

COUNCIL FORUM MEETING
Thursday 28th January 2016

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

RESOLUTIONS

56. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

57. Freedom of the Borough

The Mayor, Councillor Faryad Hussain, called upon the Leader of the Borough Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan OBE to introduce Mr Jack Straw to the meeting. The Mayor read out the following declaration which confirmed the decision of Council Forum on 1st October 2015 to admit Mr Straw as a Freeman of the Borough:

“That this Council recognising the eminent service The Right Honourable Jack Straw has rendered to the townspeople of the Borough, merits the highest honour which it is in their power to bestow, does hereby, in pursuance of the Local Government Act, 1972, admit The Right Honourable Jack Straw to be an Honorary Freeman of the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen”.

The Mayor then called upon the Leader of the Council to lead the tributes to Mr Straw, followed by the Leader of the Main Opposition Group. Following which The Mayor, on behalf of the Council, congratulated the new Freeman and presented him with a silver casket and a copy of the resolution of admission in illuminated writing on vellum.

The new Freeman signed the Roll of Honorary Freemen and responded, thanking the Council and Councillors for their continued work in both towns; emphasising that he had always recognised his duty to represent the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen as a whole. Mr Straw led the Council through a fond reminiscence of his political life; from September 1959; delivering leaflets under his mother’s instruction, to 3rd May 1977 and being selected as the Member of Parliament for Blackburn. He made specific reference to 2 MPs from both sides of the chamber: Barbara Castle, his

predecessor and mentor, and Sir Edward Gardner who helped clarify his thinking in his early years. Mr Straw also expressed his gratitude to both the current Chief Executive (Harry Catherall) and his predecessors Graham Burgess and Phil Watson CBE.

Mr Straw mentioned that throughout his career he had enthused how great a place Blackburn with Darwen is; with the Borough showing great imagination in its successful shopping mall, Cathedral Quarter, university campus and from the public and private investment it attracts. Adding that he felt privileged to be the new Chair of the Youth Zone, which helps over 1000 youngsters each week.

Concluding, Mr Straw thanked a number of people who had supported him over the years, however he reserved especial thanks and gratitude to his wife Mrs Alice Straw, whom he referred to as a staunch ally and friend throughout his career.

At the conclusion of the presentation ceremony the Mayor and the Freeman of the Borough withdrew from the Council Chamber for a short recess.

58. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Evans, Lee, and Maxfield,

59. Minutes of Policy Council and Council Forum 3rd December 2015

Resolved – That the minutes of the Policy and Council Forum Meetings held on 3rd December 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

60. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were received as follows:

For Agenda Item 10: Akhtar H., Akhtar P., Bateson, Casey, Connor, Entwistle, Groves, Hardman, Humphrys, Hussain S., Jan-Virmani, Mahmood A., Maxfield, Mulla, Rehman, Surve, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.

For Agenda Item 13.5: Whittle.

61. Mayoral Communications

The Mayor advised Council that he had delivered a demanding and rewarding series of engagements during the Xmas period; including a lights switch-on, Civic Carol Concert, the official naming and opening of Alan Shearer Way, National Holocaust Memorial Day, along with a visit to the

scrap metal art store. In summation the Mayor reminded Council that tickets were still available for the Mayors Ball on the 15th April.

62. Council Forum

One question had been received from a member of the public under Procedure Rule 10, as follows:

From Mark Farrell, 784 Livesey Branch Road, Blackburn, to the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services:

How has the charge for Landlords for the Selective Landlord Licensing Scheme been arrived at?

Mr Farrell received a response from the Executive Member for Neighbourhoods, Housing and Customer Services.

63. Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

The Chief Executive announced that one Notice of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

Every Child Leaving Care Matters

This Council calls on the Government to amend the Children and Families Act 2014 to enable all children in care to stay under the care of the local authority until 21 years of age. Currently children who are placed with foster carers can remain in care until the age of 21, but children in residential care must leave by the age of 18 and sometimes 16 or 17. These vulnerable children and young people in residential care can have complex needs, and compared to those placed in foster care are being discriminated against by the Government.

As corporate parents we have a moral obligation to ensure that all children have the best services and support that we as a local authority can give. Staying in the care of the local authority in appropriate accommodation until the age of 21 should be acted on urgently, however without appropriate government funding which would cover the full costs incurred this cannot be realised.

We call upon the Government to urgently review the 'Staying Put' policy so that local authorities can provide the required level of care and support to all children in care.

Moved by: Cllr Julie Gunn - Assistant Executive Member, Children's Services.

Seconded by: Cllr Pat McFall - Assistant Executive Member, Children's Services,

Following a short debate the Motion was carried.

RESOLVED – That the Motion be carried.

At this point the Mayor advised that any Members who had declared an interest in the following agenda item should leave the room.

64. Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17.

A report was submitted which sought approval for the adoption of the Local Council Tax Support Scheme for 2016/17: Members were advised that in preparation for setting the budget for 2016/17, the Council was obliged to formally continue the scheme already agreed or make any adjustments prior to 1st April 2016.

It was explained to Council that the report sought to fulfil the necessary legal requirements and confirm Blackburn with Darwen BC's Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17.

The report emphasised that there were no changes to the scheme; however, there it pointed out that there may be a number of minor changes relating to terminology and changes to national welfare benefits which may need to be made prior to April 2016.

As noted in the recommendations, these changes would be delegated to Director of Finance & IT in consultation with the Executive Member for Resources

RESOLVED –

- a) That the contents of the report are noted;
- b) That the localised Council Tax Support Scheme that was approved by Council in January 2015 is continued for the financial year 2016/17, and;
- c) That any subsequent technical amendments to the Council Tax Support Scheme that may be required following legislative changes are delegated to the Director of Finance & IT in consultation with the Executive Member, Resources.

Those Members who had left the chamber for this item were advised this agenda item had concluded and were invited to resume their seats.

65. Gambling Policy Statement

A report was submitted which provided Council with the outcome of the consultation undertaken for the 2016 revision of the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Policy.

The report pointed out that the Council was required to publish a Statement of Licensing Policy under the Act, which is a statement of principles that the Licensing Authority must consider when determining a Premises Licence application. This policy must be reviewed every three years. The Policy set out the approach that will be taken when dealing with permissions it granted and enforced thereafter. It also identifies how the Authority would seek to promote the licensing objectives under the Act.

A vote was carried in favour of the recommendations in the report.

RESOLVED –

That Council considers the proposed changes and approve the revised Statement of Licensing Policy.

66. Policy and Corporate Resources Committee

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.

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

The Leader of the Council referred to a Motion agreed at the Last Council Forum meeting: ("*This Council asks both the Chief Executive and the Director of Public Health to write to both members of Parliament to ask for these {Public Health} cuts be reversed*"). He advised Council that every Member now had a copy of the response received from the Secretary of State for Public Health. The content suggesting that although he shared the Council's concerns it remained a decision to be made by the Council.

The Leader also pointed out that having carefully considered the budget settlement the outcome for the Borough was significantly worse than initially anticipated.

The Executive Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Customer Services responded to question relating to hover boards, Selective Landlord Licensing and the impact of Welfare Reform.

The Executive Member for Regeneration responded to questions relating to Pennine Reach, the Heritage Lottery Fund and Freckleton Street link road.

Advising Council that the next meeting of Policy and Corporate Resources would include an invite for all Members to attend, the Executive Member for Resources explained that there would be a specific item detailing the Partnership Review.

Councillors specifically commended the work of the Saturday collection service in the Environment portfolio, along with the Museum service and King Georges Hall in the portfolio for Leisure, Culture and Young People.

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

68. Questions from Members under Procedure Rule 11

The Chief Executive announced that no questions had been received under Procedure Rule 11:

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

MAYOR