

COUNCIL FORUM

Thursday, 18 July 2019

PRESENT –*The Mayor Councillor Jim Shorrock (in the Chair), Councillors; Afzal; Akhtar P; Batan; Bateson; Browne, Brookfield; Casey; Connor; Daley, Davies; Desai, Fazal; Floyd; Gee; Groves; Hardman; Harling; Hussain I; Hussain M; Hussain S; Jan-Virmani; Kay; Khan M; Khonat; Liddle; Mahmood Q; Marrow; McGurk; Oates; Patel; Pearson; Rawat; Riley; Salton; Sidat; Slater Jo; Smith D; Smith J; Talbot and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

12 Welcome and Apologies

Following the reading of the notice convening the meeting by the Chief Executive, the Mayor welcomed all to the meeting. Apologies were received from Councillors Hussain Akhtar, Julie Gunn, Zamir Khan, Pat McFall, Colin Rigby, Jean Rigby, Jacqueline Slater, Julie Slater, Neil Slater and Brian Taylor.

13 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

RESOLVED - The Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 16th May 2019 were agreed as a correct record.

14 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

15 Mayoral Communications

The Mayor updated Council Forum on recent events and activities and welcomed back returning Councillors Paul Browne and Mustafa Desai, as well as welcoming new Councillor Zainab Rawat. The Mayor also requested that all Members behave appropriately in the Council Chamber during his Mayoral Year.

16 Council Forum

One question had been submitted under Procedure Rule 10, from Sarah Jeal as follows:

This is a question for the Lead Member for Children and Education.

I am the mother of a very intelligent, frustrated 18 month old daughter.

I moved up to Blackburn with my husband a few years ago. I also have a 4 year old son who attends Shadsworth Infant School, he started in September after attending Shadsworth Children's Centre from the age of 2.

My son found it very difficult in social situations and was a very shy little boy, with little support network he and his sister are very isolated.

However, my husband's yearly income was below the criteria to qualify for

the free 15 hours a week nursery place. So I enrolled him in Shadsworth Children's Centre. The change in my son was remarkable, he went from shy and withdrawn to a bright and excitable little boy with many friends. This was in September 2016.

However, my daughter who will be 2 in September this year does not qualify for the free 15 hours. My husband's yearly wage has slightly increased in line with the recent national living wage rises. This now means that we are over the criteria to qualify for the free child's place.

My daughter will not be attending nursery until she is 3 although my friends (who does not work) child will be attending when they turn 2 this year. My child will be held back from education because one parent works and earns a low income.

Could the Member for Children and Education explain why as a working family we do not qualify for something that was put in place to encourage employment, that will impact on mine and many others children?

Thank you, please will the Member for Children and Education support me and the other families of this Borough and write to the Secretary of State for both DWP and Education to lobby them to increase the maximum earning limits in line with national minimum wage?

Councillor Maureen Bateson in response advised that she had every sympathy for Mrs Jeal's position, and that it was hoped that assistance could be given. Councillor Bateson referred to the Motion later in the meeting where the benefits freeze would be further discussed and representations to the Government were proposed.

17 To consider Motions submitted under Procedure Rule 12

Two Motions had been received under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

MOTION 1

Motion to DECLARE A CLIMATE EMERGENCY

BwDBC notes:

1. Humans have already caused irreversible climate change, the impacts of which are being felt around the world. Global temperatures have already increased by 1°C from pre-industrial levels. Atmospheric CO₂ levels are above 400 parts per million (ppm). The latest report from the Inter-Governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in October 2018 gave us 12 years to implement changes to keep global warming to a maximum of 1.5°C in order to avoid widespread drought, food scarcity, heat related deaths and loss of biodiversity including insects and vital food crop pollinators.
2. At present the world is on track to overshoot the Paris Agreement's 1.5°C limit before 2050. In order to reduce the chance of runaway global warming and limit the effects of climate breakdown, it is imperative that we as a species reduce our CO₂e (carbon equivalent)

emissions from their current 6.5 tonnes per person per year to less than 2 tonnes as soon as possible.

3. Individuals cannot be expected to make this reduction on their own. Society needs to change its laws, taxation, and infrastructure to make low carbon living easier and the new norm.
4. Carbon emissions result from both production and consumption.
5. Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has already made some positive progress, but this is not enough. More can and must be done. The Independent Panel on Climate Change in its Oct. 2018 report was very clear that action from all parts of society is necessary and local government has a responsibility to lead the way.
6. Town and city councils around the world are responding by declaring a 'Climate Emergency' and taking action to address this emergency.

BwDBC believes that:

1. All levels of government (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown. Local councils that recognise this should not wait for their national governments to change their policies.
2. Towns and cities are uniquely placed to lead the world in reducing carbon emissions, as they are in many ways easier to decarbonise than rural areas.
3. The consequences of global temperature rising above 1.5°C are so severe that preventing this from happening must be humanity's number one priority.
4. Bold local climate action can deliver economic and social benefits in terms of new green jobs, economic savings and market opportunities, as well as much improved well-being for Blackburn *with* Darwen residents – for example through reducing fuel poverty and energy bills, encouraging healthy, active travel and improving green spaces and access to nature.

BwDBC decides to:

1. Declare a 'Climate Emergency'.
2. Commit to a target of making Blackburn *with* Darwen carbon neutral by 2030, taking into account both production and consumption emissions (scope 1, 2 and 3 of the Greenhouse Gas Protocol - GHG Protocol establishes comprehensive global standardised frameworks to measure and manage greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from private and public sector operations, value chains and mitigation actions).
3. Request an update report within six months setting out the immediate actions the Council has taken and will take to address this emergency and a plan to measure annual borough-wide progress towards meeting the 2030 target.
4. Work with partners across our towns and across the region to deliver this new goal through all relevant strategies and plans and drawing on local and global best practice.
5. Actively lobby the Government to provide the additional powers and resources needed to meet the 2030 target.

Proposed by:- Cllr Andy Kay

Seconded by:- Cllr Tasleem Fazal

The Motion was debated and then Members moved to the Vote.

RESOLVED - That the Motion as submitted be carried.

MOTION 2

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council calls upon our Chief Executive to write to the MPs for both of our towns, requesting that they too write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, as well as the Secretary of State for Education to demand an urgent cumulative impact assessment of the austerity programme that has been driven by the Coalition government of 2010-2015 and the Conservative government since 2015.

As a result of the “benefit freeze” many families are unable to qualify for the 15 hours of 2 year olds free child care because the national minimum wage now exceeds the qualifying income level.

In addition to this, our Chief Executive and our MPs must also ask what the Government is going to do to alleviate the increases of poverty, including in work poverty levels now internationally recognised by the UN and others.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council calls for the reversal of the freeze of benefits, and demands an increase to all benefits and eligibility criteria in line with inflation, including the 15 hour offer of childcare for 2 year olds from £16,180 per year, which is the rate set in 2014.

Proposed by Cllr Vicky McGurk

Seconded by Cllr Sylvia Liddle

In moving the Motion, Councillor Vicky McGurk advised that the figure quoted of £16,180 a year should read £16,190.

Members then debated the Motion and a Recorded Vote was proposed and this was agreed, with Members voting as follows:

FOR: Councillors Afzal, Akhtar, Batan, Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Casey, Davies, Desai, Fazal, Floyd, Groves, Harling, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Jan-Virmani, Kay, Khan, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Rawat, Riley, Sidat, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Whittle and the Mayor, Councillor Jim Shorrocks.

AGAINST: Councillors Connor, Gee, Hardman, Marrow, Pearson, Salton, and Slater.

ABSTAIN: Councillor Daley.

RESOLVED: That the Motion be carried.

A report was submitted advising the Council that the Constitution has been updated to reflect changes to the Portfolios and Chief Officer structure of the Council following decisions made throughout 2018/19 and at the Annual Council in May 2019.

Members were asked to note that the Constitution had also been updated by the Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer (as appropriate) under their delegated responsibilities to ensure continued compliance with legislation and also where appropriate to improve clarity and ease of reference.

The Pay Policy 2019/20 had now been updated to include Trades Union Facility Time information.

The proposed updated Constitution and Pay Policy Documents would be published and publicly available on the Council's website following the meeting.

RESOLVED – 1) That the revised Constitution be approved, adopted and published on the Council's website;

2) That the updated Pay Policy be noted and published on the Council's website.

19 Councillor Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) Checks

Further to the approval of recommendations relating to the introduction of DBS checks for Councillors at the Council March Council Forum meeting, at their meeting in June the Standards Committee received a report from the Monitoring Officer and now recommended the Policy as attached (Appendix A) for approval by the Council Forum. Following approval, a letter and supporting information would then be issued to all elected Members.

The Council Forum in March also resolved 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 Councillors 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. As at the end of June 2019, the Council had not received a response from the Secretary of State.

RESOLVED: That the DBS Policy as per Appendix A of the report submitted, as recommended by the Standards Committee, be approved.

20 Update from other Committees

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

RESOLVED – That the update reports be noted.

21 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.

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

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

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum
on Thursday, 3 October 2019
(being the ensuing meeting on the Council Forum) by

MAYOR