

SPECIAL SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 25th March, 2026

Present:	Councillor Kate Walsh (in the Chair), Councillors Judith Addison, Mike Booth (Vice Chair), Bernard Dawson MBE and Zak Khan Co-optees: Shahed Mahmood
In Attendance:	Councillors Clare Pritchard – Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres Steve Riley – Executive Director (Environment)
Apologies	Councillors Josh Allen, Heather Anderson, Clare McKenna, Clare Yates and Mohammed Younis

361 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Allen, Anderson, Yates and Younis.

Councillors Dawson and Addison acted as substitute representatives on behalf of Councillors Anderson and Allen, respectively.

362 Declarations of Interest and Dispensations

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

363 Minutes of the last Meeting

The Minutes of the meeting of Cabinet held on 18th November 2025, were submitted for approval as a correct record.

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

364 Town Centre Levelling Up Project Progress

The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Transformation and Town Centres, with the support of the Executive Director (Environment) submitted a report to update the Committee on the Levelling Up funded (LUF) town centre projects.

The report set out the purpose of the Levelling Up Fund and explained that its focus was on capital investment in local infrastructure projects that required up to £20m. In January 2022 the Council's Cabinet approved recommendations that the LUF submission should focus around three principal interventions:

1. Redevelopment within the Indoor Market Hall and removal of the outdoor pavilions along Peel Street to provide an enhanced food and drink offering alongside traditional market stalls and new leisure offering – the intervention known as Market Hall.
2. Acquisition and external façade improvements/roof repairs to the properties of 43-59 Blackburn Road/2-4 Church Street – the intervention known as Market Chambers.
3. Acquisition and redevelopment to the block 61-69 Blackburn Road to provide for a shared workspace offering – the intervention known as Burtons Chambers.

The report also set out further information on:

- Acquisitions – within Market Chambers
- Phase 1 Construction Contract – work procured has been completed and defects resolved.
- Phase 2 Construction Contract (fit-out) – details provided
- Monitoring/reporting – reporting requirements to MHCLG is now six monthly, the spending deadline has been extended to March 2028. Details were also provided in respect of local employment by the Phase 2 contractor.
- Budget – details provided.
- Programme -there was now a working assumption that the construction works to Burton's Chambers would be 'practically' completed by 6 July 2026 and the Market Hall by 13th July 2026. The date of the Market Hall re-opening had changed to November 2026, due to agreement that the Council would now manage day to day operations.

Members of the Committee were invited to further scrutinize the report at the meeting and submitted comments and questions on the following issues:

- When would business be able to trade again?
- What plans were in place to advertise and promote the re-opening of the Market Hall?
- Was there any events plan particularly for the Asian community?
- Would there be stalls that sold halal foods?
- Which traders would be provided with stalls in the Market Hall and would there be enough to fill the Market Hall?
- Would there be a diverse range of stalls in the Market Hall catering for all members of the community?
- When would rents commence in the Market Hall?
- What plans were in place to ensure that there would be enough parking spaces for people visiting businesses in Accrington Town Centre?
- A suggestion that electric charging points should be restricted to two hours, during times of events, so that these spaces could be used as additional parking spaces.
- That street signage should be clear to avoid misunderstandings in respect of parking restrictions.
- Had CPOs on the Market Chambers been completed?
- What had the cost of using compulsory purchase orders on the Market Chambers?
- In respect of Phase 1 properties, had the cost of resolving defects been included in the contract?
- Concern that there were not more local people employed on the contracts. Would it be possible to ensure that more local people were given the opportunity of employment?
- Hyndburn Council had paid £1.3m for the acquisition of the town centre properties. This seemed a lot of money, did Hyndburn Council pay out more than it should have done?

- Why had there been a delay in the re-opening of the Market Hall?
- When will the Council be able to confirm which traders will be moving into the Market Hall so that design work of the stalls is able to be progressed?
- Concern that the deadlines for the re-opening of the Market Hall would be delayed further and that there was also a risk of market stalls not being fully occupied.

Responses to the above comments and questions were provided as follows:

Businesses Trading and Local Employment

- The opening of the Market Hall and Burtons Chambers was currently planned for November 2026 to align with the Christmas Lights switch on event, once all traders had decanted back to the Market Hall. As part of the contract for Levelling Up works, it had been ensured that social value had been included, meaning that the contractor would aim to employ as locally as possible. However, the contract for the Market Hall was of a specialist nature so there were limitations on the appointment of suitably qualified contractors and those that are employed by it. However, whilst the location of many sub-contractors were not based in the Borough, (almost all within the NW area) the very latest numbers showed 20 people working on the sites lived in the Borough/the local area.

The phase 2 contractor had also liaised with Accrington and Rossendale College to provide work-based experience for a number of their construction course students and employed 2 local people themselves.

Advertisement and Promotion of progress of the Town Centre Levelling Up Project

- A budget had been set for advertisement and promotion events but further ideas were invited for events. Events were not being distinguished for any particular part of the community but would be aimed at everyone. Organisations were encouraged to come forward to run events with the support of the Council. Grants were available through the Council annual event funding programme.

Compulsory Purchase of the Market Chambers

- The process of valuing a compulsory purchase order was explained at the meeting, including that national compensation guidance was used. The valuation was established by the Council's independent property consultants, CBRE. Valuations were for the properties, businesses and residential flats included within the properties. The process of compulsory purchase had not delayed the projects because this had not been used to acquire the buildings as there had been successful negotiations with owners and businesses to sell by agreement. However, the CPO process had been concluded to ensure that a small number of unregistered parcels of land were included within the land registration process to protect the Council against any future issues.

Parking

- Hyndburn Borough Council provides a number of free off street parking location in the Town Centre but Lancashire County Council (as the Highways Authority) was responsible for on-street parking and consequently, there decided parking time restrictions. The electric charging points were also the responsibility of Lancashire County Council and therefore, some of the issues previously raised would be raised with the County Council.

The Market Hall

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Traders who had previously had stalls on the Market would be given first choice to return to the Market Hall but additional market traders and food and beverage traders were actively being sought. It was envisaged that stalls would offer a variety of goods. Rental rates and start dates had not yet been set but a report would be submitted to the April Cabinet. It was reported that there were plans for a variety of food offerings and a bar at one end of the ground floor, with the remaining traditional market style traders at the other end.

It was anticipated that the main phase 2 construction works to the Market Hall would be complete late July followed by the fit out. Recruitment of traders had been planned to be progressed fully once rental rates had been set, allowing for leases to be signed before opening. This confirmation would then allow kitchen fit-outs to be tailored to the food style, although fit out would begin for general traders, this would be more generic. The aim was for this to be complete before the Market Hall re-opening in November.

Resolved

- 1) That the Executive Director (Environment) circulates the cost of the compulsory purchase process for the acquisition of the town centre properties in respect of the Levelling Up Projects, to all Members of the Special Overview & Scrutiny Committee: and**
- 2) That it be recommended that Cabinet set a deadline for the end of July 2026, for traders to confirm lease agreements on the Market Hall.**

Signed:.....

Date:

Chair of the meeting
At which the minutes were confirmed