

COUNCIL FORUM MEETING
Thursday 1st October 2015

PRESENT –*The Mayor Councillor F Hussain (in the Chair), Councillors Akhtar H., Akhtar P., Ali, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Desai, Entwistle, Evans, 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., Lee, Liddle, Mahmood A., McFall, Nuttall, Oates, O’Keeffe, Patel, Pearson, Rehman, 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

23. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

24. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Quesir Mahmood, Trevor Maxfield, Don McKinlay, Salim Mulla, and Colin Rigby.

25. Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

26. Freedom of the Borough

Council received a report recommending that the former long serving MP for Blackburn, The Right Honourable Jack Straw be made a Freeman of the Borough in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Right Honourable Jack Straw was the Member of Parliament for the Constituency of Blackburn for more than 36 years, between 1979 and 2015, making him the longest serving MP in the town’s history. During his parliamentary office he held a number of high profile positions, including Home Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Lord Chancellor and Leader of the House of Commons. Mr Straw had played a major role in promoting Blackburn and helping the interests of those who lived and worked in the town. All sectors benefitted from his work to bring major investment into the Borough, whilst working hard as an MP locally, helping local people.

The Leader of the Council, Mohammed Khan and Leader of the Main Opposition Party, Councillor Michael Lee spoke in support of the award to Mr Straw, ahead of comments and speeches from other Members.

RESOLVED –

- (i) That the Right Honourable Jack Straw be granted an Honorary Freeman award for his outstanding services in accordance with Section 249 of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- (ii) That the Chief Executive organise appropriate arrangements for a formal ceremony later in the year.

27. Minutes of the Council Forum held on the 16th July 2015

RESOLVED –

That subject to a minor amendment to the minutes; minute 17 should have made reference to the Executive Member for Environment not Regeneration, the minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 16th July 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

28. Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated the Council Forum that it had been a very busy couple of months for him.

The Mayor picked a few highlights of recent engagements to share:

In August, he was invited to present this year's Good Neighbour awards. The Mayor said it was great listening to the extraordinary efforts of those residents that selflessly ensure our communities were better places to live in. After the event, Councillor Khan and The Mayor invited seven year old Nathan Pugh to meet in the Mayor's Parlour. Nathan cleaned up his street on a regular basis. The Mayor explained that it was an honour to meet him and his mum and show him around the Town Hall.

The Mayor gave special praise to another group of community volunteers he had met recently. Volunteers from the Victorian Garden Kitchen at Turton Tower, accompanied by Councillor Jean Rigby, came to the Town Hall to tell him about their work after winning the Best in Show award at the Dig the City event in Manchester.

In August, it was the Blackburn Heritage Weekend; The Mayor and Mayoress opened the door to the Mayor's Parlour and the Council Chamber to the public. The event was well attended and people were keen to learn about the position of Mayor, about local democracy and how important the democratic process is. Visitors, especially young people, were very enthusiastic.

The Mayor said it had also been an honour to lead the Borough in marking Merchant Naval Day. Explaining that this country depended on the Merchant Navy and their sacrifices during both World Wars, and that the debt owed to these brave men and women should not be forgotten.

The Mayor asked that everyone make a note in their diary for the forthcoming Remembrance Sunday Service at 9.30 am on 8th November.

29. Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 10

The Chief Executive advised that no public questions had been received under Procedure Rule 10.

30. Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

The Chief Executive advised that no Notices of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12.

31. Treasury Management Annual Report 2014-15 and Mid-Year Review for 2015-16

Council considered a report advising of Treasury Management Performance for 2014-15, and an update with regard to the position to date in 2015-16.

RESOLVED – That Council:

- (a) Note the Outturn position for 2014-15; and
- (b) Agree the continuation of the existing Treasury Management Strategy, and Treasury and Prudential Indicators for 2015-16, as set at Finance Council in March.

32. Streamlining the Planning Process – Scheme of Delegation

Council considered a report containing recommendations on streamlining the Planning process, particularly in relation to the Scheme of Delegation: It was reported that following the publication of the Governments productivity plan 'Fixing the Foundations' which increased the floor target for approval of 'Major' planning applications to 50%, it had been necessary for the Council to review its processes for determining planning applications. It was proposed that the Scheme of Delegation be revised to reduce the volume of applications presented to Committee, whilst ensuring that a suitable degree of Member input and oversight was retained. The changes proposed were outlined in Appendix 1 of the report submitted. It was also proposed that the Scheme of Delegation as regards protected tree applications be amended, to make amendments to Tree Preservation Orders where the amendments arose solely from works authorised under delegated powers.

Following debate Council agreed the following recommendations.

RESOLVED – That Council:

1. Note the changes recently made by Central Government to the nationally set performance regime for Local Authority Planning Services, and the potential implications of this for the Council;
2. Note the anomaly that exists in the current Scheme of Delegation in respect of Tree Preservation Orders; and
3. Approve amendments to the Council's Constitution relating to the Scheme of Delegation in respect of Planning Applications and Tree Preservation Orders, as set out in Appendix 1.

33. Update on Leisure Review

Council considered a report updating Members on progress made on the review of leisure provision across the Borough and proposals for consultation with residents, stakeholders and employees who may be affected by the outcome of the leisure review.

Council were reminded that in September 2014 it had agreed that a review of Leisure Provision across the Borough should be undertaken to achieve a budget saving of £731k per annum: A significant proportion of the portfolio budget was attributed to the operation of swimming pool facilities, and the portfolio could not achieve the level of savings required with delivering swimming provision in different ways, and potentially from directly operating fewer pool facilities.

Sport England had been requested to undertake a strategic assessment of the need for swimming pool provision in the Borough, utilising their Facilities Planning Model (FPM) report. The key findings of the report were outlined in the report submitted. The report advised that the current supply of pool water space in the Borough was more generous than national and regional comparators and was higher than all other local authorities in the study area with the exception of South Ribble.

Reference was made in the report submitted to Council about the capacity, facilities and usage at Darwen Leisure Centre and Blackburn Leisure Centre, and that any reductions in pool provision would have to be focussed on Daisyfield Pools and Shadsworth Leisure Centre as these centres were "significantly older, with dated facilities and were therefore less attractive for public users."

The report submitted the Consultation process that would be undertaken and that a more detailed report on future swimming pool provision would be submitted to Council Forum on 3rd December 2015 to enable Members to deliberate and make final decisions.

Following a debate there then followed a Recorded vote with Councillors voting as follows:

For

Councillors Hussain Akhtar, Parwaiz Akhtar, Maureen Bateson, Stephanie Brookfield, Jim Casey, Mustafa Desai, Eileen Entwistle, Tom Evans, David Foster, Karimeh Foster, Jamie Groves, Julie Gunn, Dave Harling, Pete Hollings, Tony Humphrys, Iftakhar Hussain, Yusuf Jan-Virmani, Mike Johnson, Andy Kay, Mohammed Khan, Zamir Khan, Suleman Khonat, Sylvia Liddle, Arshid Mahmood, Pat McFall, Carl Nuttall, Jane Oates, Ron O’Keeffe, Abdul Patel, Abdul Rehman, Phil Riley, John Roberts, Jim Shorrocks, Salim Sidat, Dave Smith, Jim Smith, Naushad Surve, Damian Talbot, Brian Taylor, Shiraz Vali, Ashley Whalley, Ron Whittle, John Wright and The Mayor Councillor Faryad Hussain.

Against

None.

Abstained

Councillors Imtiaz Ali, Paul Browne, Kevin Connor, Alan Cottam, Julie Daley, Denise Gee, Derek Hardman, Michael Lee, John Pearson, Jean Rigby, Jacqueline Slater, John Slater, Julie Slater and Konrad Tapp.

RESOLVED - That Council:

1. Approve the consultation process referred to within the report to inform any final decisions;
2. Note that subject to the outcome of the consultation process, any subsequent proposals may involve change in the provision of facilities and as a consequence, staff currently involved in providing the services will be affected; and
3. Note that the Executive member will bring a further report on the review of Leisure provision to Council on 3rd December 2015 to report on the outcome of the consultation process and present proposals for approval.

34. Policy and Corporate Resources Committee

The Chair of the Policy & Corporate Resources Committee presented an update report to the Council of the agreed format for the first three rounds of meetings for all four Scrutiny Committees. He explained that all work programmes were progressing well, with interim recommendations being formed, before final recommendations at the next round of Committee meetings.

As the report showed all the Committees have been very active:

The Regeneration Committee had undertaken a site visit to the Ewood Ward looking at landlord licensing areas and attended a public consultation at Ivy Street Community Centre. It was explained that the Committee would also attend a similar consultation in Darwen.

The Children's Committee were currently setting up a task group for an update on Universal Credit for Young People and their families. Members had requested to speak directly with young people to hear about their experiences of the Universal Credit process. At its next meeting Members would be looking at the School Improvement Service.

The Health Committee had been busy reviewing Mental Health and Wellbeing provision in the Borough, with Members being invited to attend Mental Health First Aid Training on the 5th and 6th October 2015.

The Policy and Corporate Resources Committee were undertaking a review on Welfare Reform and its impact in the Borough, followed by an update on the CAPITA contract.

RESOLVED –

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

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

In moving his report, the Leader of the Council, advised that as outlined in the Members seminars that had taken place, options and the implications of those were still being considered regarding a potential Combined Authority for Lancashire, ahead of submission of a report to the December Policy Council meeting. He outlined the partnership vision of Your Call and the outcomes that could be delivered as a united community.

The Executive Member for Environment responded to questions regarding surface dressing works. The Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Young People advised that 2014/15 saw the highest level of activity ever recorded with the cumulative figure now topping a million attendances across the Borough. Praise was given for recent events including Darwen Gala and the Heritage weekend.

A request was made for the Executive Member for Housing, Neighbourhoods and Customer Services to pass on their thanks to the Digital Eagles from some of the elderly residents.

A further request to thank the Permanence Team in Children Services was made in light of the recent report from the Regional Adoption Agency for services being voted the best in the country.

In addition to the Executive Members report for Health and Adults, Councillor Brian Taylor as the Older Peoples Champion, outlined two things that had become apparent during conversations with groups and individuals in the Borough, and their concerns regarding loneliness and being isolated. The second concern was the consequences of developing dementia. It was explained that progress was being made in the treatment of dementia and the message of regular exercise, reducing the amount of alcohol consumed and maintaining social contact with friends and neighbours, as with most health issues, measures that all of us could implement to improve general health and wellbeing.

Councillor Taylor informed members that the work of the Age UK team within the Borough was recognised and informed members of a jointly funded project with the Council, Dementia Co-ordinator Zoe Aldcroft who was doing invaluable work to raise the profile and understanding of this illness. Dementia Action Alliance which was part of a Community Interest Group had been created within the Borough.

Councillor Brian Taylor informed the Council Forum that Councillor Salim Mulla had now taken over the Older People's Champion role.

Councillor Julie Gunn asked the Executive Member for Children Services as about the future of 'Amethyst One', a caravan which offered a rare opportunity for whole families with a disabled child to holiday together. Council were advised that in 2011 the Department for Education provided a one-off £80,000 'Aiming High Short Breaks' grant to the Borough's Children's Disability Service. However, now that Central Government funding was coming to an end. The Council was struggling to find money to keep renting the specially-adapted static holiday home. Notwithstanding, the financial challenges it was noted that the Leader and the Executive Member for Children's were seeking generous individuals, organisations and companies to help fund the £20,000-a-year cash gap, whilst continuing talks with Partington's Family Caravan Holidays to continue the lease.

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

36. Draft Year Planner 2016/17

The Draft Year Planner 2016/17 was submitted to Members with a request that any amendments be advised to Democratic Services ahead of submission of the final version at the meeting of the Policy Council on the 3rd December 2015.

RESOLVED – That the Draft Year Planner 2016/17 be noted and that any changes be advised to Democratic Services.

37. To consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

The Chief Executive advised 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