

BOLTON COUNCIL

Members of the Council are hereby summoned to attend a meeting of the Council to be held in the Council Chamber, 2nd Floor, Town Hall on Wednesday next, 23rd March, 2022 at 7.00 p.m. when the following business is proposed to be transacted: -

1. Vote of Thanks to Madam Mayor and Consort

Motion to be moved by Councillor Cox

2. Minutes

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the proceedings of the meetings of the Council held on 16th March, 2022 (Section A) (to follow).

3. Constitution

Motion in the name of Councillor Cox –

That the amendments to the Council's Scheme of Delegation for 2021/2022, as circulated, be approved.

4. Changes in Committee Membership and Appointments to Other Bodies

5. Questions under Standing Order No. 9(a)

6. Questions under Standing Order No. 9(c)

7. Committee Proceedings

To approve the proceedings of the following Committee:-

Licensing and Environmental Regulation Committee
(See Section B)

8. Motions under Standing Order No.4

(a) Motion in the name of Councillor Silvester -

This Council believes that healthy high streets throughout the Bolton Borough are essential for community cohesion, civic pride, employment, shopping, services and leisure. But many shops and businesses were struggling even before the Covid pandemic: high street retail employment fell in more than three-quarters of local authorities between 2015 and 2018 according to the Office of National Statistics and more than half of all UK consumers were shopping online before the pandemic.

This Council notes that retail is among the sectors most affected by the coronavirus pandemic, and retail workers have been on the frontline of the crisis throughout. The almost complete shutdown of non-essential shops between March and June 2020 has hit businesses hard, and the need for social distancing has changed the way many businesses operate, reducing footfall. The pandemic has accelerated what, in many cases, has been a longer trend of lower footfall and changing shopping habits. As the Portas Review a decade ago acknowledged, the form and function of many high streets needs to radically change if they are to adapt and survive.

This Council welcomes the willingness of Government to acknowledge the problems and come forward with initiatives in response to these challenges such as the furlough scheme, the Covid support business loans, and the High Street Taskforce. However, as the Treasury Select Committee stated in 2019, the current system of Business Rates places an unfair burden on “bricks

and mortar” businesses compared to online retailers, and the Business Rate system needs radical overhaul. The announcements in the Budget, though welcome, fall short of what is required: small changes to revaluation cycles and temporary discounts simply tinker around the edges, and will not deliver the support that local high streets need and deserve.

This Council resolves to:

Write to the Government to urge it to scrap business rates and replace them with a system which is fit for purpose and which levels the playing field between bricks and mortar businesses and online retail giants.

Campaign to devolve funds like the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other national funding pots, to give local communities, councils and regions the ultimate say in how it is spent in their area.

Explore what local action can be taken to revive our high streets and town centres including facilitating a public meeting involving the Bolton Civic Trust and other stakeholders to discuss the plans for the redevelopment of Bolton Town Centre.

Make full use of s215 planning enforcement powers where empty units are attracting antisocial behaviour or creating an eyesore on the high street – and name and shame those premises which don't do their bit and are regularly subject to enforcement.

Proactively contact landlords of vacant premises (and work with Chambers of Commerce, Landlord Associations and BID managers) to explore meanwhile use options and/or encourage alternative rental models (e.g. turnover rather than market rent) to enable new co-operatives, SMEs,

social enterprises and community businesses to open their doors on the high street.

(b) Motion in the name of Councillor Donaghy –

Council deplores the decision by the Government Agency Ofcom to raise the Energy Price Cap by around £700 from April 2022: a decision that will affect more than 22 million customers. Council sees the help proposed so far by the Government as woefully inadequate, amounting to a £150 one off payment, and a further 'loan' of £200. Council believes that this excessive increase in bills will directly lead to an increase in the hardship already suffered by many people in this borough, and worse still, will lead to many vulnerable people being too afraid to heat their homes.

Council therefore calls upon the Government to:

- A. Agree with the independent proposals by Ecotricity to remove the VAT element on energy bills for all customers who use up to 3KW per annum, and to further explore a grading system of VAT on fuel use over 3KW per annum, based upon the amount of energy used.
- B. To hold a public inquiry into all possible solutions to the energy crisis.
- C. For the Government to intervene directly by subsidising energy prices in the same way that it does to farming and train fares, among others.

(c) Motion in the name of Councillor Veevers –

Council notes with concern that inflation has risen to its highest point for 10 years and that further increases to the cost of power, fuel, food and other consumer goods and to fares for public transport are likely to mean more rises.

Council also notes that this is happening at a time when real incomes are being reduced by increases to National Insurance, below inflation pay rises, cuts to Universal Credit and ending or suspension of the 'triple lock' safeguarding for state pensions. This will have a proportionately greater impact on those on low or medium incomes.

Council believes that Government must take urgent action to reduce the impacts on those who cannot afford it and spread the cost to those at the top of the earnings scale and Companies that have largely avoided paying a fair level of taxation.

Council resolves to make these views known to appropriate levels of Government and ask the Borough's MPs to support these moves to reduce the impact on the majority of Bolton's inhabitants.

(d) Motion in the name of Councillor D. Wilkinson -

Council recognises the out pouring of sympathy for the Ukrainian people from the individuals, churches, schools and businesses from across the communities of Bolton and the country in providing donations both of goods, supplies and money.

That council supports the economic sanctions imposed on Russia and the oligarchs to help the Ukrainian people in their fight for freedom but calls upon all individuals and organisations which have received political donations from questionable Russian sources to donate such monies to charities which support the Ukrainian people.

It is now unacceptable for the sake of transparency and for British democracy for those organisations and individuals to retain those Russian monies.

That council calls upon the borough's MP's to support the renouncing of Russian donations.



TONY OAKMAN
Chief Executive
Town Hall, Bolton

16th March, 2022

The proceedings of the Cabinet and Executive Cabinet
Member Portfolio meetings from 7th March to 15th March 2022
are included for information only in a separate volume.