

COUNCIL FORUM

Thursday 25th March 2021

PRESENT – *The Deputy Mayor Councillor Derek Hardman, Councillors Afzal, Akhtar H, Akhtar P, Batan, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Connor, Daley, Davies, Desai, Fazal, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Harling, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Jan-Virmani, Kay, Khan M, Khan Z, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McFall, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Rawat, Rigby C, Rigby J, Riley, Salton, Sidat, Shorrocks, Slater Jacq, Slater Jo, Slater Ju, Slater N, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

52 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting and the Mayor advised how the remote meeting would operate.

After Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain, a Minute's Silence was observed in memory of all those who had lost their lives during the Covid-19 pandemic in the Borough over the past year, and Council Officer Andy Clayworth who had tragically recently passed away.

53 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Finance Council meeting held on 1st March 2021 were agreed as a correct record.

54 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

55 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor noted the first anniversary of the Covid-19 lockdown, and advised that his thoughts were with all those affected, advising that nominations for the Mayoral Awards could be made for anyone who had gone above and beyond in responding to the pandemic.

The Mayor also confirmed his chosen Mayoral Charities for 2021/22 which were the East Lancs Scouts, East Lancs Guides, Derian House and the East Lancs Hospice,

The Mayor concluded by thanking all those who had made it possible to run virtual meetings during the Municipal Year.

56 Council Forum

The Chief Executive reported that no questions had been received under Procedure Rule 12.

57 Motions

The Chief Executive reported that no Motions had been received under Procedure Rule 10.

58 Covid-19 Pandemic- One Year On

A report was submitted which provided an overview of the key highlights of the Council's response to the COVID-19 pandemic over the last 12 months.

Since the first case in Blackburn with Darwen last March, the Pandemic had seen more than 17,500 positive cases of COVID in the Borough; the highest cumulative rate for any local Authority in the Country.

The report detailed the Council's role as Civic Leader, and the response including, Governance, Leadership and Partnership, Adapting Services, the Testing Programme, Support for Residents, Businesses and Workplaces, the Vaccination Programme, as well as a look ahead to the 'New Normal'.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

59 Updates from Other Committees

The Chairs of the Standards Committee, PEOPLE, PLACE and Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committees provided updates on the recent work of their respective Committees.

The Chair of the Standards Committee, Councillor Saima Afzal, reported that the Committee on Standards in Public Life made a number of recommendations in their January 2019 report on local government ethical standards. In that report, they identified some best practice recommendations which represented a benchmark for ethical practice and which they expected any local authority to implement. The Standards Committee reviewed the recommendations made and as set out in the Appendices to the report considered these, against the current Code of Conduct and Constitution and also considered the option of adopting the latest Model Code of Conduct produced by the LGA.

After considering the options the Standards Committee unanimously recommended to the Council Forum

- 1) Adopt the 15 best practice recommendations which the Committee on Standards in Public Life consider represent a benchmark for ethical practice and which they expect any local authority should implement (Appendix A).

Then subject to 1) above agree the Full Council:

- 2) Update the local *Code of Conduct* and update the local *Arrangements for dealing with Complaints about the Code of Conduct for Members* to reflect the Committee on Standards in Public Life best practice recommendations as set out in both documents referenced in Appendix B;
- 3) That Best Practice Recommendation 5 – continue to apply annually for administrative effectiveness and efficiency.
- 4) That Best Practice Recommendation 15 – be applied on an annual basis with Group Leaders.

RESOLVED – That the recommendations from the Standards Committee be approved and that the report and updates from the Chairs of the PEOPLE, PLACE and Policy and Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

60 Reports of Executive Members with Portfolios

The Leader and Executive Members presented their reports, providing updates as appropriate.

During discussion of the reports, the use of the Chat function in MS Teams was discussed, and Members were advised that at the Standards Committee the night before, it had been agreed that Officers produce a protocol for correct use of the function.

RESOLVED – That the reports of the Leader and Executive Members be noted.

61 Questions from Members

No questions from Members had been received under Procedure Rule 11.

At the end of the formal business, the Leader of the Council, Councillor Mohammed Khan, reported that Councillor Suleman Khonat had been nominated for the position of Deputy Mayor for the Municipal Year 2021/22 and passed best wishes to the current Deputy Mayor for when he became Mayor. Councillor Khan also noted that this was the last Council Forum meeting that Louise Mattinson, Director of Finance would attend, and thanked her for her excellent contribution to the Council.

Councillor Khan, Councillor John Slater and the Mayor led tributes to the Councillors not seeking re-election: Councillors Colin Rigby, Andy Kay, Julie Daley and Saima Afzal.

Councillors Hardman and Khonat returned thanks, and Councillors Andy Kay and Saima Afzal responded to the tributes.

Signed at a meeting of the Annual Council

On Thursday 20th May 2021

(being the ensuing meeting on the Council) by

MAYOR