Smaller Parks and Play Areas' capital scheme budget.

A fair economy that works for everyone.

Add - 10 additional mobile Speed Indicator Devices. £37,500

To be funded from the Short Life Operational Assets Earmarked Reserve.

£15,000 to support District Centre Christmas and promotional schemes.

To be funded from the existing Short-Life Operational Assets Earmarked Reserve (Appendix B3).

Thriving communities.

£20,000 for the provision of new and replacement bus shelters.

To be funded from the existing £85,000 Neighbourhood Improvements capital budget which has not been fully allocated, reducing the balance of the available capital budget for other Neighbourhood Improvements to £65k.

Proposed amendments to the Revenue Programme 2023/24

Double the Community Hub budgets from £5,000 to £10,000 per Hub to enable meaningful community projects, totalling £25,000.

To be funded from general reserves.

	Revenue (to be funded from General/Unallocated reserves)	Capital (to be funded from schemes within existing capital programme)	Capital (to be funded from Short Life Operational Assets Earmarked Reserves)
Parks and Open Spaces	-	40,000	-
District Centre Christmas and promotional schemes	-	-	15,000
Speed Cameras	-	-	37,500
Neighbourhood Improvements – Bus Shelters	-	20,000	-
Increase to Community Hub Budgets	25,000	-	-

Councillor Howarth introduced the amendment and explained that he was not proposing any criticism of the budget, but his amendment was an addition to serve residents and to benefit them.

Councillor Tomlinson advised that he would have engaged with the Liberal Democrats prior to budget setting to discuss individual projects, however he was not prepared to accept the amendment.

A vote was undertaken on the proposed amendment, and it was subsequently,

Resolved: (For: 18, Against: 27 and Abstain: 0)

For: Councillors Bretherton, Buttery, Campbell, Coulton, Gleave, Mary Green, Michael Green, Hancock, Howarth, Lillis, Mullineaux, Rear, Shaw, M Smith, P Smith, Turner, Walton and Watson.

Against: Councillors Adams, Alty, Ashton, Bedford, Bell, Bylinski Gelder, Farnworth, Forshaw, Foster, Gabbott, Hindle-Taylor, Hunter, Jackson, Lomax, Martin, Pillinger, Pritchard, Roberts, Sharples, Stevens, Stringfellow, C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, Unsworth, Watkinson, Wharton-Hardman and Williams.

Councillor Karen Walton on behalf of the Conservative Group, seconded by Councillor Damian Bretherton proposed an amendment to the budget:

1. The Conservative Group propose to increase the budget from £48k to £250k for the Green Infrastructure Capital Programme and increase the Capital Programme for parks, smaller parks and play areas from £120k to £300k and to rename the scheme, Smaller Parks, play areas and football pitches, resulting in the repurposing of £382 from the Budget Equalisation Reserve to improve and revitalise many neglected areas of the Borough. The increase in the budget for smaller parks, play areas and football pitches has been increased to provide for drainage and improvement works that would benefit many of our local football pitches, which are often unplayable for many months of the year due to the poor conditions on the field. The provision of these much needed facilities is so essential for the health and wellbeing for so many of the younger residents of the Borough and has been neglected due to larger projects taking priority.

The increase in the General Infrastructure budget is to provide some budget funding for other improvements across the Borough but especially for the Central Park Project, the biggest new park in the North West, created in 2014 to celebrate 40 years of South Ribble Borough Council, bringing together green spaces across the Borough allowing a natural break, separation and green lungs from the expanding built up areas surrounding the Park. Many areas included in the original project have been neglected and are in need of improvement or have not even commenced. To celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Borough this year, the budget would be used to improve the walking and cycling links, disabled access, natural play areas, recreation, ecology and biodiversity from St Catherine's Park in the south to the River Ribble in the north of the Borough linking up to the new Tram Bridge project funded from the Government's levelling up bid.

2. The Conservative Group propose to repurpose £200k from the Budget Equalisation Reserve to monitor and help to reduce speeding traffic by providing 2 speeding indicator devices (SPIDs) in every ward of the Borough. Working with Parish Councils, Community Hubs, the Police and Crime Commissioner and LCC to identify the many speeding hotspots in the Borough so that the SPID's can be permanently installed to discourage speeding traffic.
3. The Conservative Group propose to repurpose £200k from the Budget Equalisation Reserve to include a budget reserve for Environmental

Improvements. This budget reserve would be utilised to generally improve the appearance of the street scene in all areas of the Borough with projects such as replacing many of the old, worn out bus shelters, new and replacement litter and dog bins in areas where residents have requested them especially on all the new housing developments, new benches, notice boards and improving the street scene generally in the village centres or retail areas to encourage residents into these area and shop locally.

4. The Conservative group propose a £100k reduction in the General/unallocated Reserve to be transferred to the Town Deal Reserve Funding and £50k from Business Support, Advice and Grants to support the suspending of the car park charges in the Borough, initially for a period of 1 year. The Leyland Town Deal work and improvements will have a substantial impact on residents wishing to visit and park their cars in Leyland for many months and by suspending the car parking charges will help support businesses and residents to access Leyland Town Centre.

The amount of £50k from the Business Support, Advice and Grants budget would be repurposed to suspend the car park charges on the Hope Terrace car park, which is the only other car park in the Borough where car parking charges apply. There has been a number of issues with the car parking machine and the changes to parking conditions which has caused difficulties with the local businesses in the Tardy Gate Centre. The suspension of car parking charges would support the local businesses, many of whom are in danger of closing or still trying to recover from the effects of Covid and we, as a Council should be supporting them.

Councillor Walton introduced the amendment and advised it had been carefully considered and costed with the Section 151 Officer, Councillor Walton thanked officers for their work and explained their amendment was designed to improve the health and wellbeing of residents.

Councillors C Tomlinson, Foster, Michael Green, Bretherton, Howarth, M Smith participated in the debate on the amendment.

Councillor Tomlinson indicated he was not willing to accept the amendment.

A vote was undertaken on the proposed amendment, and it was subsequently,

Resolved: (For: 13, Against: 27 and Abstain: 5)

For: Councillors Bretherton, Buttery, Campbell, Coulton, Gleave, Mary Green, Michael Green, Mullineaux, Rear, M Smith, P Smith, Walton and Watson.

Against: Councillors Adams, Alty, Ashton, Bedford, Bell, Bylinski Gelder, Farnworth, Forshaw, Foster, Gabbott, Hindle-Taylor, Hunter, Jackson, Lomax, Martin, Pillinger, Pritchard, Roberts, Sharples, Stevens, Stringfellow, C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, Unsworth, Watkinson, Wharton-Hardman and Williams.

Abstain: Councillors Hancock, Howarth, Lillis, Shaw and Turner.

The debate resumed on the substantive motion and the following members participated: Councillors Pritchard, Stringfellow, Ashton, Forshaw, Unsworth, Williams and Alty.

A vote was taken on the substantive motion proposed by the Cabinet Member (Finance, Assets and Public Protection) Councillor Matthew Tomlinson, seconded by the Leader of the Council, Councillor Paul Foster and subsequently,

Resolved: (For: 32, Against: 0 and Abstain: 13)

That Council,

- a. Approves the budget and proposals set out in this report, including the level of Council Tax as set out in the Formal Council Tax Resolution for 2024/25, including Parish Precepts, at **Appendix A, which is appended to the minutes in full.**
- b. Notes the advice of the Chief Finance Officer in relation to the robustness of the estimates within the overall budget, including the risks contained within it and the adequacy of the proposed level of financial reserves, as set out in the Statutory Report at **Appendices B1 – B3;**
- c. Approves the council's Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) at **Appendix C;**
- d. Notes the council's forecast Cumulative Budget Deficit and Budget Strategy 2024/25 to 2026/27 at **Appendix D**, including the analysis of the movement in the 2024/25 Budget from the position approved by Council in March 2023;
- e. Notes the analysis of the Directorate Budgets for 2024/25, by expense type, at **Appendix E;**
- f. Approves the capital programme for 2024/25 to 2026/27 (**Appendices F1, F2 & F3**);
- g. Approves the Capital Strategy at **Appendix G;**
- h. Approves the Treasury Management Strategy at **Appendix H1** and note the advice of the treasury management consultants at **Appendix H2;**
- i. Approves the council's Pay Policy at **Appendix I** for publication on the council's website from April 2024 (including Appendix I (i) – the pay scales for South Ribble Council and Appendix I (ii) – the pay scales for Shared Services);
- j. Notes the Budget Consultation 2024/25 Report at **Appendix J;**
- k. Notes the Impact Assessment of the Budget Proposals for 2024/25 at **Appendix K.**

For: Councillors Adams, Alty, Ashton, Bedford, Bell, Bylinski Gelder, Farnworth, Forshaw, Foster, Gabbott, Hancock, Hindle-Taylor, Howarth, Hunter, Jackson, Lillis, Lomax, Martin, Pillinger, Pritchard, Roberts, Sharples, Shaw, Stevens, Stringfellow,

C Tomlinson, M Tomlinson, Turner, Unsworth, Watkinson, Wharton-Hardman and Williams.

Abstain: Councillors Bretherton, Buttery, Campbell, Coulton, Gleave, Mary Green, Michael Green, Mullineaux, Rear, M Smith, P Smith, Walton and Watson.

Chair

Date