
COUNCIL

Thursday, 13th November, 2025

Present:	Councillor Josh Allen (Mayor), Councillors Vanessa Alexander, Heather Anderson, Mike Booth, Scott Brerton, Stephen Button, Danny Cassidy, 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, Steven Smithson, Tina Walker, Kimberley Whitehead, Clare Yates and Mohammed Younis
Apologies:	Councillors Judith Addison, Noordad Aziz, Andrew Clegg, Loraine Cox, Marlene Haworth, Joyce Plummer, Clare Pritchard, Ethan Rawcliffe and Kate Walsh

The Mayor welcomed everyone to the meeting and made a brief statement about the filming of proceedings and filming generally within the Town Hall, followed by a fire safety announcement.

207 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Heather Anderson, Noordad Aziz, Andrew Clegg, Loraine Cox, Marlene Haworth, Joyce Plummer, Clare Pritchard, Ethan Rawcliffe and Kate Walsh.

208 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no formal declarations of interest or declarations of dispensations submitted.

209 Announcements

The Mayor made the following announcements:

1) Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day

Councillor Josh Allen, Mayor, remarked that the Borough had recently held numerous parades and services for Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day. He thanked the residents who had supported the events, as well as Council officers, volunteers, the Royal British Legion and others who had helped to make the arrangements which provided a focus for veterans and their families, as well as commemorating the lives of those lost in action since World War 1. The occasions were a poignant reminder of what people fought for and should be observed so that history did not repeat itself.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, echoed these comments and noted that attendance at the service in Oak Hill Park, Accrington, had been the largest he could remember. Councillor Khan added that it had been pleasing to see large numbers of young people attending the services, including those from scouts, brownies and various cadet organisations.

Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP then made the following announcements:

2) Accrington Neighbourhoods Board

Councillor Dad reminded members that the Council had been awarded £20m over a 10 year period, starting in April 2026, under the Government's Plan for Neighbourhoods Funding. During the past few months, the Board had been working hard to shape a regeneration plan based on Government guidance. Last week further engagement had taken place at Accrington Town Hall with schools and the college, so that young people could have their say. The plan was due to be considered by Cabinet on 19th November, following which it would be submitted to the Government by 28th November 2025. The next phase would be to finalise project selection and then to commence delivery. It was envisaged that there would be a mixture of short and medium term projects that would make a difference and it might be possible to secure match-funding where available.

The Board had recently been strengthened by the addition of four new members, including Paul Hunter (Anglican Minister); Madison Gore (Primary School Teacher); Dr Jane Eccles (GP Partner/Primary Care); and Damian Cunliffe (Night-Time Economy/Entrepreneur). All would bring new experience to the Board.

3) Bullough Park, Accrington

Work was on going to enhance Bullough Park, Accrington, with new woodlands, hedges, wildflowers and wetlands and a new entrance way. Phase 1 had been completed, which had used Police funding, s106 monies and other Council resources to deter anti-social behaviour, particularly motorbike nuisance. Phase 2 had now commenced, which would see new footpaths, benches, a pond and additional tree planting and was supported by funding from several partner bodies. A Forest Fun Day was due to be held on Sunday 7th December 2025, and all were encouraged to get involved. Phase 3 would start in 2026.

4) Police Engagement

Councillors Dad and Khan had met with Chief Inspector Holt and Inspector Moore of Lancashire Constabulary to discuss closer working between the Police and Council. Councillors had forwarded a number of suggestions with a view to additional Police resources being deployed to tackle these matters. The group would meet again in the near future. Councillor Khan endorsed the comments being made, noting that the meeting had been very productive.

David Welsby, Chief Executive, announced the following:

5) Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

Members were about to discuss an item on Local Government Reorganisation, which dealt with the Council's preferred model for the new local authority structure. The formal decision would be for the Cabinet to determine. However, Cabinet members were interested in hearing the views of the Council as a whole, before reaching their conclusions.

Councillor Zak Khan, Leader of the Opposition, was granted permission by the Mayor to make a brief announcement, as follows:

6) Councillor Marlene Haworth

Councillor Zak Khan thanked members on both sides of the Chamber for their support and kind words directed towards Councillor Marlene Haworth at this difficult time. Councillors

had put aside their political differences to reach out to a respected colleague who was dealing with a health issue. This gesture of support was very much appreciated.

210 Confirmation of Minutes

The Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25th September 2025 were provided.

Regarding Minute 159 - Declarations of interest, Councillor Melissa Fisher noted that there had been posts on social media about whether she should have declared a formal interest in respect of Agenda Item 10 (Motion 2) in view of the premises let by her husband. She confirmed that the premises did not meet the definition of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). Namely, it did not comprise at least three unrelated tenants living and sharing toilet, bathroom, or kitchen facilities, forming more than one household. She considered that some of the social media posts had amounted to personal attacks and had implied corruption. Those responsible for making such allegations were reminded of the Local Government Association's 'Debate Not Hate' campaign.

In respect of Minute 162 - Question Time (King George V Playing Fields), Councillor Heap asked if work was still on target. Councillor Stewart Eaves responded that the work had slowed down recently due to poor weather. The drainage to the road was still being worked on and the project remained on schedule overall.

In connection with Minute 161 - Confirmation of Minutes, on the matter of Accrington Stanley FC, Councillor David Heap noted that the Leader of the Council had referred to a Council sponsored football shirt give-away. However, it was understood that the shirts had, in fact, been funded by Andy Holt, the Club's Chairman. Councillor Dad invited Councillor Whitehead to respond and she indicated that the Council had contributed to the shirt give-away and both she and the Mayor had attended the event.

Regarding Minute 162 - Question Time, Councillor Heap asked if the controlling group would be answering, in full, the questions provided at Agenda Item 5 during the meeting. Councillor Dad indicated that the questions would be answered, in a similar manner to the meeting in July 2025, with a verbal answer being provided wherever possible. Due to the number of questions submitted at the September 2025 meeting, these had each received a written response.

In respect of Minute 167 - Motions (Motion 4), Fair Funding Review, Councillor Zak Khan commented that in the minutes of a recent Cabinet meeting he had been criticised for allegedly exaggerating some the negative impacts under the Review by highlighting that the Government could withdraw £5m from Hyndburn's financial settlement. He noted that the Portfolio Holder had subsequently referred to that same figure when discussing the authority's finances and he asked if his original statement would now be endorsed. He also asked whether the Leader of the Council had confidence in the Chancellor. Councillor Dad responded that there was no minute about the Chancellor on the Agenda to allow this query to be raised and that members would need to await her announcement on the local government financial settlement. Councillor Alexander reported that the original minute was accurate and that she would not be seeking an amendment to that record.

In connection with Minute 162 - Question Time (Skip Days), Councillor Steven Smithson asked what improvements were planned and what progress had been made to date. Councillor Steward Eaves indicated that an update was proposed to be taken to the next Cabinet meeting, which was likely to recommend a substantial increase in enforcement fines. However, an idea to seize offenders' vehicles was unlikely to be a viable option. Take up of the skip days was uneven with some being very good but others, such as in St Andrews and St Oswalds wards, being less effective. There had also been some difficulties

with the delivery of flyers in the Milnshaw ward, although some 550 items had ultimately been collected.

Regarding Minute 182 - Question Time (Accrington Victoria Hospital Site), Councillor Paul Cox, reminded members of the Council's commitment to work with partners to identify proposals for the future of the site. However, residents and ward councillors appeared not to be being kept informed. He and Councillor Andy Clegg had now met with local Police who had indicated that anti-social behaviour was starting to increase again. Councillor Dad acknowledged that the dissemination of information could be improved. The Council was represented on the Working Group. He undertook to ask for minutes and other supporting information to be made available.

Resolved

- **That the Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 25th September 2025 be approved as a correct record.**

211 Question Time

Eleven eligible questions had been received, which were set out in the report. The Mayor read out the questions as submitted.

1) Bullough Park Changing Rooms

*To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP) or relevant Portfolio Holder
Submitted by Councillor Shabir Fazal OBE*

“The changing rooms at Bullough Park have been closed for a considerable period. Could the Council provide an update on what plans or actions are in place to refurbish these facilities and ensure they are reopened for future community events and sporting fixtures?”

Response:

Councillor Dad reminded members that there was a lot of investment currently being made in Bullough Park. The pavilion was part of the overall work planned for the park. At the moment, the Council was considering its options and any future plans would need to be linked to what funding was available. The Leader wished to see the pavilion back in use, particularly as the park was in his own ward. It would be good to support grassroots cricket at this location.

Councillor Fazal did not wish to ask a supplementary question, but thanked the Leader for the investment in Bullough Park. The site had been a sporting hub in the past, but in his view had been allowed to decline. There were now two midweek and two weekend cricket fixtures. The park could support cricket in the summer and football in the winter, but the closure of the pavilion meant that this could not currently happen. It was imperative to reopen the changing facilities as a priority. Councillor Dad indicated that he shared this ambition, but did not accept that the park had been run down. For example, some £60k had been spent on a children's play area within the last 3-4 years. However, there had been some funding challenges during the period of austerity under the previous Government.

2) Stickerless Private Hire Vehicles for Safety

To the Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder Housing and Regeneration (Councillor Melissa Fisher)

Submitted by Councillor Shabir Fazal OBE on behalf of Sohail Asghar

“Wolverhampton also allows stickerless private hire vehicles to reduce the risk of vandalism and break-ins during off-duty hours. Will Hyndburn consider a similar policy to protect drivers and vehicles, particularly those parked overnight in residential areas?”

Councillor Fisher thanked the Councillor Fazal and the member of the public for the question. The Council’s Licensing Manager had a good working relationship with colleagues in Wolverhampton. The reason that Wolverhampton had changed their policy to remove the need for operator door signs / logos was not related to risk of vandalism or break ins. The reason was to allow private hire drivers to work for multiple operators. Private hire operators licensed with Wolverhampton were still permitted to require their drivers to display logo door stickers if they wished, however Wolverhampton Council neither required nor prohibited it.

Hyndburn’s policy allowed drivers to display magnetic operator door logos, which still allowed them to work for multiple operators, and the magnetic signs could be removed when the driver was not working. Some form of exterior permanent “sticker” stating that the vehicle was not insured unless pre-booked was a legal requirement for all private hire vehicles. It was not clear how Wolverhampton had legally removed this requirement.

Overall, exterior livery allowed for easier identification of private hire vehicles by both authorities and members of the public, and was especially important when members of the public were accessing vehicles. It was also important (as well as a legal requirement) to ensure that passengers were aware that private hire vehicles must be pre-booked. In the interest of public safety, the Council had no current plans to change the requirement. In fact, the majority of Local Authorities required some form of markings on the doors.

The Mayor advised that no supplementary question could be asked in the case of questions submitted on behalf of the public.

3) Proposed Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) – Application No. 11/24/0389 – Knuzden Moss Farm

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP)

Submitted by Councillor Zak Khan on behalf of Vinette Davitt

“The Planning Inspectorate has overturned HBCs decision to vote down the proposed BESS system in Stanhill, Oswaldtwistle. Will the Council support residents in seeking a judicial review, to prevent setting a precedent of significant infrastructure on our greenbelt when more suitable urban, brownfield sites exist?”

Councillor Dad indicated that the Council would always work with residents to support them within the overarching legal framework. Planning application 11/24/0389 had been considered by the Planning Committee on 16th April 2025. After reviewing recent national planning decisions, appeal outcomes, and the Government’s updated planning policy - including the introduction of the concept of the ‘grey belt’ - officers had recommended approval, as there were no substantive planning reasons to justify refusal.

However, members of the Planning Committee had resolved to refuse the application due to concerns about the impact on the Green Belt.

The Planning Inspectorate had subsequently overturned that decision on appeal. A Judicial Review could only be pursued where there was evidence that the decision-maker had made a legal error. Having reviewed the Inspector's report carefully, officers did not consider that any such legal error had been made. Consequently, there were no grounds on which the Council could lawfully seek a Judicial Review.

While the Council understood residents' concerns about protecting the Green Belt, it must also act within the legal framework that governed planning decisions and appeals.

4) Fly Tipping

To the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services (Councillor Stewart Eaves)
Submitted by Councillor Zak Khan

"Given the lack of uptake for recent skip days and the fact that it is fly-tippers that cause a stain on our communities, would the monies spent on this initiative not be better spent on more fly tipping deterrence measures such as cameras?"

Councillor Stewart Eaves indicated that the Council was currently considering a number of measures to be put in place to try and reduce fly tipping. Cameras were one of the tools available and he would like to support their wider use. However, they were not economically viable. By way of example, it had taken around two months to complete the necessary measures to install one such camera in Oswaldtwistle.

Councillor Khan asked the following supplementary question. He was pleased to note that the intention was to increase fines, but since evidence was required, cameras would help to support his approach. He asked if the Portfolio Holder would consider a localised solution for littering hot spots. The cost of cameras could be offset by the release of officer time. Councillor Eaves undertook to discuss this suggestion further with the Cabinet.

5) Community Township Funding

To the Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres (Councillor Clare Pritchard)
Submitted by Councillor Steven Smithson

"Community Township Funding for £80,000 was agreed at the budget - please can an update be provided on when a report will be brought to Cabinet and how the scheme will work?"

Members were informed that, in the absence of the Portfolio Holder, a written response would be provided. Councillor Heap commented that, as this was an item in the budget, some information should be readily available, particularly as to whether the funding would be split evenly between the townships. The Leader Council responded that the funding was being distributed via the Cabinet Action Fund. The relevant Portfolio Holder would provide a more detailed response.

6) Oakhill Park Bowling Greens

To the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services (Councillor Stewart Eaves)
Submitted by Councillor David Heap on behalf of Robert Rothery

"Please could the portfolio holder give the exact dates of when work will start on the protective fence around Oakhill bowling club?"

Councillor Stewart Eaves indicated that the fence for the bowling green at Oakhill Park was currently being manufactured by a local company based in Rishton. It would be installed between January and March 2026 and completed in time for the start of the bowling season.

7) Accrington Stanley FC

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP)

Submitted by Councillor David Heap on behalf of Andrew Buckel

“Please could the Leader of the Council give an update on progress to a resolution with regards to the Accrington Stanley planning issues?”

Councillor Dad thanked the resident for their question. Councillors continued to work collaboratively with both Accrington Stanley FC and residents to resolve the planning issues. A meeting had taken place with the club in the last few weeks and the Council was continuing to have that dialogue. The Council had some statutory responsibilities, but was continuing to work with the club and residents.

8) Local Elections 2026

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP)

Submitted by Councillor David Heap on behalf of: Kevin Laycock

“Please could the Leader confirm if May’s 2026 local elections will be going ahead in Hyndburn?”

Councillor Dad indicated that this question had been asked at a recent Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The issue was about whether it would be appropriate to hold elections and to make appointments for a short term of office, given the administrative time and resource implications involved. There was a need to focus on the transition to the new unitary authorities and postponement of the 2026 election could help those preparations. Elections in Cumbria had been deferred in 2021 prior to reorganisation and elections in Surrey had been postponed in 2025 in preparation for the shadow authority elections in 2026. The situation had led to the spread of misinformation. Local authorities in Lancashire could only request postponement from the Secretary of State. Hyndburn Borough Council had been asked its opinion, but the Government would decide the matter.

9) CCTV Camera, Baxenden

To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP) or relevant Portfolio Holder

Submitted by Councillor David Heap on behalf of Lee Scholfield

“Please could the relevant portfolio holder give an update on the CCTV camera at the top of Southwood Drive, Baxenden?”

Councillor Whitehead reported that this was within the Portfolio of Councillor Clare Pritchard who was not present, but that she was able to provide a brief response on her behalf. The issue was on-going. The camera and wireless function needed to be replaced. A bid had been submitted for the 2026/27 capital programme in order to repair and replace several CCTV cameras across the borough. The Portfolio Holder would be asked to provide a reply and, if necessary, to meet with residents.

10) Article 4 Direction

*To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP)
Submitted by Councillor David Heap on behalf of Catherine Laycock*

“Please could the Leader give an update as to when he thinks Baxenden will be covered by Article 4 protection with regards to HMOs.”

Councillor Dad reminded members that there had been a long debate about this matter at Council a few meetings ago.

The current Article 4 Direction relating to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) had been made in March this year, but would not come into effect until March 2026. When Cabinet had agreed to make this Direction, it had also resolved to review its impact six months after it had come into force - meaning that review would take place around Autumn 2026.

The National Planning Policy Framework required that Article 4 Directions were applied in a measured and targeted way, supported by robust evidence, and limited to the smallest area necessary to address the identified issue.

However, the authority was aware that several other councils across the North West had recently introduced Article 4 Directions that covered their entire administrative areas. In light of this, officers would be reviewing the evidence to assess whether there was a case for extending similar protection to additional wards, including Baxenden.

This review would also consider whether any new Direction should be non-immediate, with a 12-month lead-in period, or immediate, which would take effect straight away but could expose the Council to compensation claims from affected property owners for abortive costs, loss of value, or reduced profits.

The Leader added that he would be happy to keep members apprised of any developments.

11) War Memorials

*To the Leader of the Council (Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP)
Submitted by Councillor Steven Smithson on behalf of Mr and Mrs Westell*

“The War Memorial restoration programmes was allocated £55,000 at the budget - please can an update on the programme and which war memorials will be part of the programme be provided?”

There was a budget allocation of £55,000 in the Capital Programme for restoration of some of the war memorials. Due to other work pressures within the Facilities Team, this project and associated funding had been slipped to 2026/27. A further bid had been submitted for the 2026/27 capital programme in order to repair the remaining war memorials. Should this be successful this would make one larger programme of works which should give cost savings in terms of economies of scale.

The full list of war memorials that had been allocated funding for repair would be made available as soon as possible.

212 Appointment of Co-optee

Members considered a report of Councillor Stephen Button, Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Overview & Scrutiny Committee, requesting that the Council give consideration to the Committee's recommendations for the appointment of a co-optee.

Councillor Button provided a brief introduction to the report in which he outlined the criteria previously set for this appointment and the reasons for the recommendation in favour of the current candidate.

The Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee could appoint up to four co-optees to the Committee and had previously appointed three co-optees, Jean Battle, Jackie Rawstron and Sandie Dent with one vacant co-optee position still remaining.

The Committee had felt that a young person would provide greater balance to discussions and be more representative of the community and, therefore, had recommended to the Council that the remaining co-optee position be reserved for this purpose. This had been approved at the Council meeting on 16th January 2025.

Following the receipt of an application for the co-optee position by the Committee from a member of the public, the Committee had considered the application at their meeting held on 13th October 2025. The Committee had felt that, although the application did not meet the reserved criteria for a young person, the applicant would bring new experiences, skills and an extra dynamic to the Committee. They had, therefore, determined that the applicant would be a valued asset to the Committee and provide greater representation of the community. The application was from Mr Matt Shaw. Details supporting his application had been circulated to Members separately.

Councillor Shabir Fazal OBE expressed disappointment that the Council had been unable to attract a young person. If the Council wanted young people to be more influential it would need to ensure that they were engaged. The Council should aim to be more creative and energetic in connecting with communities. The Council could also be more proactive in engaging ethnic minorities in overview and scrutiny.

Councillors Whitehead, Khan, Dad, Heap, Smithson and Gilbert all spoke in favour of the appointment and recognised the need for the Council to encourage more involvement by young people and wider groups including those with a disability. Councillor Button acknowledged that it might be possible in future years to reach out to sixth forms and/or Accrington and Rossendale College.

Resolved

- That Council approves the appointment of Matt Shaw as a co-optee on the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee until the end of the 2025-26 municipal year and sets aside its previous decision to reserve the vacant co-optee position for a young person between 18-25 years of age.**

213 Local Government Reorganisation Proposals

Members considered a report of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, updating the Council on preparations to submit a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation to Government.

The report presented the business case that had been prepared to support the creation of three unitary authorities in Lancashire and included a one-page executive summary of this

case. The full business case had been circulated to members under separate cover following its publication.

Councillor Dad provided a brief introduction to the report and highlighted the main reasons for change and the rationale for Hyndburn's preferred option. An initial decision taken by the Council earlier in the year to support a 3 Unitary Authority (3UA) model was backed up by the evidence now provided.

The Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution had introduced the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill on 10th July 2025, following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper on 16th December 2024.

The new Bill had announced how the government would facilitate a programme of local government reorganisation (LGR) for two-tier areas and for those unitary councils where there was evidence of failure or where their size or boundaries might be hindering their ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality services for their residents.

The Government had set a timeline for Lancashire councils to produce a preferred option for local government reorganisation by the end of November (28th), asking for proposals to move from the current two-tier system of a county council, two smaller unitary councils and 12 districts councils, to a simpler model of fewer councils.

The Government's aim with LGR was to improve efficiency savings, service delivery, provide stronger local leadership, economic growth, community identity and foster effective local partnerships, while not hindering the ability to deliver sustainable and high-quality services for residents.

Government Guidance

Government guidance (the Statutory Invitation) set out the following criteria which would be used to assess proposals for reorganisation:

- A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of Local Government;
- Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial pressures;
- Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens;
- Proposals should show how councils in the area had sought to work together in coming to a view that met local needs and was informed by local views;
- New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements;
- New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The criteria above were not weighted, but the intention was to provide guidance to areas to develop proposals that addressed the criteria and were supported by data and evidence. Decisions on the most appropriate option for each area would have regard to the guidance and the available evidence.

Under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, the Council had to submit a proposal based on whole Local Authority Districts, but could request that the Secretary of State used their modification power in sections 7 and 11 of the 2007 Act to adjust the boundary subsequently. In the guidance, the Secretary of State had also expressly allowed for the submission of proposals that suggested boundary changes.

Proposals

Councils in Lancashire had worked together to identify possible options for reorganisation. The Government had provided funding to develop a shared evidence base across Lancashire councils, including both socio-economic baseline data for the options, a public and stakeholder engagement process and finance data.

It was intended that a joint letter would be sent to the Minister by Lancashire Leaders to accompany the various business cases that were being submitted.

The various cases would be taken to councils throughout Lancashire ahead of the deadline for submission of proposals on 28th November 2025.

Currently there were five proposals based on the following models:

- Model 1 consisted of Lancashire being split into 2 large unitary councils with a North / South divide
- Model 2 consisted of 3 unitary councils (Coastal / Central / Pennine)
- Model 3 consisted of 4 unitary councils (North / South / East / West)
- Model 4 consisted of 5 smaller unitary councils (North / South / Middle / East / West)
- Model 5 was the Blackpool proposed four unitary model

The report included colour-coded maps of the five models referred to above and an explanation of the make-up of each of the unitary authorities proposed and population sizes for each model. The 3UA model (Model 2) preferred by Blackburn with Darwen, Fylde, Hyndburn, Rossendale and Wyre would see new authorities based upon the following district council footprints:

- Coastal Lancashire (Blackpool, Fylde, Lancaster and Wyre);
- Central Lancashire (Chorley, Preston, South Ribble and West Lancashire);
- Pennine Lancashire (Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale).

Timeline

Delivering LGR in Lancashire would be a complex and far-reaching programme of change. The proposed timeline was intended to allow sufficient time to plan, implement and embed the new arrangements while maintaining service continuity and public confidence.

The indicative timeline below set out the key phases and milestones for implementation. It was designed to ensure a smooth transition from the decision to proceed with reorganisation through to the establishment of fully operational new councils.

The decision on Hyndburn's preferred option would be made by Cabinet on the 19th November, with the three unitary authorities (3UA) business case option being made available on 7th November.

The timeline for Local Government Reorganisation was currently as follows:

- November 28th, 2025: Councils to submit proposals to Government;
- Early 2026: Government-led public consultation on proposals for new unitary councils;
- Summer 2026: Government would select the preferred unitary council option;
- May 2027: Elections would take place for a Shadow Authority for each of the new unitary councils; and
- April 1st, 2028: “Vesting Day”, when new unitary councils would start to operate all services and the existing 15 authorities were abolished.

The report included a pictorial representation of the above timeline in the style of a Gantt chart.

Findings and Recommendations

On the 16th January 2025, following the publication of the English Devolution White Paper the Council had recommended supporting the creation of a Pennine Lancashire Unitary Authority (which included Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley and Rossendale).

Currently, the Council’s preferred option was the three-unitary model for Lancashire. The business case prepared in respect of the options suggest that this was the only configuration that met all six of the Government’s criteria for local government reorganisation, while reflecting the way Lancashire’s economy, services and communities already worked and providing the best platform for the future.

The three-model business case had been developed following a detailed options appraisal, including data analysis and assessments of the evidence base.

It was considered that other options all fell short of what Lancashire needed. A two-council model would be too large and remote, misaligned with key service boundaries and financial risk. A four-or five council model would fragment economic corridors, create uneven capacity and weaken the devolution case.

The business case concluded that only the three-council model aligned with real economics and service footprints, balanced risk, kept decision-making local and met every Government test without compromise.

The benefits of the three-model business case was making services clearer without creating councils that were too large and remote or too small to make a difference. Matching NHS and Police footprints, which none of the other options did, meant a much greater ability to work collaboratively with strategic leadership.

The business case indicated that the three unitary model delivered a sustainable future for Lancashire through a stronger, more balanced financial case than any of the other proposed options, combining credible savings with the capacity to invest in services, work with partners, support economic growth, unlock deeper devolution, and connect at a local level to places people lived, worked and learnt in.

A table was provided within the report summarising the different options by government criteria. As stated previously, the findings indicated that the three unitary model was the

only configuration that met all six of the Government's criteria for local government reorganisation.

The report also set out an infographic, which showed the vision behind the case for three unitary authorities for Lancashire, which included the following statement:

"Our vision is for three new unitary councils, balanced in scale and rooted in real places, to create the capacity and clarity needed to unlock Lancashire's potential. They will deliver stronger services for geographies that reflect places, communities and key partner footprints, give businesses and government credible partners for growth and devolution, and reconnect decision-making to the places people live, work and learn in."

Consultations

Communities and stakeholders across the county had been invited to have their say on local government reorganisation in Lancashire. Two surveys had been conducted across September 2025 to understand which council services Lancashire residents saw as most important, priorities for local government to focus on in the future and initial thoughts on moving to larger unitary councils.

The community survey had been promoted across the county to ensure a broad range of voices contributed to the discussion. 13,414 respondents had filled out the survey, including 67,784 individual written comments in answer to the open text questions, showing a genuine interest and high level of engagement from Lancashire.

A total of 409 responses had been received for the stakeholder survey, representing over 200 unique organisations and individuals. Respondents had included parish and town councils, businesses, voluntary and community groups and public sector organisations.

Two reports had been produced, summarising the results of the surveys which were undertaken by Cratus Group, an independent agency on behalf of Lancashire's local authorities. This information would now be used to inform the developing proposals for submission to Government in November 2025.

What people highlighted across the engagement was that services that mattered most to local people were those that touched daily life and wellbeing, such as good health and care services, reliable and accessible transport, affordable housing and good schools and opportunities for children. Community identity and connection remained strong. Clarity and simplicity were recurring themes in written feedback. Residents and businesses wanted less duplication, clearer responsibility for services that were more consistent and reliable, and a stronger link between local decisions and visible outcomes. Partnership working and fairness had also been also emphasised, with many respondents highlighting the importance of tackling inequalities across Lancashire and ensuring all areas had equal access to good quality local job opportunities, services and investment.

In the absence of Councillor Aziz, Chair of the Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Mayor read out a statement which summarised the discussions held at a meeting of that Committee on 11th November 2025. At that time, members had been given the opportunity to consider Local Government Re-organisation and the Council's preparations to submit a proposal to Government.

The Committee had held in-depth discussions, considering many issues including:

- the reasons for forming new unitary authorities;
- the timescales involved;

- the impact on the residents of the Borough;
- the impact on the Council's finances and staff;
- local representation; and
- the potential benefits in the future.

The Committee had been informed that Hyndburn Council intended to propose the three unitary authority model and felt that the evidence provided in the business case for the creation of three unitary authorities proved to be the most suitable fit and the best of the proposed models. Consequently, by a majority vote, the Committee had recommended to support the Council's proposal for the three unitary model in Lancashire.

The Committee had also recognised the merits of the proposal for postponing local elections in 2026 to ensure continuity in Council services prior to a Shadow Council being formed the following year. The Committee, therefore, by a majority vote, had also supported a recommendation to defer the 2026 local elections.

The recommendations as set out in the report were **MOVED** and **SECONDED**.

Mr Welsby, Chief Executive, added that he had attended the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report before Council today had been prepared before that meeting and its recommendations simply proposed to note the report on the local government reorganisation proposals and sought comments on the options under discussion. In the light of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation, he asked whether the Council might wish to adopt the same stance as its formal decision.

Councillor Paul Cox moved the following **AMENDMENT** to add the following recommendations, after the words 'That the Council agrees: (1) To note the report on the local government reorganisation proposals.:'

“

- (2) To support the three unitary authority model for local government reorganisation in Lancashire and recommends that the Cabinet approve the necessary submission to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- (3) To recommend that Cabinet requests the Government to postpone the 2026 local elections for Hyndburn.”

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Dad.

Councillors Zak Khan spoke about taking time to consider the matter carefully, particularly as the business case had only recently been published. He noted that the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's decision was not unanimous. He also raised concerns about Hyndburn being 'swallowed up' and about the effect of the any new authority taking on the financial burdens of existing councils whose financial management had been less effective than Hyndburn's. He asked:

- Whether the Council's views would make a difference to the Cabinet's preferred option;
- What the view of Hyndburn's residents had been during the consultation exercise;
- Whether Hyndburn's views would make a difference to the Government's final decision;
- Whether the Council should maximise its use of reserves before the new authorities were established.

Councillors Clare Yates, Fazal Shabir, Mohammed Younis, Andy Gilbert, Paul Cox, Danny Cassidy, Bernard Dawson spoke in favour of the 3UA proposals to varying degrees. Some members expressed support on the basis of the 3UA option being co-terminus with health, police and fire service boundaries, or on the grounds of future financial and economic benefits for the community. Others were simply keen to make the best of a change that was seen as inevitable.

Councillor Shabir spoke against the postponement of the local elections in 2026, which he considered was a fundamental democratic right. Councillors Steven Smithson, Mohammed Younis, David Heap, Danny Cassidy echoed this opinion. Councillors Andy Gilbert and Mike Booth spoke in favour of the postponement of the elections.

Councillor Steven Smithson commented on a lack of detailed evidence about what Hyndburn residents wanted. Councillor Scott Brerton reminded members that the Cabinet would make the final decision on the preferred model. He was of the view that Hyndburn had been more transparent than many other authorities throughout the consultation process.

Councillor Judith Addison outlined the size of the population typically represented by ward councillors in unitary authorities and expressed concern about the ability of elected members to manage that workload.

Councillor Dad summed up highlighting the Hyndburn had been the first Lancashire local authority to publish the business case and that it had been both open and transparent throughout the whole process. The decision on whether, or not, to postpone the elections would be taken by the Government, not by the Leader of the Council. The initial preference for a 3UA option had been highlighted as early as January 2025. The evidence had now vindicated that choice. He noted that there were precedents for the postponement of elections in advance of local government reorganisation both in the Cumbra area in 2021 and in multiple council areas in 2025. Accordingly, he was in favour of recommending the 3UA model to Cabinet and seeking the postponement of the local elections in 2026.

Councillor Fazal asked if the Council could vote on each element of the amendment separately, particularly as some members might have a conflict of interest if their seat was up for election in 2026. The Chief Executive responded that, unless agreed otherwise by the Council, the amendment would be taken as a whole. Councillor Whitehead added that she had sought legal advice on the matter of a potential conflict of interest and that she intended to abstain. The Chief Executive clarified that the Council was not the decision taker on the matter of the election recommendation and, therefore, there was unlikely to be a conflict of interest.

Councillor Younis supported the separation of the two elements of the amendment, as he believed that this would result in a truer reflection of support for each issue. The Chief Executive invited the mover of the amendment Councillor Paul Cox to consider splitting the amendment into two parts. Councillor Cox agreed to alter the amendment accordingly.

The following **AMENDMENT** was then put to the **VOTE**. The addition of the following words:

“(2) To support the three unitary authority model for local government reorganisation in Lancashire and recommends that the Cabinet approve the necessary submission to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.”

The above **AMENDMENT** was **CARRIED**.

The next **AMENDMENT**, as detailed below, was then put to the **VOTE**. The addition of the following words:

- (3) To recommend that Cabinet requests the Government to postpone the 2026 local elections for Hyndburn."

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 16.5, six members called for a recorded vote on the amendment at (3) above, the outcome of which was as follows:

For (11)

Councillors Vanessa Alexander, Mike Booth, Steve Button, Paul Cox, Munsif Dad BEM JP, Stewart Eaves, Melissa Fisher, Andy Gilbert, Clare McKenna, Dave Parkins, and Clare Yates

Against (8)

Councillors Judith Addison, Shabir Fazal OBE, David Heap, Zak Khan, Kath Pratt, Steven Smithson, Tina Walker and Mohammed Younis.

Abstain (7)

Councillors Josh Allen (Mayor), Scott Breton, Danny Cassidy, Jodi Clements, Bernard Dawson MBE, Peter Edwards and Kimberley Whitehead

Accordingly, the **AMENDMENT** was **CARRIED**.

There was no debate on the substantive motion, which was then put to the **VOTE** immediately and was **CARRIED**.

Resolved

- **That the Council agrees:**

- (1) **To note the report on the local government reorganisation proposals.**
- (2) **To support the three unitary authority model for local government reorganisation in Lancashire and recommends that the Cabinet approve the necessary submission to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.**
- (3) **To recommend that Cabinet requests the Government to postpone the 2026 local elections for Hyndburn.**

With the agreement of the meeting Item 10 on the Supplemental Agenda was taken next.

214 Proposed Amendments to the Council's Constitution

The following matter was submitted as urgent business with the Mayor's agreement in accordance with Section 100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the reason being to enable the proposed changes to the Council Procedure Rules to be implemented in a timely fashion ahead of the next scheduled Council meeting on 15th January 2026 and to enable any consequential changes to the Scheme of Delegation to be made under delegated powers to facilitate the implementation of the on-going organisational review.

Members considered a report of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, seeking approval for proposed amendments to the Council's constitution.

Councillor Dad outlined a number of changes proposed to the Council Procedure Rules, in relation to 'Question Time', which had been discussed and recommended at the recent Leader's Policy Development Board meeting.

The overall report proposed changes in two sections of the constitution, as follows:

Question Time

There had recently been a significant increase in the number of questions submitted to full Council as part of the "Question Time" arrangements, both from councillors and members of the public. Democratic engagement was welcomed, and the proposed amendments were designed to ensure that the process was manageable and operated fairly. The proposed amendments were intended to accommodate the increased number of questions, whilst ensuring that as many councillors as possible had an opportunity to have their questions responded to at Council meetings given that Question Time only lasted for 30 minutes.

Where a councillor submitted multiple questions, their first question would be listed on the agenda in the order of receipt. Their second question (and any subsequent questions) would be taken only after the first questions from all other councillors had been dealt with. Where more than one councillor submitted multiple questions, the second (and subsequent) questions from each of these councillors would be taken in turn and in order of receipt.

Given the increase in questions, it was increasingly likely that not all questions would be dealt with within the time available. Public questions that did not receive an answer at the meeting would receive a direct written response and contact details would have to be provided for that purpose.

Scheme of Delegation

The proposed amendment to the scheme of delegation did not involve making any new or additional delegations to officers. Instead, it involved reallocating some of the existing delegations from one chief officer to another chief officer to reflect changes in management arrangements that might arise from the ongoing organisational review. As such, the amendments would essentially be procedural.

The Chief Executive was currently reviewing the organisational structure of the Council to ensure this put the Council in the best position to operate effectively and deliver the priorities in the new corporate plan. As part of this process some service areas might switch from being the responsibility of one chief officer to another, which meant that the scheme of delegation would require amendment to reflect the changes and ensure that delegated decisions were taken with the proper authority in place.

In respect of Question Time, Councillor Steven Smithson noted that elderly members of the public were not always comfortable with supplying their contact details to enable other councillors, such as the relevant Portfolio Holder, to get back to them.

Councillor Zak Khan confirmed that he was happy with the proposed 5 clear working days deadline for the submission of questions and the proposed changes to prevent the available time for questions being dominated by a single councillor. He also noted that the current arrangements already limited councillors to one question of their own, except with the

consent of the Chair, although no such restriction was now applied to questions submitted by members of the public. He supported the changes as proposed, but requested that, at the next Leader's Policy Development Board, members consider whether to allow a supplementary question in the case of a question submitted on behalf of a member of the public.

The Mayor commented that the changes proposed to Question Time were born out of a successful meeting he had arranged between the two group leaders and himself, the aim of which had been to ensure that the political groups worked together constructively. He commended Councillors Dad and Khan for their positive approach and thanked Councillors Fazal, Whitehead and Cassidy who had also been present.

Councillor Dad summed up by confirming that the political group leaders would continue to work together for the benefit of residents. The changes proposed to the constitution should improve the procedures around Question Time. Notwithstanding the formal procedure, all residents could ask questions of the Council or its councillors at any time.

Resolved

- That the Council:

- (1) Approves the proposed changes to the “Question Time” held at full Council meetings as described in paragraph 3.1 of the report and approves the proposed amendment to the paragraph A2.2 of the Council Procedure Rules attached as Appendix 1 to the report (with the new wording shown in red).**
- (2) Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to amend the Council’s scheme of delegation to officers (in respect of non-executive decisions) to give effect to the outcome of the ongoing organisational review which will be determined by the Chief Executive as Head of Paid Service in consultation with the Leader of the Council.**

215 Minutes of Cabinet

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd October 2025 were submitted.

The following matters were raised:

In connection Minute 194 - Medium Term Financial Strategy, Councillor Zak Khan reiterated his earlier point about the Council’s finances, noting that Table 3 included funding gap figures in the pessimistic scenario as follows:

- 2026/17 - £3.3m
- 2027/28 - £4.6m
- 2028/29 - £5.6m.

Councillor Dad replied that the administration was open and transparent about the Council’s finances. The Council was committed to fighting for resources and had been proactive in raising concerns with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

(MHCLG) and Sarah Smith MP. The leadership was confident that the Council would reap some reward from this dialogue but would only find out at the end of the year.

In respect of Minute 190 – Reports of Cabinet Members (Wilson Sports Hub), Councillor Heap agreed that the new facilities were fantastic. However, he expressed surprise that the Leader of the Council had been so positive about its opening, noting that some time ago he had described the development in what might be perceived as a disparaging manner.

Councillor Paul Cox added that he had attended the Cath Thom Leisure Centre on a couple of occasions and that the facilities were amazing. He recalled a similar scenario with the development of the Stanley Sports Hub at Highams Playing Fields, which had initially been resisted by residents but was now seen as a superb facility. The venue had even been used as a training camp for women's international football.

The Mayor added that he had attended the opening of the Cath Thom Leisure Centre, which had been an enormous pleasure. Cath's family had been in attendance and had been very thankful, on what was quite an emotional occasion. Another positive was that the Mayor and his wife had recently joined the Hyndburn Parkrun event, which took place every Saturday, setting off from the Cath Thom Leisure Centre.

Councillor Mohammed Younis noted that the project had started under the previous political administration but had been seen through to completion by the current administration. He thanked everyone involved in the delivery of the project, including the officer team.

Councillor Dad responded that the vision for the project had emerged some 7 years ago when he was Portfolio Holder for Leisure. He had always been supportive of the concept, but, in the light of residents' concerns, an election promise had been made to review it. This had been carried out after the elections in 2024 and the progression of the project had been agreed. The Council, with involvement from Councillors Alexander, Aziz and Fisher, was now working closely with Hyndburn Leisure in respect of governance issues and communication, and significant improvements were being made. The new Centre was a great facility and an important legacy.

Resolved

- That the Minutes be received and noted.

216 Minutes of Committees

The Minutes of the following meetings were submitted:

Meeting	Date
Standards Committee	5 th August 2025
Audit Committee	22 nd September 2025
Planning Committee	15 th October 2025

Resolved

- That the Minutes be received and noted.

The Mayor thanked all for their attendance tonight and reported that the next meeting of the Council would be held on Thursday 15th January 2026 at 7:00pm.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed