

Minutes

Meeting name	Council
Date	Thursday, 27 February 2025
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray LE13 1GH

Present:

Chair Councillor T. Webster (Chair)

Councillors

J. Adcock	P. Allnatt
I. Atherton	S. Atherton
M. Brown	R. Browne
S. Butcher	S. Carter
R. Child	D. Chubb
M. Clay	H. Cliff
S. Cox	P. Cumbers
C. Evans	M. Glancy
M. Gordon	L. Higgins
S. Lumley	J. Mason
J. Orson	S. Orson
D. Pritchett	R. Sharp
A. Thwaites	

Officers

Chief Executive
 Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
 Assistant Director for Governance and Democracy (Monitoring Officer)
 Director for Corporate Services
 Director for Place and Prosperity
 Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer
 Democratic Services Officer (BG)

The Reverend Dr Mary Barr offered prayers.

Minute No.	Minute
CO62	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Freer and Hewson.</p>
CO63	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>Councillor Gordon clarified the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In relation to CO50, she clarified that at the meeting held on 12 February 2025 she had made an error when referring to CO46 of the meeting held on 5 December 2024 and that she would like to apologise to Council for the error that she had made. • In relation to CO51, Councillor Gordon clarified that her interest was because she is a tenant of a Council-owned property. <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2025 were confirmed.</p> <p>(For 24, Against 0, Abstentions 2)</p>
CO64	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>An other registrable interest in respect of Councillor J. Orson was noted as being on record for any matters which relate to the Leicestershire County Council.</p>
CO65	<p>MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>The Mayor stated that as it had only been two weeks since the last Council meeting, he had not been to many engagements and therefore he would cover these at the next Council meeting in March.</p> <p>The Mayor did take the opportunity to inform Members that the Melton Borough Council flag is being flown at half-mast in memory of and in respect for a previous serving Member and former Mayor, Mrs Barbara Hart, who passed away on Sunday (23 February 2025).</p> <p>The Mayor explained that Mrs Hart served as a Borough Councillor from 1974 to 1991 and was Mayor from 1988 to 1989. She also served as Chair of the Housing Committee from 1979 to 1982 and again from 1984 to 1987.</p> <p>Members were informed that the Council had received an email in from Mrs Hart's daughter, Dawn Carlile, who stated the following:</p> <p><i>“Thank you so much for sending me this information about flying the borough flag at half-mast. As a family we are very touched the Council have taken these steps and I know how much it would have meant to my mum. She loved her work at the Council and was committed to serving people of Bottesford and the Borough of Melton during her time as Councillor.”</i></p> <p>The Mayor then conveyed that Members’ thoughts are with Mrs Hart’s family and</p>

	<p>friends at this sad and difficult time.</p>
<p>CO66</p>	<p>LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS</p> <p>On the 13 February, the Leader chaired the Landlord Assurance Board. Other Councillors present were Margaret Glancy, Jim Adcock and Mike Brown. The Landlord Assurance Board was created before the Regulator's inspection last year and is not a requirement, but it is good practise. The Leader explained that now the Council are considered an exemplar of good practise. The Board provides a forum in which the Council's duties as a social landlord may be monitored by a cross-section of tenants, who have received training, volunteering as critical friends. It is also attended by an experienced external social housing provider as an additional point of reference. Some of the agenda is a bit formal in order to meet reporting standards but the meetings are friendly, informative and respectful. The Board does not discuss individual cases but are open about trends and aspirations. So far it is clear that for the most part the tenant representatives are pushing at an open door and their contributions are greatly valued because they are based on lived experience which enable the Council to focus better on key priorities. On 26 February, the Leader attended a routine follow up meeting with members of the inspection team. Having listened very carefully to everything the inspection team shared with the Council, it is clear that the Board is an important part of the Council's continuous improvement programme, and that Melton is doing well and is on target.</p> <p>On 18 February, the Leader met with the Police and Crime Commissioner. They discussed an open letter sent by the PCC on Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation and established a large measure of agreement, including his critique of the County Council's approach to this profound change. They also took the opportunity to discuss other issues of mutual concern.</p> <p>Council was informed that on the 19 February, he had a routine meeting with representatives of the Town Estate and as part of the agenda, he was able to explain the general picture on Devolution and Local Government Reform.</p> <p>The Leader informed Council that on 20 February he attended the Barkstone, Plunger and Redmile Parish Council meeting at their invitation and agreed to re-visit the area to follow up on various issues. He attended the meeting with County Councillor Bryan Lovegrove and Borough Councillor Chris Evans.</p> <p>Members were informed that on 20 February the Leader chaired a meeting of Leicestershire's district council leaders regarding Devolution and Local Government Reform (LGR). They discussed the assertions from the day before by the County Council Leader at their meeting and they unanimously rejected those assertions. The Leader noted that out of the seven leaders, two are Conservative, two Labour and three Liberal Democrat. Four of the district leaders are also County Councillors. In addition, there had been a further exchange of emails in which they have re-stated their willingness to meet with the County Council, Rutland County</p>

Council and Leicester City Council and a meeting will now be held on the 6 March, 4pm at County Hall. The Leader also informed Council that the government minister leading on LGR has invited the seven district leaders to a meeting early in March. That is before the requirement to submit an interim plan on the 21 March.

Members were informed that on 24 February, the Leader stood in for the Mayor when he attended a celebration and thanks evening for the Borough's voluntary organisations, which contribute in so many different ways to life in the community. The Leader thanked Officers for their hard work in setting up and running the event.

The Leader reminded Members that as part of the UKSPF programme, the Council extended the food hub provision from the town into the parishes. In doing so the Council have linked in with some existing voluntary action but also created new opportunities. It was explained that this is growing into other forms of assistance and mutual help. The food hub volunteers were well represented at the celebration and thanks evening and the Leader was delighted to listen to their accounts and to reflect with them on ideas for the future.

The Leader explained to Members the recent activity around the reversion of a temporary traffic order for loading restrictions in the centre of Melton Mowbray. The existing arrangements were put in place during 2020, as part of a series of measures to support the town centre during the pandemic and permitted the loading and unloading period in the pedestrian zone to be extended by one hour. The removal of that one-hour extension five years later caused great consternation among the Business Improvement District (BID), the Town Estate and the street traders, who considered not trading in Melton Mowbray at all. Members were informed that, as part of a partnership approach, the Council applied for a 12-month temporary traffic regulation order to effectively retain the one-hour extension and that this would take effect from the 11 March. In the interim Leicestershire County Council, the Highways Authority, has facilitated an emergency temporary traffic regulation order, so loading/unloading will continue to operate for the extra hour. Following engagement with market traders and town centre businesses through both the Town Estate and the BID, the Council is committed to working with partners to develop a permanent solution. The Council will support a consultation on changing the loading times in line with local business needs, whilst balancing the need to keep the High Street area safe for users and visitors alike.

The Leader referred to an article that appeared in the Melton Times the previous week written by the local MP, Edward Agar. In it he twice referenced the Leader's friend and colleague Matthew O'Callaghan with praise. Describing him as, "long a doughty champion of Melton to whom we all owe gratitude." The Leader asserted his agreement with the article.

CO67

PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No questions from the public were received.

CO68	<p>QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS</p> <p>No questions from Members were received.</p>
CO69	<p>MOTIONS ON NOTICE</p> <p>No motions on notice were received.</p>
CO70	<p>COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26</p> <p>The Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance, Property and Resources, Councillor Cox, introduced the Council Tax Setting 2025/26 report and moved the recommendations. The Leader, Councillor Allnatt, seconded the motion.</p> <p>No comments were raised.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>Council noted the calculations and sets the Council Tax for the year 2025/26, made in accordance with the requirement set out in the Local Government Finance Act 1992.</p> <p>The above resolution was considered through a recorded vote as follows:</p> <p>FOR THE MOTION (17) Adcock, Allnatt, Brown, Butcher, Carter, Clay, Cliff, Cox, Cumbers, Evans, Glancy, Gordon, Higgins, Lumley, Mason, Sharp, Thwaites</p> <p>AGAINST THE MOTION (0)</p> <p>ABSTAINING FROM THE MOTION (9) I Atherton, S Atherton, Browne, Child, Chubb, J Orson, S Orson, Pritchett, Webster</p>
CO71	<p>DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER</p> <p>The Leader, Councillor Allnatt, introduced the Devolution White Paper report and moved the recommendation. Councillor Glancy seconded the motion.</p> <p>In introducing the report, the Leader outlined events so far and explained to Members that the District and Borough Council Leaders' and Rutland Council Leader's preference is for three unitary authorities covering Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. One authority for the north of Leicestershire including Rutland, one for the south of Leicestershire and the third covering the city of Leicester.</p> <p>The Leader of the Opposition, Councillor Browne, stated that this is the beginning of a process and that his view was that change is required, as Councils have struggled over the last 20 years. He added that Members needed a say before a decision is taken. He proposed the following amendment. Councillor J. Orson seconded the proposed amendment.</p>

- 1) *That Council requests the Leader to work together with all partners to secure the best structure of Local Government for the residents of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and report on progress at each Council meeting until submission is made of final proposals in November.*
- 2) *That as part of that regular update, the Leader provides Members of Melton Borough Council with details of costings, and commissioning of works with outside agencies to support the development of the Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation.*
- 3) *That the Council requests the Leader to engage with all partners including Leicestershire County Council, County NHS Bodies, Police, Fire Service, Integrated Care Board and other key statutory stakeholders as part of developing the Council's preferred option.*
- 4) *That before any final proposal is submitted to Government in November 2025, setting out Melton Borough Council's preferred option, that a report will be submitted to Full Council detailing the full benefits and weaknesses considered in relation to this, and compared against those options which have been rejected, and that Council will have an opportunity to consider, debate and give its view on this.*

The meeting adjourned to allow legal advice to be provided. When the meeting reconvened, the proposer and seconder of the original motion accepted the amendment into the motion.

Councillor Lumley proposed the following amended. Councillor Higgins seconded the motion.

Thanks the Leader for all his work on devolution and local government reform and thanks him for circulating information when it becomes available. Acknowledges that there are bound to be differences of opinion but Council has complete trust in the Leader to represent the best interests of Melton Borough in a fair and balanced way. Welcomes the broader engagement envisaged with the public and stakeholders over the coming months.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Higgins stated that a unitary form of local government is probably the right way to go but that the local must be kept in local government.

The proposer and seconder of the original motion accepted the amendment into the motion.

During the debate the following points were raised:

- There was concern expressed over the potential changes to standards

regime.

- A comment was made that it was likely that the ultimate solution could be imposed by central government and not determined locally.
- It was noted that with change on the way, there will be opportunities as well.
- It was recognised that there is a need to keep the local in local government and that the area can't lose its local and rural identity.
- Whilst there were concerns over adult social care, it was noted that there is a review of this nationally. In addition, Rutland County Council is currently an upper tier authority and so would have the expertise to transfer over to a new unitary authority.
- A comment was made that this won't be implemented immediately, although it will be imposed if an agreement can't be reached.

RESOLVED

That Council

- (1) Noted the current position and the Council's initial response to the Devolution White Paper.**
- (2) Noted the criteria and process set out by government for submitting and evaluating proposals for local government reorganisation, and the legal framework within which it operates.**
- (3) Provided views on devolution and local government reorganisation such that they can be incorporated into the development of initial ideas and interim plans.**
- (4) Requested the Leader to work together with all partners to secure the best structure of local government for the residents of Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, and report on progress at each Council meeting until submission is made of final proposals in November.**
- (5) Requested that the Leader provides Members of Melton Borough Council with details of costings, and commissioning of works with outside agencies to support the development of the Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation.**
- (6) Requested that the Leader engages with all partners including Leicestershire County Council, County NHS Bodies, Police, Fire Service, Integrated Care Board and other key statutory stakeholders as part of developing the Council's preferred option.**
- (7) Requested that before any final proposal is submitted to Government in November 2025, setting out Melton Borough Council's preferred option, a report would be submitted to Full Council detailing the full**

benefits and weaknesses considered in relation to this, and compared against those options which have been rejected, and that Council will have an opportunity to consider, debate and give its view on this.

- (8) Thanks the Leader for all his work on devolution and local government reform and thanks him for circulating information when it becomes available. Acknowledges that there are bound to be differences of opinion but Council has complete trust in the Leader to represent the best interests of Melton Borough in a fair and balanced way. Welcomes the broader engagement envisaged with the public and stakeholders over the coming months.**

(Unanimous)

At 7:11pm, the meeting was adjourned.

At 7:19pm, the meeting reconvened.

The meeting closed at: 7.36 pm

Mayor