
COUNCIL (SPECIAL MEETING)

Thursday, 15th May, 2025

- Present:** Councillor Josh Allen (Mayor), Councillors Judith Addison, Vanessa Alexander, Heather Anderson, Noordad Aziz, Scott Brerton, 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, Kate Walsh, Kimberley Whitehead, Clare Yates and Mohammed Younis
- Apologies:** Councillors Mike Booth, Danny Cassidy, Loraine Cox, Marlene Haworth and Joyce Plummer
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15 Apologies for absence

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

16 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations submitted.

17 Appointment of Honorary Aldermen and Freeman

Members considered a report of the Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) seeking approval to the appointment of new Aldermen and Freeman of the Borough for 2025 in respect of the following persons:

Freemen

- Mrs Hilary Austin
- Mr Stephen Hutchinson BEM
- Mr Rawden Kerr
- Mr Zack Kerr
- Ms Anne Lincoln

Aldermen

- Mr Peter Britcliffe
- Mr Graham Jones
- Mr Abdul Khan
- Mr Malcolm Pritchard

Freemen Appointments

To qualify for appointment as a freeman the proposed recipient had to be:

- (a) persons of distinction, or

- (b) persons who had, in the opinion of the authority, rendered eminent services to that place or area.

The individuals proposed were notable as follows:

Mrs Hilary Austin

Hilary was the Chairperson for the Church & Oswaldtwistle Royal British Legion Branch and the Chairperson for Accrington & District Royal Airforce Air Cadets.

Hilary's work and dedication to the community and all the events that were organised was valued within this Borough.

Mr Stephen Hutchinson BEM

Stephen was Lieutenant of the Royal Naval Reserve (RNR) and Chair, Accrington and District Unit Sea Cadets. He had been awarded the British Empire Medal in 2022. Stephen also worked for the local company Prospects as the Low Carbon Community Buildings Officer.

Mr Rawden Kerr

Rawden was the Town Crier for Great Harwood and was often called upon to officiate at events, not only throughout Hyndburn, but also in other parts of East Lancashire. Rawden excelled at his craft, having been town crying for the past 15 years and was one of the best in UK. He had scooped the award for British Championships 'best content of cry' in 2023.

Mr Zack Kerr

Zack was a Changing Places ambassador who had won the Positive Role Model for Disability Award at the National Diversity Awards in 2021. He continued to successfully campaign for disabled facilities and raise awareness for other notable causes in the Hyndburn area.

Ms Anne Lincoln

Anne was a Pastor at Clayton Baptist Church whose charitable work supported struggling individuals and families across Hyndburn and beyond. From Food Parcels and Free Lunches to Christmas Markets and Warm Spaces provider, Anne's impact could be felt across the Borough.

Aldermen Appointments

To qualify for appointment as an aldermen the proposed recipient had to have rendered eminent services to the Council as a past member of the Council, but must not currently be a member of the Council (section 249(1) Local Government Act 1972).

Additional guidance as to eligibility was provided in the Civic Protocol, including the following:

- 12 years' service.
- Consideration would be given to members not having 12 years' service but who had, during their years of office, held the title of Mayor, Mayoress, Consort, Leader of the Council or Leader of an Opposition group (providing the latter office was held for three years or more).

The proposed recipients Mr Peter Britcliffe, Mr Graham Jones, Mr Abdul Khan and Mr Malcom Pritchard all had lengthy and distinguished former service with the Council and/or were former Mayors of the Borough, or had been Leader of an Opposition group for the relevant qualifying period. As such, they were all considered to meet the eligibility criteria.

Voting Requirements

The legislation required that a principal council might, by a resolution passed by not less than two-thirds of the members voting thereon at a meeting of the council specially convened for the purpose with notice of the object, confer the honours as set out above.

The recommendations set out in the report envisaged that the names of the proposed aldermen be moved, seconded and voted upon *en bloc*, prior to considering the freemen. Then, having considered the aldermen, the names of the proposed freemen would be moved, seconded and voted upon *en bloc*.

The Leader of the Council proposed that the full list of nominees for both freemen and aldermen be taken *en bloc*. Councillor Zak Khan proposed that each nomination be voted upon individually. Mr David Welsby, Chief Executive reminded members of the recommendations and proposed procedure, as set out in the report. The Mayor noted that some councillors had strong personal views about particular nominees, but he expressed concern that voting upon each nomination individually would make the decision process much lengthier.

An **AMENDMENT** to the voting procedure was **MOVED** and **SECONDED**, as follows;

“That the full list of nominees for both freemen and aldermen be considered *en bloc*.”

Councillor Gilbert asked, should *en bloc* voting be agreed, whether members could speak and pay tribute to individual nominees prior the vote being taken. Mr Welsby advised against any debate in the public domain, which might include personal details of the individuals concerned.

A brief adjournment was held to allow councillors to discuss the above amendment within their political groups.

The meeting reconvened and it was **MOVED** and **SECONDED** that the business be considered in private.

The matter was put to the **VOTE** and it was:

Resolved

- **That, in accordance with Section 100A(4) Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following item, when it was likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted, or the nature of the proceedings, that there would otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraph at Scheduled 12A of the Act, specified below.**

***Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 1 –
Information relating to any individual***

There was a further brief adjournment to allow the public gallery to clear.

On recommencing the meeting, there was a debate upon the amendment. The Mayor asked that this be limited to one speaker on behalf of each political party.

The Leader of the Council spoke in favour of his amendment. He noted that all of the information required was set out in the report and all nominees had rendered eminent service to the community or Council. It would be unfair to single out individuals, as all were deserving of the honours proposed. Councillor Shabir Fazal OBE spoke in favour of taking all of the nominees *en bloc*. Councillor Zak Khan indicated that the procedure for voting in two separate blocks had been agreed previously between the political group leaders and he saw no reason to alter it. He confirmed that his group members would have a free vote on the matter.

The **AMENDMENT** was then put to the **VOTE** and it was:

Resolved - **That the full list of nominees for both freemen and aldermen be considered *en bloc*.**

Members considered whether, or not, to proceed immediately to the block vote, or if they wished to debate the matter. The Mayor added that he was minded only allow comments in support of individuals during any debate. The Mayor then agreed to a brief debate being held.

Councillor Gilbert commented that all nominees were deserving of the awards. In particular, he paid tribute to those individuals who had inspired him personally, including Graham Jones, Zak Kerr and Peter Britcliffe.

Councillor Khan reminded members that awards were based on strong principles and that each nominee merited the proposed honour.

Councillor Pritchard spoke in support of the all awards being made and, in particular, mentioned the achievements of her father, Malcolm Pritchard, as well as those of Hilary Austin and Peter Britcliffe.

Councillor Younis voiced his support for all of the nominations.

Councillor Aziz spoke in support of and about the achievements of Rawden Kerr. He also spoke about setting aside political differences to recognise the valuable service of former councillors from all parties when considering the aldermen awards.

The full list of nominees for both freemen and aldermen was then put to the **VOTE**. The requisite two thirds majority in favour of those voting was achieved.

Resolved (1) **That in accordance with Section 249(5) of the Local Government Act 1972, Mrs Hilary Austin, Mr Stephen Hutchinson BEM, Mr Rawden Kerr, Mr Zack Kerr and Ms Anne Lincoln be conferred with the title of Honorary Freeman of the Borough and be presented with the award at the Mayor Making Council on 31st May 2025, or should that not prove possible due to the unavailability of the recipients, at some stage during the remainder of the Municipal Year 2025/26.**

- (2) That in accordance with Section 249(1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council appoints the following as Aldermen: Mr Peter Britcliffe, Mr Graham Jones, Mr Abdul Khan and Mr Malcolm Pritchard with the formal presentation to be made at the Mayor Making Council on 31st May 2025, or should that not prove possible due to the unavailability of the recipient, at some stage during the remainder of the Municipal Year 2025/26.
- (3) That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, be authorised to make the necessary arrangements.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
at which the minutes were confirmed