
SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 18th November, 2025

Present: Councillors Mike Booth (Vice Chair), Zak Khan and Clare Yates
Co-optees: Shaheed Mahmood

In Attendance: Mark Hoyle – Head of Regeneration and Housing
Councillor Melissa Fisher – Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing & Regeneration
Lyndsey Sims – Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure Trust

Apologies Councillors Josh Allen, Heather Anderson, Clare McKenna, Kate Walsh and Mohammed Younis

182 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Councillor Booth (Vice-Chair of the Committee) took the Chair in the absence of Councillor Walsh (Chair of the Committee).

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors McKenna and Walsh.

There were no substitute representatives.

183 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations declared at the meeting.

184 Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of the Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee held on 14th October 2025 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

Resolved - **That the Minutes be received and approved as a correct record.**

185 Leisure Transformation Update

Lyndsey Sims, Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure Trust, gave a presentation on the progress of the Leisure Transformation project. The Committee was provided with information about the Wilson's Project, Wilson's/Cath Thom Leisure Centre, Hyndburn Leisure (Energy Efficiency Works) and Mercer Hall Repurposing.

She gave details on:

- The long-term vision for Hyndburn's Leisure Estate
- Sport England Strategic Outcomes Planning Model (outcomes, insight, interventions and commitment)
- Project Aims

- Developing the facility proposals (cost, existing facility condition and the potential impact on people's lives)
- 2025/26 Priorities
- The Cath Thom Leisure Centre
- Hyndburn Leisure Centre
- Mercer Hall
- Bank Mill House
- Clayton Community Centre

Committee Members referred to the following issues:

- What plans were in place to encourage use of the facilities by the asian community;
- when there would be additional opening events?
- what strategies were being used to promote events?
- a suggestion for ladies only events
- if renovations planned for Mercer Hall were on schedule?
- Would swimming lessons be available for schools and, if so, would use by local schools be encouraged rather than pupils being bused in from other areas, causing additional traffic in the area?

Responses were:

- Open events had been held on 11th & 12th October and been well attended. More open events would be held.
- A pre-opening membership campaign had been held and, consequently, the opening events had been attended by thousands of people.
- suggestions for events were noted.
- Renovations to Mercer Hall were on time and estimated to be completed by the end of the year/beginning of 2026.
- schools would be transported to Hyndburn Leisure Centre or the Cath Thom Centre by coach for swimming lessons.

Resolved - **That the Chief Executive of Hyndburn Leisure Trust be thanked for the presentation and that the report be noted.**

186 Huncoat Garden Village Progress Report

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing & Regeneration presented a report to provide the Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Huncoat Garden Village (HGV) project.

The Head of Regeneration and Housing reported that the HGV project formed a key part of the Council's growth plans and gave details of the housing development it formed. The HGV Masterplan and Framework and Delivery Strategy had been approved by Cabinet in October 2021 and set out a framework for the new Housing development and expanded settlement of Huncoat which would be a high-quality residential development and environment. The new development would deliver 1,816 new homes of mixed tenure over a 15-year period as well as a new local centre, primary school, open space, new woodland, networked open space and a new residential relief road.

Homes England has awarded the Council a £29,897,722 grant for the HGV project towards key infrastructure costs. Key partners included Homes England, Lancashire County Council, National Highways and local landowners.

The Committee was informed that good progress had been made including the selection of Eric Wright Civil Engineering Limited as the preferred contractor to construct the proposed relief road and the Council being in discussion with Homes England to extend the grant availability period from March 2028 to March 2029.

Advance Questions were submitted prior to the meeting and responses were provided by the Head of Housing and Regeneration as follows:

1. With reference to Cabinet giving consent to start the process toward a compulsory purchase order (CPO) for the proposed new Relief Road, should an agreement with the landowner fail, what financial impact and delay would there be if an agreement could not be met?

Response – Compulsory purchase orders do not require consent from a landowner for projects that would have a public benefit. Landowners are entitled to fair compensation based on market value. Details of how CPOs work was provided. Landowner compensation has been provided within the Homes England grant award for the project. Any additional costs would sit with the Council. The timetable for the new road is based on the CPO timetable.

2. The Huncoat Garden Village development will result in increased numbers of families and older people who will have healthcare requirements. Will the Council include consultation with healthcare authorities as part of the planning process and are there any known plans to increase healthcare facilities in the area such as more GPs and NHS healthcare facilities.

Response – The Committee was assured that the implications of the development in respect of the provision of health care services was being considered by the appropriate health authorities. There were plans to increase services with the preferred facility to be located at the former Accrington Victoria Hospital site.

3. Has consideration been given to the Local Government Re-Organisation and possible impacts on the Huncoat Garden Village project, as this project will be taking place over a 15 year period during which it is very likely that Councils will be merged to form new unitary authorities.

Response – the Huncoat Garden Village project is well established and therefore local government re-organisation is not expected to have any impact on it.

Members submitted further questions relating to the following issues:

- Could the compulsory purchase order (CPO) process be delayed if the landowner does not agree to a financial settlement?
- How long will the development take to be completed?
- Can the Council guarantee that the land would be used appropriately and that the Council was working with Lancashire County Council on any relevant changes.
- Has the Local Government Review been considered in relation to ensuring that investment would continue after the termination of Hyndburn Borough Council.

- Some Councillors had received feedback that representatives on the Huncoat Forum were not representative of the majority of voices in Huncoat and requested that multiple Forums were created to represent people.
- Concern that LGR would lose investment if the project was not started before it was implemented.
- A request for clarification on community spaces provided by the development and enough essential services for residents.

Responses:

- The compulsory purchase order process does not stop the landowner seeking inflated value but any dispute over a value would be determined by the Upper Tribunal (Lands Chamber) to ensure fair compensation, however, the Council does have the powers to take possession of land if it is deemed for the public good.
- The Huncoat Garden Village development was a 15 year project.
- Lancashire County Council, Highways was a statutory consultee and therefore, as soon as the developer was ready to begin, would be included as part of the project.
- Significant S106 funding had been made available and would enhance investment for the development which should be seen as an opportunity for the wider Huncoat area. Section 106 funding was also being provided to enhance sporting facilities and communal spaces and play areas. He pointed out that this allocation had been made in principle but had been firmed up as part of a planning application.
- The Committee was informed that the Huncoat Forum was the main area of engagement for the project and although numbers attending peaked and troughed, the usual representatives of the main Forum Group and ward Councillors were regular attendees. He indicated that interest would increase as the project commenced.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed