

TRAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

21 JANUARY 2015

PRESENT

The Worshipful the Mayor (Councillor Ejaz Malik), in the Chair.

J. Holden	M. Cornes	P. Myers
S. Adshead	J. Coupe	D. O'Sullivan
S. Anstee	L. Dagnall	I. Platt
Dr. K. Barclay	Mrs. P. Dixon	K. Procter
J. Baugh	Mrs. L. Evans	Mrs J. Reilly
J. Bennett	N. Evans	T. Ross
Miss L. Blackburn	T. Fishwick	M. Sephton
R. Bowker	M. Freeman	B. Sharp
H. Boyle	P. Gratrix	B. Shaw
Mrs. A. Bruer-Morris	J. Harding	E.W. Stennett
Mrs. J.E. Brophy	D. Higgins	S. Taylor
B. Brotherton	M. Hyman	L. Walsh
D. Bunting	C. Hynes	A. Western
D. Butt	D. Jarman	M. Whetton
C. Candish	P. Lally	A. Williams
K. Carter	J. Lamb	M. Young
R. Chilton	J. Lloyd	Mrs. P. Young
Mrs. L. Cooke	A. Mitchell	

In attendance

Chief Executive	Ms. T. Grant
Corporate Director Children, Families and Wellbeing	Mrs. D. Brownlee
Corporate Director Economic Growth, Environment and Infrastructure	Mrs. H. Jones
Acting Corporate Director Transformation and Resources	Ms. J. Hyde
Director of Finance	Mr. I. Duncan
Director of Legal and Democratic Services	Ms. J. Le Fevre
Democratic and Performance Services Manager	Mr. P. Forrester
Marketing and Communications Team Leader	Mrs. K. Dooley
Democratic Services Officer	Mr. I. Cockill

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D. Acton, C. Boyes, M. Cordingley, A. Duffield, J.R. Reilly, B. Rigby, J. Smith, Mrs. V. Ward and D. Western.

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59. MINUTES

That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 12 November 2014 and the Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held on 10 December 2014, be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

60. ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Her Majesty the Queen's New Year's Honours

The Council joined the Mayor in congratulating those residents who had received recognition in the Queen's New Year Honours List, namely:

Mr Robert Hough of Bowdon awarded the citation of Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) for services to Business in the North West;

Miss Rebecca Bryant of Sale awarded the citation of Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (OBE) for services to the community and Victim Support in Manchester;

Ms Arlene McCarthy of Bowdon awarded the OBE for parliamentary and political services;

Mr Robert McLoughlin of Hale awarded the OBE for services to Broadcasting in the North West;

Mr Lawrence Jones of Hale Barns awarded the citation of Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to the Digital Economy; and

Mr Joseph Brown of Sale awarded the citation of Medallist of the Order of the British Empire (BEM) for services to Community Sport in Trafford.

On behalf of the Council, the Mayor had written to convey congratulations for their achievements.

(b) Greater Manchester Devolution

Further to the previous meeting of the Council held on 10 December 2014, the Leader of the Council announced that the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) had confirmed its support for the Devolution Agreement at its meeting on 19 December 2014 and that the approved Scheme had been submitted to the Secretary of State on 22 December. The Leader also outlined key dates leading up to the Order being placed before Parliament on 27 February 2015 and confirmed that Trafford would be in a position to respond to the Consultation on the proposals to amend the Constitution of the GMCA before the 13 February deadline.

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61. QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The Mayor reported that 6 questions had been received under Procedure Rule 10.2.

- (a) Councillor Freeman asked the following question for which he had given notice:

“The Leader of the Council will be aware as will other elected members of the considerable public disquiet evidenced on social media and FOI applications surrounding the continued delay in publishing the Report of this Council into the 7 million pound black hole in the Council’s finances for 2014/15, caused by the overspend in Adult Social Care.

Whilst I and members in this chamber can appreciate why publication has been delayed can the Leader for clarity now give a clear time line to elected members and the public as to when this report will be published and reaffirm in doing so this Council’s commitment to openness, honesty and transparency?”

In response, Councillor Anstee stated that there was no black hole in the Council’s finances and that the Council was operating with a balanced budget and like in previous years, was on target again in the current year. The report could not be published until after the end of a number of disciplinary hearings, for which the Leader had no definitive timeline and was a position that the Information Commissioner’s Office was in agreement with. Councillor Anstee confirmed that the Council was committed to being open about the investigation as soon as it could.

As a supplementary question, Councillor Freeman asked whether an undertaking to be open and transparent about the processes and mitigating factors could be provided before the Budget Council Meeting in February, to which the Leader referred the Member to the answer he had just given.

- (b) Councillor Harding asked the following question for which she had given notice:

“The Executive Member will be aware from the email sent to all Trafford councillors last week by the Breathe Clean Air Group that they have been monitoring air pollution in Urmston and Davyhulme over the past 12 months. The analysis, undertaken by an accredited Laboratory, shows that the levels of NO2 at locations near the M60 motorway and in Urmston town centre are considerably higher than the EU safety limit and in some cases more than 50% above the safety limit.

Will he take heed of these findings and ensure that the specific sites where these recordings have been collected are monitored by the Council’s own air quality testing and, if air pollution is found to be in excess of the EU safety limit, ensure that this Council takes urgent action to remedy this in the best interests of the health and wellbeing of local residents?”

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Councillor Hyman, Executive Member for Economic Growth and Planning advised that the Breathe Clean Air Group (BCAG) had sent air quality monitoring results to all Councillors on two occasions and in October 2014, the Head of Public Protection sent out a detailed response that put the BCAG figures into context both in terms of the quality of the data provided and the extensive monitoring already undertaken by Trafford and other Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA). There was some uncertainty about the methods employed to take the samples and how accurate they were compared to the monitoring results from the Council's automatic monitoring stations that were used to gather information for the Greater Manchester air quality network and the national monitoring network.

Councillor Hyman indicated that the EU standards referred to in the question are not 'safety limits' but air quality objectives that were targets that had been set for air quality management areas across Europe. As there can be large fluctuations in pollution levels throughout the day, measurement techniques were standardised across the country and pollutants were monitored by councils 24/7 all year round. The Council's monitoring results indicated that the recorded nitrogen dioxide levels in Trafford had not changed significantly for some time and that particulate matter, smaller than 10 microns, was decreasing over time.

Air quality was, nevertheless, a concern for the Council and to address the issues raised by BCAG, the Council had agreed to commission an additional new automatic monitoring station which would be located in close proximity to the M60 motorway in Davyhulme in February 2015 and which would support the AGMA air quality strategy. Acknowledging that cars, buses, and heavy goods vehicles were the main source of UK nitrogen dioxide pollution in towns and cities, the Executive Member advised that there would need to be a European or national policy change to promote the use of low emission vehicles to properly tackle the problem and significantly reduce NO2 levels.

Councillor Hyman also referred Members to a recent communication from Environmental Pollution which provided additional information to all Members.

Councillor Harding welcomed the response and asked as a supplementary question whether the Council could continue to work with BCAG. Indicating that the Council continued to listen to all parts of the community that wished to participate, Councillor Hyman confirmed that the Council would listen to the BCAG and set its views against the Council's own monitoring results.

(c) Councillor A. Western asked the following question for which he had given notice:

"Could the Leader of the Council please confirm exactly how he intends to spend the unanticipated interim airport dividend recently announced, amounting to £1 million?"

Councillor Anstee responded to the question advising that it was being used to support the Revenue Budget in the current financial year and that other uses would be detailed in the near future, in the budget report to Council.

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Councillor A. Western asked as a supplementary question for an undertaking that monies from the dividend will be spent on frontline services. The Leader of the Council indicated that the majority of spending would be on frontline services within the Children and Families Directorate and that reference would be made to this in the report when presented.

- (d) Councillor A. Western asked the following question for which he had given notice:

“Could the Executive Member please confirm how much the authority is paying the company Grayson Gritting H&E Services for gritting supervision in Trafford? The figure paid to date, month by month, along with an estimate of the annual cost of this would be appreciated”

Responding on behalf of the Executive Member for Environment and Operations, Councillor Coupe reported that Grayson H&E Services were appointed by the Council in November 2014 to carry out winter maintenance supervision. The rate paid by the Council was £200 per week for standby, plus £250 for each gritting callout and in the six weeks up to 5 January 2015 there had been 14 callouts. The total amount invoiced up to 5 January was £4,700, £1,200 standby plus £3,500 for callouts. There had been 11 callouts since 5 January so the Council would be invoiced for a further £2,750 to date and the total standby cost for the winter season would be £5,000, 25 weeks at £200. At current callout rates, the Council estimated that the total callout costs for the season would be £11,250 making an estimated overall cost of £16,250.

Thanking Councillor Coupe for the information, Councillor A. Western asked as a supplementary question why the contract for these services had been outsourced with, as he understood, no consultation with the workforce? In the absence of the Executive Member, Councillor Coupe agreed to refer the question to him for a written response.

- (e) Councillor Adshead asked the following question for which he had given notice:

“Could the Executive member for Environment and Operations please let me know how many reports of pots holes there were in the year before the Council changed the definition of a pot hole and years subsequent to that, could he also tell us the cost to the Council in terms of claims for damage to vehicles during the same period against Trafford Council?”

Councillor Coupe responded on behalf of the Executive Member for Environment and Operations and advised that the definition of a pothole was not changed by the Council and that a revised Highway Inspection Policy – ‘Code of Practice for Highway Safety Inspections’, a delegated Executive decision in October 2012, clarified the definition of a pothole, as advised by the Audit Commission. The revision had been required as the old policy did not include any such clarification.

Councillor Coupe informed Councillor Adshead that he had the facts and figures requested before him in table form and he would forward the information to him.

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In light of the revised definition and being of the opinion that standards were deteriorating, a meeting about which he was due to attend, Councillor Adshead asked as a supplementary question what had been done in terms of lobbying to achieve additional funding and what would be the full cost of bringing Trafford's Highways up to the adequate standard?

Councillor Coupe indicated that he would, in the absence of the Executive Member, refer it to him with a request that Councillor J.R. Reilly gets back to Councillor Adshead before the meeting he referred to.

- (f) Councillor Mrs. Brophy asked the following question for which she had given notice:

"The number of pensioners receiving meals on wheels from their local council has halved in the past five years. According to new figures obtained through a Freedom of Information request the number of elderly people receiving local authority-funded meals has fallen from 296,000 in 2009/10 to around 109,000, that's a 63% drop.

Please would the Executive Member comment on whether pensioners in Trafford have experienced a drop in numbers receiving meals on wheels?"

Councillor Michael Young, Executive Member for Adult Social Services and Community Wellbeing confirmed that, along with most other local authorities, Trafford ceased to deliver an in-house Meals on Wheels service many years ago and ended its last external contract in the 2012/13 budget round and was a reason why the Freedom of Information nationally completed recently had returned a low number of councils that supply Meals on Wheels.

The Executive Member reported that the Council currently supports meal preparation in about 400 cases as part of packages of care and will support someone who could not physically move to heat a meal or had a particular health need for food preparation. Councillor M. Young also outlined the other types of support provided to individuals and advised that a number of independent suppliers can deliver against specific dietary requirements, a list of which he had passed to Councillor Mrs. Brophy.

Grateful for the answer, Councillor Mrs. Brophy asked as a supplementary question how the Council could make sure that in Trafford people are receiving adequate nutrition and what steps can be put in place to ensure this happens. Councillor M. Young advised that those subject to Social Care Assessment are monitored and although the cooking and provision of food was not usually included, the service can assist with provision, if necessary, from an individual's personal budget.

62. CHANGES TO THE MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

RESOLVED: That the Council notes that the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council agreed the following changes to the Membership of Committees, with effect from 6 January 2015:

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- (a) Councillor Mrs. Reilly replaced Councillor Sharp as a Member of the Planning Development Control Committee; and
- (b) Councillor Sharp replaced Councillor Mrs. Reilly as a Member of the Scrutiny Committee.

63. CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2015/16

The Executive Member for Finance and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report seeking approval of a local Council Tax Support Scheme for the 2015/16 municipal year. The report had been recommended to Council from the Executive Meeting held earlier that day.

Further to paragraph 1.2 of the report, the Executive Member reported that the scheme had helped 254 more people back into work through the use of added work incentives and in response to Councillor Ross' question, undertook to provide him with a written explanation.

RESOLVED: That the Council adopts the Council Tax Support scheme currently in operation, with the incorporation of the amendments detailed below for 2015/16:

- (a) The applicable amounts are increased by 1% to keep them in line with inflationary increases to Housing Benefit and other welfare benefits, as set out in appendix 1 to the report.
- (b) That the non-dependant deductions are frozen at their current rate, as set out in appendix 2.
- (c) That the remaining funding allocated to the Council Tax Support discretionary fund from when it was first introduced in April 2013, be rolled over into 2015/16, which is estimated to be approximately £20,000 by the end of the year.

64. URGENT BUSINESS - NEW BANKING ARRANGEMENTS: INDEMNITY

(Note: The Mayor allowed consideration of this matter as an item of urgent business since cheque indemnity provisions, as part of the Council's new banking arrangements, have only recently been requested and must be given before the new arrangements come into force on 1 February 2015.)

The Executive Member for Finance and the Director of Finance submitted a joint report seeking approval for an indemnity to be given by the Director of Finance, as the Council's Section 151 Officer, to the Council's new Banker, Barclays Bank PLC, against any losses or claims arising from them processing cheques made payable to 'Trafford Council' or 'Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council' on behalf of Trafford Borough Council.

RESOLVED: That the Director of Finance, as the Council's S151 Officer, be authorised to sign an indemnity to Barclays Bank PLC ("Barclays") against all

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actions proceedings claims or costs which Barclays may suffer or incur as a result of Barclays collecting monies payable to 'Trafford Council' or 'Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council' on behalf of the Council without such items being endorsed.

65. APPOINTMENT OF THE INDEPENDENT MEMBER TO THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE

The Chairman of Standards Committee and the Director of Legal and Democratic Services / Monitoring Officer submitted a report seeking the Council's endorsement of an appointment to the vacant post of Independent Co-opted Member on Standards Committee.

RESOLVED: That Mr. Richard Brown be appointed as an Independent Member of Standards Committee with immediate effect.

66. MOTION SUBMITTED BY THE LABOUR GROUP - IMPACT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND WELLBEING CUTS

It was moved and seconded that:

"This Council calls on the government to recognise the damaging effects of the austerity cuts to councils. In particular in Trafford we note with concern three service areas which have now been identified as high risk:

- Failure of safeguarding services - risk has increased from medium to high
- Major event leading to inability to deliver critical services to vulnerable people - risk has increased from medium to high
- Adult social care is at high risk because of the inability to implement a wide range of savings proposals in the current economic climate

In light of the fact that this Council faces huge budget pressures over the next three years with further cuts of £57 million (£25 million in 2015/2016), this Council calls on the government to halt the cuts which if implemented will seriously affect the health and wellbeing of Trafford's most vulnerable children and adults."

Following a debate on the matter, the Motion was put to the vote and declared lost.

67. MOTION SUBMITTED BY THE LABOUR GROUP - SCHOOL CROSSING PATROLS

It was moved and seconded that:

This Council calls on the Executive to reconsider the proposals to scrap thirty-one school crossing patrols, and notes:

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- these patrols operate on busy and dangerous roads, and have actually been instrumental in preventing accidents over many years;
- that many of these patrols were actually put in place onto an existing light controlled crossing following dangerous or fatal incidents;
- Council is concerned that the scrapping of these patrols will have a detrimental effect on road safety across the Borough.

In light of the huge public outcry/response to the published proposals to abolish the thirty-one crossing patrols, Council believes it is right and proper that the Executive is asked to reconsider the proposal with a view to reversing its previous decision.”

It was moved and seconded as an amendment that:

“This Council calls on the Executive to respond to further consultation being conducted in relation to school crossing patrols, and take into consideration all feedback received, including the nature of the road, number of vehicles and previous accident rates.

Council believes it is right and proper that the Executive is asked to consider this proposal in light of representations made, and notes that no decision has yet been made and so does not have a previous decision to reverse.”

Following a debate on the matter, the amendment was agreed with the unanimous consent of the Council and as such, the substantive Motion was declared carried.

RESOLVED: That This Council calls on the Executive to respond to further consultation being conducted in relation to school crossing patrols, and take into consideration all feedback received, including the nature of the road, number of vehicles and previous accident rates.

Council believes it is right and proper that the Executive is asked to consider this proposal in light of representations made, and notes that no decision has yet been made and so does not have a previous decision to reverse.

68. MOTION SUBMITTED BY THE LABOUR GROUP - LOCAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING

It was moved and seconded that:

“This Council notes the letter signed by more than 100 Council Leaders across the country calling for an improved funding settlement for Local Government in the 2014 Autumn Statement (Observer, 30 November 2014). Given the sustained and severe cuts to local government enacted throughout this Parliament – over and above any other government department – Council is supportive of the content of this letter and therefore extremely disappointed that the Leader of the Council did not choose to add his signature. Council also notes with regret that the continued reductions in

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local government budgets will leave Trafford services at breaking point, and calls on the Leader of the Council to support any further cross-party letters from local government leaders expressing concern about the impact of more cuts to council funding.”

Following a debate on the matter, the Motion was put to the vote and declared lost.

69. MOTION SUBMITTED BY THE CONSERVATIVE GROUP - SMALL BUSINESS RATE RELIEF

It was moved and seconded that:

“The Council welcomes the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to offer business rates support for 30,000 small businesses based on the high street.

The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement an additional £500 business rate discount for retail and food and drink business, offering additional support to Trafford’s town centres.

This takes the total discount from the current £1,000 to £1,500 in 2015 to 2016 and reduces the cost of business rates on the high street.

Council notes the importance of business rate growth as a revenue stream to overcome future fiscal challenges and resolves to encourage take up of the discount and to continue supporting small businesses in Trafford.”

Following speeches in support, the Motion was agreed with the unanimous consent of the Council.

RESOLVED: That the Council welcomes the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer to offer business rates support for 30,000 small businesses based on the high street.

The Chancellor announced in the Autumn Statement an additional £500 business rate discount for retail and food and drink business, offering additional support to Trafford’s town centres.

This takes the total discount from the current £1,000 to £1,500 in 2015 to 2016 and reduces the cost of business rates on the high street.

Council notes the importance of business rate growth as a revenue stream to overcome future fiscal challenges and resolves to encourage take up of the discount and to continue supporting small businesses in Trafford.

The meeting commenced at 7.00 p.m. and finished at 9.14 p.m.