

COUNCIL

HELD: Wednesday, 16 October 2024

Start: 7.30 pm

Finish: 10.55 pm

PRESENT:

Councillor: J Finch (Mayor)

A Fennell (Deputy Mayor)

Councillors:

Abbott

T Aldridge

M Anderson

R Bailey

A Blundell

P Burnside

C Coughlan

V Cummins

T Devine

G Dowling

I Eccles

J Fillis

A Fowler

T de Freitas

N Furey

Y Gagen

J Gordon

N Hennessy

P Hennessy

P Hesketh

P Hogan

J Howard

Ingman

K Jukes

S Lawton

K Lloyd

Mrs J Marshall

J Mee

R Molloy

M Nixon

G Owen

A Owens

M Parlour

S Patel

E Pope

I Rigby

N Pryce-Roberts

Webster

D West

D Westley

Mrs M Westley

D Whittington

J Witter

Officers:

Chris Twomey, Acting Chief Executive

James Pierce, Director of Finance and Corporate Resources
(Section 151 Officer)

Lisa Windle, Assistant Director of Corporate and Customer
Services

Kathryn Sephton, Assistant Director of Environmental Services

Paul Charlson, Assistant Director of Planning & Regulatory
Services

Alan Leicester, Director of Housing & Environment

Kay Lovelady, Head of Legal & Democratic Services

Jacky Denning, Democratic Services Manager

Tom Lynan, Elections Manager

27 PRAYERS

The Mayor's Chaplain for the evening, Reverend Phil Jump, led Members and officers in prayer.

28 APOLOGIES

There were no apologies for absence.

29 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations were received:

1. Councillors Blundell, de Freitas, Eccles, Gordon, Howard, Mrs Marshall, Mee, Gaynar Owen, Patel, Webster, Whittington and Witter declared a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 8 'Update To The Community Infrastructure Levy (Cil) And Section 106 Governance And Expenditure Framework', Item 10 ' Council Annual Report 2023/24', Item 12 'Statutory Polling Review 2024 – Final Proposals', Item 20 ' Tawd Valley Developments Limited – Business Plan Update' in view of their membership of a Parish Council.
2. Councillors Aldridge, Bailey, Fillis, N Hennessy and D Westley declared a non pecuniary interest in relation to Item 8 'Update To The Community Infrastructure Levy (Cil) And Section 106 Governance And Expenditure Framework', Item 10 ' Council Annual Report 2023/24', Item 11 ' Complaints Annual Report - 2023-2024', Item 14 ' Food Waste Collections – Capital Transitional Grant Payment', Item 19 ' Skelmersdale Town Centre Draft Masterplan', Item 20 ' Tawd Valley Developments Limited – Business Plan Update' as Members of Lancashire County Council, as did Councillors Coughlan and Gagen as an employee of Lancashire County Council.
3. Councillors Eccles, Finch, Furey, Gordon, Howard, Marshall, Mee, Pope, Suresh, David Westley, Marilyn Westley and Witter declared a pecuniary interest in relation to Item 21 (a) 'Winter Fuel Allowance and Protecting Pensioners from Fuel Poverty – Motion' as a person or have a connected person affected by the decision and indicated that they would leave the room whilst the item was under consideration.

30 MINUTES

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday, 17 July 2024 be received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

31 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE MAYOR AND/OR THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Mayor announced that the Mayor's fund raising Committee would be holding a Halloween Fancy Dress Party on Saturday 2 November 2024 at the E-Rooms in Skelmersdale – Tickets £10 each.

The Mayor also appealed for donations for tombola prizes to be used at future events and asked if these could be left at reception.

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

The Mayor advised that one question had been received from Councillor Adrian Owens in respect of Single Use Plastics, which had been circulated and published

on the Council's website, and that the response would be published following the meeting.

33 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. Policy & Resources Committee – Tuesday 25 June and 24 September 2024.
- B. Planning Committee – Thursday 25 July and 5 September 2024.
- C. Audit & Governance Committee – Wednesday 31 July 2024.
- D. Standards Committee – Tuesday 17 September 2024.

(Note: Given the significant attendance by Members of the public, the Mayor announced that he would be re-ordering the agenda to consider items 15 'Leisure Update' and 16 'Savings Options and MTFS Update' at this point in the meeting.)

34 UPDATE TO THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL) AND SECTION 106 GOVERNANCE AND EXPENDITURE FRAMEWORK

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Planning & Regulatory Services, as contained on pages 43 to 146 of the Book of Reports, which advised of the preparation of a revised Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 Governance and Expenditure Framework (the Framework). The new framework is to supersede that previously adopted and last revised in 2020. The revision had been necessary to ensure that the framework remains the most appropriate and effective approach for CIL and S106 expenditure.

The minute of Policy & Resources Committee had been circulated.

RESOLVED: That the Council's Constitution be amended to include the new delegations as set out in Appendix 3 to the report.

35 TUC DYING TO WORK CHARTER

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Corporate & Customer Services, as contained on pages 147 to 168 of the Book of Reports, which sought agreement to sign up to the TUC Dying to Work Charter, and to implement the Supporting Employees with Terminal Illness Policy.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Council sign up to the Dying To Work Charter establishing the

Council's commitment to support staff with Terminal illness in partnership with the TUC and our local Unions UNISON and GMB.

- B. That Council endorse the creation of a Supporting Employees Diagnosed with Terminal Illness Policy and supporting guidance for managers, as attached at Appendix (i) to the report.

36 **COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Corporate & Customer Services, as contained on pages 169 to 208 of the Book of Reports, which presented the Council Annual Report 2023/24.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Council Annual Report 2023/24 be noted.
- B. That authority is given to the Assistant Director for Corporate & Customer Services in consultation with the relevant Lead Member to make any minor final amendments to the document prior to publication on the Council website.

37 **COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Corporate & Customer Services, as contained on pages 209 to 286 of the Book of Reports, which presented the annual performance data in relation to Complaints received between 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024, the Council's continuous improvement plan for the same period, evidencing the Council's commitment to learning from complaints and the annual self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman statutory complaint handling code.

RESOLVED: In accordance with the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code, the performance data, continuous improvement plan and self-assessment be noted.

38 **STATUTORY POLLING REVIEW 2024 - FINAL REPORT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, as contained on pages 287 to 330 of the Book of Reports, which reviewed all Parliamentary Polling Districts and Polling Places and all Local Government Polling Districts and Polling Places at the same time, to enable the Council to comply with its statutory duty to review.

RESOLVED: That the Final Schedule of Proposals, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

39 **OFFICER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Chief Legal & Democratic Services

Officer (Monitoring Officer), as contained on pages 331 to 358 of the Book of Reports, which sought approval of the revised Officer Code of Conduct, following which the Code would be adopted.

The minute of Standards Committee had been circulated.

RESOLVED: That the Officer Code of Conduct be approved and adopted forthwith.

40 **FOOD WASTE COLLECTIONS – CAPITAL TRANSITIONAL GRANT PAYMENT**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Environmental Services, as contained on pages 359 386 of the Book of Reports, which sought authority to spend the Transitional Capital funding through Section 31 grants received from DEFRA on 11 April 2024, for the procurement of new vehicles, to deliver mandatory food waste collections on a non-ring-fenced basis.

RESOLVED: That the Assistant Director of Environmental Services be authorised to procure specialised food waste vehicles and food containers to deliver mandatory food waste collections by 31 March 2026. The cost of which will be taken from the capital grant payment of £1,072,995 from DEFRA under Section 31 of the Local Government Act.

41 **LEISURE UPDATE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, as contained on pages 363 to 380 of the Book of Reports, which provided an update on a range of leisure matters.

Members were advised that the consultation would be started w/b 21 October 2024.

The recommendations at paragraph 2 of the report were moved and seconded.

An Amendment to the Motion, set out in the following terms, was moved and seconded:

"That recommendations 2.1 and 2.2 of the report be replaced by a new 2.1 authorising the setting up of a Sub Committee of Full Council: Leisure Review Sub Committee Membership – 7 members – 4 Labour, 2 Conservative and 1 Owl Functions:

(1) To consider the future of the two existing leisure facilities at Nye Bevan Pool, Skelmersdale and Park Pool, Ormskirk and the possible options for replacing these facilities by taking into account the current operating costs, the Council's current and projected financial position together with the information and options detailed in the report of FMG Consulting.

(2) To report recommendations to the December meeting of the Full Council. "

A vote was taken, and at the request of a Member, was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors Bailey, Blundell, Eccles, de Freitas, Furey, Gordon,

Hesketh, Hogan, Howard, Ingman, Juckes, Lloyd, Marshall, Mee, Owens, Pope, Rigby, Webster, D Westley, Mrs Westley, Whittington and Witter (TWENTY TWO)

AGAINST: Councillors Abbott, Aldridge, Anderson, Burnside, Coughlan, Cummins, Devine, Dowling, Fennell, Fillis, Finch, Fowler, Gagen, N Hennessy, P Hennessy, Lawton, Molloy, Nixon, Owen, Parlour, Patel, Pryce-Roberts and West (TWENTY THREE)

ABSTENTIONS: (NONE)

The Amendment was LOST.

A vote was taken on the Motion, and at the request of a Member, was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors Abbott, Aldridge, Anderson, Burnside, Coughlan, Cummins, Devine, Dowling, Fennell, Fillis, Finch, Fowler, Gagen, N Hennessy, P Hennessy, Lawton, Molloy, Nixon, Owen, Parlour, Patel, Pryce-Roberts and West (TWENTY THREE)

AGAINST: Councillors Bailey, Blundell, Eccles, de Freitas, Furey, Gordon, Hesketh, Hogan, Howard, Ingman, Juckes, Lloyd, Marshall, Mee, Owens, Pope, Rigby, Webster, D Westley, Mrs Westley, Whittington and Witter (TWENTY TWO)

ABSTENTIONS: (NONE)

The Motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the Deputy Chief Executive be given delegated authority to explore the potential for delivering two new wellbeing and leisure facilities using new and innovative building approaches and to bring a report back to Council on the findings.
- B. That the Deputy Chief Executive be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps to consult on the future of the Nye Bevan and Park Pool leisure centres, the findings of which will be reported back to Council.

(Note: The Council meeting adjourned for 5 minutes at the conclusion of this item.)

SAVINGS OPTIONS AND MTFS UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Services, as contained on pages 381 to 386 of the Book of Reports, which presented savings and efficiency options for approval prior to the 2025/26 budget setting.

A Motion to move the recommendations at paragraph 2 of the report, were moved and seconded.

An Amendment, circulated prior to the meeting, was moved and seconded.:

A vote was taken, the Amendment was LOST.

A vote was taken on the Motion, which at the request of a Member, was recorded as follows:

FOR: Councillors Abbott, Aldridge, Anderson, Burnside, Coughlan, Cummins, Devine, Dowling, Fennell, Fillis, Finch, Fowler, Gagen, N Hennessy, P Hennessy, Lawton, Molloy, Nixon, Owen, Parlour, Patel, Pryce-Roberts and West (TWENTY THREE)

AGAINST: Councillors Bailey, Blundell, Eccles, de Freitas, Furey, Gordon, Hesketh, Hogan, Howard, Ingman, Juckes, Lloyd, Marshall, Mee, Owens, Pope, Rigby, Webster, D Westley, Mrs Westley, Whittington and Witter (TWENTY TWO)

ABSTENTIONS: (NONE)

The Motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the current MTFs position be noted.
- B. That the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps to implement the savings identified in:
Appendix A:
 - (i) Reduce agency staff usage in Planning
 - (ii) Review of Skelmersdale Town Centre Management Cost Budgets
 - (iii) Amend HROD salary budget to reflect establishment
 - (iv) Adjust DFG admin fee income budget to reflect the size of the grant
 - (v) Remove water coolers
 - (vi) Disestablish vacant 0.2fte post in Creditors
 - (vii) Reduce Creditors overtime budget
 - (viii) Reduce Customer Services overtime & agency budgets
 - (ix) Reduce benefits team overtime budget
 - (x) Reduce council tax and NNDR team overtime budget

Table 1:

- (i) Terminate Public Realm agreement
- (ii) Review of HROD team
- (iii) Review of Communications & Engagement
- (iv) Review of Legal & Democratic Services

- C. That the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps (including the procurement of external support) to identify projected savings and efficiency proposals detailed in Section 4 and table 2 of the report set out below, following which a further report be brought back to full Council for determination:

Table 2:

- (i) Increase pest control charges
- (ii) Increase bulky waste collection charges
- (iii) Review of Public Toilets Management
- (iv) Review of the Ranger Service
- (v) Review of car parking
- (vi) Review of Leisure Services
- (vii) Community Safety Review
- (viii) Review of Building Control
- (ix) Removal of Mayoral civic duties

43 **RESPONSE OF WEST LANCASHIRE BOROUGH COUNCIL TO CONSULTATION ON CHANGES TO THE NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Consideration was given to the report of the Assistant Director of Planning & Regulatory Services, as contained on pages 387 to 408 of the Book of Reports, which detailed the response submitted by officers to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) consultation on 24 September 2024.

A Motion to move the recommendation at 2.1 of the report was moved and seconded.

An Amendment, circulated prior to the meeting was altered at the meeting as follows and the Altered Amendment was moved and seconded in the following terms:

*"That in addition to recommendation 2.1 being approved with the addition that the CEO write to our two Members of Parliament to provide each of them with a copy of the Council's response to the Consultation and seeking their support for our concerns to the proposed changes to the NPPF by making representation to the **Minister of Housing Communities & Local Government (MHCLG).**"*

A vote was taken on the Amendment, which was LOST.

A vote was taken on the Motion, which was CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That the response to the National Planning Policy Framework consultation, attached as Appendix A to the report, be noted.

44 **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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information

as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the 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.

(Note: The meeting was adjourned for 5 minutes)

45 SKELMERSDALE TOWN CENTRE DRAFT MASTERPLAN

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive, as contained on pages 409 to 600 of the Book of Reports, which provided information about the draft Skelmersdale Town Centre Masterplan, including the approach to regeneration and renewal of the town centre and the proposed key projects, and sought approval to public consultation of the draft Masterplan at the end of October and November 2024.

The report also advised that following the outcome of the public consultation process, the draft Masterplan would be finalised and recommended to Council for approval in February 2025.

The minute of the Policy & Resources Committee had been circulated.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the proposed draft Masterplan for Skelmersdale Town Centre as set out in this report be approved for consultation purposes.
- B. That the Deputy Chief Executive be given delegated authority to take all necessary steps and actions to arrange for public consultation of the draft Masterplan and report back to Council in February 2025.

46 TAWD VALLEY DEVELOPMENTS LIMITED – BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

Consideration was given to the report of the Director of Finance & Corporate Resources, as contained on pages 601 to 670 of the Book of Reports, which sought approval for the latest Business Plan of Tawd Valley Developments Limited (TVDL), which is the Council's wholly owned development company.

RESOLVED:

- A. That the TVDL Business Plan, set out in the Appendix to the report, be approved.
- B. That the implications for the Council arising from the Business Plan, as set out in section 5 of the report, be approved.

(Note: Councillor Furey was not present during consideration of this item and therefore did not take part in the voting.)

47 MOTIONS

The following Motions were considered at the request of the Members indicated:

48 WINTER FUEL ALLOWANCE AND PROTECTING PENSIONERS FROM FUEL POVERTY - MOTION INCLUDED ON THE AGENDA BY COUNCILLOR DE FREITAS

The following Motion was moved and seconded:

"Council Notes:

- *The Labour Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.*
- *The estimated impact of this decision, which Age UK says will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.*
- *The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments play in helping older residents of West Lancashire and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health.*
- *The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.*
- *The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible, further exacerbating their financial hardship.*

Council believes:

- *That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.*
- *While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many pensioners across West Lancashire who are not in receipt of Pension Credit but on a low income will now lose their allowance.*
- *The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, especially with such short notice and without adequate compensatory measures, is deeply unfair and will disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.*
- *The government's approach fails to consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.*

Council resolves to:

- *Bring forward a Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel Payment for those most in need.*
- *Request that the Council Leader write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.*
- *Commit the Council to signing the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK and write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the petition themselves.*
- *Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services*

and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in West Lancashire are supported in claiming their entitlement."

An Amendment to the Motion, circulated at the meeting, was moved and seconded. A vote was taken on the Amendment, which was CARRIED.

A vote was taken on the Substantive Motion, which was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

A. Council Notes:

- The out of control inflation, rising cost of living and rising energy costs which occurred under the previous Conservative Government amid the financial mismanagement and chaos under 14 years of Conservative cuts to public services and rising taxes.
- The announcement today of falling inflation rate.
- This Government's recent decision to restrict the Winter Fuel Payment to only pensioners in receipt of means-tested benefits like Pension Credit, as announced by Chancellor Rachel Reeves.
- Age UK suggest the impact of this decision will mean 2 million pensioners who badly need the money to stay warm this winter will not receive it.
- The significant role that Winter Fuel Payments plays in helping some older residents of West Lancashire and across the UK afford heating during the coldest months, thereby preventing 'heat or eat' dilemmas and safeguarding health, and the Government's commitment to retain the Winter Fuel Payments for those most in need.
- The criticism from Age UK, the Countryside Alliance and other charities, highlighting the social injustice and potential health risks posed by this sudden policy change.
- The additional strain this decision will place on vulnerable pensioners, many of whom do not claim Pension Credit despite being eligible – estimated to be up to 880,000, further exacerbating their financial hardship.

B. Council believes:

- That the Winter Fuel Payment has been a lifeline for many older people across the UK and that restricting its availability solely to those on Pension Credit risks leaving many pensioners in financial hardship.
- While some pensioners currently in receipt of the Winter Fuel Payment may not require it, many pensioners across West Lancashire who are not in receipt of Pension Credit but on a low income will now lose their allowance and may seek support from the Household Support Fund.
- The decision to means-test Winter Fuel Payments, could disproportionately affect the health and well-being of our poorest older residents.
- The government's approach must consider the administrative barriers and stigma that prevent eligible pensioners from claiming Pension Credit, leaving many without the support they desperately need.

C. Council resolves to:

- Continue our Council-led local awareness campaign to alert those eligible of Pension Credit which in some respects will help access to the Winter Fuel

Payment for those most in need.

- Seek urgent clarity on the Household Support Fund and ensure this information is updated on the council's website, advertised through social media, and alerted through partners within the statutory and VCFS to ensure the widest breadth of residents are made aware of and supported by the fund.
- Request that the Chief Executive write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, urging a review of the decision to means-test the Winter Fuel Payment and asking the government to ensure that vulnerable pensioners, particularly those who do not claim Pension Credit, are protected from fuel poverty.
- Write to all members offering them the opportunity to sign the 'Save the Winter Fuel Payment for Struggling Pensioners' petition being run by Age UK.
- Encourage local efforts to promote Pension Credit uptake through council services and partnerships with local charities and community organisations to ensure that all eligible pensioners in West Lancashire are supported in claiming their entitlement.

(Note: (i) During consideration of the item Councillors Aldridge, Burnside, Cummins, Eccles, Fillis, Finch, Furey, Gordon, Howard, Juckes, Marshall, Mee, Owen, Patel, Pope, D Westley, Mrs Westley, Whittington and Witter, declared a pecuniary interest in the item and left the room.

(ii) As the Mayor, Council Finch had declared a pecuniary interest in this item and had left the room, Councillor Fennell took the Chairperson's role.)

49

COUNCIL TAX EXEMPTIONS FOR STUDENTS - MOTION INCLUDED BY COUNCILLOR ADRIAN OWENS ON BEHALF OF THE OUR WEST LANCASHIRE GROUP

The following Altered Motion was moved and seconded:

"Council notes that:

- *Many types of accommodation, which house students are currently exempt from council tax.*
- *As at October 2024, there are 622 properties registered within the Borough that attract an exemption from Council Tax in accordance with the Regulation relating to student households (Exemption Class N) and a further 336 properties registered within the Borough that attract an exemption from Council Tax in accordance with the Regulation relating to student halls of residence (Exemption Class M).*
- *If these properties were not exempt from Council Tax, if a full Council Tax charge was levied in all these cases (assuming no Council Tax Support entitlement or other Council Tax Discounts/ Exemptions were eligible), it is estimated that an additional £1.7M Council Tax liability may be generated of which the Borough Council's share of the additional liability income is estimated to be approximately £175K.*
- *All households generate a need for local authority-funded public services, e.g. street cleansing, waste management, and environmental health demands*
- *Prior to 2020, councils received funding to cover the cost of these services through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), but since 2020 when the RSG was phased out, the income lost from council tax exemptions relating to student accommodation has*

effectively been borne by all other West Lancashire council tax payers.

- The Fair Funding Review of funding to councils promised by the previous Conservative Government in 2017 was never delivered and the core funding formulae for local councils have not been updated since 2013. This and the phasing out of RSG mean that councils with high student populations such as West Lancashire are not fairly funded from central Government under the current arrangements.*

Council believes that:

- Students and other council tax exempted or discounted residents are a very welcome part of our community and our local economy. This has a big impact on services in these parts of the Borough.*
- Student households and other exempted or discounted households should continue to be exempt from council tax, as students are on low (and loaned) incomes and other residents qualify accordingly.*

Council resolves that:

The Chief Executive write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Local Government Association; and the Members of Parliament serving West Lancashire Borough to request that a review of government funding of local councils takes place as part of the current national spending review and that a revised system of government funding of local councils should compensate the income lost to local councils through council tax exemptions for student households and halls of residence and other such exemptions and also re-introduce minimum 3-year funding settlements for local government to aid financial planning."

A vote was taken, the Altered Motion was CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

A. Council notes that:

- Many types of accommodation, which house students are currently exempt from council tax.
- As at October 2024, there are 622 properties registered within the Borough that attract an exemption from Council Tax in accordance with the Regulation relating to student households (Exemption Class N) and a further 336 properties registered within the Borough that attract an exemption from Council Tax in accordance with the Regulation relating to student halls of residence (Exemption Class M).
- If these properties were not exempt from Council Tax, if a full Council Tax charge was levied in all these cases (assuming no Council Tax Support entitlement or other Council Tax Discounts/ Exemptions were eligible), it is estimated that an additional £1.7M Council Tax liability may be generated of which the Borough Council's share of the additional liability income is estimated to be approximately £175K.
- All households generate a need for local authority-funded public services, e.g. street cleansing, waste management, and environmental health demands
- Prior to 2020, councils received funding to cover the cost of these services through the Revenue Support Grant (RSG), but since 2020 when the RSG

was phased out, the income lost from council tax exemptions relating to student accommodation has effectively been borne by all other West Lancashire council tax payers.

- The Fair Funding Review of funding to councils promised by the previous Conservative Government in 2017 was never delivered and the core funding formulae for local councils have not been updated since 2013. This and the phasing out of RSG mean that councils with high student populations such as West Lancashire are not fairly funded from central Government under the current arrangements.

B. Council believes that:

- Students and other council tax exempted or discounted residents are a very welcome part of our community and our local economy. This has a big impact on services in these parts of the Borough.
- Student households and other exempted or discounted households should continue to be exempt from council tax, as students are on low (and loaned) incomes and other residents qualify accordingly.

C. Council resolves that the Chief Executive write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government; the Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Local Government Association; and the Members of Parliament serving West Lancashire Borough to request that a review of government funding of local councils takes place as part of the current national spending review and that a revised system of government funding of local councils should compensate the income lost to local councils through council tax exemptions for student households and halls of residence and other such exemptions and also re-introduce minimum 3-year funding settlements for local government to aid financial planning.

(Note: Councillor Aldridge, Fillis, Mee, Pope and Whittington were not present during consideration of this item.)

.....
THE MAYOR