CABINET

Wednesday, 24th June, 2026

Present: Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP (in the Chair), Councillors Vanessa Alexander, Jodi Clements, Paul Cox, Melissa Fisher, Clare Pritchard and Kate Walsh

In Attendance: Councillors Stephen Button, Jordan Fox and Zak Khan

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Munsif Dad, welcomed the following newly appointed members to the Cabinet: Councillors Jodi Clements, Paul Cox and Kate Walsh.

He also welcomed representatives of the Main Opposition groups and confirmed his commitment to inviting their comments or questions at Cabinet meetings. He requested that Opposition questions should always be addressed to the Chair of the meeting.

Councillor Dad also remarked that he intended to bring forward Agenda Item 10 – Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes 2026-27, so as not to delay Councillor Stephen Button unnecessarily.

34 Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence submitted on this occasion.

35 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

There were no declarations of interest or dispensations reported on this occasion.

36 Minutes of Cabinet

The minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 22nd April 2026 were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

37 Minutes of Boards, Panels and Working Groups

The minutes of the following bodies were presented:

Name of Body	Date of Meeting
Leader's Policy Development Board	11th February 2026
Cabinet Waste and Recycling Group	7th April 2026
Leader's Policy Development Board	29th April 2026

Resolved - **To note the minutes of the various Boards, Panels and Working Groups, as set out in the above table.**

38 Reports of Cabinet Members

Leader of the Council

Councillor Munsif Dad reported on the following:

Scaitcliffe Skate Park

Scaitcliffe skate Park, Eagle Street, Accrington, would shortly receive £255k of investment from the Pride in Place funding, for a refurbishment project. The current facility was around 20 years old and was at the end do its useful lifespan. Modern concrete ramps would be installed to replace the existing metal construction.

The above scheme complemented a wider programme of investment in sport and leisure, including providing funding for the employment of a new sports development officer and on-going improvements in Bullough Park.

Consultations on the Scaitcliffe skate park design would take place over the summer months, with further information available on social media at that time.

Councillor Zak Khan supported this investment, but enquired whether it might be premature, given that wider regeneration plans for the town centre might include this area of land. The Leader responded that investment in, or demolition of the skate park was needed now, because if its state of repair. The site was well used, did not attract anti-social behaviour and was remote enough from residential properties so as not to attract any nuisance complaints.

Councillor Jordan Fox asked why this site had been prioritised over facilities in other townships, such as Great Harwood. The Leader reiterated that the skate park was at the end of its useful life and that Pride in Place funding would be available for the townships too. Councillor Clements noted that Great Harwood had recently received a pump track facility in place of a defunct skate park.

Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres

Councillor Clare Pritchard reported on the following:

Levelling Up Projects Update

Local company, Senator, had now been appointed under the fit-out contact to provide furniture for Burton's Chambers. Conception Design Associates (CDA), a Preston based company, had been engaged for the manufacture and installation of the kitchens, pot wash and bar area within Accrington Market. CDA would source a significant amount of the equipment required from firms in Clayton-le-Moors and Haslingden, with other components also coming from providers within the Hyndburn area. The main contractor on these two Levelling Up Fund (LUF) projects, Krol Corlett, had also indicated that most of their contractors were companies within the Northwest and locally based.

The above demonstrated how Hyndburn Borough Council continually sought to prioritise local businesses.

Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services

Councillor Paul Cox reported on the following:

<u>Food Waste Collection</u>

The new food waste collection service had been going well since its introduction on 1st April 2026. In the first month, sone 150 tonnes of food waste had been collected, rising to 170 tonnes at present. Hyndburn was the only council in Lancashire that collected food waste into the same collection vehicle and also from the same position residents presented their other wheeled bins.

There were 50 free food waste bags in the rolls supplied to residents, so it was likely that some of these rolls would be exhausted shorty. If enquiries were received about replacement bags, residents should be advised to tie an empty bag onto the waste caddy handle to signify to the crews that a new roll was required.

Overall, the new service was performing better than had been anticipated.

The Leader and Councillor Cox both commented that much of the credit should go to Councillor Stewart Eaves, as the previous portfolio holder, under whose stewardship the new service had been introduced.

Councillor Melissa Fisher remarked that she had been in touch with a local resident, Alan Clitheroe, who was campaigning to stop nuisance from seagulls around the Whinney Hill landfill Site. It was hoped that the recent termination of the County Council's waste disposal contact at the site and the processing of food waste elsewhere would reduce the attractiveness of the site to birds. However, it was acknowledged that a number of local authorities outside of Lancashire would be continuing to tip household domestic waste there.

Councillor Khan noted the scale of the changes and that these had been implemented well. He asked whether complaints would be closely monitored. Councillor Cox responded that complaints were extremely low and mainly as the service was rolled out but would be kept under review.

39 Urgent Decisions Taken

In accordance with Executive Procedure Rule B16(c), Members considered a report on the following decision taken under the urgency procedure:

No.	Decision Heading	Portfolio Holder	Date of Approval
(a)	Town Centre Levelling Up Funded Projects	Councillor Clare Pritchard	4th June 2026

Councillor Dad remarked that this decision related to the CDA contract for Accrington Market, as highlighted previously by Councillor Pritchard (Minute 38 - Levelling Up Projects Update refers).

Resolved - **To note the report on urgent decisions taken.**

40 Portfolio Responsibilities 2026/27

The Agenda set out a copy of the Leader's document: Labour Cabinet Membership and Portfolio Holder Responsibilities for 2026/27, which the Leader of the Council had previously approved under his executive powers. Councillor Dad reported that there had been some minor adjustments to the Portfolios since 2025/26.

A summary of the appointees and their Portfolios was as shown below. Details the specific functions allocated to each Portfolio were as set out in the Agenda document.

- Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP – Leader of the Council;
- Councillor Melissa Fisher – Deputy Leader of the Council (Designate) and Portfolio Holder for Housing and Regeneration;
- Councillor Vanessa Alexander – Deputy Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Resources and Council Operations;
- Councillor Clare Pritchard – Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres;
- Councillor Jodi Clements - Portfolio Holder for Education and Skills;
- Councillor Paul Cox Eaves – Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services; and
- Councillor Kate Walsh – Portfolio Holder for Culture, Heritage and Arts;

Councillor Dad announced that he had taken a further decision, as Leader of the Council, to amend the detailed portfolios in the schedule of responsibilities, as follows:

Portfolio Title	**Amendment Approved**
Transformation and Town Centres	Bullet 3 to read 'Town Centres and Market Hall Project'
Culture, Heritage and Arts	Insert new bullet 6 to read 'Haworth Art Gallery'

Councillor Khan requested that Portfolio Holders be open to responding, in good faith, to issues raised by Opposition members. He expressed concern that there might have been instances previously when Portfolio Holders had not always responded to members of the public when matters had been raised with them. The Leader of the Council gave an assurance that if councillors wished to discuss any matter, they should simply ask the relevant Portfolio Holder directly and also let him know. Cabinet members would do their utmost to engage with enquirers.

Councillor Pritchard commented that public perceptions were not always accurate. Last year there had been some public disquiet on social media about communication with stakeholders regarding the town centre projects, yet the Council had in fact nurtured a good relationship with the various town centre stakeholders.

Resolved - **To note the Portfolio Responsibilities for 2026/27, including the amendments indicated in the table above by the Leader of the Council.**

41 Overview & Scrutiny Work Programmes 2026-27

Members considered a joint report of Councillors Stephen Button, Stewart Eaves and Clare Yates, Chairs of the Resources, Communities and Wellbeing and Special Overview and Scrutiny Committees respectively, requesting that Cabinet gave consideration to and provided comments on the work programmes for Overview and Scrutiny for 2026/27.

Councillor Button provided a brief introduction to the report and the draft work programmes, commenting on the reasons for narrowing down the full list of suggested topics and highlighting the final proposed items for consideration and the meeting date at which these would be considered. Councillor Dad asked if the work programme would be flexible.. This was confirmed by Councillor Button.

Councillor Khan commented that none of the four public suggestions had been taken up, which was disappointing given that residents had engaged in the consultation exercise. He also noted that suggestions regarding Digital Transformation/AI Usage and HMOs had been rejected, but that both topics could potentially have a significant impact on the Borough. He expressed the view that individual overview and scrutiny meetings could potentially deal with more items of business without being overburdened, particularly as some reviews, such as Skip Days, might only require a light touch. Councillor Jordan Fox also supported the inclusion of AI in the work programme, given its potential to create efficiencies within the organisation. Councillor Button undertook to give the matter of additional topics in the work programme some further consideration in discussion with the other Chairs. The Leader reminded all that the question of flexibility within the programme had already been answered.

The Leader indicated that it was proposed to seek an amendment to the terms of reference of the three overview and scrutiny committees at the Council meeting on 16th July 2026. The proposed changes would include Local Government Reorganisation within the remit of Resources OSC and Pride in Place/Neighbourhood Board within the remit of Communities and Wellbeing OSC (both functions currently being included within the remit of the Special Scrutiny Committee).

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

At the beginning of each municipal year, the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees each agreed a work programme for the year.

The process for agreeing the work programme was set out in Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule C6(a) as follows;

"The chair and vice chair of each overview and scrutiny committee will meet with the Cabinet within four weeks of each Annual Meeting to discuss the Cabinet's policy priorities for the coming year. The chairs and vice chairs will propose a draft work programme for their committee within two weeks of that meeting. The draft work programmes will be submitted to the next following meeting of the Cabinet for comment and the draft work programme for each overview and scrutiny committee will then be submitted to the next following meeting of that committee (together with any comments or recommendations from the Cabinet) for approval."

Any comments received from Cabinet would be considered at the next meetings of the Committees.

The work programmes had been developed following consideration of the Council's guide for selecting items for scrutiny and consultation including:

- Emails to all Councillors;
- Suggestions sought from all service managers;

- Social media coverage for public suggestions; and
- Informal meetings with the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Committees

There had been 40 suggested items received for consideration for Scrutiny from Service Heads, Councillors and members of the public. Items of a similar nature had been merged. These items had been discussed in depth between the Scrutiny Chairs and Vice-Chairs before producing the work programmes. It should be noted that there were too many suggested items to be included in the work programmes and therefore, some items had to be rejected on this basis.

Several items, including statutory items and previously agreed standing items (as listed at the end of the appended Work Programmes) had been included in the work programme.

Items which were not deemed suitable for Scrutiny had not been included in the programmes.

Members and officers had sought to provisionally allocate items to specific meetings. These might be subject to change during the year.

As in previous years, additional items could be added to the work programmes as the year progressed following scrutiny procedure rules.

The three Overview and Scrutiny Work Programmes were set out in the report at Appendix 1. All suggested items (including those rejected and reasons for rejection) could be seen in Appendix 2 of the report.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons.

Resolved - **That Cabinet notes, without formal comment, the attached Work Programmes for the Overview and Scrutiny Committees for 2026/27.**

42 Provisional Financial Outturn Position - Revenue Budget Monitoring - Financial Year 2025/26

Members considered a report of Councillor Vanessa Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Council Operations, informing Cabinet of the draft financial spending of the Council up to the end of the financial year in March 2026. Members were advised that a further report would be provided once all the work had been completed if there was any significant change to the position reported here.

Councillor Alexander provided a brief introduction to the report and highlighted the provisional underspend figure of £1.337m against an in-year working Budget of £17.401m. The underspend had been achieved, through good financial discipline and additional income generation. The underspend would be transferred to reserves to alleviate pressures on the 2026/27 Budget and £150k would be made available to fund the survey for the Brookside project referred to at Agenda Item 14. The closing balance level of reserves was robust, at some £25,093m. The provisional outturn position was subject to external audit, but this provided a good platform for the on-going management of risk, future investment in the Borough and continuing stability of the Council's finances.

The Leader noted the strong financial position and thanked the Portfolio Holder and officers for their hard work. He noted that it might be possible to fund additional projects if finances remained strong.

Councillor Khan endorsed the Leader's comments about strong financial management and thanked him for the continuing investment into the Brookside initiative. He noted that income from garage rental and allotments was not reinvested directly into the development of those services and asked if other funding, such as s106 monies, could support them. He also asked what the Council did to chase up non recoverable Housing Benefit claims. Councillor Alexander undertook to look into question about funding for garages and allotments, but indicated that the services did not currently make a profit for the Council. Regarding non-recoverable Housing Benefits, it was not possible to recover money from those who did not have it, nor did the Government reimburse the Council for those losses. Checks were made to ensure that all claims were legitimate. The reality was that there were significant pockets of deprivation in the Borough. Councillor Melissa Fisher added that individuals who found themselves in difficult financial circumstances a should not be berated.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

At the Full Council meeting on 27th February 2025, Council had agreed the General Fund Revenue Budget for 2025/26. This had set a budget for the Council's total revenue spend in 2025/26 of £17.313m, however budget adjustments in year had resulted in a working budget of £17.401m.

The provisional revenue outturn position for the 2025/26 financial year was a total spend for the Council of £16.064m. This gave a revenue underspend on net expenditure of (£1.337m) compared to the latest working budget.

Table 1: Actual Performance Against Budgets

Department	Original Budget £'000	In Year Budget Changes £'000	Working Budget £'000	Provisional Outturn £'000	Provisional Outturn Variance to Working Budget £'000
Environmental Health	941	(1)	941	919	(22)
Environmental Services	5,495	70	5,565	5,508	(57)
Legal and Democratic	1,896	6	1,902	1,862	(40)
Planning and Transportation	712	5	717	566	(151)
Regeneration and Housing	1,604	(203)	1,401	906	(495)
Resources	5,964	179	6,143	6,391	248
Net Cost of Services	**16,612**	**57**	**16,669**	**16,152**	**(517)**
Non-Service	865	31	896	(109)	(1,006)
Corporate Savings Target	(164)	0	(164)	-	164
Cabinet Approved Contributions	-	-	-	-	-

Total Net Expenditure	**17,313**	**88**	**17,401**	**16,042**	**(1,358)**
Funding	(17,313)	(88)	(17,401)	(17,379)	22
(Under)/Overspend	**-**	**-**	**-**	**(1,337)**	**(1,337)**

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A total net underspend of (£594k) had been reported to Cabinet on 21st January 2026. The provisional outturn showed an increase to the overall net underspend of (£743k), resulting in a total net underspend of (£1.337m), compared with the working budget.

A summary of the changes between the Quarter 3 forecast and the provisional outturn was shown in Table 2 below. A more detailed breakdown could be seen at Appendix 1 of the report.

The Final Accounts were still being prepared and would be reviewed by External Auditors once completed. Therefore, the reported underspend of (£1.337m) was provisional and might change.

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Table 2: Movements in Forecast During the Quarter

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Department	Quarter 3 Forecast Outturn £'000	Provisional Outturn £'000	Changes in Provisional Outturn During Quarter £'000
Environmental Health	975	919	(56)
Environmental Services	5,557	5,508	(49)
Legal and Democratic	1,933	1,862	(71)
Planning and Transportation	720	566	(154)
Regeneration and Housing	1,377	906	(471)
Resources	6,592	6,391	(201)
Net Cost of Services	**17,154**	**16,152**	**(1,002)**
Non-Service	(48)	(109)	(61)
Corporate Savings Target	-	-	-
Total Net Expenditure	**17,106**	**16,042**	**(1,064)**
Funding	(17,700)	(17,379)	321
(Under)/Overspend	**(594)**	**(1,337)**	**(743)**

Variance by Service

Section 4 of the report provided a breakdown of the provisional outturn variances by service area set out in additional tables (Nos 4 to 11), and included a supporting commentary. It highlighted the key changes since Quarter 3 and compared the outturn position against the approved budget.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons.

Resolved **(1) That Cabinet notes the provisional outturn position against the Revenue Budget for 2025/26 and the underspend in year of (£1.337m).**

(2) That Cabinet agrees to transfer the underspend of (£1.337m) into the Underspends Reserve, noting that £1m has been approved for use within 2026/27 to fund the additional February budget announcements at the 26th February 2026 Council meeting.

(3) That Cabinet approves the use of £150k to support and enhance the Brookside project to ensure vital environmental surveys are undertaken, including £50k soil surveys, £62k water surveys and £38k for contingency should any further investigations be required.

(4) That future decisions on usage of any remaining funds to be approved by Chief Executive in conjunction with the Leader and members of the Cabinet.

43 Capital Programme Outturn 2025/26

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Vanessa Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Council Operations, providing an update on the Council's Capital Programme. It set out the outturn position for 2025/26 including variations to the budgets from those reported to Cabinet in January 2026.

Councillor Alexander provided a brief introduction to the report and highlighted the capital outturn position of £19.904m, which equates to 99.93% spend of the latest rephased budget. This demonstrated efficient programme management on an overall programme of £56.146m the majority of which was being funded externally. Some £36.230m had slipped into 226/27, principally due to rephasing of Huncoat Garden Village and Levelling Up Fund schemes. Overall, there had been no need to rely on prudential borrowing, as a result of strong governance and investment income. She thanked officers for their hard work.

The Leader reported that the controlling group had established a capital oversight group which had met on two occasions to date. The aim of the group was to ensure good progression on delivery of the programme and to maintain an overview of the position. Councillor Dad offered to share information from this body with the main Opposition groups. The Capital Programme was very ambitious and the intention was to complete as much as possible before Local Government Reorganisation.

Councillor Khan acknowledged the need to maintain progress on delivery. He also noted that s106 funding had accounted for £67,054 of the capital financing and asked whether this had been spent on projects within the locality of the original planning development. Councillor Alexander confirmed that the Council tried to invest in projects in the same area. A list of the relevant projects was available. Councillor Judith Addison made the point that s106 funding was highly regulated and that developers could challenge the Council via arbitration if they believed that the amounts set were excessive. In Hyndburn's case, the imposition of s106 burdens could make certain projects unviable. The Leader referred members to Paragraph 4.9.11 of the Revenue Budget Outturn Report (Minute 42 above refers) for an explanation of the use of s106 funding. Martin Dyson, Executive Director (Resources) undertook to provide information on s106 expenditure to Councillor Khan.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The Council had authorised new additions to the capital programme of £2.726m at its meeting on the 27th February 2025.

Since the Council meeting in February 2025, new schemes totalling £30.820m had been approved and added to the programme. The additional expenditure approved was to be fully funded from by external grants and capital receipts.

In addition, the capital spend outturn from 2024/2025 slipped £23.236m into 2025/2026, of which £12.5m related to the Levelling Up scheme for Accrington Town Centre, the Leisure Estate Investment and Housing Schemes, including Disabled Facilities Grants.

A further £0.633m of capital budgets had been removed from the capital programme. As a result, the total approved Capital programme now totalled £56.148m. The table below provided a breakdown:

Capital Budget 2025/26	**Amounts £'000**
Budget Approvals (Council Feb-25)	2,726
Slippage b/f from 2024-25	23,236
Budget Adjustments in Year	-633
Schemes Approved in Year (QTR1)	29,780
Schemes Approved in Year (QTR2)	681
Schemes Approved in Year (QTR3)	84
Schemes Recommended for Approval (QTR4)	274
Working Capital Programme 2025-28	**56,148**
Less Approved Slippage into Future Years	-26,310
Less Recommended Additional Slippage into Future Years	-9,920
Working Capital Budget 2025-26	**19,919**

The current programme of £56.148m was not capable of being delivered in the current financial year. Therefore, uncompleted elements of £36.230m had been slipped into the future years in which it was expected to be spent.

Outturn Position

The actual expenditure to 31st March 2026 was £19.904m against the latest rephased budget for 2025/2026 of £19.919m. This equated to 99.93% spend.

Following the rephasing of the programme budgets, the outturn showed a small underspend of £0.015m with most schemes in line with the budgeted profile and spend in year.

As shown in the table below, £36.230m of budget had been rephased into 2026/2027. £26.076m related to the scheme at Huncoat Garden Village, £6.454m related to the Levelling Up scheme for Accrington Town Centre, £0.515m to Oswaldtwistle Civic Theatre

Refurbishment Works, £0.635m to works at King George V Playing Pitches and Pavillion, £0.285 to Disabled Facility Grants and the balance to miscellaneous capital schemes.

The significant elements of the programme spent in year were shown in the table below with a more detailed breakdown shown in Appendix A of the report.

Programme Area	Revised Programme (Qtr 4) £000	Slippage into 2026/27 + 2027/28 £000	Programme After Slippage 2025/26 £000	Total Expenditure 2025/26 £000	Variance (Under) / Over Spend £000
Community Projects	741	(114)	627	631	4
Housing Improvement Programme	1,895	(285)	1,610	1,610	(0)
Huncoat Garden Village	29,187	(26,262)	2,925	2,925	-
IT Projects	548	(51)	497	502	5
Leisure Estate Investment	6,921	(588)	6,333	6,333	-
Market Development Works	13,460	(6,454)	7,006	7,006	0
Operational Buildings	1,405	(1,279)	126	111	(15)
Parks & Open Spaces	1,315	(938)	377	368	(9)
Planned Asset Improvements	217	(200)	16	16	-
UK Shared Prosperity Fund	255	(57)	197	197	-
Vehicles & Equipment	206	-	206	206	(0)
Total Capital Expenditure	**56,148**	**(36,230)**	**19,919**	**19,904**	**(15)**

The overall net position was that the Capital Programme at period 9 had forecast a total spend of £21.861m and the actual outturn of £19.904m was a reduction of £1.957m, which was largely due to delays on schemes which would now be slippage into 2026/27.

The £19.904m outturn had largely been financed using external grant monies received and the use of capital receipts and reserves held by the Council. There had been no use of prudential borrowing in the financing of the programme and there would be no future implications on the revenue budget due to the repayment of principal and interest.

The funding of the programme in 2025/26 was illustrated in the report as a pie chart, which set out the following information in a pictorial format:

Financing of Capital Programme 2025/26		
External Grants and Contributions	£14.480, 923	73%
Earmarked reserves	£5,223,208	26%
Capital Receipts	£102,687	1%
Section 106 Agreements	£67,054	0%
Direct Revenue Financing	£30,199	0%

Close monitoring of the capital programme had been undertaken throughout the year to ensure that the projects were kept in line with spend forecasts and were considered in the Council's cash flow forecasts. Deviations from the spending profiles and any financial implications were considered in future treasury and revenue budget forecasts.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons.

Resolved - **That Cabinet notes the outturn position for 2025/26 of £19.904m and slippage into 2026/27 of £36.230m.**

44 Prudential Indicators Monitoring and Treasury Management Strategy Update - Quarter 4 2025/26

Members considered a report of Councillor Vanessa Alexander, Portfolio Holder for Resources and Council Operations, updating Cabinet on the Treasury Management provisional outturn position for 2025/26.

Councillor Alexander provided a brief introduction to the report and highlighted that performance against the prudential indicators was within the limits set and that treasury management had delivered prudent and affective compliance. There were some cost pressures due to leases, but overall risk from borrowing was low, the Council had strong liquidity and no new borrowing was being undertaken.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* required the Council to set Prudential Indicators annually for the forthcoming three years to demonstrate that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent, and sustainable. The Council had adopted its prudential indicators for 2025/2026 at its meeting in February 2025.

The Prudential Code required the Council, having agreed at least a minimum number of mandatory prudential indicators (including limits and statements), to monitor them - in a locally determined format on a quarterly basis.

The indicators were purely for internal use and not designed to be used as comparators between authorities. If it should be necessary to revise any of the indicators during the year, the Executive Director (Resources) would report and advise the Council further.

'Treasury Management' related to the borrowing, investing and cash activities of the authority, and the effective management of any associated risks. In February 2025, in the same report referred to above, the Council had also set out and then had approved its current Treasury Management Strategy. This had been in accordance with the CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance & Accountancy) code of practice on treasury management in public services, the Council having previously adopted, via Cabinet, the then revised code of practice. Associated treasury management Prudential Indicators had been included in the February 2025 report.

<u>Prudential Indicators Monitoring</u>

Appendix 1 of the report showed the monitoring information for each of the prudential indicators and limits. They related to:

- External debt overall limits;
- Affordability (e.g. implications for Council Tax);

- Prudence and sustainability (e.g. implications for external borrowing);
- Capital expenditure; and
- Other indicators for Treasury Management.

Treasury Management Update

The provisional outturn balance sheet position as at 31st March 2026 for treasury management activities was shown in the table below.

Table 1 - Forecast Treasury Balance Sheet Position 2025/26

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Borrowing Position – Q2 2025/26	Original Estimate 2025/26 £'000	Provisional Outturn Position 2025/26 £'000
External Debt		
Borrowing	9,595	9,595
Other Long-Term Liabilities	1,967	1,542
Total External Debt	**11,562**	**11,137**
Capital Financing Requirement	9,190	9,066
Under/(Over) Borrowing	**(2,372)**	**(2,071)**
INVESTMENTS		
Total Short-Term Investments		**28,726**
Total Long-Term Investments		
Total Investments		**28,726**
Net Investments/(Borrowing)	**(11,562)**	**17,589**

It could be seen from the above table that the Council was performing within the original targets set at the start of the year. Within the prudential indicators there were several key indicators to ensure that the Council operated its activities within well-defined limits. In general, the requirement was that the Capital Financing Requirement should exceed gross debt.

However, in 2025/26 the gross debt exceeded the Capital Financing Requirement. This was due to the Council having historical debt with a maturity repayment profile (meaning all principal was paid at the loans maturity date) but the accounting treatment required that the Capital Financing Requirement was reduced each year by the payment of Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP).

Other Liabilities in prior years reflected finance liabilities relating to vehicles and plant and in the current year reflected the transfer of all leases onto the balance sheet to comply with the new IFRS 16 – Leases accounting standard.

The requirement to have Capital Financing Requirement exceed Gross Debt centred around providing an assurance that borrowing was not taking place for Revenue purposes. However, as the Council was not borrowing additional funds currently, this was not an issue.

The current position of the treasury function, and its expected change in the future, introduced risk to the Council from an adverse movement in interest rates. The Prudential Code was constructed based on affordability, part of which was related to borrowing costs and investment returns.

Investment balances were higher than had been forecast when the Prudential Indicators and strategy had been set. This was mainly due to grants received in advance of capital spend being incurred, as well as slippage in the capital programme.

The Capital Programme 2025/26 was expected to be funded using Government Grants (including Levelling Up Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund) and other external financing. It had also been supported during the year by greater use of internal sources of capital finance (including capital receipts and use of the Council's reserve balances). No external borrowing had been required during the year.

Investment Activities During the Period

During the year the Council had invested funds with other Local Authorities, the Government's Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility and used Money Market Funds and Bank deposit accounts.

Table 2 - Invested Funds 2026/26

Portfolio Position	Provisional Outturn 2025/2026 £'000
Local Authorities	24,000
Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility	2,646
Money Market Funds	2,000
Lancashire County Council Call Account	0
Bank Deposit Accounts	80
Total Short-Term Investments	**28,726**

The table below showed the investments the Council had in place as of 31st March 2026 with other local authorities:

Table 3 - Investments with Other Local Authorities

Local Authority	Date From	Date To	Amount £'000	Interest Rate
Loans Outstanding as at 31 March 2026				
Surrey County Council	16-Feb-26	15-Apr-26	2,000	4.550%
Guildford Borough Council	22-Dec-25	22-Apr-26	2,000	4.500%
Kingston Upon Hull CC	23-Oct-25	23-Apr-26	2,000	4.600%
Broxbourne Council	07-Jul-25	07-May-26	2,000	4.150%
Uttlesford Borough Council	19-Nov-25	19-May-26	2,000	4.450%
West Northamptonshire Council	27-May-25	26-May-26	2,000	4.150%

North Lanarkshire Council	13-Jun-25	12-Jun-26	2,000	4.200%
Eastleigh Council	19-Jun-25	18-Jun-26	2,000	4.300%
Blackpool Council	12-Feb-26	13-Jul-26	2,000	4.750%
Perth & Kinross Council	28-Jul-26	27-Jul-26	2,000	4.150%
Antrim & Newtonabbey Borough Council	18-Mar-26	18-Dec-26	2,000	4.500%
Moray Council	06-Jan-26	05-Jan-27	2,000	4.600%
Total Local Authority Loans			**24,000**	

The Council had no future-dated loans agreed at the end of the quarter. Table 4 set out in the report showed a corresponding nil return.

The Council's Finance team had several checks in place before any loans to other local authorities were agreed, to prioritise the security of any funds invested.

To ensure the Council was considering any possible risk posed by the recent increase in Section 114 Notices being issued, the authority was undertaking additional due diligence, which included:

- Reviewing local press for any signs of financial distress;
- Analysing the latest financial statements of the local authority; and
- Assessing the overall financial health and stability of the local authority.

Expected Movement in Interest Rates

The Council had appointed MUFG (formally Link Asset Services) as treasury adviser to the Council and part of their service was to assist the Council in formulating a view on interest rates. A graph was included in the report, which gave MUFG's latest view of the expected future movement in interest rates.

The latest forecast set out a view that both short and long-dated interest rates would gradually fall, as inflation moved closer to the Bank of England's target of 2.00%.

Interest rate risk was minimised as the Council's borrowings were fixed until a trigger point, where the lender might seek better rates. Current interest rates would need to rise significantly for this to occur. With rates expected to fall in the short-term this was unlikely to occur, but this would be monitored closely.

The revenue outturn position on the Council's Treasury Management activities was shown in the table below.

Table 5 - Forecast Treasury Revenue Provisional Outturn – 2025/26

-

Portfolio Position 2025/26	Working Budget 2025/26 £'000	Provisional Outturn 2025/26 £'000	Forecast (Under) / Over Spend £'000
Interest Receivable			
Interest Receivable on Temporary Lending	(700)	(1,600)	(900)
Other Interest Receivable	-	(30)	(30)

Total Interest Receivable	**(700)**	**(1,630)**	**(930)**
Interest Payable			
Interest Payable on Long-Term Borrowings	440	439	(1)
Interest Payable on Finance Leases	41	216	175
Other Interest Payable	-	3	3
Total Interest Payable	**481**	**658**	**177**
Minimum Revenue Provision	1,085	1,142	57
Net (Income) / Expenditure from Treasury Activities	**866**	**170**	**(696)**

Interest Receivable

The Council had invested amounts of surplus cash on a short-term, temporary basis. The Council's strategy continued to focus on the security of deposits and the liquidity of funds. The interest received from these investments was above the budgeted expectations for the full year, mainly due to higher levels of funds being held and the Bank of England maintaining interest rates at higher levels than had been anticipated when the budget had been set. The actual income from investment interest for the year ending 31st March 2026 was £1.6m; an increase of £900k against the original budget forecast.

The Council continued to invest surplus cash in top-rated financial institutions. The authority continued to spread its money around several institutions to ensure that it was not potentially damaged by the unforeseen collapse of any one bank. Deposits were also held with banks where the Council believed that the respective governments were likely to be able to guarantee deposits in the event of bank failure. This strategy was continuing to yield an appropriate rate of return, though at a lower rate, as there was less risk attached to these deposits. The Council also operated a policy of holding no more than £2m in any one bank (except for the liquidity account held with Nat West Bank where the limit was £3m) to ensure that the risk was spread.

The Council could place unlimited funds with the Government's Debt Management Agency Deposit Facility (DMADF). This allowed greater flexibility for placing of funds with potential for higher returns with minimal risk.

Interest Payable

An estimate of interest on additional borrowing had been included in the budget and whilst there were no new borrowing requirements for capital spend, the changes required for lease accounting and the timing of the leases being taken had resulted in a pressure against the 2025/26 revenue budget.

Minimum Revenue Provision

Minimum revenue provision charge was forecast to be higher than budget due to previously purchased vehicles being replaced with leased ones. Plus there were an additional 4 Refuse Collection Vehicles (RCVs) for food waste that had also been leased.

Performance Against Prudential Indicators

The Council's performance to date, and current forecasts for the year, against the Prudential Indicators set in the Treasury Management Strategy approved by full Council on 27th February 2025 were shown in Appendix 1 to the report. The Council had remained within the Prudential Indicators set out in the approved Treasury Management Strategy.

Liability Benchmark

The Council's Treasury Management Strategy had also set out a Liability Benchmark. This compared the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy. The liability benchmark had been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing.

The liability benchmark was a useful tool to help establish whether the Council was likely to be a long-term borrower or a long-term investor in the future and so shape its strategy focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represented an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council would have to hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans, while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark had been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumed the same forecasts as used throughout the report, but that cash and investment balances were kept to a minimum level of £10M at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

The long-term liability benchmark assumed no new capital expenditure funded by borrowing and that income, expenditure and reserves all increased by inflation of 1.0% each year. This was shown in a chart included in the report, together with the maturity profile of the Council's existing borrowing. The chart showed that the Council had long-term borrowings, that were committed to a number of years ago, which were forecast to be above the liability benchmark, and therefore the Council would not be expecting to enter into new borrowings over the short term.

Borrowing levels were above the liability benchmark due to high cash balances as a result of grants received in advance of capital spend, as well as the Council holding healthy levels of reserves.

There were no alternative options for consideration or reasons.

Resolved - **That Cabinet notes the Treasury Management activities provisional outturn position for 2025/26.**

45 Appointment of Cabinet Committees and Cabinet Groups 2026/27

Members considered a report of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, confirming the establishment of Cabinet Committees and Cabinet Groups for the 2026/27 Municipal Year and appointing members to the Committees and Groups.

Councillor Dad provided a brief introduction to the report and announced some additional nominees (not included in the report) for the various bodies being established, which are included in Table 1 below.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

In June 2015, Cabinet had established the Cabinet Committee (Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013). The Cabinet Committee determined whether to grant, renew, revoke or vary scrap metal licences pursuant to the Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013, where the applicant or licensee (as the case may be) had informed the Council that they wished to make oral representations. Meetings took place only as and when required, but this body was needed to enable compliance with statutory requirements.

In December 2017, Cabinet had established the Cabinet Committee (Street Naming). The Cabinet Committee met from time to time and discharged the Council's functions in respect of the naming and renaming of streets pursuant to Sections 17 and 18 Public Health Act 1925.

In June 2012, Cabinet had established the Cabinet Waste and Recycling Group. The body acted in an advisory capacity to Cabinet and did not have any delegated or decision-making powers. This Group met infrequently, but provided oversight of certain aspects of the Council's Waste Services.

On 21st September 2022, Cabinet had established the Net Zero Working Group. The Working Group's remit was to support the work of Cabinet in addressing climate change, but it did not have any delegated or decision-making powers. The Group was currently active, but met infrequently. It was proposed to amend the name of the group to the Sustainability Working Group, to more closely reflect the wider aims of environmental sustainability and to align this body with a named area of responsibility set out in the Leader of the Council's portfolio. Save for the change of name, the terms of reference of the Working Group would remain unchanged.

On 18th September 2025, Cabinet had established the Cabinet Action Fund Working Group. The group's remit was to evaluate applications for funding from the Cabinet Action Fund and to make recommendations to the Leader of the Council and Executive Director (Resources) for the payment of any grant. The delegated authority to make any payment rested with the Executive Director (Resources), following the aforementioned consultations.

For 2026/27, it was also proposed that a review of the terms of reference of the Economic Policy Forum take place to ensure that this was closely aligning to the business area of responsibility within the Leader of the Council's portfolio. This body was not currently a formally constituted Cabinet group. Discussions would be held on this proposal and a further report may be provided at a later date.

It was proposed that the bodies set out in Table 1 continue into 2026/27, with the membership as shown in column 2 thereof. The terms of reference for those bodies were included in the report as Appendix 1. Some minor amendments were suggested to the terms of reference of the Cabinet Committee (Street Naming) and the Cabinet Waste and Recycling Group to take into account the existence of two Main Opposition groups, as well as the change noted above in relation to the new name of the Net Zero Working Group. The changes proposed were highlighted in the appendix to the report.

Cabinet was reminded that the formal Committees could only comprise councillors who were Cabinet Members, whereas Working Groups could comprise both Cabinet and non-executive councillors.

Table 1

Committees	
Cabinet Committee (Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013)	Councillor Melissa Fisher (Chair) Councillors Vanessa Alexander and Munsif Dad
Cabinet Committee (Street Naming)	(Chair to be confirmed) Councillors Melissa Fisher and Clare Pritchard (+ 1 Labour vacancy) (+1 Conservative and +1 Reform UK vacancy - both attending as observers)
Working Groups	
Cabinet Waste and Recycling Group	Councillor Paul Cox (Chair) Councillors Munsif Dad (+ 1 Labour vacancy) (+1 Conservative and +1 Reform UK vacancy)
Sustainability Working Group (formerly Net Zero)	(Chair to be confirmed) Councillors Steve Button and Ethan Rawcliffe (+1 Labour vacancy)
Cabinet Action Fund Working Group	Councillors Vanessa Alexander and Melissa Fisher (+1 Labour vacancy)

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

The Cabinet could decide to create new or disestablish existing committees or working groups, as it saw fit. It could also decide not to make appointments to any of the approved committees, panels and groups for the time being. However, there was a need to finalise the above bodies as soon as possible to ensure continuity of cover for their areas of work.

Resolved

(1) That Cabinet agrees to the establishment of the Cabinet Committees and Cabinet Groups, as set out in paragraph 3.8 of the report, and with the terms of reference, as set out in Appendix 1 thereof.

(2) That the membership of the Cabinet Committees and Cabinet Groups, as set out in paragraph 3.8, with the additional nominees notified at the meeting, be approved.

(3) That where nominations to the bodies agreed at (1) have not been made available in time for the Cabinet meeting, to delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve any subsequent political group nominations received, following consultation with the leader of the political group concerned.

46 Growth Lancashire Limited

Members considered a report of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, seeking Cabinet's agreement to the winding-up of Growth Lancashire Limited and to the transfer of its services to Blackburn with Darwen Council.

Councillor Dad provided a brief introduction to the report, which included the background to the establishment of the company, its current governance arrangements, its area of work and the reasons for the proposed changes, He noted the intention was for the services to continue under transitional arrangements administered by Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council prior to those services being transferred to the Lancashire Combined County Authority (LCCA).

Councillor Addison commented that heritage advice was sometimes provided by Growth Lancashire Limited (GLL) at this Council's Planning Committee meetings. Jane Ellis, Executive Director (Legal and Democratic Services) confirmed that this would have been carried out under a contract for heritage advice. Councillor Khan enquired if Hyndburn Borough Council would be entitled to a share of the £387k reserves if the company was would up. The Leader responded that it was likely that any balance of reserves would ultimately transfer to LCCA.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

Growth Lancashire Limited (GLL) was a company established jointly by Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Rossendale Councils and Lancashire County Council. Blackburn with Darwen Council had been accountable body for GLL's external funding for 21 years.

The Board comprised of local authority and private sector directors, operating under Articles of Association that defined governance, ownership and operational arrangements. The Council Leader was the Council's nominated representative on GLL's board of directors.

GLL provided a range of contracted business support and specialist planning services to partners and customers. The councils from across Lancashire financially contributed on a subscription basis and / or purchased GL services. Hyndburn's recent annual contribution had been £15,000. GLL was the only pan-Lancashire body that was financially supported and / or delivered paid for services in all Lancashire local authority areas.

In agreeing Lancashire's devolution arrangements with Government, it had always been intended to integrate GLL within the Lancashire Combined County Authority (LCCA), once established. With the development of the LCCA and with the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), it was now considered the right time to reset and adapt the current arrangements for the provision of GLL's services. To this end, on 18th March 2026, the board of GLL had agreed to wind-up the company and transfer the staff and financial reserves to Blackburn with Darwen Council as the accountable body. The financial reserves would then be split between Blacburn with Darwen Council and the LCCA, at a later date.

The report, therefore, sought Cabinet's formal agreement to the winding-up of the company. Subject to all five founding members confirming their agreement to wind-up GLL, Blackburn with Darwen Council would manage its administrative closure.

Subject to the winding up of the company, Blackburn with Darwen Council would take temporary responsibility for GLL's 7 business support staff, while the transfer arrangements to the LCCA were finalised. The 5-specialist planning related staff would be transferred to Blackburn with Darwen Council in anticipation of LGR changes. The company reserves, which currently stood at £378,000, (some of which were currently being used to cover operating costs) would provide for all staff related costs and risks.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

None had been proposed. The report followed a decision by the board of GLL to wind-up the company. This decision was made given Lancashire's devolution agreement with Government, which included the transfer of GLL's business support services to the LCCA, and the imminent prospect of LGR.

Resolved - **That Cabinet:**

(1) Agrees to the winding up of Growth Lancashire Limited, further to the decision of Growth Lancashire Limited's board of directors at its meeting on 18th March 2026.

(2) Agrees in principle to the company's functions and services being transferred to Blackburn with Darwen Council.

(3) Notes that Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP will resign as a director of Growth Lancashire Limited in the event of the Cabinet agreeing to the company being wound up.

47 Brookside Restoration Initiative

The Cabinet considered a report of Councillor Munsif Dad BEM JP, Leader of the Council, providing an update on the progress of the Brookside Restoration Initiative for land in Council ownership at Stanhill, Oswaldtwistle. The report also to sought budget provision as part of a funding package for site enhancements, assessments and specialist advice. The actions proposed would fulfil the Council's responsibilities under Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, both as a regulator and a responsible landowner.

Councillor Dad provided a brief introduction to the report, highlighting the support for the project, the additional investment proposed and the proposal to carry out site investigations. The Council was taking a proactive approach to the issues identified and would commission specialist investigations. Initial work had identified some contaminants at the site, which was consistent with the industrial heritage of the area. The site would remain open for walkers during these works, but there would be some restrictions in place. The Council remained committed to investigating and managing the issues identified and improving the site. The intention was to circulate some information on this to councillors as soon as possible and to provide updates to the public via social media.

Councillor Khan welcomed the investment in this project and asked if additional National Lottery Heritage Fund monies might be available. The Leader commented that the current budget proposal was for the survey only. Anne Hourican, Senior Environmental Initiatives Officer, responded that the various capital allocations received so far were for the physical upgrades planned, such as the new entrance, etc. Any Heritage Lottery bid would require match funding, which would need to be identified, and was not part of the current funding allocation.

Councillor Addison commented that the Methodist Chapel in the vicinity was now closed and that the building might be available for use in connection with the Brookside Initiative. Ms Hourican indicated that the building had been used previously for some small community gatherings and this had been useful. However, the chapel now had significant structural issues and the building was generally in a poor state of repair. Any renovation of the Chapel would be a substantial additional project and would require specialist advice.

The Leader reported that he had asked Ms Hourican to keep him and Councillor Khan updated on developments.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

Budget provision was required to support momentum of the Brookside Restoration Initiative, which was one of the Council's most significant environmental enhancement projects. Accessibility enhancements, including for mobility access, had been identified as the top priority in the extensive community engagement and survey activities.

<u>Background</u>

The site had been purchased by the Council in 2022 specifically to bring forward enhancement proposals. This followed many years of lack of maintenance and decline in the site condition while it was in private ownership. The Initiative was being progressed in tandem with external organisations and the local community. It had already generated significant momentum, external funding of some £500,000 had already been secured and there would be potential for ongoing external investment to implement the Brookside Masterplan and Delivery Programme phased over 10 years.

<u>Summary of initial site assessment findings</u>

The industrial legacy of the site spanned at least 3 centuries, from the 1700's industrial revolution onwards. This was significant heritage value but it also presented some challenges which were being proactively addressed through the enhancement programme.

As one of the many research studies for the initiative, a specialist consultancy, RSK Environment Ltd (RSK), had been commissioned by the Council to carry out initial soil and water sampling, analysis, and preliminary risk assessments. Regrettably, though perhaps not surprisingly given the history of the site, this had identified evidence of potential contaminants in some locations. These were mostly located in the central and southern areas of historical industrial uses and one of the central mill lodges. Also, there were a number of historical mining assets within the site.

Focused safety measures, with fencing and signage to guide public access safely through the central areas, had been implemented by the Council. Visitors were asked to follow all on-site signage.

Other areas of the site would remain open for walking and informal recreation. Preliminary investigations found no evidence of site-wide contamination, with most locations showing no visible signs or odours and vegetation limiting exposure in many areas; although it was recognised that the sampling and testing completed to date had been limited and this was to be addressed in further site assessments.

The pro-active enhancement programme now required further detailed assessments to better understand the extent of the contaminants, understand any implications for health and water quality, provide further guidance for public usage, and to inform the design and specification of site enhancements and any additional remediation options that might be required.

<u>Proposals for the next stage of site assessments</u>

Stage 1 – this comprised the following land-based assessments primarily related to potential health risks:

- further shallow soil sampling to delineate the magnitude and extent of contaminants;
- desk based coal mining risk assessment and Mine Remediation Authority; and
- additional assessments in the central area in response to magnetometer findings.

Stage 1 would also involve communications assistance for public information purposes and ongoing project management and liaison between the Council, Environment Agency and other stakeholders.

Stage 2 – this comprised the following water assessments primarily relating to potential controlled waters risks, together with liaison with the Environment Agency:

- three further rounds of water sampling; and
- drainage survey, focussing on interactions between the lodges, outfalls and brook

Stage 3 – this comprised the construction stage:

- review of detailed design proposals;
- assistance with health and safety measures for infrastructure works; and
- response and guidance on any observations encountered during construction

It was proposed that the Council waives its Contract Procedure Rules to appoint RSK Environment Ltd to carry out the Stage 1 assessments referred to above. These were required urgently as the land-based assessments would provide the Council with further information about potential public health risks at the site and it was considered sensible to avoid a further, potentially lengthy procurement process given that RSK were already very familiar with the site, the Stage 1 assessments followed on from work already carried out by RSK and RSK had previously been appointed following a very thorough procurement exercise. The assessment proposals and costs had been independently reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Team. The further appointment of RSK was therefore considered by officers to provide best value to the Council.

<u>Duties of the Council</u>

The following advice had been received from RSK:

> "We consider that as the landowner and with the information collected to date, the Council has a duty under Part 2A Environmental Protection Act 1990 (Contaminated Land Regulations) to assess the risks to, and protect, current site users. Based on the findings to date, further assessment would still be necessary, regardless of future development proposals".

The following advice had been received from the Council's Environmental Health Team:

a) Part 2A of the Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended) required the Council to inspect land in its area of control from time to time for the purposes of identifying contaminated land. In this regard, the Council was required to apply its resources to those areas most likely to be contaminated, and it should deal with the highest risk sites first.

b) The Council required additional assessments in order to determine whether or not the Brookside site presented a significant risk of significant harm, or whether or not there was a significant possibility of that harm occurring to sensitive end receptors and/or to controlled waters and water environment i.e. the Council should determine whether parts of the site were or were not contaminated land for the purpose of the Environmental Protection Act 1990.

c) The investigations carried out by the Council should also provide information on remediation options.

Following the results of a magnetometer survey in the central area, the Environmental Health Team had also advised that the magnetometer survey might indicate the presence of buried containers, the initial soil sampling had also confirmed a visible tar-like substance in one of the sample locations in the central area of the site and that there was now enough information to say that deterring public access was necessary in some central areas of the site.

Following this advice, focussed and appropriate safety measures had been implemented on site and a risk management approach had been progressed.

Precautionary measures

Various precautionary measures had been actioned and included:

- enhanced hygiene measures including a dedicated hygiene station for volunteer activities;
- prioritising activities and projects into appropriate areas of the site;
- avoidance of works involving soil disturbance in some areas, pending further assessments;
- focussed access restrictions in the central area of the site accompanied by signage to guide public usage, including guidance for dog walkers;
- project management and rephasing the next proposed physical improvements to identify elements for early progress and to accommodate the timescales required for further assessments; and
- continuing to seek advice from RSK, the Environment Agency, the Council's Environmental Health Team and other specialists.

Communication and stakeholder engagement

A communication and stakeholder engagement plan had been prepared to provide careful communication of the initial findings, explain why further investigations were being undertaken pro-actively, support understanding, and ensure that communication was proportionate, transparent and responsive to public concern.

Initial communications would be further informed and updated as the assessments progressed.

Communications channels would include site signage, Council website, FAQs information, social media, updates and briefings to a range of stakeholders.

The communications approach adopted industry best practice guidance.

The multi-agency approach included expert advice from Lancashire County Council's Public Health Team, UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) and a communications specialist working alongside RSK.

The Council's communications team were also making connections with colleagues in other Councils and agencies to help with developing effective public information.

<u>Site enhancement and possible remediation options</u>

Design measures and remediation options would be informed by the further assessments. The approach would generally be targeted at breaking potential exposure pathways through installation of cover materials (e.g. boardwalks or surfaced paths etc), integrating design features such as boundaries or dense planting to deter access in certain areas, ground treatments if required near mining assets, and robust risk assessment of activities.

The main opportunity to improve site conditions and address remediation measures was by integrating these measures into site enhancements. Any need to remove materials from the site and/or for physical remediation was not known at this stage and would be informed by the further assessments.

<u>Other requests for external financial support towards assessments</u>

<u>*DEFRA – Land Remediation Pathfunder Scheme (LRPS) – EoI submitted*</u>

A new Land Remediation Pathfinder Scheme (LRPS) had been launched on 8th April and an expression of interest had been submitted by the Council on 7th May 2026. Clearly this would be highly competitive, but if selected, it might assist with further specialist inputs and later remediation options if required.

<u>*Environment Agency (EA)*</u>

Formal consultation with the Environment Agency (EA) had been submitted in relation to their regulatory responsibilities for controlled waters. In addition, several requests had been made for EA financial support to assist with the ongoing assessments.

For information, there might be potential for EA funding to assist with later delivery of stream restoration and wetland proposals which were part of the overall masterplan. EA colleagues had put forward a proposal which might enable funding in 2027/28 onwards. At that stage, the costs of related assessment works could be integrated into the delivery budget and project management arrangements.

<u>*External investments in site enhancements and proposed community activities*</u>

Three external capital grants had already been secured for access enhancements and a range of improvements in 2026/27:

- Pride in Place £200,000
- FCC Communities Foundation £100,000
- Lancashire Environmental Fund £30,000

A bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund was intended to be prepared by the Prospects Foundation in respect of the next stage of the initiative. This would bid for some £250,000 over 2 or 3 years, to support heritage related actions, community activities and engagement and the related staff capacity. It was likely that additional match funding in the region of £50,000 would be required from the Council or other sources to support this bid.

A Countryside Stewardship pre-application had been submitted by the Council's Planning Team in respect of the site. This was normally now a closed funding stream, but the Council's entry had been invited as the authority had an approved Woodland Management Plan.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

Option 1 - would be to do nothing. This was not recommended as it would halt progress with the Brookside initiative, fail to use £330,000 of capital funding currently secured, miss out on other opportunities for external investment and fail to fulfil the statutory duties of the Council both as regulator and as a responsible landowner. It would also fail to be pro-active in improving site conditions through positive design measures.

Option 2 - would be to delay assessments and site enhancements. This option was not recommended for the same reasons as above.

Resolved - **That Cabinet approves the following:**

(1) Budget provision of £150,000 to add to external capital grants already secured for a package of site enhancements accompanied by specialist assessments that are required to understand the implications of industrial legacy at the Brookside site.

(2) The waiving of the Council's Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the appointment of RSK Environment Ltd, to carry out further specialist assessments at the Brookside site for the reasons given in Paragraph 3.11 of the report.

48 Exclusion of the Public

Resolved – **That, in accordance with Regulation 4(2)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, the public be excluded from the meeting during the following items, when it is likely, in view of the nature of the proceedings that there will otherwise be disclosure of exempt information within the Paragraphs of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 specified at the items.**

49 Accrington Market - Operations

In accordance with Regulation 5(6)(a) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012, approval had been received from Councillor Stewart Eaves, Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, to the following decision being made by Cabinet on 24th June 2026, in private, on the grounds that the decision was urgent and could not reasonably be deferred.

Exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

Members considered a report of Councillor Clare Pritchard, Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres, seeking approval to a preferred approach for the operation of certain elements of Accrington Market Hall and approval for the necessary delegated authority to officers to explore the feasibility of what was being proposed. Councillor Pritchard gave a brief introduction to the report, highlighting the rational for the proposals.

Councillors Fox and Khan asked a number of questions and made some observations, to which the Portfolio Holder and Leader of the Council responded.

Approval of the report was not deemed a key decision.

Reasons for Decision

The reasons for the decision were set out in the exempt report.

Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection

The alternative options considered and reasons for rejection were set out in the exempt report.

Resolved – **That the recommendations as set out in the exempt report be approved.**

Signed:……………………………………………

Date: ………………………………………………………

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed