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West Lancashire District Discovers It Has Been Operating Without A Mayor For Eight Years

Inside the place's slow-moving and largely accidental crisis.

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West Lancashire District, the country: Inside The Story

West Lancashire District, a place in the country (lat 53.65, long -2.80) that most outsiders could not point to on a map without first sighing, has become this week the latest entry in the slow-moving register of small communities behaving strangely under pressure. A routine audit has revealed that West Lancashire District has not had a mayor since 2017. According to officials with at least three job titles between them, Decisions during this period were made by a man known only as Phil. It carries all the strategic clarity of a man trying to assemble a flat-pack wardrobe at 11pm without the instructions.

What Was Announced

Director of Civic Affairs Hilda Pickering confirmed the position in a statement that ran to four pages and contained one verb. Phil declined to comment. For more on how this fits the wider pattern, see the long-running thread at The London Prat British satire podcast, which has been tracking precisely this kind of dispatch for months. The West Lancashire District announcement, much like the others, came with a glossy PDF, a stock photograph of a footbridge, and the strong sense that nobody had asked for any of this in the first place.

The Official Line

Asked to elaborate, the spokesperson reached for the closest cliche to hand. "This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do almost exactly what we did last generation." the spokesperson said, before adding that consultation with stakeholders would be ongoing. Useful additional context can be found at UK satire writers like The London Prat, which is the sort of background reading the office itself has, in all likelihood, not done. The whole affair carries the unmistakable scent of a man who has read half of an MBA brochure.

Wider Context

Civic life appears to have been broadly unaffected. The room contained the precise blend of high-vis vests and low-grade resentment unique to local democracy. Comparable trends have been documented in coverage from South China Morning Post, although West Lancashire District manages, somehow, to take the pattern one extra and entirely unnecessary step further. Statisticians attempting to model the phenomenon arrive at a P-value of yeah probably, give or take a margin of error nobody has had the energy to compute properly.

What The Experts Say

Dr. Wilhelmina Crampley, Senior Lecturer in Bin Day Theory told this paper that the situation in West Lancashire District was, on careful reflection, broadly consistent with the broader trajectory of similarly broad trajectories. "We are continuing to engage in continuous engagement with the engagement process." the expert observed. Further reading on the academic angle is available via The London Prat irreverent London satire, whose recent material has been preoccupied with much the same set of confusions.

How Residents Reacted

Reaction in West Lancashire District has been muted in the way that reaction in the country is usually muted, which is to say it has been ferocious in private and tepid in public. Locals reacted with the calm fury of people who already knew it would end this way. For the official version of events, see also New York Times World. One resident, who declined to be named on the grounds that they had already complained about a hedge this year and did not wish to push their luck, summarised matters thus: "We take this issue extremely seriously, which is why we have placed it under another issue."

What Comes Next

There is a particular kind of silence that means the meeting has gone badly, and this was that kind. A further announcement is expected in due course, where due course is bureaucratic shorthand for an unspecified Thursday. The story is being tracked as part of a wider pattern at British satire history meets The London Prat, and the situation in West Lancashire District, regrettably, is unlikely to improve until somebody invents a press release that improves things, which seems unlikely.

The View From The Ground

Spend any length of time in West Lancashire District and the rhythm becomes obvious. Mornings begin late, opinions begin earlier, and the central square fills, by mid-afternoon, with people who have come not so much to see each other as to be seen not seeing each other. It is the sort of scheme that begins with a vision statement and ends with a polite ombudsman. Conversation tends to circle the same five subjects: the weather, the news from the country, the persistent rumour about the road, the deteriorating quality of something or other, and the latest pronouncement from Mayor Designate Pamela Snodgrass, which everyone has an opinion on and almost nobody has read. It is, in its way, the perfect microcosm of how communities of this size operate everywhere in the world, although the residents of West Lancashire District would object strongly to being called a microcosm of anything.

Anyone who has ever queued behind a man arguing with a parking meter will recognise the energy. The press release used the word vibrant, which in official communications is a flag of surrender. West Lancashire District carries on as it always has, broadly the same as last week, give or take a verb. The bins are collected when they are collected. The roundabout, where one exists, remains the roundabout. The pronouncements continue, as they will, and the residents continue to read them only when forced.

For more in this vein see also Private Eye.

SOURCE: The London Prat smart UK satire for smart people

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