

BOLTON METROPOLITAN BOROUGH

2013/2014

MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

28TH AUGUST, 2013

Present - Councillors Shaw (Mayor), G. Harkin (Deputy Mayor), Allen, Ashcroft, Ayub, Bashir-Ismail, C. Burrows, D. Burrows, J. Byrne, L. Byrne, Chadwick, A. Connell, M. Connell, Cunliffe, Darvesh, Dean, Donaghy, Evans, Mrs. Fairclough, Greenhalgh, Hall, Haslam, Hayes, A. Ibrahim, I. Ibrahim, Iqbal, Irving, Jones, Kay, Kellett, Lewis, McKeon, Mistry, Morgan, Morris, Murray, Peacock, Peel, Pickup, Radlett, Rushton, Sherrington, Silvester, Spencer, Mrs. Swarbrick, Mrs. Thomas, A. Walsh, J. Walsh, Watters and Wild.

23. PETITIONS

The following petitions were received –

- (a) Residents requesting fencing to be erected around the bowling green, Leverhulme Park which was referred to the Director of Environmental Services; and
- (b) Residents requesting the retention of open space at Devonshire Road Playing Fields which was referred to the Deputy Chief Executive.

24. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Council held on 26th June, 2012 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

25. 2013/2014 FOOD SERVICES PLAN

It was moved by Councillor Peel, seconded by Councillor J. Byrne and agreed –

That the 2013/14 Food Services Plan be approved.

26. ACCESS TO INFORMATION REGULATIONS

It was moved by Councillor Morris, seconded by Councillor Mrs. Thomas and agreed –

That the quarterly report on Executive decisions made under the special urgency provisions of the Access to Information Regulations be noted.

27. SYSTEM OF RISK MANAGEMENT

It was moved by Councillor Greenhalgh, seconded by Councillor A. Connell and agreed -

That the Audit Committee confirms that the system of risk management in the Authority is adequate in identifying risks and allowing the Authority to understand the appropriate management of those risks and confirms that there are no areas of significant duplication or omission in the systems of governance in the Authority that have come to the Committee's attention and have not been adequately resolved.

28. CHANGES IN COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP AND APPOINTMENTS TO OTHER BODIES

It was moved by Councillor Donaghy, seconded by Councillor Mrs. Fairclough and agreed –

That the following appointments and changes in membership be approved:-

- (i) That Councillor Mrs Thomas replace Councillor A. Connell on the Octagon Theatre Trust.

**29. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS UNDER STANDING ORDER
9(a)**

The following questions were asked under Standing Order 9(a):-

- (i) by Councillor Hayes relating to the use of Airport Dividend – Residential Roads

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (ii) by Councillor Peacock relating to Bolton's Economy

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (iii) by Councillor Jones relating to GCSE and A Level results

The Cabinet Member for Schools and Skills replied to this question

- (iv) by Councillor Morgan relating to Broadband Speeds

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (v) by Councillor Haslam relating to the Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (vi) by Councillor Ashcroft relating to GCSE and A Level results

The Deputy Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (vii) by Councillor Greenhalgh relating to stalls in the new refurbished market

The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhood and Community Services replied to this question.

- (viii) by Councillor Dean relating to the Charity Canopy – Newport Street improvements

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

- (ix) by Councillor Wild relating to 20mph speed limits – residential roads in the Borough

The Executive Cabinet Member for Environmental Services replied to this question.

- (x) by Councillor Ashcroft relating to recent protest

The Leader of the Council replied to this question.

30. PLANNING COMMITTEE

It was moved by Councillor Darvesh, seconded by Councillor Kellett and resolved –

That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Planning Committee held on 18th July, 2013 be approved.

31. LICENSING AND REGULATIONS COMMITTEE

It was moved by Councillor Kay, seconded by Councillor Jones and resolved –

That the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Licensing and Environmental Regulations Committee held on 27th June and 23rd July, 2013 be approved.

32. SCRUTINY COMMITTEES

It was moved by Councillor I. Ibrahim, seconded by Councillor Donaghy and resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings of the following Scrutiny Committees be approved:-

Corporate and External Issues Scrutiny Committee – 27th August, 2013

Environmental Services Scrutiny Committee – 20th August, 2013

Children Services and Culture Scrutiny Committee – 21st August, 2013

Health Overview and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee – 23rd July, 2013

33. AREA FORUMS

It was moved by Councillor Peel, seconded by Councillor J. Byrne and resolved –

That the minutes of the meetings of the Area Forums, now submitted, be approved.

Astley Bridge Area Forum – 19th June, 2013

Bradshaw Area Forum – 12th June, 2013

Brightmet Area Forum – 17th July, 2013

Bromley Cross Area Forum – 10th July, 2013

Crompton Area Forum – 5th June, 2013

Great Lever Area Forum – 11th July, 2013

Halliwel Area Forum – 4th June, 2013

Harper Green Area Forum – 3rd June, 2013

Heaton and Lostock Area Forum – 19th June, 2013

Hulton Area Forum – 18th June, 2013

Kearsley Area Forum – 24th June, 2013

Little Lever and Darcy Lever Area Forum – 10th June, 2013

Rumworth Area Forum – 13th June, 2013

Smithills Area Forum – 4th July, 2013

Tonge with the Haulgh Area Forum – 3rd July, 2013

Two Towns Area Forum – 11th June, 2013

Westhoughton with Chew Moor Area Forum – 5th June, 2013

34. MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 4 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

It was moved by Councillor Mrs. Thomas and seconded by Councillor McKeon -

The PM announced in 2010 that:-

“This Government will not cut this deficit in a way that hurts those we most need to help, that divides the country, or undermines the spirit and ethos of our public services”.

The reality sits in stark contrast to the promise as the cuts both in terms of grants to local authorities and individuals have in fact been focussed on some of the most deprived areas of the country, including Bolton. They have in fact further disadvantaged the worse off councils by diverting their funding to the better off councils. The holistic effect of the Government’s policies on the Borough is causing untold damage and should be reversed.

Furthermore, this Council believes there is an alternative to its attack on public services – namely the levy of a financial transaction tax on the speculative activities that have accelerated the recent enrichment of the few to the detriment of the many. The Council therefore calls upon Government to enact the FTT and use the revenues from this measure to reverse on-going shrinkage in central grants to our Council, in order for them to comply as a coalition with their stated intention to act with ‘fairness’.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.

**35. MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 4 –
PROPOSALS TO REDUCE THE NUMBER OF
COUNCILLORS AND SRA’S**

It was moved by Councillor Hayes and seconded by Councillor Radlett -

Council recognises that the national and international situation has led to massive reductions in public sector spending, and that this has disproportionately impacted on local government. In Bolton, this has meant reductions in the standard of service received by Council Tax payers and a considerable reduction in the numbers of employees.

Council believes that in these circumstances Councillors should also be seen to be making sacrifices, and instructs the Chief Executive to bring forward proposals to achieve a reduction in the number of Councillors and in the number of Special Responsibility Allowances paid at the earliest opportunity.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared lost.

**36. MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 4 –
REFORM OF DEMOCRATIC PROCEDURES**

It was moved by Councillor Morris and seconded by Councillor Peacock -

As austerity is set to continue under the current Government, with Local Authorities taking the disproportionate share of cuts across Whitehall departments, we can only expect more cuts to hit local services.

With this in mind, this Council feels that it is only appropriate that both we in Local Government, and national Government, look vigorously for savings so to protect the most vulnerable in our society.

Therefore, this Council asks that the Coalition re-investigate the missed opportunities they have had to reform our democratic procedures in national and local government so that efficiencies can be found whilst protecting our democratic rights.

Upon being put to the vote, the Motion was declared carried.

37. MOTION UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 4 – BEDROOM TAX

It was moved by Councillor Peel and seconded by Councillor Lewis -

That this Council endorses the following principles when dealing with the Bedroom Tax:-

Bolton Council is committed to working with our social housing providers to protect tenants from the Bedroom Tax in the following ways:-

- proactively engaging with tenants and offering advice and assistance;
- preventing tenants from losing their homes through sensitive debt management and rent arrears procedures;
- identifying the need for and processing discretionary housing payments quickly; and

adjusting allocations and letting policies to assist tenants who wish to downsize.

Bolton Council is also committed to protesting to the Government to repeal the Bedroom Tax by:-

working with tenant organisations who call for the repeal of the Bedroom Tax;
communicating the hidden costs and impracticalities of the Bedroom Tax;
demonstrating to Government the unfairness of the Bedroom Tax; and
working with the Government to provide alternative strategies to address housing shortages.

Consequently, a Policy Development Group will be convened to work through these proposals in greater detail.

Furthermore, this Council welcomes and endorses a 'no-homelessness' policy that has recently been adopted by the Bolton at Home Board, which is a new and innovative approach to dealing with Bedroom Tax arrears.

The policy will apply where the tenants' arrears are solely as a consequence of the bedroom tax. In these circumstances, and where the tenant has made every effort to engage with Bolton at Home, eviction proceedings will proceed but, before any possession warrant is executed, the tenant will receive a final one-off offer re-housing option in a property identified as meeting their housing needs.

This 'no homelessness' approach will provide a balanced and sustainable response to the need for Bedroom Tax arrears to be paid, but with the freedom from the fear that there will be homelessness as a consequence of unavoidable arrears.

Although the only long term solution to the Bedroom Tax is a repeal of the legislation, the no-homelessness policy could potentially provide a long term, sustainable and credible solution to the issue of unavoidable arrears as a result of the Bedroom Tax.

Where upon the motion was put to the meeting where the voting was as follows –

The Motion was then put to the vote when the voting was as follows:-

For the Motion, 45 viz:

Councillors Allen, Ayub, Bashir-Ismail, C. Burrows, D. Burrows, J. Byrne, L. Byrne, Chadwick, A. Connell, M. Connell, Cunliffe, Darvesh, Dean, Donaghy, Evans, Mrs. Fairclough, Greenhalgh, G. Harkin, Haslam, Hayes, A. Ibrahim, I. Ibrahim, Iqbal, Irving, Jones, Kay, Kellett, Lewis, McKeon, Mistry, Morgan, Morris, Murray, Peacock, Peel, Pickup, Radlett, Sherrington, Silvester, Spencer, Mrs. Swarbrick, Mrs. Thomas, A. Walsh, Watters and Wild.

Abstentions, 4 viz:

Councillors Ashcroft, Hall, Rushton and J. Walsh.

Whereupon the Motion was declared carried.

(The meeting started at 7.00 p.m. and finished at 9.35 p.m.)