

COUNCIL FORUM
Thursday 25th January 2018

PRESENT – *The Mayor Councillor Rigby C (in the Chair), Councillors; Akhtar H; Ali; Bateson; Connor; Daley; Desai; Fazal; Foster D; Foster K; Gee; Groves; Gibson; Gunn; Hardman; Harling; Humphrys; Hussain I; Hussain S; Jan-Virmani; Kay; Khan M; Khan Z; Khonat; Lee; Liddle; Mahmood A; Mahmood Q; Marrow; McFall; McGurk; Mulla; Murray; Nuttall; Oates; Patel; Perkins; Rigby J; Riley; Shorrocks; Sidat; Slater Jo; Slater Ju; Slater N; Smith D, Smith J; Surve; Talbot; Tapp; Taylor; Vali; and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

38 Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

39 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Akhtar P, Brookfield, Casey, Hollings, Johnson, Maxfield, Hussain F, Slater Ja, Pearson, Entwistle, Davies and Wright.

40 Minutes of the Policy Council Meeting held on 7th December 2017

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Policy Council meeting held on the 7th December 2017 be agreed as a correct record.

41 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were received as follows (Agenda Item 12):

Councillors Fazal, Groves, Jan-Virmani, Khonat, Mahmood, McGurk, Mulla, Talbot, Taylor, Whittle, Connor, Hardman and Marrow.

The Chief Executive reminded those Councillors that had declared an interest that they would need to leave the room ahead of consideration of Agenda Item 12 – Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

42 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated Council Forum on recent activities and events, in particular a number of school visits.

The Mayor reminded Councillors that the Mayor's Ball would be held on Friday

16th March 2018 at Ewood Park and encouraged all Members to attend.

43 Council Forum

The Chief Executive advised that one question had been received from members of the Public under Procedure Rule 10 as follows:

From Asif Mahmud to Councillor Mohammed Khan, Leader of the Council:

Following this week's controversial Panorama programme about a segregated Blackburn, would the council respond to my following question at the full council meeting on Thursday 25/1/18.

Panorama revisited Blackburn after 10 years to see if 'segregation' had improved. The programme received national coverage and focused its attention on Blackburn. The good folk of Blackburn are greatly concerned about the image Blackburn is being portrayed as.

Many of the points raised in the programme highlighted the acute segregation between the 'British Asian' and 'British White' communities with regards to housing, education and socially. The Cantle and Casey reports coupled with the 2011 census data clearly support the view, segregation is a serious problem and needs addressing.

The issue of segregation needs to be tackled head on and so far, central and local government have either taken a cack handed approach or merely ignored the issue.

It is abundantly clear to me that there is segregation in the town, and whilst the council has to accentuate the positives of the town, they also have a duty to address the issue of segregation. Segregation has lasting adverse impact on all areas of life for those affected.

Would the council and its elected officials tell me and the wider public, whether it acknowledges the issue of segregation and what steps if any, it has taken, is taking and plans to undertake to address this serious issue.

We can't ignore any longer!

Councillor Mohammed Khan gave a response to the question and supplementary question arising, advising that the Council, in partnership with

all sectors and the local community, continued to deliver initiatives and were working hard to address issues. The Leader referred to the negative slant that the Panorama programme portrayed, and the lack of acknowledgement of the ongoing work to improve social integration. The Leader referred to the report on the Social Integration Strategy 2018-20 which was an agenda item later in the meeting.

44 The Motions Submitted under Procedure Rule 12

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

MOTION 1

This Council is extremely disappointed, on behalf of its residents that the Government is continually choosing to ignore the plight of children, families and adults needing our support.

The Association of Directors of Children's Services, the Local Government Association and others have repeatedly urged the government to urgently address the deepening funding gap facing children's services, expected to be £2bn by 2020. The Government has again failed to listen to and address the continuing funding gap for children's and adult social care.

National bodies representing each of these services have repeatedly, and loudly, warned of the serious consequences of the Government ignoring the funding pressures facing Councils like ours.

Both adults and children's services also rely on the financial sustainability of other services our Council provides. The only way to protect the vital services which care for the elderly, the disabled, and to protect children and support families is for central Government to invest additional new money.

As a result of this Government's continuing underfunding of these services, our ability to invest in the preventative aspects in both these services is severely diminished. This is leading nationally to children and families entering the child protection system in record numbers and the elderly and disabled not receiving appropriate and necessary care.

This Council believes the Government needs to provide Councils with a long term, sustainable solution, this is urgently needed to prevent us from becoming another "blue light" service. To give Councils the resources they need to provide the support that all these groups need, when they need it, is the only solution.

Within a system that is already struggling to cope with unprecedented levels of demand, and the reduction in general Government support to our Council, this is becoming impossible. The alternative means risking more and more families and individuals reaching a critical stage where Councils have no choice but to intervene to keep everyone safe.

Councils, national representative bodies, charities and care providers have repeatedly warned of and continue to warn of the serious consequences of funding pressures on all who use our services, their carers and the provider market.

It is fundamentally unfair of the Government to shift the burden of tackling a national funding crisis onto Councils and their residents. In particular the Adult Social Care Council Tax Precept policy has a vastly different effect in different areas as authorities with a lower tax base are not be able to raise as much income as those authorities with a higher tax base. In addition, the ability to raise and collect Council tax is not related to need.

This Council calls upon the relevant Ministers along with our local MP's to address the very significant issues both our own and other Councils are facing in protecting our most vulnerable children and adults and for the Government to face up to its own Duty of Care as we as a local Council are expected to do.

Mover Vicky McGurk

Seconder Julie Gunn

Following debate on the Motion, there then followed a Vote on the Motion.

RESOLVED - That the Motion be carried.

MOTION 2

This Council is concerned at the lack of involvement of Members in the allocation of section 106 monies in local areas. It asks the Executive Member to draw up a scheme that will involve local Members in the process of determining the use of these monies.

Mover David Foster

Seconder Karimeh Foster (in the absence of Councillor Roy Davies)

Following debate on the Motion, there then followed a Vote on the Motion.

RESOLVED – That the Motion be lost.

45 Ofsted Inspection of services for children in need of help and protection, children looked after and Care Leavers

Members received an update with regard to the Council's recent Ofsted inspection, completed as part of Ofsted's Single Inspection Framework (SIF) between 25th September and 19th October 2017.

Inspectors judged the following areas:

- Children's Services overall **(good)**
- The experiences and progress of children who need help and protection **(requires improvement)**
- The experiences and progress of children looked after and achieving permanence **(good)**
 - Adoption performance **(good)**
 - The experience and progress of care leavers **(good)**
- Leadership, management and governance **(good)**

There was a separate judgement for the Local Safeguarding Children Board, which was also judged to be good.

Nine recommendations had been made in respect of Children's Social Care and three recommendations for the Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB); more detail concerning these recommendations was contained in section 5 of the report. The Department had developed an action plan to address each of these recommendations.

The judgement put the Council in the top third of local authorities nationally and only six out of 23 in the North West to have this rating.

The thanks of the Council were passed to all involved in work around the inspection, including Staff, Members, Young People and Foster Carers.

RESOLVED - That Members:

- Note the findings of the Ofsted inspection, including the recommendations made;
- Note the four inspection frameworks under which the Council continues to be regulated by Ofsted; and
- Note that the action plan developed in response to this inspection will be subject to Scrutiny review.

46 Social Integration Strategy 2018-20

Council Forum received a report containing recommendations relating to the Social Integration Strategy 2018-20.

The report reflected that the Borough was a vibrant and diverse place, made up of different races, cultures, beliefs and attitudes. The people, location, character and shared assets made the Borough a great place to live, work and visit. The Council had been nationally recognised for its work over many years. The strategy was embedded in other key policies across the Council and given its importance, a social integration strategy had been developed to raise the profile and prominence of a key Council priority.

The vision was for all communities to feel part of the Borough by playing a greater part in civic life, and in accessing leisure, culture and sport opportunities and for residents to have shared values and aspirations - to want for others what they would want for themselves and their families.

The strategy was underpinned by the facilitation, enablement and encouraging of linking opportunities, understanding and respect in communities and growing the local economy and skills agenda.

RESOLVED – That the Council:

- a) Note the contents of the report and adopt the strategy;
- b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive in consultation with the leader to co-design/deliver a two-year action plan; and
- c) Receive a report on progress and achievements, at the end of the two-year cycle.

47 2018/19 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement

A report was submitted which updated the Council on the 2018/19 Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement.

The provisional Local Government Finance Settlement was announced by the Secretary of State Communities and Local Government, Sajid Javid MP in an oral statement to the House of Commons on 19th December 2017.

The announcement set out the provisional allocations for 2018/19 which had been originally announced in December 2015 as part of the 4 year settlement offer which the Council agreed to accept at Council Forum in October 2016.

The publication of the provisional settlement on 19th December 2017 marked the start of the consultation which ended on 16th January 2018 and to which the Council had submitted a response. It was expected that the final 2018/19 settlement would be laid before the House of Commons for approval in February.

The report provided a brief summary of the key points within the settlement, with specific focus on those funding streams of particular relevance to the Council.

RESOLVED – That the Council note the key points contained within the provisional settlement which impact upon the authority and which will be considered and incorporated into the financial reports to be presented to Finance Council on 26th February 2018.

Ahead of consideration of the next item, Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19, Members who had declared interests left the room.

48 Local Council Tax Support Scheme 2018/19

The Welfare Reform Act contained provisions which abolished Council Tax Benefit and recommended localised schemes to be administered by Local Authorities throughout England with effect from 1st April 2013.

As a consequence of the legislation, it was agreed at Council on 31st January 2013 that the localised scheme adopted by Blackburn with Darwen BC would be means tested in the same way as Council Tax Benefit, however, awards would be 20% less for working age claimants than the previous national scheme.

Full Council had confirmed in previous years that this scheme would continue to apply. The report fulfilled the Council's obligation to consider the local scheme each financial year and formally agree the provision for 2018/19.

In preparation for setting the budget for 2018/19, the Council was obliged to formally continue the scheme already agreed or make any adjustments prior to 1st February 2018. The report sought to fulfil the necessary legal requirements and confirm Blackburn with Darwen BC's Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19.

It was proposed that the Council Tax Support scheme for 2018/19 was amended as follows:

Universal Credit

The notices received from the Department of Work and Pensions regarding claimants of Universal Credit would now be considered as an acceptable claim form for the Council Tax Support scheme. In order to receive this notice, the claimant must have already stated to the Department of Work and Pensions an intention to claim Council Tax Support. This change would improve the current application process and reduce barriers to customers claiming the support. In addition, the time taken to award the entitlement would be reduced substantially.

Uprating

In each financial year all claim types were amended to take into account any central government changes known as 'uprating'. In line with previous years, these changes would be made prior to the annual billing process in March 2018.

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 2017 is continued for the financial year 2018/19, 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 declared interests and left the room before consideration of the previous agenda item now re-joined the meeting.

49 Report of the Policy and Corporate Resources Committee

Council Forum received the latest report from the Policy and Corporate Resources Committee.

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

50 Reports of the Executive Members with Portfolios

Council Forum received and considered reports and updates from the Leader and Executive Members with portfolios. They were considered as follows: the Leader's report, Environment, Leisure, Culture and Young People, Neighbourhoods and Prevention, Resources, Schools and Education, Health and Adult Social Care, Regeneration and Children's Services.

RESOLVED – That the reports of the Leader and Executive Members for the following portfolios: Environment, Leisure, Culture and Young People, Neighbourhoods and Prevention, Resources, Schools and Education, Health and Adult Social Care, Regeneration and Children's Services be noted.

51 Questions Received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

No questions had been received from Members 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