

COUNCIL

HELD: Wednesday, 17 April 2024

Start: 7.30 pm

Finish: 8.00 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor:

M Nixon (Mayor)

J Finch (Deputy Mayor)

T Aldridge

R Bailey

P Burnside

V Cummins

G Dowling

A Fennell

A Fowler

N Furey

J Gordon

P Hennessy

P Hogan

K Jukes

K Lloyd

R Molloy

M Parlour

E Pope

I Rigby

Webster

D Westley

J Witter

M Anderson

A Blundell

C Coughlan

T Devine

I Eccles

J Fillis

T De Freitas

Y Gagen

N Hennessy

P Hesketh

J Howard

S Lawton

Mrs J Marshall

G Owen

S Patel

J Rear

N Pryce-Roberts

D West

D Whittington

A Yates

Officers:

Jacqui Sinnott-Lacey, Chief Executive

Chris Twomey, Deputy Chief Executive

James Pierce, Head of Finance, Procurement and Commercial Services Section 151 Officer

Paul Charlson, Head of Planning & Regulatory Services

Alan Leicester, Head of Housing Services

Kay Lovelady, Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Jacky Denning, Democratic Services Manager

Thomas Lynan, Electoral Services Manager

Ben Gudger, Interim Head of Economic Development and Regeneration

Jessica Hollingworth, Communications, Marketing & Engagement Manager

Rebecca Tallo, Leisure Partnerships Development Manager

95

PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain for the evening, Deacon Des, led Members and officers in prayer.

96 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Marsh-Pritchard and Councillor Mrs Westley.

97 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services advised that a general exemption had been granted by the Standards Committee, which enabled Members that had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or a Pecuniary Interest to take part and vote in respect of item 12(a) on the agenda (Minute 97) 'WASPI (Women Against State Pension Inequality) Motion.

98 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 28 February 2024 be received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the removal of Councillor Pope's name from the list of attendees.

99 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR AND/OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Mayor announced:

- A. That the Mayor's Charity Ball would be held on Saturday 27 April 2024 at Lancashire Manor Hotel and she thanked those Members that had donated raffle prizes.
- B. That an afternoon tea would be held in the Mayor's Room and that details would be provide in due course.

100 TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 10.2

There were no items under this heading.

101 MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

Consideration was given to the minutes of the undermentioned meetings of the Committees shown.

RESOLVED That the minutes of the undermentioned meetings and any recommendations contained in them, be approved:

- A. Standards Committee – Tuesday, 5 March 2024
- B. Planning Committee – Thursday, 21 March 2024

102 CORPORATE HEALTH AND SAFETY STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, as contained

on pages 37 to 56 of the Book of Reports, which sought approval of the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Strategic Plan (the Plan) 2024 - 2027.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Health and Safety Strategic Plan (2024-2027) attached as Appendix 1 to this report be approved.

103 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of that Act and as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption under Schedule 12A outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

104 **BURSCOUGH SPORTS REFURBISHMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, as contained on pages 57 to 64 of the Book of Reports, which sought approval for a scheme to refurbish Burscough Sports.

Following a discussion, the Portfolio Holder for Leisure gave an undertaking to give first refusal, to Banks Leisure Centre management company, of any non-leased equipment being dispensed of during the refurbishment.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the scheme to refurbish Burscough Sports be approved with a capital expenditure budget of £3.188m funded through the sources set out in paragraph 5.2 of the report.
- B. That funding be set aside in the Medium Term Financial Strategy to meet the potential short term impact on revenue income that will result from the scheme.
- C. That the Deputy Chief Executive be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps and actions and to procure and enter such contracts that are required to deliver the scheme.

105 **HOUSING SCHEME AT BECCONSALL LANE, HESKETH BANK**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Executive, as contained on pages 65 to 78 of the Book of Reports, which set out details of a proposed new housing scheme at Becconsall Lane.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the proposed new Becconsall Lane housing scheme as set out in this

report be approved.

- B. That the Head of Housing be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps and actions and to procure and enter such contracts that are required to deliver the scheme.

(Members of the public and the press were invited back into the meeting for the next agenda item.)

106 **MOTIONS**

The following Motion was considered at the request of the Member indicated:

107 **WASPI (WOMEN AGAINST STATE PENSION INEQUALITY) - MOTION FROM COUNCILLOR MELISSA PARLOUR ON BEHALF OF THE LABOUR GROUP**

The following Motion was moved and seconded.

"Council notes that:

- In the 1995 Pensions Act, the Government increased State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further increase to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.
- The change was not properly communicated to 3.8m women born in the 1950s until 2012, giving some only one year's notice of a six year increase in their anticipated retirement age. 5940 (5% of population of West Lancashire) of the affected women are in our own authority area.
- The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has found that the Department for Work and Pensions was guilty of maladministration in its handling of the State Pension Age increase for women born in the 1950s.
- The All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women has concluded that "the impact of DWP maladministration on 1950s-born women has been as devastating as it is widespread. The APPG believes that the case for category 6 injustice is overwhelming and clear. Women have had their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances totally obliterated by a lack of reasonable notice."
- Research commissioned by campaign group WASPI has found that by the end of 2022, more than 220,000 1950s born women will have died waiting for justice since the WASPI campaign began in 2015.
- WASPI's figures show that over the course of the two year COVID pandemic, 1 in 10 women who died was affected by these uncommunicated changes and lost both their state pension income and the opportunity to make alternative retirement plans.
- Despite the Ombudsman's findings and the rapid death rate of those affected, the government is choosing to wait for further reports before taking any action.

Council believes this injustice has not only had a profound effect on the individuals involved but on the wider community in West Lancashire and on local government, not least because:

- Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care
- Women who would have retired and engaged in caring responsibilities for grandchildren are having to continue working, increasing the childcare burden on the state locally
- Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing stock
- There is a broader impact on voluntary services of all kinds locally, which are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned
- Our local economy is negatively affected by the reduced spending power and disposable income the uncommunicated State Pension Age changes has brought about among women born in the 1950s

Council supports:

- The conclusion of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality that women born in the 1950s have suffered a gross injustice, affecting their emotional, physical and mental circumstances in addition to causing financial hardship.
- A swift resolution to this ongoing injustice before more and more women die waiting for compensation.
- The WASPI campaign for an immediate one-off compensation payment of between £11,666 and £20,000 to those affected, with the most going to women who were given the shortest notice of the longest increase in their state pension age.

Council asks:

- The Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament, and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to outline the effects of the injustice to 1950s women on the community in West Lancashire and to seek their support for an immediate compensation package."

A vote was taken, the Motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:**A. That Council notes that:**

- (i) In the 1995 Pensions Act, the Government increased State Pension age for women from 60 to 65, with a further increase to 66 in the 2011 Pensions Act.
- (ii) The change was not properly communicated to 3.8m women born in the 1950s until 2012, giving some only one year's notice of a six year increase in their anticipated retirement age. 5940 (5% of population of West Lancashire) of the affected women are in our own authority area.
- (iii) The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO) has found that the Department for Work and Pensions was guilty of maladministration in its handling of the State Pension Age increase for women born in the 1950s.

- (iv) The All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality for Women has concluded that “the impact of DWP maladministration on 1950s-born women has been as devastating as it is widespread. The APPG believes that the case for category 6 injustice is overwhelming and clear. Women have had their emotional, physical, and mental circumstances totally obliterated by a lack of reasonable notice.”
 - (v) Research commissioned by campaign group WASPI has found that by the end of 2022, more than 220,000 1950s born women will have died waiting for justice since the WASPI campaign began in 2015.
 - (vi) WASPI’s figures show that over the course of the two year COVID pandemic, 1 in 10 women who died was affected by these uncommunicated changes and lost both their state pension income and the opportunity to make alternative retirement plans.
 - (vii) Despite the Ombudsman’s findings and the rapid death rate of those affected, the government is choosing to wait for further reports before taking any action.
- B. That Council believes this injustice has not only had a profound effect on the individuals involved but on the wider community in West Lancashire and on local government, not least because:
- (i) Women who would have looked after older relatives or partners are unable to afford to do so, with a knock-on impact on local social care
 - (ii) Women who would have retired and engaged in caring responsibilities for grandchildren are having to continue working, increasing the childcare burden on the state locally
 - (iii) Women who have been left in poverty are struggling to meet their housing costs, with a knock-on impact on local housing stock
 - (iv) There is a broader impact on voluntary services of all kinds locally, which are missing out on able, active volunteers who would otherwise have been able to retire from full-time work as planned
 - (v) Our local economy is negatively affected by the reduced spending power and disposable income the uncommunicated State Pension Age changes has brought about among women born in the 1950s
- C. That Council supports:
- (i) The conclusion of the All Party Parliamentary Group on State Pension Inequality that women born in the 1950s have suffered a gross injustice, affecting their emotional, physical and mental circumstances in addition to causing financial hardship.
 - (ii) A swift resolution to this ongoing injustice before more and more women die waiting for compensation.
 - (iii) The WASPI campaign for an immediate one-off compensation payment of between £11,666 and £20,000 to those affected, with the most going to women who were given the shortest notice of the longest increase in their state pension age.
- D. That Council asks the Leader of the Council to write to local Members of Parliament, and to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to outline the

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effects of the injustice to 1950s women on the community in West Lancashire and to seek their support for an immediate compensation package.

(Note: During consideration of the item, Councillors Eccles, Howard, Pope, Rear, D Westley, Whittington and Witter declared an interest and left the meeting.)

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THE MAYOR