



Morecambe Town Council

Morecambe Town Hall,
Marine Road
Morecambe
Lancashire
LA4 5AF

www.morecambe.gov.uk

Members of Morecambe Town Council

Cllr R Walsh - Chairman
Cllr G Knight - Vice Chairman

Cllr C Ainscough, Cllr J Ainscough, Cllr D Blacow, Cllr D Bottoms, Cllr L Bradbury, Cllr P Clarke, Cllr F Cooper, Cllr C Cozler, Cllr R Dennison, Cllr W Dixon, Cllr K Gee, Cllr P Hart, Cllr J Goodrich, Cllr J Hanson, Cllr C Kent, Cllr D Knight, Cllr J Livermore, Cllr M Pattison, Cllr J Pilling, Cllr J Rogerson, Cllr J Slater, Cllr M Stenneken, Cllr D Whitaker

Minutes of Morecambe Town Council's Full Council Meeting held at 7pm on the 20 March 2025 at Morecambe Town Hall, Marine Road, Morecambe, LA4 5AF.

Record of Attendance:

Councillors: Russell Walsh (Chairman), Geoff Knight (Vice Chairman), Martin Bottoms, Lee Bradbury, Trish Clarke, Claire Cozler, Roger Dennison, Wayne Dixon, John Goodrich, John Hanson, Clark Kent, Debbie Knight, John Livermore, Margaret Pattison, Jackie Rogerson, Jim Pilling, Jason Slater, David Whitaker, Christian Ainscough, Dan Blacow, Faye Cooper.

Officers: Luke Trevaskis, Peter Fisher, Joel Turner.

Press: Beyond Radio

Public: 1

Minute 2024/25 - 086 - Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance received from Cllrs K Gee, J Ainscough, P Hart, and M Stenneken.

The Council acknowledged an error in the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024 which omitted Cllr K Gee's record of attendance. It was confirmed by the Chief Officer that Cllr K Gee was indeed in attendance and the Council agreed to update the minutes.

The Council considered a request for approval of apologies for non-attendance at recent Council meetings from Cllr Keri Gee due to the birth of her child. In her request, Cllr Keri Gee noted that her last meeting attended was on 21 November, and formally requested that apologies be accepted for non-attendance from that date (21 November) until at least 1st May to focus on motherhood. Cllr Keri Gee indicated she anticipated returning to Council meetings from May 2025 onwards. The Council approved the apologies for non-attendance and accepted the reasons.

Minute 2024/25 - 087 - Declarations of Interest

Cllrs M Pattison, R Dennison, J Hanson, C Cozler, J Livermore and M Bottoms declared membership of Lancaster City Council.

Cllr M Bottoms declared cabinet membership of Lancaster City Council and indicated an interest in discussions about Items 5, 6, and 9 due to LCC commitments.

Cllr R Dennison declared an interest as Armed Forces Champion of Lancaster City Council (Agenda Item 8 - Grant Application)..

Minute 2024/25 - 088 - Minutes

The minutes of the last full council meeting were unanimously approved, removing Cllr J Livermore and Cllr D Whitaker from the attendance record.

Minute 2024/25 - 089 - Public Participation

A request to speak was received from City Councillor Cleet; however, this was declined due to the request not meeting the required notification procedures outlined in the Council's Standing Orders. The Chairman also made reference to previous concerns regarding the conduct of City Councillor Cleet towards the former Chairperson, Councillor Claire Cozler, noting behaviour that had been perceived as disrespectful both to Cllr Cozler and to the wider council chamber.

Minute 2024/25 - 090 - Match Day Parking

The Council agreed to explore appropriate measures to lobby or campaign against inappropriate parking on football matchdays, ensuring that residents' access to their properties, and their quality of life are protected.

While matchdays bring significant economic and cultural benefits to Morecambe, the associated parking issues are causing considerable disruption to local residents. Vehicles are frequently parked over driveways, blocking access to homes, damaging grass verges and pavements, and creating congestion on narrow residential streets. This not only causes frustration but also raises serious public safety concerns, particularly regarding emergency services access, which may be delayed due to obstructed roads.

Additionally, unsafe parking forces pedestrians - especially children, elderly residents, and those with mobility impairments - onto the road, increasing the risk of accidents. The increased traffic congestion and vehicle idling contribute to environmental damage, while the lack of proper parking management negatively impacts local businesses by limiting access for customers.

The Council agreed to work with relevant authorities, the football club, and local stakeholders to identify and implement practical solutions, such as increased enforcement, designated parking areas, traffic management measures, or alternative transport options. It was agreed a balanced approach is needed to maintain the positive impact of matchdays while ensuring that visitors park responsibly and that residents do not suffer undue disruption.

Minute 2024/25 - 091 - Planning Application 24/00116/FUL - Former Park Hotel

It was proposed by Cllr Joanne Ainscough, and seconded by Cllr Claire Cozler, to submitted a letter of support for this application. Following an accepted friendly amendment from Cllr Lee Bradbury to request conditions that protect the renovation of the Park Hotel, and that this is considered in conjunction with the new build properties, to ensure it is not solely the new build part of the project that is complete. The Council unanimously resolved to submit a letter of support for this application.

Minute 2024/25 - 092 - HMOs

The Council resolved to object to Planning Application 25/00212/FUL.

In order to enhance the future efficiency and responsiveness of responses to planning applications, the Council resolved to delegate future objections and representations to the Chief Officer for submission. This will ensure objections are lodged promptly, increasing their visibility on the City Council's planning portal, where they may support residents in raising their own legitimate concerns. Moreover, this proactive approach will safeguard the Town Council's ability to respond within statutory deadlines, preventing missed opportunities to represent our community's interests, should an application be received and require a response prior to the Council's next formal meeting date.

Minute 2024/25 - 093 - Devolution

The Council noted a recent letter from Jim McMahon OBE MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, to NALC reinforces the importance of parish and town councils in the devolution process. The letter states:

"This Government absolutely values the crucial role played by town and parish councils in local government. We know people value governance at the community scale. We want to see stronger community arrangements when reorganisation happens... We will also rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal local authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice."

"I expect local leaders to be seeking views from their MPs, as well as ensuring wider engagement with other local partners, stakeholders, residents, workforce representatives, and businesses. This should include parish and town councils."

At its January meeting, the Town Council took decisive action to ensure Morecambe's voice is heard in the ongoing discussions about local government reorganisation. The Council resolved to:

1. Conduct a Resident Survey (inviting Lancaster City Council to collaborate) to understand residents' priorities for localism and devolution.
2. Engage with our MP by formally expressing the Council's commitment to being actively involved in devolution discussions.
3. Initiate discussions with the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG), our MP, and NALC to advocate for Morecambe's role in devolution.

Progress to Date:

1. A letter has been sent to the MP.
2. Engagement with MHCLG and NALC has commenced, with meeting requests submitted.
3. The draft resident survey is on track for completion by the end of March, and an invitation to collaborate will be extended to Lancaster City Council.

Despite these proactive steps, higher tier authorities have yet to engage with Morecambe Town Council on devolution.

Internal strategy meetings with members have highlighted key concerns, particularly the City Council's structural deficit and any legacy debts that may come forward which could impact any future unitary authority.

This has raised pressing questions amongst members, including:

- If a new unitary authority is headquartered elsewhere in the county, how will Morecambe's interests be safeguarded?
- Could financial pressures lead to the sale of key assets, such as the Town Hall or the Platform, and could the proceeds of such sales be used to invest in areas outside of the Morecambe Town Council administrative boundary?
- Will critical decisions be made centrally without genuine local representation?

Members noted these are not just hypothetical risks - without early and proactive engagement, Morecambe could be left behind. Reorganisation should not result in the loss of identity or investment, but should create opportunities for a stronger, more effective system of local governance.

To be at the forefront of these changes, the Town Council agreed it must actively engage not only with Lancaster City Council but also with all potential decision-makers and leading figures shaping Morecambe's future.

It was noted that to date, the higher-tier authority has not provided clarity on how parish and town councils will be involved and members agreed we cannot afford to wait for an invitation.

Across the country, other districts are preparing for reorganisation, with councils like Fylde forming new parish councils to strengthen their position. Morecambe must not be left behind in ongoing conversations and the Town Council must ensure residents receive timely and accurate information.

Cllr C Ainscough indicated that change was coming whether people like it or not. He advised County colleagues don't understand what devolution means for them and Lancaster is not providing clarity locally.

Cllr G Knight acknowledged that currently Lancashire County Council and Lancaster City Council employees are in limbo. He noted that there is no strategic engagement with parish and town councils, and stated that we need to put the town first.

Cllr J Pilling echoed these sentiments, commending officers for trying to get information that doesn't seem to be forthcoming from any direction. Cllr Pilling raised concerns regarding the future of local community assets such as Morecambe Town Hall, the Platform, and the former Frontierland site. He also proposed that Morecambe Town Council should have a good case to apply for an asset of community transfer on the Town Hall.

Cllr C Cozler advised that local government reorganisation is affecting the job market as local people do not know how secure current vacant positions may be. She advised there needs to be an education campaign and that MTC should lead this if LCC does not. Cllr Cozler asked members to support the Town Council in navigating this space, as otherwise local jobs are on the line - local jobs that could be safeguarded with the Town Council's intervention.

Cllr R Walsh indicated residents were concerned about the danger that service will cease in future and there will be nobody to deliver them to standards the local community expect.

Cllr D Whitaker confirmed that clarity was needed on partnership with the City Council and that the City Council was not moving quickly enough to safeguard the interests of Morecambe. Cllr Whitaker agreed that the interests of MTC need to be at the forefront of regular discussions at LCC.

Cllr R Dennison indicated concerns regarding services being withdrawn or reduced and that it was commonplace in some areas such as Cheshire that parish and town councils undertake many of these services. Concern was raised by Cllr Dennison for those areas without such as parish or town council to support them in the future.

Cllr M Bottoms indicated that a letter has been signed by all fifteen leaders of District Councils in Lancashire to ask the Government for clarity, indicating that Lancaster City Council were also in the dark. Cllr Bottoms also indicated there could be significant job losses, and that the plan at Lancaster City Council is to ensure Morecambe Town Council will not get any assets as the City Council is not permitted by Government to undertake such actions prior to local government reorganisation.

The Council agreed all Recommended Actions:

1. Engagement with Key Decision-Makers: the Town Council agreed to formally invite local government leaders, officers, and politicians to discussions on devolution to ensure:
 - Transparency on how parish and town councils will be engaged.
 - An understanding of the potential risks and opportunities for Morecambe.
 - Meaningful resident involvement in shaping the town's future.
2. Advocacy with DLUHC and NALC: the Town Council agreed it must raise concerns about the lack of clarity regarding local governance post-reorganisation.
 - Not all parish and town councils are equipped for service delivery, but Morecambe Town Council is already leading the way as the only town council in the country providing district-wide services successfully.
 - MHCLG must recognise that parish and town councils prepared to take on greater responsibilities should be actively included in reorganisation discussions, not just consulted.
 - The Town Council should seek to work with the MHCLG to ensure that there can be future mechanisms for parish and town councils delivering services to receive direct government funding, or financial agreements via any new unitary structure.
 - Morecambe Town Council should position itself as a national case study for ultra-localism, ensuring the outcomes of reorganisation are meaningful and sustainable.

The Town Council agreed its role should be clear and it was resolved that we must lead this conversation. Members were resolute that no local authority can advocate better for Morecambe than Morecambe Town Council, and members agreed that if we do nothing, Morecambe could face reduced influence in future decision-making that could impact the town for years to come. Members acknowledged that if we act now, we can shape this process to benefit our residents and secure a fairer, more

effective local governance structure. Members agreed we must ensure that Morecambe's interests are protected and that local people receive the best possible outcome from these changes. It was accepted that we cannot afford to be passive observers - we must be proactive advocates for our community. Morecambe's voice should not just be heard, but acted upon.

Minute 2024/25 - 094 - Exclusion of Press and Public

The Council resolved that, in accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business, on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest by reason of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted or for other special reasons arising from the nature of that business or of the proceedings.

Minute 2024/25 - 095 - FSE 2025-26 Grant Application 006

The Council resolved to award a grant of £12,000.00 to Armed Forces Day.