

Minutes of Meeting of the Full Council

Meeting Date: Tuesday, 1 October 2013 starting at 6.30pm7
Present: Councillor R Sherras (Chairman)

Councillors:

P Ainsworth	A M Knox
J E Alcock	S Knox
R Bennett	G Mirfin
S Bibby	R Newmark
I Brown	E M H Ranson
S Brunskill	L Rimmer
S Carefoot	M Robinson
P Dowson	C Ross
R J Elms	I Sayers
R Hargreaves	G Scott
T Hill	J Shervey
B Hilton	D T Smith
K Hind	D Taylor
S A Hirst	R J Thompson
J Holgate	N C Walsh
S Hore	J White
K Horkin	A Yearling

In attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Community Services, Director of Resources, Head of HR, Head of Legal and Democratic Services.

Councillors observed a minute's silence in remembrance of former Councillor and Honorary Alderman, Bert Jones, who had recently died.

348 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend Andy Froud, opened the meeting with prayers.

The Mayor began by welcoming Councillor Jim Shervey, the new Councillor for the Littlemoor Ward of Clitheroe, to his first Council meeting.

349 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were submitted on behalf of Councillors J B Hill, J Rogerson, R Swarbrick and M Thomas.

350 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

351 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no items of public participation.

352 COUNCIL MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 16 July 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

353 MAYORAL COMMUNICATIONS

The Mayor reported on over 20 engagements that he and the Mayoress had attended since the last meeting. These had included civic events, award ceremonies, 100th anniversaries, the 100th and 105th birthdays of two Ribble Valley residents, charity fun days, openings and unveilings and coffee mornings.

The Mayor also highlighted the launch of the Council's Year of Health and Wellbeing and his attendance at Yorkshire Day celebrations at Skipton. He was particularly pleased to have attended the hugely successful Food Festival, which continued to go from strength to strength and was pleased to report on the recent launch of the innovative mobile Phone Trail App which gave easy access to produce details.

Most recently the Mayor had hosted his Civic Service at Gisburn and thanked all who had attended.

Finally, the Mayor referred to his Tandem Parachute jump which had taken place at the end of July and thanked everyone for their sponsorship. The current total raised was £1,600 with more still to be collected. The Mayor ended by reminding everyone that the Mayor's Ball would be taking place on 9 November 2013 at the Shireburn Arms.

354 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader began by welcoming Councillor Shervey to the meeting. He congratulated him on his success in the recent by election and informed him that being an elected Member on Ribble Valley Borough Council was a challenging but very rewarding experience.

The Leader went on to talk about the financial position of the Council. He paid tribute to his colleagues on the Budget Working Group who were working on the demanding and difficult task of framing the details to present a balanced budget to Council at the beginning of next year. Whilst not wishing to prejudge the details of the budget, he believed it proper to report to Members that the 11% shortfall in grant normally received by the Council would have to be made up from a number of sources. The continued control of cost remained a constant discipline and some use of the New Homes bonus income would have to be considered. He also cautioned that, after a freeze of four years, and with one of the lowest levels in the country, the Budget Working Group would also have to

consider a rise in Council Tax for next year, although that would be a decision that the Council would take at the appropriate time.

The Leader reminded Members that the other key priority for the Council was planning. He reported that the Core Strategy had been submitted and work had now begun on the site allocations stage. He made it clear that he intended that the Core Strategy Working Group would continue to meet but would now focus on the speedy conclusion to the allocations stage. The Council continued to be frustrated at the way the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had impacted on local control planning issues and that the point had been made forcibly and directly to the Planning Minister, Nick Boles when, in response to the Council's request, he had recently visited the borough to listen to the Council's concerns and those of local campaign groups and the Town Council. The Leader was optimistic that some progress had been made as a result of the visit. The Leader was pleased that the Minister had given his assurance that once fully adopted, the Council's strategy would provide the Council with a defence in terms of over supply against the presumption in favour of development in the NPPF. The Minister had also stressed the need for the Council to seek active consultation with neighbouring authorities under the duty to co-operate, as those comments would carry considerable weight with the Inspector should they object to the Council's numbers. The Leader made clear of the need to move the Core Strategy forwards to adoption as speedily as possible and he knew that the Chairman, the Working Group and officers were fully aware of the urgency of the matter.

Whilst highlighting the difficulties and challenges for the Council, the Leader also wished to remind Members of significant positives that characterised the excellent and cost effective services that the Council continued to provide. The Council continued to be a high performing authority and the Leader ended by highlighting two accolades that had recently been received that demonstrated that excellence.

Firstly, the 2013 perception survey had revealed that Ribble Valley had some of the most satisfied residents in the country, with a satisfaction score of over 95%. This was up from the previous level of the survey in 2011. More specifically, over 90% were satisfied with the Council's Refuse service. The Leader acknowledged the work of the Director of Community Services and his team in achieving that excellent result. In addition, over 76% of residents felt the Council provided good value for money and were satisfied with Council services, and 64% of residents expressed satisfaction with planning services.

Secondly, the recent audit review which had covered key performance indicators in the areas of financial planning, governance, control and resilience had reflected very high levels of professionalism in the Finance department. The Council's results were almost certainly the best results in the county and it was likely that they would place the Council within the top 10% of Councils in the country. The Leader again believed this was an excellent result and offered his congratulations and thanks to the Director of Resources and her team, who had worked so hard to achieve the excellent results.

LEADER'S QUESTION TIME

The Leader of the opposition, Councillor A Knox, asked if the Leader would agree that the auditors' 'Review of the Council's Arrangements for Securing Financial Resilience' was a positive reinforcement of the efforts of the Council's Budget Working Group and the Committee structure, as opposed to the more negative view of the effectiveness of those Councils who had a cabinet structure.

The Leader, Councillor S Hirst, thanked Councillor Knox for his question and confirmed that the recent report produced by the external auditors was a culmination of a significant piece of work that they had carried out as part of the closure of the Council's accounts. They had looked at the Council's financial arrangements not just its governance structure and scored each area. The Accounts and Audit Committee had considered the report as had the Budget Working Group. The Council was extremely pleased to have gained green indicators in all areas which meant that the Council was meeting or even exceeding the required standard in terms of its financial arrangements.

Next, Councillor Knox asked what the difference was, in terms of the Council Tax, levied by Ribbles Valley Borough Council on residents of the borough, between the Council's revised actual budget compared to the actual budget in percentage terms for the financial year 2012/2013.

The Leader confirmed that when the budget was agreed the Council Tax was set for the year whatever the final surplus or deficit of the accounts turned out to be. There were many variances during the year both up and down and the eventual financial position was adjusted through the use of general fund balances. The original estimate had assumed £20,000 would be taken from balances to balance the budget. That figure equated to 0.6% in Council Tax band D terms. The Council's outturn position had been a surplus of £83,000, which equated to a 2.6% in band D Council Tax terms. In a supplementary question, Councillor Knox expressed concern that in the current times of austerity, did an underspend effectively amount to over taxing of residents by 2.6%. The Leader confirmed that the underspend in question was barely 1% short of the balanced budget and that he would rather the Council were in an underspend position than an overspend position.

Finally, Councillor Knox asked how many of hours officer time had been committed to the Clitheroe Food Festival and if that figure could be evaluated in cash terms.

The Leader reported that detailed records of staff time in supporting the Clitheroe Food Festival had not been kept but a very rough estimate of the time spent by the Council's Tourism, Regeneration, Finance and Admin staff prior to the day of the Food Festival, was 1,100 hours. The cost of this if it were to be allocated would be £17,000 or £21,500 if National Insurance and Superannuation contributions were to be included.

The Leader confirmed that the Council was keen to promote events like the Food Festival as part of an ambitious regeneration and tourism programme.

In a supplementary question, Councillor Knox said that he too applauded the success of the Food Festival but wondered if funds could be diverted towards issues relating to food poverty instead. The Leader acknowledged the points Councillor Knox made but reminded him of the important role of the Food Festival in the Council's boroughwide regeneration programme.

356 COMMITTEE MINUTES

(i) Emergency Committee – 1 July 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(ii) Planning and Development Committee – 18 July 2013

Councillor Simon Hore submitted a written question under Standing Order 9. He highlighted concerns regarding an effective traffic management plan in relation to disruption in Chipping over the summer since the development of six affordable homes had commenced. He asked if, as part of the conditions of planning consent, the Council as the planning authority, was able to insist that a traffic management plan was advised to the Parish or Town Council prior to commencement of work and that local residents in the immediate vicinity were also informed. He asked if the Chairman agreed that such a level of communication with parishes and residents would help in resolving development concerns once building work commenced.

The Chairman of Planning and Development Committee, Councillor T Hill, thanked Councillor Hore for his question and confirmed that in this instance, there was no planning condition relating to a construction management plan and such a plan was normally only appropriate for major proposals. He accepted it may be that, in light of the concerns raised, more consideration should have been given to the use of such a condition so that it would reflect the individual circumstances of a site. He noted that given the number of applications received, liaising with Parish Councils on such conditions in every case would be difficult to manage, and advocated that any concerns should ideally be expressed at the stage where parishes were advised of the application so that if a condition were needed relating to a construction management plan, it could be included with other conditions. In a supplementary question, Councillor Hore asked if the planning department could include a simple checklist that would pick up some of these issues. The Chairman assured him that the points raised would be properly considered and that he would report back to Councillor Hore as appropriate.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(iii) Special Planning and Development Committee – 6 August 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(iv) Accounts and Audit Committee – 28 August 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(v) Health and Housing Committee – 29 August 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(vi) Community Committee – 3 September 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(vii) Personnel Committee – 4 September 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(viii) Parish Councils' Liaison Committee – 5 September 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(ix) Policy and Finance Committee – 10 September 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received with the exception of Minute 274.

MINUTE 274 – POLITICAL BALANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR COMMITTEE

Members considered recommendations regarding political balance arrangements for committees following the Littlemoor By election on 1 August 2013.

RESOLVED: That

1. the number of seats on each committee and the allocation of those seats be as set out in Appendix A of the report to the Policy and Finance Committee;
2. the allocation of committee seats to Councillor Rogerson be as set out in Appendix B of the report to the Policy and Finance Committee.

(x) Planning and Development – 12 September 2013

The Chairman, Councillor T Hill, made a comment in respect of Minute 320. He emphasised that the decision to withdraw from the Barrow Lands appeal had not been taken lightly and that the decision did not necessarily mean that the appeal would not progress and that residents would still have an opportunity to put forward their views. He expressed his concern that an 'i-petition' had been created to demand the dismissal of two senior officers who had been directly involved in matters surrounding the Barrow Lands application and the Core Strategy. He regarded the petition as outrageous and abhorrent. The Chairman

strongly believed that the officers concerned were both courageous and conscientious officers whose integrity was without question.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

(xi) Licensing Committee – 17 September 2013

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the above meeting be received.

The meeting closed at 7.25pm.

If you have any queries on these minutes please contact Marshal Scott (414400).