

COUNCIL FORUM MEETING
Thursday 30th January 2014

PRESENT –*The Mayor Councillor S. Mulla (in the Chair), Councillors Akhtar, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Cottam, Davies, Entwistle, Evans, Foster D., Foster K., Gee, Groves, Hardman, Harling, Hollern, Hollings, Hussain I., Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan M., Khonat S., Lee, Liddle, Mahmood, Maxfield, McFall, Nuttall, O’Keeffe, Pearson D., Pearson J., Rehman, Rigby C., Rigby J., Riley, Shorrocks, Sidat, Slater Jacqueline, Slater John, Slater Julie, Smith D., Smith J., Solkar, Surve, Talbot, Tapp, Taylor, Thayne, Walsh C., Whalley and Wright.*

RESOLUTIONS

51. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read of the notice convening the meeting.

52. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Connor, Daley, Desai, Hirst, Humphrys, Hussain F., Hussain S., Khan Z., Khonat H., Oldfield, Patel and Walsh D.

53. Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 5th December 2013

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on 5th December 2013 be approved as a correct record.

54. Declarations of interest

Council were advised that there had been a significant number of declarations of interest received by the Monitoring Officer in relation to agenda item 9 (Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15). Accordingly, in order to facilitate an effective discharge of the democratic process, the Monitoring Officer had granted a dispensation to all Council Members, to allow them to participate in discussions and vote on the agenda item 9 only. This would allow all Members including those Members who may be affected by any decision to openly participate in the discussion and vote on agenda item 9.

No other Declarations of Interest were received.

55. Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated the meeting on a number of events he had recently attended with his Mayoresses including a number of Carol Services and Hospital visits.

Particular reference was made to visits to Newfield School to distribute Christmas presents.

The Mayor also updated the meeting on the recent New Years Honours awarded to Councillor Salim Sidat MBE and Nick Kennedy MBE.

Reference was made to the Holocaust Memorial Day event on 26th January, and the Mayor requested that Councillors support the next event in January 2015.

The Mayor also invited Councillors to attend the Annual Memorial Day Event on 2nd March 2014 at Corporation Park.

The Mayor also asked Council to remember Councillors Dorothy Walsh and Zamir Khan who are currently in hospital along with Councillor Jim Hirst who was also unwell.

Finally, the Mayor referred to the forthcoming visit to be made by the Queen to the Borough on Maundy Thursday 17th April.

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

Council were advised that no questions had been submitted by members of the public under Procedure Rule 10.

At this point of the meeting, the Mayor advised Councillor Bateson needed to bring forward the agenda item on the East Lancashire Highways and Transport in order that she could leave the meeting after this item due to family illness.

57. East Lancashire Highways and Transport Plan

Approval was sought from the Council Forum to formally approve the publication of the joint Highways and Transport Masterplan for East Lancashire.

The East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan had been produced to inform and determine future transport investment priorities for the East Lancashire geographic area which covered the Local Transport Authority areas of Lancashire County Council and Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

A six week consultation on the draft East Lancashire Highways and Transport Masterplan began on 23rd October 2013 and saw a range of responses from key stakeholders, including district, town and parish council, PLACE, and local MP's. the comments received would be summarised within an appendix to the published Masterplan.

The Joint Masterplan would be published by Lancashire County Council following sign off and approval by their Cabinet Committee which would meet on 6th February 2014.

RESOLVED – That the publication of the Highways and Transport Masterplan for East Lancashire be approved.

58. To consider motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

Council were advised that one Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12:

This Council notes the recent upset over the enforced conversion of Darwen Vale School to an Academy.

This Council notes that schools now have the power to convert to Academies with a minimum of consultation.

This Council believes that parents should have the final say on the status of their children's school and on the preferred sponsor of any academy.

This Council calls on any school consulting on whether or not to become an Academy and on the preferred sponsor - whether through choice or by direction - to hold a ballot of parents.

Proposed by: Cllr Dave Harling
Seconded by: Cllr Pete Hollings

Councillor David Foster moved an amendment to the Motion:

"This Council requests that the Leader of the Council write to the Chair of Darwen Vale High School's Interim Executive Board and asks that the Board ensures that a body independent of the Aldridge Foundation undertake the consultation.

It further requests that the Executive Member for Schools and Education prepares a submission to the consultation presenting the case for an alternative sponsor"

The amendment to the Motion was seconded by Councillor Thayne.

Following debate on the amended motion, Councillor Harling advised that he was happy to accept the first paragraph of the amendment, as an addition to his original motion and there followed a vote on the amended motion.

The amendment was carried.

There then followed a vote on the second paragraph of Councillors Foster's amendment which was lost.

There then followed a vote on the Substantive Motion which now read as follows.

This Council notes the recent upset over the enforced conversion of Darwen Vale School to an Academy.

This Council notes that schools now have the power to convert to Academies with a minimum of consultation.

This Council believes that parents should have the final say on the status of their children's school and on the preferred sponsor of any academy.

This Council calls on any school consulting on whether or not to become an Academy and on the preferred sponsor - whether through choice or by direction - to hold a ballot of parents.

This Council requests that the Leader of the Council write to the Chair of Darwen Vale High School's Interim Executive Board and asks that the Board ensures that a body independent of the Aldridge Foundation undertake the consultation.

The vote was carried.

RESOLVED - That the Motion be carried as amended.

59. Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2014/15

Council received a report containing recommendations relating to the adoption of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2014/15.

Council was advised that in preparation of the budget for 2014/15 the Council was obliged to formally continue the scheme already agreed or make any adjustments prior to 1st April 2014. The report sought to fulfil the necessary legal requirements and confirms Blackburn with Darwen BC's Council Tax Support scheme for 2014/15.

The full scheme details were also detailed in Appendix A.

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report are noted;
- b) That the localised Council Tax Scheme detailed in Appendix A be approved and implemented from 1st April 2014.
- c) That the Exceptional Hardship Policy detailed in Appendix B be approved and implemented from 1st April 2014; and

- d) That the subsequent alteration to the Council Tax Support Scheme that is required following legislative changes to National Welfare Schemes be delegated to the Director of Finance in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources.

60. Flood Awareness Campaign within Blackburn with Darwen

A report was submitted which sought to raise awareness of a proposed Media campaign to promote flood awareness to Residents and Business within Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council.

Under the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA2004), the Council has a number of duties, one of which is a duty to “warn and inform” members of the Community about potential and real risks they may face within their community. In light of the recent and ongoing National flooding (Cornwall, Kent etc.), it was thought timely to promote Community Resilience and the “be prepared” message to the Community to help raise awareness of issues around flooding.

The Press and Communications team were preparing a media campaign to promote flood awareness across the Borough to ensure that Blackburn with Darwen residents knew what to do if flooding is imminent, or forecast to occur; with advice from the Environment Agency and support from the Council. It would appear that residents in Cornwall residents (as one example) were not as prepared as they could be for the floods of December 2013 – January 2014 (ongoing).

The media campaign would include all other service area information/work relating to flood awareness to ensure that it was a co-ordinated message of Council activity and Community Resilience. Current Council flood awareness included Flood Watch, Hollin Bridge Street drop in and Corporate Management Exercise.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted. .

61. Policy and Corporate Resources Committee

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

RESOLVED -

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

62. Reports of Executive Members with Portfolios

Council Forum reviewed and considered reports of the Leader and Executive Members with portfolios. These were considered as follows:

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

In moving his report, the Executive Member for Schools and Education reported that the number of 5 A*-C results had improved nationally to 59.1 % which narrowed the difference to 0.9% between local and national figures demonstrating steady improvements.

The Lead Member for Children's Services referred to the huge success of the Adoption and Fostering recruitment campaign.

The Executive Member for Environment received commendations from other Members on the success of the Scrap Metal Dealers Licensing process.

RESOLVED -

That the reports from the Leader and the Executive Members for Schools and Education; Health and Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Environment, Leisure, Culture and Young People, Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services, Regeneration, and Resources be noted.

63. To Consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

The Chief Executive announced that three questions had been received from Councillor David Foster under Procedure Rule 11 as follows:

(Questions 1-3 from Councillor David Foster)

1) To the Executive Member for Regeneration

Has the Executive Member read the British Academy report 'If you could do one thing, nine local actions to reduce health inequalities'?

2) To the Executive Member for Resources

Following on from comments made by the Leader of the Council at January's Executive Board Meeting, what plans are being made to discontinue the use of 0845 numbers for Council services?

3) To the Leader of the Council

Since 2010/11 there has been a more than 50% reduction in the cost of Officers attending conferences. Why has there not been a similar percentage reduction on Councillors attending conferences?

Responses to the questions and supplementary arising were provided by the Leader, Executive Member for Resources and Lead Member for Regeneration (Councillor Tom Evans).

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

MAYOR

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