

COUNCIL FORUM MEETING
Thursday 23rd April 2015

PRESENT –*The Mayor Councillor A. Cottam (in the Chair), Councillors Akhtar H., Akhtar P., Ali, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Daley, Davies, Desai, Entwistle, Gee, Groves, Gunn, Hardman, Harling, Hollings, Humphrys, Hussain F., Hussain I., Hussain S., Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan M., Khan Z., Khonat H., Khonat S., Lee, Liddle, Mahmood, Maxfield, McFall, Mulla, Nuttall, O’Keeffe, Pearson, Rehman, Roberts, Rigby C, Shorrocks, Sidat, Slater Jacqueline, Smith D., Smith J., Surve, Talbot, Taylor, Walsh, Whalley, Whittle and Wright.*

RESOLUTIONS

71. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

72. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors T Evans, D Foster D, Foster K, Hollern, McKinlay, Patel, Rigby J, Riley, Slater John and Slater Julie.

73. Minutes of the Finance Council Meeting held on 2nd March 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the Finance Council Meeting held on 2nd March 2015 be approved as a correct record.

74. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

75. Mayoral Communications

The Mayor requested that a two minute silence be observed in memory of former Councillor and Mayor Nen Bramley Haworth.

Reference was made to the success of the recent Mayor’s Ball which had received positive feedback.

The Mayor referred to a recent engagement involving gifted children which he found very enlightening and recommended that future Mayors arrange a similar meeting.

76. Council Forum

One question had been received under procedure Rule 10 from Mr Brian Todd on behalf of the Older People's Forum and various groups:

To the Executive Member for Regeneration:

“Will my Council ensure that all new Mobility Scooter Owners in the Borough have an opportunity to receive the Highway Code for Motor Scooter Users. There are several suppliers of such equipment whom I should like to see required to give a copy of the Highway Code for Motor Scooter Users. There may well be private purchases of such scooters and I would ask my Council to ensure the all purchasers either through the trade or Private Purchasers are enabled to obtain copies of the Highway Code for Motor Scooter users in order to enhance road safety both for the scooter user and the general public.

I would further ask my Council to consider providing annual Road Safety Training for such Scooter Users as some users appear to be totally unaware of their responsibilities and safety issues involving other people. I see this as an important issue which is growing in importance as more and more of these scooters are being seen on our roads.”

The Executive Member for Regeneration, Councillor Maureen Bateson gave a response to the question and supplementary question arising.

77. Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

The Chief Executive advised that a Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

“This Council is concerned that the PFI contract at Blackburn Royal Hospital means that money is diverted for private profit. We believe that consideration should be given to “buying out” the PFI contract. The Council therefore asks the Acting Leader or his successor to convene a meeting of leaders of the appropriate organisation to examine the feasibility of such a move so that money can be put into front line services.”

*Proposed by Cllr Roy Davies
Seconded by Cllr Paul Browne*

Following a debate there then followed a vote on the Motion, which was lost.

RESOLVED– That the Motion be lost.

78. Revised Elected Ward Councillor Member Referral Scheme for Planning Applications

A report was submitted which informed the Council of proposals to revise the current Member Referral Scheme.

RESOLVED – That the revised referral scheme as set out in the “Proposal” section of the report presented to the 19th March Planning & Highways Committee be approved.

79. Streamlining The Planning Process - Scheme of Delegation to Officers

A report was submitted which sought agreement to change the scheme of delegation to officers in respect of planning applications.

RESOLVED – That the Council’s Constitution to be amended relating to the Scheme of Delegation and the powers of the Planning & Highways Committee as follows:

The one or more objection trigger is removed altogether from the Scheme of Delegation, so as to be determined by the Director of Regeneration, where the objections raised are solely not planning related considerations as listed in the “what’s material” & “what’s non-material” paper published with each Committee agenda.

All commercial applications proposed on development sites that are designated as industrial/business development land in the adopted Local Plan, and where the proposal will not override a material objection, to be determined by the Head of Regeneration (Planning & Transport).

80. The Mayoralty 2015/16

A report was submitted which contained recommendations relating to the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2015/16.

Members were reminded that the existing rotation agreement ended in 2014/15, and that Labour Mayors would be in office 2015/16 and 2016/17 as agreed at the Council Forum meeting on 25th April 2013, (Minute No.94 refers). A report on the appointment of the Mayor was submitted to Council Forum annually, and in the event that the proportionality of the Council changes going forward in a way that would affect the nomination of Mayor for a particular year, a report on this matter would be submitted for Council’s consideration.

For 2015/16, it was the turn of the Labour Group to nominate the Mayor, who in line with usual practice would usually be the serving Deputy Mayor, which in this case was Councillor Faryad Hussain. It was also the Labour Group’s turn to nominate the Deputy Mayor for 2015/16.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That in line with the usual practice of the Deputy Mayor in current year serving as Mayor the following year, Councillor Faryad Hussain be nominated to serve as Mayor in 2015/16; and
- 2) That the Councillor Hussain Akhtar be nominated to serve as the Deputy Mayor for 2015/16.

81. Policy & Corporate Resources Committee

The Chair of the Policy & Corporate Resources Committee presented an update report on the work of the Committee.

RESOLVED – That the report of the Policy & Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

82. Report of the Executive Members with Portfolios

Council Forum received and considered reports of the Leader and Executive Member with Portfolios. These were considered as follows:

The Leader, Regeneration, Resources, Schools and Education, Health & Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Environment, Leisure Culture and Young People and Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services.

In moving his report, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan, made reference to the success of the Your Call initiative, that the thanks be passed to the former Leader of the Council, Councillor Kate Hollern, volunteers, Members and Officers who made the Your Call initiative so successful.

Councillor Frank Connor made particular reference to the excellent work being carried out by staff in terms of improved outcomes for Looked after Children.

Councillor Jan-Virmani thanked officers for their work in prosecutions relating to Trading Standards, Housing Standards and Selective Licensing.

RESOLVED – that the reports of the Leader, Regeneration, Resources, Schools and Education, Health & Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Environment, Leisure Culture and Young People and Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services be noted.

83. Constitution Update

Members were advised that the Constitution had been updated following changes in organisational structure previously noted and agreed, statutory changes, changes to the delegations, and to reflect recommendations from

the Planning and Highways Committee, and the Standards Committee during 2014/15.

Since the last constitutional update there have been some changes, including to the Council's organisational structure requiring updates to chief officer portfolio responsibilities.

The Planning and Highways Committee during 2014-15 had reviewed the delegations to officers in respect of planning applications and the Members' Referral Scheme and those changes were incorporated into the revised Constitution.

The Standards Committee had also reviewed the Members Code of Conduct and the Arrangements for handling Complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members. The recommendations of the Standards Committee were also incorporated in the revised Constitution.

Finally the Constitution included the requirements brought in by the Local Authorities (Standing Orders) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2015 as regards the dismissal of the Head of Paid Services, the Monitoring Officer and the Chief Financial Officer.

RESOLVED – That the changes to the Constitution be approved as below:

Amendments made to the Constitution to reflect the resolutions/decisions made at full Council since April 2014:

- a) Amendments made to the Constitution to reflect changes to the senior management structure, the delegations and legislative changes;
and
- b) to reflect the recommendations made by the Planning and Highways Committee and the Standards Committee during 2014/15.

84. Questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 22

The following questions had been received under Procedure Rule 11:

From Councillor D Foster to the Executive Member for Resources:

- 1 *What was the cost of providing tablet and ancillary equipment including software to Members and what percentage have been in for repair?*

From Councillor D Foster to the Executive Member for Leisure & Culture:

- 2 *What steps are being taken to ensure that gym equipment at Darwen Leisure Centre is being fully maintained?*

From Councillor D Foster to the Executive Member for Regeneration:

3 Following the resignation of 3 members of the Darwen Town Centre Partnership Board is the Executive Member satisfied it is fit for purpose?

In the absence of Councillor David Foster, Councillor Roy Davies asked the questions.

The Executive Member for Resources, Leisure & Culture & Regeneration gave responses to the questions and supplementary questions arising.

At this point of the meeting, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan expressed his best wishes to Councillor David Foster who had been taken ill shortly before the meeting. Councillor Khan also wished all Councillors who were up for election the best of luck and thanked Councillor Hanif Khonat for his four year contribution to the Council and the Shear Brow Ward. Councillor Khan made particular reference to the excellent service of the former Leader of the Council, Councillor Kate Hollern during the last 20 years and he wished her all the best for the future, including the forthcoming General Election.

Councillor Khan also expressed his gratitude for the work of retiring Mr Jack Straw who had represented Blackburn for the past 36 years with distinction, and passed on best wishes for the future.

Reference was also made that it would be the last Council Forum Meeting, that the Mayor would Chair, and Councillor Khan thanked the Mayor for this professional and fair approach during his Mayoral Year.

Councillor Hanif Khonat returned the thanks expressed by Councillor Khan, and Councillors Michael Lee and Paul Browne echoed Councillors Khan's comments regarding the Mayor.

Signed at a meeting of the council
on the day of
(being) the next ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR