

COUNCIL FORUM
Thursday 6th October, 2016

PRESENT – *The Mayor Councillor Akhtar H., (in the Chair), Councillors; Akhtar P., Ali, Bateson, Brookfield, Casey, Connor, Daley, Desai, Entwistle, Fazal, Foster D., Foster K., Gee, Groves, Gunn, Harling, Humphrys, Hussain F., Hussain I., Hussain S., Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Khan M., Khan Z., Khonat, Lee, Liddle, Mahmood A., Mahmood Q., Marrow, McGurk, McFall, Mulla, Murray, Nuttall, Oates, Patel, Pearson, Rigby C., Rigby J., Riley, Roberts, Shorrock, Sidat, Slater Jacqueline, Slater John., Slater Julie, Slater Neil, Smith D., Smith J., Surve, Talbot, Taylor, Vali, Whittle and Wright.*

RESOLUTIONS

22 Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

23 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Hardman, Kay Tapp, Davies, McKinlay, Maxfield and Hollings.

24 Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 21st July 2016

The Minutes of the Council Forum meeting on the 21st July 2016 were agreed as a correct record.

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the Council Forum meeting on 21st July be agreed as a correct record.

25 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations were received.

26 Award of Civic Service Award to former Councillor Paul Browne

Former Councillor, Paul Browne, was presented with the first Civic Service Award which had recently been introduced to mark the service of Councillors who had served over 25 years on the Council and also were in the final term of office or who had recently left the Council after service for over 25 years.

The Leader of each political group made speeches in support of Paul Browne,

who received a formal Certificate and piece of glassware from the Mayor.

Paul Browne responded with thanks for the comments made and indicated how proud he was to receive the award.

27 Mayoral Communications

Since the last Council meeting the Mayor advised that he had attended numerous events including:

A visit to the newly refurbished Youth Enterprise Centre, and the newly refurbished McDonald's at Whitebirk and an event marking the 40th Anniversary of Age UK, and recently a MacMillan Coffee Morning helping to raise funds for a great charity.

The Mayor had also attended numerous prize-giving events involving children of the Borough.

The Mayor advised that he would be attending the Canal Festival at Eanam Wharf on Wednesday 19th October marking the 200 year Anniversary Event of the Leeds-Liverpool Canal.

Looking ahead into November, the Mayor reminded Councillors that Remembrance Services would be held starting with Armistice Day on Friday 11th November at 11.00 am., followed by services on Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th November, and the Mayor hoped as many Councillors as possible would attend.

28 Public Forum

Eight questions had been received under procedure Rule 10 as follows:

	Name of person asking the question	Subject Area	Response by
1	Jean Bain	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith
2	Pat & Brent Wardle	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith
3	Simon Wilson	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith
4	Bill Comer	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith
5	Moira & Martyn Lees	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith
6	Dennis Holt	Changes to refuse collection	Councillor Jim Smith

7	Asif Mahmood	Hate Crime	Councillor Mohammed Khan
8	Vivienne Davenport	Traffic calming on Meins Road and Preston New Road	Councillor Phil Riley

The Chief Executive advised that written answers to the questions would be submitted to the residents who had been unable to attend the meeting to ask the questions in person.

29 **Notices of Motion**

No Notices of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12.

30 **Acceptance of the Government's 4 year Grant Settlement Offer**

It was reported that as part of the December 2015 Spending Review, the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) made an offer to Councils to take up a 4 year funding settlement for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

To accept this offer, an email confirmation had to be sent to DCLG by 14th October including a link to an Efficiency Plan; the Secretary of State had not issued any guidance on what an efficiency plan should contain, but had stated that it must cover the full 4 year period.

Members were advised that the Government did not expect the production of the plan to be a significant burden on Councils and had said that it should be simple and straight forward, drawing together existing corporate plans and strategies. The plan could be linked to the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) provided it could articulate how provision of a greater clarity around funding could deliver further savings to produce a balanced budget.

The advantages and disadvantages of the Government's offer were highlighted in the report submitted and Council was requested to agree that the offer be accepted.

RESOLVED- That the Council Forum:

- 1) Accept the Government's 4 year funding offer as it will create certainty over a significant part of the Council's future resources and will allow the Council to develop and deliver against the MTFS; and
- 2) Agree to submit the MTFS, approved by Finance Council on 29th February 2016, as its Efficiency Plan in order to satisfy the conditions of acceptance of the 4 year funding settlement for the period 2016/17 to 2019/20.

31 Appointment of Independent Persons and Independent Members

Council Forum was asked to agree the formal appointment of the Council's 2 Independent Persons and 2 Independent Members of the Standards Committee.

Members were reminded that following the appropriate recruitment and selection process, on the 30th August 2012, Council Forum approved the appointment of Alan Eastwood as the Council's Independent Person for a 4 year period. This term of office had now been completed and further appointment was required.

Given the number of roles that the Independent Person may undertake the potential for conflict may arise. Accordingly, Council was recommended to appoint 2 Independent Persons. As previously, the appointments would be for 4 years, until October 2020.

Following a further open and full recruitment process, involving public advertisement and interviews by a panel, the Council was recommended to reappoint Alan Eastwood for a further term of 4 years and Stewart Wright for the same period, who would be a new additional Independent Person.

Council Forum was also recommended to approve the re-appointment of Paul Fletcher and Dr Tassadaq Hussain who were originally appointed as Independent Members by the Standards Committee at their meeting on 14th January 2013.

Both Independent Members had indicated that they would be willing to complete another term of 4 years.

RESOLVED - 1) That the re-appointment of the existing Independent Person, Alan Eastwood, for a further period of 4 years until the 6th October 2020 be approved;

2) That the appointment of a second Independent Person, Stewart Wright, for a period of 4 years until the 6th October 2020 be approved; and

3) That the re-appointment of the existing Independent Members of the Standards Committee, Paul Fletcher and Dr Tassadaq Hussain, for a further period of 4 years until the 6th October 2020 be approved.

32 Electoral Review 2016-17 Stage One – Council size

Council Forum was requested to agree a submission from Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) on Council size.

On the 25th September 2015 as a result of identifying electoral imbalances, the Council received a letter from the Commission outlining their plans for an Electoral Review Intervention of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council as part of the LGBCE Electoral Review Programme for 2017-18.

Members were advised that a number of meetings had been held with LGBCE representatives regarding the Council Electoral Review. As part of these discussions there was an agreement to bring forward the timetable for the Review by 12 months in light of the fallow year (2017). This rationale should support the conclusion of a Review during 2017, and an Order to be laid before Parliament and a whole Council election in May 2018.

It was explained that the Council could not take its own decisions on size or warding arrangements and must submit its proposals to the LGBCE at every stage. The LGBCE would consider and determine the proposals based on its own assessment of relevant factors. The Council could however take a view on how often it held Borough Council elections; and it was recommended that the current arrangements of elections by thirds remained unchanged.

The timetable for the Electoral Review was outlined in the report submitted, which culminated in 'All Out' Elections in 2018.

The Council's proposals had been formulated having regard to the LGBCE's technical guidance on electoral Reviews which indicated a view would be taken on Council size for an Authority by considering three areas: Governance arrangements; Scrutiny functions relating to its own decision making and the Council's responsibilities to Outside Bodies; and the representational role of Councillors in the local community and how they engaged with local people, conduct casework and represent the Council on local partner organisations.

Council was advised that the new warding arrangements would not be implemented until the All Out elections in 2018. Any by-elections prior to that would take place based on current ward boundaries.

It was highlighted that Councillors had, for a number of years, voted to maintain a deliberately low level of remuneration in comparison to other authorities. With a shift in responsibilities necessitated from the reduction in the number of Councillors, a review of remuneration would be necessary. A review of remuneration was scheduled for March 2017, however Council was asked to endorse (subject to a final decision of LGBCE) an independent review of Member remuneration allowances in 2017/18 in readiness for a new Council shape and size from May 2018.

Under the current arrangements, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council had

64 elected Members in 23 wards. The proposal was to reduce the Council size to 51 Members in 17 wards at the local government election due in 2018. It was considered that this number would ensure appropriate levels of Governance, Scrutiny and Community Leadership for the Council from 2018 and allowed for the Authority to continue to elect its Members by thirds.

Several factors had been considered in forming the recommendations including, policy developments eg. Localism, Transformation, Combined Authorities and the possibilities of further shared services and or devolution of powers, outsourcing and service delivery changes, corporate plan commitments and of course a future of continued financial constraint due to deficit reduction.

During discussion of the report, Councillor John Slater suggested an amendment to the report in terms of the number of Councillors and Wards, proposing that the numbers be changed to 54 Councillors and 18 Wards. This suggested amendment was not voted on.

RESOLVED -

- 1) That Council endorse the proposal on Council size;
- 2) That the Chief Executive be authorised to formally submit the proposal on Council size to the Local Government Boundary Commission for England; and
- 3) That an independent review of Member's Allowances be undertaken during 2017/18 in readiness for a new Council shape and size from May 2018.

33 Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018

A report was submitted to Council Forum with an overview of the process and proposals for the Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018.

In 2011 legislation was passed to reduce the number of MPs from 650 to 600. Under the law as it stood a new review by the Boundary Commissions had to be completed by October 2018, reducing the number of constituencies in the UK to 600 (533 – 501 in England) resulting in an expected annual saving of £12.2M.

Initial proposals were published on 13th September 2016 and information about proposed constituencies was now on the Boundary Commission for England website.

Lancashire currently had an existing allocation of 16 constituencies with a reduction to 14 constituencies being proposed.

The report outlined the various stages of the process leading up to completion of the Review by October 2018.

The Commission had proposed that the existing Blackburn constituency be slightly changed, by the inclusion only of the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen Ward of Fernhurst. The existing Rossendale and Darwen constituency would be moderately changed by the loss of the Fernhurst Ward to the Blackburn constituency and the inclusion of the Worsley and Greenfield Wards (both Borough of Rossendale wards). The Commission considered that these changes resulted in a geographically better shaped constituency.

RESOLVED - That the Council Forum agree in principle the Commission's initial proposals for Blackburn with Darwen Parliamentary Boundary Review 2018.

34 Policy & Corporate Resources Committee

A report of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy and Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee was presented to the Council Forum.

RESOLVED - That the report of the Chair and Vice Chair of the Policy & Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee be noted.

35 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: Leader; Regeneration; Health & Adult Social Care; Children's Services; Environment; Leisure, Culture & Young People; Neighbourhoods & Prevention Services; Resources and Schools & Education.

In moving his report, the Executive Member for Regeneration made reference to a change to a date in the report submitted: in relation to Wainwright Way, the deadline for expressions was 28th October 2016, not 23rd September as referred to in the report.

Councillor Maureen Bateson made reference to the success of the Blackburn with Darwen Leaving Care Football Team, who had won the North West Leaving Care Football Tournament and that she would be presenting them with an award at the forthcoming 'Children in Our Care Celebration of Achievement Awards' that would be held at King George's Hall on 11th October 2016.

Councillor Arshid Mahmood advised that officers in his Portfolio were busy in relation to a number of seasonal events including Halloween, Bonfire Night

and Christmas. Councillor Mahmood also made reference to the rise in crime as a result of austerity and the importance of Councillors getting involved with Ward Issues Meetings and targeting anti-social behaviour. Reference was also made to the new CCTV Hub which was progressing well and Members would be invited to visit, with the official launch due in November 2016.

In moving his report, the Executive Member for Schools & Education, Councillor Dave Harling, updated the Council Forum in relation to Ofsted Inspection Outcomes – six schools had been judged as ‘good’, with one noted as ‘outstanding’.

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

36 Draft Year Planner 2017/2018

The Draft Year Planner for 2017/18 was submitted to the Council Forum ahead of the submission of the final version to Policy Council in December.

The Chief Executive requested that any comments or amendments be forwarded to Phil Llewellyn in Democratic Services.

37 Questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been submitted 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