

COUNCIL FORUM
Thursday, 21st April 2016

PRESENT – *The Mayor, Councillor F Hussain (in the Chair), Councillors H. Akhtar, P. Akhtar, Ali, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Entwistle, Evans, D. Foster, K. Foster, Gee, Groves, Hardman, Harling, Hollings, Humphrys, I. Hussain, S. Hussain, Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, M. Khan, Z. Khan, S. Khonat, Liddle, A. Mahmood, Q. Mahmood, Maxfield, McFall, McKinlay, Nuttall, Oates, O’Keeffe, Patel, Colin Rigby., Jean Rigby., Riley, Roberts, Shorrocks, Sidat, Jacqueline Slater, John Slater, Julie Slater, D. Smith, J. Smith, Surve, Talbot, Tapp, Taylor, Vali, Whalley, and Wright.*

RESOLUTIONS

79. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

80. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Desai, Gunn, Lee, Mulla, Pearson, Rehman, and Whittle.

81. Minutes of the Finance Council meeting held on 29th February 2016

The minutes of the Finance Council meeting held on 29th February 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

82. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations were received.

83. Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated Members on recent events and activities including:

The Mayors Ball, which had raised a good amount of money, for which the Mayor thanked all who attended and helped out.

Reference was made to the ceremony held on March 14th which marked Commonwealth Day in the Borough. Additionally Council were advised that a German exchange trip with St Wilfred’s school and a “Breaking Boundaries” event had formed part of his busy itinerary.

In conclusion the Mayor thanked all Members for their continued support throughout the year, especially Councillors Paul Browne, Adbul Rehman, Tom Evans and Ron O’Keeffe, for whom this would be their last meeting.

84. Questions from members of the public received under Procedure Rule 10.

Council were advised that no questions had been received from the public.

85. Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

Council Forum was advised that one Notice of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12, as follows:

This Council notes the recent announcement by the Conservative government that all schools will be forced to become academies, or have plans to do so, by 2020.

This Council regrets that local people will not be consulted and though the government claims to be a supporter of localism this decision is being taken out of the hands of local people.

This Council opposes the move to remove any requirement to have parents on the governing body of schools so that they will no longer be accountable to the local community.

We resolve to ask the Chief Executive to write to our two local MPs asking them to oppose any legislation that will force schools to become academies.

The Motion was Moved by Councillor David Foster and Seconded by Councillor Karimeh Foster who reserved the right to speak.

In Moving the Motion Councillor Foster made reference to asset stripping of government community schools, the academisation of Darwen Vale, and the last parliamentary report on Education which offered no substantial evidence that Academy status improved a schools performance.

At this point Councillor Harling Moved an amendment to the Motions which was Seconded by Councillor John Roberts, which read as follows:

“Amendment to CF Motion 21st April 2016 (Insert bold text and delete rest)

This Council notes the recent announcement by the Conservative government that all schools will be forced to become academies, or have plans to do so by 2020.

*This Council opposes the move to remove any requirement to have parents **or Local Authority representatives** on the governing body of schools so that they will no longer be accountable to the local community.*

This Council does not agree that forced conversion to academies is the only way to improve schools. Research by the Education Select Committee has shown that there is not sufficient evidence to prove that academies improve the achievements of pupils when compared to maintained schools.

This Council has an excellent record of improving schools without the need for them to become an academy. The Government's proposals ignore the various challenges schools presently face such as a recruitment crisis, reductions in their budgets and increases in class sizes. Further, this Council believes that these proposals are part of the government's plan to privatise education in this country, and to further reduce the ability of local government to represent their local communities.

This Council opposes the "asset stripping" proposed by the government that will pass ownership of school land to the Secretary of State. Removing local control over our locally owned land assets is the same as theft by central government.

Recent research has shown that Academies have a track record of selective admissions with more able pupils being accepted in place of less able or disadvantaged children.

This Council believes that local schools should have choice to stay as a maintained school if that is what they wish.

This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to all the local MPs in Lancashire and the Leaders of the adjacent Upper Tier Councils outlining this Council's opposition to the proposals, and asking them to oppose any legislation that will force schools to become academies.

This Council further instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State to outline the Council's objections to the proposals".

Speaking to the Amendment Councillor Harling welcomed the original Motion but did not feel it went far enough.

There followed a brief discussion on the motion at the end of which a Named Vote was requested on the amendment to the Motion.

For

Councillors: Akhtar (H), Akhtar (P), Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Entwistle, Evans, Foster (D), Foster (K), Groves, Gunn, Harling, Hollings, Humphrys, Hussain (F), Hussain (I), Hussain (S), Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan (M), Khan (Z), Khonat (S), Liddle, Mahmood (A), Mahmood (Q), Maxfield, McFall, Nuttall, Oates, O'Keeffe, Patel, Riley, Roberts, Shorrock, Sidat, Smith (D), Smith (J), Surve, Talbot, Taylor, Vali, Whalley, Wright.

Against

Councillors: None.

Abstention

Councillors: Ali, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Gee, Hardman, Rigby (C), Rigby (J), Slater (Ja), Slater (Jo), Slater (Ju), Tapp.

(Councillor Rehman was not present at the time of the vote)

RESOLVED – The amendment to the Motion be carried.

Further to which a vote then took place on the substantive Motion which was carried.

RESOLVED –

That the Council notes the recent announcement by the Conservative government that all schools will be forced to become academies, or have plans to do so by 2020.

This Council opposes the move to remove any requirement to have parents or Local Authority representatives on the governing body of schools so that they will no longer be accountable to the local community.

This Council does not agree that forced conversion to academies is the only way to improve schools. Research by the Education Select Committee has shown that there is not sufficient evidence to prove that academies improve the achievements of pupils when compared to maintained schools.

This Council has an excellent record of improving schools without the need for them to become an academy. The Government's proposals ignore the various challenges schools presently face such as a recruitment crisis, reductions in their budgets and increases in class sizes. Further, this Council believes that these proposals are part of the government's plan to privatise education in this country, and to further reduce the ability of local government to represent their local communities.

This Council opposes the "asset stripping" proposed by the government that will pass ownership of school land to the Secretary of State. Removing local control over our locally owned land assets is the same as theft by central government.

Recent research has shown that Academies have a track record of selective admissions with more able pupils being accepted in place of less able or disadvantaged children.

This Council believes that local schools should have choice to stay as a maintained school if that is what they wish.

This Council instructs the Chief Executive to write to all the local MPs in Lancashire and the Leaders of the adjacent Upper Tier Councils outlining this Council's opposition to the proposals, and asking them to oppose any legislation that will force schools to become academies.

This Council further instructs the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State to outline the Council's objections to the proposals".

86. Lancashire Combined Authority Proposals

Council considered a report and recommendations which updated members on the progress on the Lancashire Combined Authority proposals, outlined the response to the public consultation exercise and sought agreement for the Council to become a constituent member of a Combined Authority for Lancashire.

RESOLVED – that;

1. The contents of the report be noted
2. The response to the public consultation on the Combined Authority proposals be noted
3. The Council agree to become a constituent member of a Lancashire Combined Authority and submit proposals to do so to the Secretary of State
4. In the interim period, the Council agree to form a shadow Lancashire Combined Authority
5. Any future proposals for a devolution deal with the Government be brought back to Council for agreement

87. Mayoralty 2016/17

Council considered a report on the appointment to the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for 2016/17. Members were reminded by the Leader of the Council that Annual Council formally appoint Members of the Council to the office of Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the forthcoming Municipal year. The Member appointed to the position of Deputy Mayor was normally appointed to the office of Mayor in the following year.

Reference was made to the agreement made at the Council Forum meeting on 25th April 2013, that Labour Mayors would be office in 2015/16 and 2016/17 (Minute No.94 refers). However it was stressed that in the event that the proportionality of the Council changed 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.

As such Council were advised that 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 that case was Councillor Hussain Akhtar. It was also recommended that Council Forum agree the nomination of Deputy Mayor for 2016/17.

The Leader of the Council nominated Councillor Colin Rigby OBE as Deputy Mayor for 2016, which was duly seconded by Councillor Derek Hardman.

RESOLVED –

1. That in line with the usual practice of the Deputy Mayor in current year serving as Mayor the following year, Councillor Hussain Akhtar be nominated to serve as Mayor in 2016/17; and
2. That the Council Forum nominated Councillor Colin Rigby OBE, the Deputy Mayor for 2016/17.

88. Policy and Corporate Resources

The Chair of the Policy and Corporate Resources Committee presented an updated report on the work of the Committee.

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

89. Reports of 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 and Adult Social Care, Children's Services. Environment, Leisure, Culture and Young People, Neighbourhoods Housing and Customer Services.

The Leader of the Council referred to Healthier Lancashire / Pennine Lancashire transformation. Giving updates on image and branding, Your Call, Your Call good neighbour awards and the upcoming elections.

The Executive Member for Regeneration responded to several questions relating to Darwen Markets ranging from Executive Board Decisions, consultations, petitions, and leaflets with conflicting comments.

Councillor Foster requested to Move a Motion under Standing Order 13D. ((d) to refer something to an appropriate body or individual) Following some discussion, the Mayor, using his discretion, granted the request.

The Motion read as follows:

This Council resolves that the issue of the Darwen Three Day Market be referred to the appropriate Scrutiny Committee and defer any decision of the Executive Board.

Several Members questioned the legitimacy of the Motion and referred to due process of the Council and the opportunity to request a Call In once the decision had been made.

Following a lengthy discussion there was a Move to the Vote requested by Councillor Riley, duly seconded by Councillor Kay.

Councillor Karimeh Foster requested a Named Vote, duly seconded by Councillor John Slater.

Voting was as follows:

For

Councillors: Ali, Browne, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Foster (D), Foster (K), Gee, Hardman, O'Keeffe, Lee, Pearson, Rigby Colin, Rigby Jean, Slater (Ja), Slater (Jo), Slater (Ju), Tapp.

Against

Councillors: Akhtar (H), Akhtar (P), Bateson, Brookfield, Casey, Entwistle, Evans, Groves, Harling, Hollings, Humphrys, Hussain (I), Hussain (S), Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan (M), Khonat (S), Liddle, Mahmood (A), Mahmood (Q), Maxfield, McFall, MCKinlay, Nuttall, Oates, Patel, Riley, Roberts, Shorrocks, Sidat, Smith (D), Smith (J), Surve, Talbot, Taylor, Vali, Whalley, Wright.

Abstention

Councillors: Hussain F., (The Mayor).

Councillor Khan (Z), was not present during the vote.

RESOLVED –

That the Motion be lost.

(At 8:39pm the Deputy Mayor took the Chair).

The Executive Members for Regeneration, Schools and Education, Childrens Services, Environment, Culture Leisure and Young People responded to questions on recycling, Care Leavers Awards, the Outstanding Ofsted for Newfield School, Gold Beez Card usage, potholes, and the skate park facility.

90. Questions received under Procedure Rule 11

Council were advised that two questions had been received under Procedure Rule 11 as follows:

From Councillor David Foster to the Executive Member for Regeneration, Councillor Phil Riley:

- 1. Can the Executive Member explain why the Freckleton St extension was £1.2 million over budget?*
- 2. When will the options report on Darwen Market and associated buildings be published?*

Councillor Foster received a response from the Executive Member for Regeneration to both questions.

Prior to the conclusion of the meeting the Leader of the Council wished to pay tribute to the Members who had chosen not to stand for re-election, explaining that between 5 councillors there were over 90 years of service which was to be commended as a fantastic achievement. Councillor Paul Browne, Councillor Alan Cottam, Councillor Tom Evans, Councillor Ron O`Keeffe and Councillor Abdul Rehman each of those present responding accordingly.

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

MAYOR