

# COUNCIL FORUM

## Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2022

**PRESENT** – *The Mayor, Councillor Suleman Khonat, Councillors P. Akhtar, Ali, Baldwin, Browne, Casey, Connor, M. Desai, S. Desai, Fielding, Floyd, Gee, Gunn, Humphrys, I. Hussain, M. Hussain, S. Hussain, Irfan, Imtiaz, S. Khan, Z. Khan, Liddle, Marrow, McCaughran, McGurk, Ab. Patel, Al. Patel, Raja, Riley, Russell, Salton, Shorrocks, Sidat, Jo. Slater, Ju. Slater, N. Slater, D. Smith, J. Smith, Talbot, Taylor, and Whittingham.*

### **RESOLUTIONS**

#### **29 Welcome and Apologies**

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

There then followed Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain.

A minute's silence was then held in memory of Queen Elizabeth II and former Councillor Doreen Taylor.

Apologies were received from Councillors H. Akhtar, Brookfield, Fazal, Harling, Hardman, Mahmood, Rawat, Rigby, and Jacq. Slater.

#### **30 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting**

**RESOLVED** – That the Minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> July 2022 be agreed as a correct record.

#### **31 Declarations of Interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

#### **32 Mayoral Communications**

The Mayor reported on events he had attended since the last meeting, including visits to Schools, Charities and Community groups. He praised these groups for all the work they have done for the Borough, and stated that he had learnt a lot from these visits.

The Mayor highlighted the high attendance at memoriam events after the passing of Queen Elizabeth II. He also thanked the staff of Blackburn with Darwen Council for all their hard work over this period.

Looking forward, the Mayor brought attention to Remembrance Day Events that would be held in November. He also asked Councillors to save the date of the Mayor's Ball.

Finally, the Mayor emphasised the importance of giving the Mayor's Office enough time in advance of events if they required the Mayor's attendance.

### **33 Casual Vacancy – Darwen South Ward**

Council Forum received a report that requested Members to note the Casual Vacancy in the Darwen South Ward.

It was noted that Andrew Walker had not been able to attend any meetings of the Council since his last attendance at the Council Forum on 24 March 2022. Under section 85(1) of the Local Government Act 1972 ('the Act'), if a member fails to attend any meeting of the Council throughout a period of six consecutive months from the date of their last attendance, they cease to be a councillor. An exception to this includes the non-attendance being formally approved in advance by the Council. Therefore, in accordance with legislation Andrew Walker's membership of the Council had ceased.

With reference to section 86 of the Act, the Council needed to declare a casual vacancy for the Darwen South ward before notice of the vacancy was published and that a by election be held to fill the vacancy.

#### **RESOLVED –**

That the Council:

1. Note that Councillor Andrew Walker has ceased to be a Member of the Council.
2. Declare a casual vacancy for the Darwen South ward.
3. Subject to 2.2 above, note that the Returning Officer shall make the necessary arrangements to hold a by election in the Darwen South ward, in accordance with legislation.
4. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to declare the office of a councillor vacant, when any change to the membership of the council occurs in the future.

### **34 Council Forum**

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

### **35 Motions**

The Chief Executive announced that one Notice of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10 as follows:

Motion to Support the Expansion of Free School Meals

The Council wishes to record its support of the expansion of free school meals. There is an understanding of the positive effects that a quality school meal has on improving school attendance, on children's health, and academic performance. The Council believes that the cost-of-living crisis heightened the need for the expansion of free school meals. There is also a belief that the solution to ensuring fairness and equity across Blackburn with Darwen's schools was to extend universal provision, as Wales and Scotland have committed to deliver.

The Council agrees for the Leader and the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Education, Kit Malthouse, to call for:

- An alleviation of financial pressure on hard working families struggling to feed their children during the cost-of-living crisis by implementing an urgent extension of free school meals to ensure universal provision for all school age groups, for a time limited period to match the cost-of-living crisis.
- A simultaneous review of the eligibility criteria and realistic threshold that would increase the number of children entitled to free school meals. Current eligibility for free school meals means a household on universal credit in England must earn less than £7,400 a year (after tax and not including benefits), regardless of the number of children in the family. This low threshold means that many children from working families in poverty are not entitled to free school meals. Universal provision to end only once this threshold has been implemented.
- Food provision for children on free school meals to be provided during the school holidays as standard. Children need healthy, nutritious meals all year round, and we need certainty that this will be provided continuously, outside of term time.

Proposer: Cllr Julie Gunn

Seconder: Cllr Damian Talbot

Following discussion and debate, Council Forum moved to the vote.

**RESOLVED** – That the Motion be carried.

## **36 Corporate Plan Refresh**

The Council were updated on the development of the Corporate Plan refresh. This included an attached draft structure of the Corporate Plan, and an explanation behind the six missions that would be included in the document.

**RESOLVED** – That the Council:

1. Agrees the six missions which the Council will focus on over the next four years.
2. Notes the draft structure of the Corporate Plan.

**37 Review of the Policy for the Minimum Revenue Provision and Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators**

Following approval at Executive Board, the Council were requested to approve the revised policy for the Council's Minimum Revenue Provision and amended Prudential and Treasury Management Indicators for 2022/23.

**RESOLVED** – That the Council approves the recommendations below as approved by the Executive Board at its meeting on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

1. The Policy on the Minimum Revenue Provision as set out at Appendix A.
2. The amended Prudential Indicators for the 2022/23 as set out at the Appendix B.

**38 Updates from Other Committees**

Council Forum received an update from the Chairs of the Overview and Scrutiny Committees on the progress of their work.

**RESOLVED** – That the updates from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees be noted.

**39 Reports of the Executive Members with portfolios**

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

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

**40 Questions from Members**

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

**41 Revised Year Planner 2022/23**

The Council were asked to approve the revised Year Planner 2022/23 which reflected the new Scrutiny Arrangements.

**RESOLVED** – That the revised Year Planned 2022/23 be approved.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Form

On 26<sup>th</sup> January 2023

(being the ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR