

COUNCIL FORUM

Thursday, 28 March 2019

PRESENT –*The Mayor Councillor Pat McFall, Councillors Afzal, Akhtar H, Akhtar P, Batan, Bateson, Brookfield, Casey, Connor, Daley, Fazal, Floyd, Gee, Groves, Gunn, Hardman, Harling, Hussain F, Hussain I, Hussain S, Jan-Virmaini, Kay, Khan M, Khan Z, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Pearson, Rigby C, Rigby J, Riley, Salton, Shorrocks, Slater Jo, Slater Ju, Slater N, Slater Ja, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

70 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillors Mahfooz Hussain, Naushad Surve, Roy Davies, Salim Sidat and Kieran Richards.

At this point of the meeting, a minutes silence was observed to remember former Councillor Henry Dickinson, who had recently passed away.

71 Minutes Of the Finance Council meeting held on 25th February 2019.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Finance Council meeting held on 25th February 2019 be agreed as a correct record.

72 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

73 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor advised that the Mayor's Ball would be held on the next day, 29th March 2019, and that it was hoped all who attended would have a great night.

The Mayor commented that this would be the last Council Forum meeting that the Chief Executive, Harry Catherall, would attend and she led the tributes to his excellent work for over 20 years at the Council. The Leaders of the Labour and Conservative groups also paid tribute and thanked the outgoing Chief Executive for his significant contribution to the Borough. The Chief Executive responded to the tributes and thanked Members and staff for their support over the years, and made reference to some of the highlights of his time as Chief Executive.

74 Council Forum

No questions had been submitted by members of the public.

75 To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

No Motions had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12.

76 LGA Corporate Peer Challenge

Members received a report which outlined the Council's response to the recommendations from the Local Government Association's (LGA) Corporate Peer Challenge which was undertaken at the Council in December 2018.

The LGA undertook a Peer Review at Blackburn with Darwen Council from 3-6 December 2018 providing an external perspective on how well the Council was performing and on its future plans.

The feedback report from the LGA, following their Corporate Peer Challenge, was reported to Executive Board on 14th February and outlined 11 key recommendations. In addition to these, there were other highlights from the final report which were outlined in the report for the Council to consider as part of the wider feedback.

The LGA had asked the Council to reflect on their findings and suggestions. Appended to the report was a table which outlined the key recommendations from the Peer Review and how the Council was responding. The Leader, Executive Members and Management Board would oversee actions and Policy Council in December 2019 would be asked to review the recommendations of the Peer Review and how they had informed our work programme.

The recommendations from the Peer Review which the Council wished to take forward would be measured through council performance reporting and business planning mechanisms. The LGA also intended to undertake a follow up 'light touch' visit in the next 12 – 24 months to help the Council assess the impact of the peer challenge and the progress it had made against the areas of improvement and development identified by the Peer Team.

RESOLVED – That:

- a) The contents of this report be noted; and
- b) The Council's response to the LGA's recommendations be endorsed.

77 Corporate Plan 2019-2023

A report was submitted seeking agreement for the Council to adopt the new Corporate Plan 2019 – 2023, from May 2019 and note that a refreshed performance framework would be developed to underpin the Corporate Plan.

Policy Council in December 2018 agreed that a new Corporate Plan 2019-2023 be developed, underpinned by a refreshed performance framework.

As reported at Policy Council in detail, the new Plan was informed by several key pieces of work and activity including independent economic analysis, refreshed Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a LSP summit held with our partners in October, the resident's survey undertaken in November and the LGA Peer Review at the end of the year.

Based on all of this activity and reflecting on the current corporate priorities, four strategic themes had been identified and underpinned by eight corporate priorities outlined in the report.

The Plan was a relatively brief strategic document highlighting the core priorities for the Council over the next four years and was underpinned by departmental business plans and other strategies and plans such as the workforce strategy, digital strategy, social integration strategy.

Subject to Council Forum approval, it was proposed that the new Corporate Plan be launched after Annual Council in May alongside the new performance framework. The Plan would be available digitally on the Council website.

RESOLVED - That:

- a) The core content of the new Corporate Plan be approved and that it be launched after Annual Council; and
- b) It be noted that a new performance framework will be developed to underpin the new Corporate Plan.

78 Councillor Disclosure and Barring Checks

Council Forum received a report containing proposed revisions to the current policy on the safeguarding and probity checks applied to Councillors.

In January the Council Forum noted that the Committee had looked at the current practice regarding undertaking police checks via the appropriate regulations. Currently all prospective councillors made a personal declaration on nomination for office as regards criminal convictions, however when elected unless their terms of office include specific health, childrens or vulnerable adults related activity, the current national regulations did not permit the Council to ask Councillors to agree to enhanced police and barred list checks.

The Standards Committee however considered that given the important role played by Councillors in the Community and the general expectations of the public as regards probity and integrity, it would be reasonable for the Council to adopt a policy where every Councillor following their election be expected to agree to a police conviction check, known as a basic disclosure, which was permitted within the regulations.

The Standards Committee also expressed the view that the cost of any basic disclosures should be borne by the Councillor, funded from their members allowance. The cycle of re-checks, being the election cycle (i.e. every 4 years).

Any new arrangements would need to be set out in a written DBS Policy approved by Council. Subject to the consideration of this report by the Council Forum it was suggested therefore that the Monitoring Officer be asked to develop a Policy which would include would fully set out the process for carrying out checks, the type of DBS check, retention/storage of

the DBS certificates, renewal, portability, the use of the disclosure information, access to information and what actions would be taken and by whom on the disclosure of convictions.

The Standards Committee also considered that the role of the modern councillor by its nature meant regular `unsupervised` access to and representation of vulnerable people in a variety of settings and they felt the current rules prohibiting the higher `enhanced` level of check for all councillors should be reconsidered by government.

In this context the Standards Committee requested that the Council Forum agree that the Chief Executive be asked to write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to express the view that in support of the Code of Conduct for Councilors and the expectations as referenced in the Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 2011, all elected members of Council's should be subject of `enhanced` disclosure and barring services checks.

RESOLVED –

1. That following election each councillor be asked to undertake a basic disclosure check which would detail any unspent convictions in line with the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act;
2. Subject to 1) above, to agree that following election any councillor who by nature of occupation/role has a DBS certificate of not more than 4 years old be allowed to utilise this certificate (known as portability) to meet requirement 1, but will be asked to undertake a basic disclosure check on the anniversary of the 4th year of the issuing of this certificate or submit a revised (portability based) certificate at that time;
3. Subject to 1) above, to agree, that the cost of the basic disclosure, currently £25, be borne by the councillor from their allowances payments;
4. Subject to 1) – 3) above, and in order to implement the new arrangements ask the Monitoring Officer to develop a DBS Policy incorporating these new arrangements as set out in this report in consultation with the Standards Committee, bringing the Policy for approval of full council in the summer; and
5. To agree that the Chief Executive write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to express the view that in support of the Code of Conduct for Councilors and the expectations as referenced in the Section 27(2) of the Localism Act 201, all elected members of Council's should be subject of `enhanced` disclosure and barring services checks.

79 Updates from other Committees

Update reports from the Standards Committee, Policy and Corporate Resources, PEOPLE and PLACE Overview and Scrutiny Committees were presented by the respective Chairs.

RESOLVED – That the update reports be noted.

80 Reports of the Executive Members with Portfolios:

The Leader and Executive Members presented their update reports to the Council Forum, providing verbal updates as appropriate.

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

81 Year Planner 2019/20

The revised Year Planner 2019/20 was submitted for approval, following submission of the draft version to Council Forum in January.

It was noted that the date for Civic Sunday 2020 had now been changed to Sunday 24th May 2020.

RESOLVED – That the Year Planner 2019/20 as amended be agreed.

82 To consider any questions received from Members under Procedure Rule 11

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

Signed at a meeting of the Annual Council
on Thursday, 16th May 2019
(being the ensuing meeting on the Council Forum) by

MAYOR