
COUNCIL (ANNUAL MEETING)

Thursday, 15th May, 2025

Present:	Councillors Judith Addison, Vanessa Alexander, Josh Allen, Heather Anderson, Noordad Aziz, Scott Brereton, Stephen Button, Andrew Clegg, Jodi Clements, Paul Cox, Munsif Dad BEM JP, Bernard Dawson MBE, Stewart Eaves, Peter Edwards, Shabir Fazal OBE, Melissa Fisher, Andy Gilbert, David Heap, Zak Khan, Clare McKenna, Dave Parkins, Kath Pratt, Clare Pritchard, Ethan Rawcliffe, Steven Smithson, Tina Walker, Kimberley Whitehead, Clare Yates and Mohammed Younis
Apologies:	Councillors Mike Booth, Danny Cassidy, Loraine Cox, Marlene Haworth, Joyce Plummer and Kate Walsh

In the absence of the retiring Mayor, Councillor Mike Booth, the meeting was opened by the Chief Executive, Mr David Welsby.

The Chief Executive welcomed all to the meeting, and explained that Councillor Booth was unwell and was unable to attend this evening. Members wished him a speedy recovery. With the consent of the meeting, the Chief Executive undertook to guide Members through the first item of business, as the Deputy Mayor would not be in a position to chair due to potential conflict of interest in the matter.

Before continuing with the business of the meeting, the Chief Executive announced the sad passing of Alderman Bill Goldsmith. Bill was formerly a magistrate and had been awarded the title of Honorary Alderman by the Council in 2004. He had served as a Labour councillor in Hyndburn for 12 years between 1986 and 1998. Councillors were reminded that his partner Sheelagh Delaney, who had also served as a Labour councillor, had passed away in 2018.

Councillors Dad, Dawson and Khan spoke briefly about Bill's good character and of his achievements.

The Council expressed its condolences to his family and friends at this sad time and marked his passing with the observance of one minute's silence.

1 **Election of Mayor 2025/26**

It was proposed by Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP and seconded by Councillor Zak Khan, that Councillor Josh Allen be elected Mayor of the Borough of Hyndburn for the Municipal Year 2025/26.

The nomination was put to the **VOTE** and was **CARRIED**.

Resolved - **That, in pursuance of Section 23 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Josh Allen be elected to the Office of Mayor of the Borough of Hyndburn for the Municipal Year 2025/26.**

Councillor Allen wished the retiring Mayor well and commended his efforts to restore dignity to debate in the Council Chamber. The Mayor also thanked all who had supported his own appointment to the role.

Numerous councillors commented that the Councillor Allen's late mother and grandfather, who had also served as local councillors, would have been proud to see him appointed as Mayor.

A short adjournment was called, whereupon the newly-elected Mayor, Councillor Josh Allen, along with the Leaders of the political groups present and the Chief Executive, retired to the Mayor's Parlour.

Following the adjournment, Councillor Allen took his place in the Mayor's seat and the Mayoral Fob was attached to the Chain of office. The Mayor then read aloud and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Mayor.

2 Election of Deputy Mayor 2025/26

The Mayor invited nominations for the election of Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Hyndburn for the Municipal Year 2025/26. It was proposed by Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP and seconded by Councillor Zak Khan that Councillor Noordad Aziz be elected to the Office of Deputy Mayor.

Resolved - **That, in pursuance of Section 24 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Noordad Aziz be elected to the Office of Deputy Mayor of the Borough of Hyndburn for the Municipal Year 2025/26.**

Councillor Aziz then read aloud and signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office of Deputy Mayor.

3 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mike Booth, Danny Cassidy, Loraine Cox, Marlene Haworth, Joyce Plummer and Kate Walsh.

4 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations submitted.

5 Announcements

There were no announcements by the Mayor or Chief Executive on this occasion.

Councillor Dad made the following announcements:

Local Government Reorganisation

The 15 Lancashire authorities had written to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government in March 2025 and had included a range of questions and asked for feedback. Lancashire County Council had been provided with the feedback this afternoon, which was lengthy and detailed. The letter would be circulated to councillors as soon as possible. The reorganisation procedure was now at Phase 2. Hyndburn had already announced its support for three unitary authorities (including an East Lancashire Council).

Once Hyndburn had considered the Government's feedback, it should be in a position to determine its formal view. The Leader undertook to keep Members informed.

Planning Department

The Leader was pleased to report the good performance achieved by the Council's Planning Department. In the 12 months following December 2022, low numbers of applications had been finalised within the statutory timeframe. Government funding had been obtained to provide staff training and to help meet targets. By 2024, some 93% of applications were being determined on time, which exceeded the national target. The older backlog had been significantly reduced, with only a very small number of applications older than 6 months.

The Planning Policy Team had submitted the new Local Plan to the Inspectors in March 2025. The inspection process was now underway and in-person hearings would take place in the autumn. The new policies around children's homes and Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) were progressing well. An Article 4 direction was in place in various wards, which would provide more powers to control certain usage.

A bursary of some £80k had been secured for a graduate recruitment programme. This would enable a new graduate post to be created.

Accrington Stanley Football Club Academy

Accrington Stanley FC had made an announcement last week about the closure of its academy. Urgent talks had been held yesterday with the club to see if financial support from the Council might enable the academy to continue to operate. A joint statement with Accrington Stanley had been agreed, which would be published by the club shortly. The Leader added that as soon as the Council had heard about the proposed closure he had written to the Chief Executive of the club. He reiterated that a meeting had taken place yesterday and that the club would publish a statement. The Council remained committed to supporting the club, its academy and the community trust.

6 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 27th March 2025 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

In respect of Minute 417 – Confirmation of Minutes, Councillor David Heap commented that he had raised the matter of works at King George V Playing Fields on several occasions, but had not yet received any information about timescales. He had now heard that a plan had been published today. Councillor Whitehead responded that she would forward the details to him shortly. Discussions had also been on-going with Accrington Wildcats Amateur Rugby League Football Club to rehome them. They were now back at Wilson Sports Hub, their original home.

In connection with Minute 416 – Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation, Councillor Steven Smithson asked if the Leader could confirm that local elections would be held in 2026. Councillor Dad responded that he did not know about the 2026 elections at this stage, but he would let Members know when more information became available.

With regard to Minute 417 – Confirmation of Minutes, Councillor Steven Smithson asked if there had been any progress on restarting the skip days. Councillor Eaves replied that he had attended a Portfolio Holder meeting with officers yesterday, at which he had been

informed that SUEZ no longer wished to continue this service. Quotes had been obtained from SB Tippers in Great Harwood and a discussion had taken place with the Leader of the Council today about this. It was hoped that a replacement service would be approved soon.

In respect of Minute 427(3) – Accrington Stanley FC, Councillor Paul Cox reported that he had been approached by a resident recently, who had asked what was happening with the events centre at the Wham Stadium in terms of sound proofing. The Leader responded that he would pass on any information about progress by the club to Councillor Cox.

Resolved

- That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on the 27th March 2025 be approved as a correct record.

7 Appointment of the Council Leader 2025/26

Members were asked to appoint a Leader of the Council for a one-year term, from this meeting until the Council's Annual Meeting in May 2026.

In December 2010, the Council had adopted the Leader and Cabinet Executive (England) Model, in accordance with the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This had taken effect from 9th May 2011. Under this arrangement, Council elected the Leader for a four-year term. The Localism Act 2011 had subsequently taken out the specification for the Leader to be elected for a four-year term, leaving the duration of tenure to local choice. In 2024, the Council had reverted to electing the Leader annually. It was proposed that the Council retained the system of appointing the Leader annually for 2025/26.

The Leader was responsible for –

- determining the size of the Cabinet (3 or more up to a maximum of 10, including the Leader);
- appointing the members of the Cabinet;
- allocating portfolios or areas of responsibility to the various Cabinet Members;
- allocating decision-making powers to the Cabinet and to individual Cabinet Members; and
- removing and replacing Cabinet Members.

In addition, the Leader was responsible for deciding how the Council's executive functions would be exercised and for making the delegation of executive powers to officers. Council would still approve a scheme of delegation of non-executive functions to officers and this would be considered later in the agenda.

The Leader must also nominate a Deputy Leader, who would exercise the Leader's powers if the Leader was unable to act, or the post became vacant.

Council was, therefore, requested to elect a Leader in accordance with these arrangements.

A nomination for Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP was **MOVED** and **SECONDED**.

Resolved

- That Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP be elected Leader of the Council for a one year period, with his term of office ending at the Council's Annual Meeting in May 2026.

8 Appointment of Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Working Groups

The Leader of the Council submitted proposals for the appointment of Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Working Groups for the Municipal Year 2025/26, including the terms of reference for those bodies. The proposed membership of the various bodies was tabled at the meeting as Appendix 3, in accordance, with sections 4.9 and 5.3 of the report.

The annual meeting of Council was required to establish Committees, Sub-Committees, Panels and Working Groups and to determine their terms of reference. The terms of reference were set out in Part 3 of the Constitution - Responsibility for Functions and the appendices indicated below were provided:-

- Appendix 1: Terms of Reference of Council, Cabinet and Committees.
- Appendix 2: Terms of Reference of Panels and Working Groups.

Where appropriate, minor and consequential amendments had been made to the existing Terms of Reference, to incorporate revised legislation and changes to national policies.

Allocation of Seats

The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990 required that the number of seats on committees and sub-committees reflected the overall political balance of the Council. The number of seats held by each political group and others for the 2025/26 Municipal Year was:-

Labour and Co-operative Group	21
Conservative Group	12
Green	1
Independent	1

The Council comprised 35 elected members.

The total seats available across the Council should now, in so far as is practicable, be divided between the political parties in the following ratio: 63.6% (Labour and Co-operative) 36.4% (Conservative). The same ratio should be applied, in so far as is practicable, to the allocation of seats on each individual committee/sub-committee. There was no legislative requirement to include councillors who were not members of a formal political group (such as Independent members) in the political balance calculation. However, the Council might choose to offer seats to Independent and other councillors who were not able to form a political group on the Council, as it had done on previous occasions.

The basic calculation to allocate seats to committees of various sizes remained as had been indicated at the Council meeting on 27th February 2025, following the by-election in the Baxenden ward, and is as shown in Table 1 below (columns 1 to 5). At that time, the Council noted that some adjustment to the ratios shown might be required in the final allocation of seats across the Council to take into account the following principles as required by the legislation and in the light of the practice referred to above concerning independent Members:

- (a) Not all seats to go to the same group;
- (b) If a Group had a majority on the Council, it should receive a majority of seats on each committee;

- (c) Total number of seats across all bodies must be proportionate (subject to (a) and (b));
- (d) Seats on each body must be proportionate (subject to (a) to (c)).

Table 1 below also set out the allocation of seats proposed for 2025/26 (column 6 refers). Following the changes to proportionality, as determined in February 2025, it was now proposed that the allocation of the Independent councillor seat be applied to a committee of 12 members (rather than a committee of 13 members). This was to take into account a proposed reduction in the size of the Planning Committee to 12 members in 2025/26.

Table 1

No of seats on Committee	Lab	Cons	Green	Indpt	Proposed Ratio
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
2 members	1	1	0	0	1:1:0:0
3 members	2	1	0	0	2:1:0:0
4 members	3	1	0	0	3:1:0:0
5 members	3	2	0	0	3:2:0:0
6 members	4	2	0	0	4:2:0:0
7 members	5	2	0	0	5:2:0:0
8 members	5	3	0	0	5:3:0:0
9 members	6	3	0	0	6:3:0:0
10 members	7	3	0	0	7:3:0:0
11 members	7	4	0	0	7:4:0:0
12 members	8	4	0	0	8:3:0:1*
13 members	9	4	0	0	8:4:0:0
14 members	9	5	0	0	8:5:1:0*
15 members	10	5	0	0	10:5:0:0

* NB. Adjusted to provide for 1 Green and 1 Independent seat.

There were no amendments proposed to the names of committees/sub-committees since the meeting held on 27th February 2025. The size of all committees/sub-committees would remain the same, save for the following proposed adjustments:

- Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee – reduce from 8 to 7 members
- Special Scrutiny Committee – increase from 7 to 8 members
- Planning Committee – reduce from 13 to 12 members

The total number of available seats across all committees and sub-committees would reduce from 88 to 87.

Details of the Council's proposed committees and sub-committees, the number of seats available and allocation of seats for 2025/26 were as set out in Table 2 below.

Table 2

Committee	Lab	Cons	Green	Indpt	Size
Audit	4	2	0	0	6
Communities & Wellbeing OSC	5	3	0	0	8
Judicial Committee (PH & HC Licensing)	4	2	0	0	6

Licensing Committee	8	5	1	0	14
Licensing Sub-Committee	2	1	0	0	3
Management Review Committee	3	2	0	0	5
Planning Committee	8	3	0	1	12
Planning (Trees) Sub-Committee	3	2	0	0	5
Resources OSC	5	2	0	0	7
Special Scrutiny Committee	5	3	0	0	8
Standards Committee	5	3	0	0	8
Standards - Hearing Sub-Committee*	3	2	0	0	5
Total	55	30	1	1	87
	63.2%	34.5%	1.1%	1.1%	100%

The proposed membership of Committees was tabled at the meeting, as Appendix 3(a).

Establishment and Membership of Panels and Working Groups

The terms of reference of the Panels and Working Groups was provided as Appendix 2.

The membership of Panels and Working Groups did not need to be politically balanced. The proposed membership of Panels and Working Groups was tabled at the meeting as Appendix 3(b).

Cabinet

The size of the Cabinet, its membership and allocation of portfolio responsibilities was within the power of the Leader. The Cabinet membership and positions for 2025/26 would be determined as soon as practicable and circulated for information.

Appointment of Co-opted Members to Overview and Scrutiny Committees

All appointments had been reviewed in 2025 and successful nominees had been appointed at that time for a two year period until the Annual Council Meeting in 2026.

Appointment of Substitute Members

A member of the Council who could not attend a meeting could appoint a reserve member not serving on that particular Committee, Sub-Committee, Panel or Working Group to act as a substitute, in accordance with Council Procedure Rule A26.8.

The Council was reminded that no substitute members could be appointed in respect of the Standards Committee.

The Council was also asked to note that, members of the Licensing Committee, Judicial Committee (Private Hire and Hackney Carriage Licensing) and Planning Committee and their substitutes were required to undertake specific training because of the quasi-judicial nature of the decisions taken.

As in previous years, it was proposed to widen the scope of the substitution arrangements to allow for any member, rather than just a reserve member, to be appointed, subject to the limitations described in paragraphs 8.2 to 8.3 of the report as outlined above.

Councillor Judith Addison spoke against the reduction in the size of the Planning Committee from 13 to 12 on the grounds that this would reduce the Conservative representation from 4 to 3 members and would leave the committee with an even number of members which could result in an equality of votes being cast, therefore, requiring the use of the Chair's second vote. The political balance calculation would suggest a committee of 8 (Labour) 4 (Conservative), but she had no objection to the gifting of a place to the Independent member. Under the circumstances, a committee of 13 members might appear to be fairer.

Councillor Khan expressed some concerns at the changes proposed to the Planning Committee and two of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees. He felt that the size of Planning Committee should be maintained as an odd number and was of the view that the change was being made for political reasons. He also felt that the reduction to the size of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee did not allow for a broad cross-section of views to be considered.

Councillor Steven Smithson asked whether there was any restriction on the Deputy Mayor chairing an Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Jane Ellis, Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) confirmed that there was no restriction.

Councillor Pritchard commented that she had served on the Planning Committee and confirmed that, as a quasi-judicial committee, the whip was never applied. Councillor Parkins concurred with that statement, although did express the view that a committee with an odd number of members might be more logical.

The Leader confirmed that there was no whip applied to voting on the Planning Committee. Members serving on that committee should have an open mind when considering each case and their decision should be based on the evidence presented. He expressed the view that the controlling group had been over-generous in the allocation of opposition seats on that committee in 2024/25. He noted the point about the desirability of an odd number of members on the committee, but was confident that an even number would be just as effective. In respect of Overview and Scrutiny Committees, the facility to co-opt members allowed for a broad base of views when scrutinising the Cabinet.

Resolved

- (1) **That the terms of reference of Council, Cabinet and other constituted bodies, as outlined in Appendices 1 and 2 of the report be approved.**
- (2) **That the political composition of Committees and Sub-Committees of the Council, as set out in Table 2 of the report, be approved.**
- (3) **That the membership of those Committees and Sub-Committees and the proposed Chairs and Vice-Chairs, as set out in Appendix 3(a), be approved and that, where any such details are not available at the meeting, the Chief Executive be authorised to approve the membership in consultation with the leaders of the relevant political groups and in the case of Green or Independent Members in consultation with those Members directly.**
- (4) **That the membership of Panels and Working Groups, together with the proposed Chairs, as set out in Appendix 3(b), be approved and that, where**

any such details are not available at the meeting, the Chief Executive be authorised to approve the membership in consultation with the leaders of the relevant political groups and in the case of Green or Independent Members in consultation with those Members directly.

(5) That a Councillor unable to attend a meeting, of which he/she is a member, be authorised to appoint a Councillor not serving on that particular Committee, Sub-Committee, Panel or Working Group to act as a substitute in accordance with Council Procedure Rule A26.8.

9 Appointments to Outside Bodies

A report relating to the appointment of Council representatives to Outside Bodies and Organisations for the Municipal Year 2025/26 was submitted for approval.

In accordance with the Council's Procedure Rule A1.2(x), the Council was required to receive nominations and make appointments to outside bodies and organisations, except where appointment to those bodies had been delegated by the Council or was exercisable only by the Executive.

An exercise had been carried out by Member Services Officers during 2020 to ascertain the status of all outside bodies to which Members might be appointed and to obtain copies of their key governance documents, so that Members could better understand their responsibilities and prepare for their role. The outside bodies list had been comprehensively updated in 2021/22 to take account of feedback obtained during that exercise and other reported changes. Minor updates had been included in subsequent years.

There were two changes recommended to be applied to the list for 2025/26, which were as follows:

- Lancashire County Council Health and Adult Services Scrutiny Committee – The appointment of a permanent substitute. This should allow for cover in the absence of the main representative, as temporary substitutes were not permitted on this Committee.
- Deletion of the Lancashire LEP Joint Scrutiny Committee – Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and their associated governance structures had been disestablished with effect from 1st April 2024.

In addition, Councillor Andy Gilbert, reported that the following body no longer existed:

- Foxhill Bank Management Committee – Notwithstanding the disestablishment of the Committee, the nature reserve itself was still in existence.

The full list of bodies and the nominations was tabled at the meeting as Appendix 1.

Resolved

- **That the appointments to Outside Bodies and Organisations for the Municipal Year 2025/26, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved.**

10 Scheme of Delegation to Officers 2025/26

It was good practice to review the scheme of delegation regularly to keep it up to date. This helped to ensure that the Council's decision-making processes operated as effectively as possible and in accordance with legal requirements. The scheme was, therefore, updated each year at the Council's Annual Meeting.

The proposed scheme of delegation for 2025/26 was set out in Schedule 1 to the report. The changes this year were minor and comprised the following:

- Giving the Executive Director (Resources) delegated powers in respect of council tax recovery, to reflect that most recovery was now undertaken with Finance, rather than by Legal Services. The delegation to the Executive Director (Legal & Democratic Services) would remain to cover situations where Legal Services needed to become involved in recovery activity;
- At present councillors were able to "call-in" planning applications which were purely factual or technical in nature. This included:
 - **Certificates of Lawfulness**, which were determined based on the facts of the case (they were used to establish whether existing or proposed development needed planning permission and planning merits were not relevant).
 - **Discharge of Conditions** applications, which were technical in nature and related to details of already approved development.
 - **Prior Notifications and Prior Approvals**, where the Local Planning Authority had a limited time to determine these applications and failure to issue a timely decision resulted in an automatic approval.

Such application types were very rarely called-in as they were generally of a minor nature. An amendment was proposed that would delegate approval of all of these application types to the Chief Planning Officer.

- Currently all planning applications which were subject to a section 106 agreement had to be reported to Planning Committee. However, in some circumstances this could be onerous. For example, if an applicant wanted to make minor amendments to an already approved planning application, there often needed to be a 'linking agreement' which tied the new permission back to the original s106 agreement. In such circumstances, the current scheme of delegation required the matter to be referred back to Committee on what was essentially a technicality, even though members would have already agreed the principle of development. It was therefore proposed to remove the automatic requirement to refer applications to Planning Committee where a s106 agreement was needed. However, the Chair, Vice-Chair and local councillors would still be able to call-in such applications if they deemed fit. In addition, most applications requiring a section 106 agreement were major applications that would be taken to Planning Committee for determination in any case.

Councillor Addison spoke against the automatic delegation of prior notification and prior approval. In particular, she was concerned that members of the Planning Committee should have the ability to have their say on issues such as 5G masts, even though the Government had provided greater powers to telecommunications companies. By way of example, the 5G mast proposals on Harvey Street, Oswaldtwistle, had given rise to a number of concerns from residents. Councillor Dad was sympathetic to the points raised, but indicated that discussions were on-going about Harvey Street.

Resolved - **That the Council agrees the scheme of delegation to officers, as set out in Schedule 1 to the report.**

11 **Review of the Constitution**

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) on a review of the constitution. The Council was required by law to have a written constitution. The Council's written constitution was reviewed regularly and a copy of the constitution was available on the Council's website.

A review of the constitution was undertaken annually to:

- (i) ensure the constitution accurately reflected the Council's political management arrangements; and
- (ii) ensure the constitution reflected changes to the law, staffing structures and best practice guidance;

As a result of the annual review, a number of amendments to the constitution had been proposed for approval as follows:

Council Procedure Rules

The Council Procedure Rules were the rules of procedure for Council meetings. Proposed amended Procedure Rules were provided as Appendix 1 to the report, with the changes shown in red. In summary, the changes were as follows:

- The Council had not appointed a chair of council business for some years, so the provisions relating to the same had been deleted;
- The Council had not operated a petition scheme for some years, so reference to the same had been deleted;
- It was proposed that members of the public should raise questions at Council via their ward councillor, rather than having the right to submit questions directly. However, it was proposed that more time be allowed for the submission of questions by changing the deadline to two clear days before the Council meeting;
- It was proposed that motions on notice would need to be signed by three councillors (i.e. a mover, seconder and one other), a reduction from the current five;
- It was proposed that an Altham Parish Council representative might speak at Planning Committee in respect of planning applications within the Parish of Altham provided the Chair of the Planning Committee gave consent.

Members would be offered training on the Council's decision-making processes. This would cover constitutional requirements, as well as legal requirements for sound and lawful decision making.

Councillor Zak Khan expressed concern about the removal of the facility for members of the public to submit question directly to the Council, as these often led to positive outcomes, such as in the case of the recent question about Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre. He also queried why the petition scheme had been withdrawn as other authorities, such as Lancashire County Council, still operated a formal scheme. He expressed a view that these changes were eroding democracy.

Councillor Judith Addison spoke in favour of retaining the public's right to ask a question. She expressed some concern about how a system of ward councillors submitting questions on behalf of residents would work in practice. Issues might include public not knowing who

their ward councillor was, lack of availability of the councillor(s) concerned, councillors not willing to forward questions to the Chief Executive and negative responses if not forwarding questions on. Councillor Younis also spoke against changing the existing arrangements for public questions. Councillors Shabir Fazal OBE and Judith Addison expressed concern that councillors could choose whether, or not, to submit a question received from a member of the public.

Councillor Pritchard noted that Lancashire County Council allowed questions to be submitted by the public. However, she would be happy to submit questions on behalf of residents. She had understood that the proposed change would allow a member of the public to submit a question via any councillor, not just through their ward councillor. One advantage of the new arrangements was that a supplementary question could be asked arising from the public question or response. Councillor Paul Cox clarified that the proposed wording at present did specify 'their ward councillor'. Councillors Melissa Fisher and Paul Cox spoke in favour of altering the original proposal to allow the public to submit a question to any councillor. Councillor Parkins noted that members of the public could still contact councillors directly with questions about Council services, without the need to await a meeting of the Council. Councillor Aziz provided an example of a question that he had raised recently in the Council Chamber on behalf of a member of the public, which demonstrated how this system could work.

Councillor Whitehead asked about the reason for the removal of references to the petition scheme. Jane Ellis, Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services), responded that the statutory obligation to have a scheme had been removed some time ago. References to the scheme in the constitution were now obsolete.

Councillor Dad summarised by indicating that the changes proposed had been tried and tested in other authorities. However, he acknowledged that an alteration to the wording was required in respect of public questions, to allow for questions to be submitted via any councillor. With the consent of the meeting and the seconder, the Leader altered the motion so as to remove the reference to ward councillors in Rule A2, 2.2(vi) Paragraph 2, Sentence 2.

Resolved

- **That Council agrees to adopt the revised Council Procedure Rules attached at Appendix 1 to the report (with proposed amendments as shown in red), subject to the following alteration:**

The replacement of Sentence 2 of Paragraph 2, at Rule A2, 2.2(vi), by the following wording:

“Members of the public wishing to ask a question must do so by asking a councillor to raise the question, although councillors are not obliged to agree to such requests.”

12 Annual Review of the Planning and Licensing Codes of Practice

A report seeking approval of the Planning and Licensing Codes of Practice following an annual review of the same was submitted.

Local authorities were recommended, as a matter of good practice, to supplement their member code of conduct with specific codes of practice to assist councillors involved in the planning and licensing processes. These were complex areas, involving quasi-judicial decision-making and where there was a real risk of legal challenge, whether on appeal or

via judicial review. The proposed codes were designed to give members guidance about dealing with the difficult issues that could arise – such as conflicts of interest, dealing with applicants, possible bias and predetermination, etc.

The codes had been significantly amended a couple of years ago and, therefore, no changes to the codes were proposed this year.

In accordance with the Council's Member Development Strategy 2024-2027, councillors sitting on the Planning, Licensing and Judicial Committees were required to have undergone training each year before they served on their respective Committees and took part in decision making.

It was intended that all members serving on the Planning, Licensing and Judicial Committees would receive training in respect of their respective code of practice as soon as possible after approval of the same. These sessions would be as short and informal as possible and would be delivered by Legal Services staff and their Planning and Licensing colleagues at no additional cost to the Council.

Councillor Addison noted that the Planning Code of Good Practice made reference to the role of Chief Planning and Transportation Officer, but that other documents referred to the post as Head of Planning. Jane Ellis, Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services), undertook to check which was the correct term, for consistency.

Resolved

- (1) **That Council approves the Planning Code of Practice and Licensing Code of Practice as appended to the report.**
- (2) **That Council notes that training will be arranged for all members of the Planning, Licensing and Judicial Committees in respect of their respective code of practice as soon as possible in the new municipal year and requires all members of those Committees to attend training prior to serving on the relevant Committee in the new municipal year.**

13 Timetable of Meetings 2025/26

The proposed Timetable of Meetings for 2025/26 was submitted for approval. As in previous years, it was anticipated that there was some flexibility around agreed dates, subject to consultation with Chairs, Vice-Chairs and the political party leaders about any in-year changes.

Councillor Smithson asked why the Council's Budget Meeting on Wednesday 26th February 2026 was scheduled to start at 7:30pm, rather than the usual 7:00pm. The Leader responded that the meeting fell within Ramadan and the slightly later start would allow time for Muslim councillors and members of the public to eat before the meeting commenced. In 2024/25, the Council had piloted a 4:00pm start time during Ramadan, but that arrangement had proved difficult for councillors who worked.

Resolved

- **That the Timetable of Meetings for 2025/26 be approved.**

14 Record of Attendance at Council Meetings 2024/25

A report relating to the annual attendance of Members at Council meetings held in 2024/25 was submitted for information. The report, detailing the attendance of Councillors at eligible meetings of the Council, was submitted each year to the Annual Meeting of the Council.

Resolved

- That the report be noted.

The Mayor announced that this point marked the conclusion of the Annual Meeting, but was not the end of all of the Council's business for the evening. A Special Meeting would now be held during which Members would be invited to recognise the exceptional work of a number of local people and the dedicated service of some past councillors.

In accordance with the wishes of Members, the Mayor moved straight to the next meeting without a break.

Signed:

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed