

POLICY COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday 1st December 2011

The Mayor Councillor Karimeh Foster (in the Chair), Councillors Akhtar, Bateson, Browne, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Davies, Desai, Entwistle, Foster D, Gee, Gordon, Graham, Harling, Hirst, Hollern, Humphrys, Hussain I., Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan M., Khan Z, Khonat H. Khonat S, Law-Riding, Lee, Maxfield, McFall, Meleady, Mulla, Nuttall, O'Keeffe, Oldfield, Pearson D, Pearson J., Rehman, Rigby C., Rigby J., Riley, Shorrock, Sidat, Slater Jacqueline, Slater John, Slater Julie, Smith D, Smith James, Smith Joseph, Solkar, Surve, Talbot, Tapp, Taylor, Thayne, Walsh and Wright.

53. Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

54. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Hussain F, Hardman, Doherty, Mahmood, Rizwan, Jones and Patel.

55. Minutes of the meeting held on 3rd November 2011

RESOLVED - That the minutes of the meeting of the Council Forum held on the 3rd November 2011 be approved as a correct record.

56. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were received.

57. Challenges and opportunities for Change

A report was submitted from the Leader of the Council outlining key national and local policy challenges and anticipated impacts on Blackburn with Darwen.

Councillor Michael Lee moved that the meeting move into Committee, which was seconded by Councillor Michael Law-Riding. Following a vote this was not carried.

Policy Council was invited to debate key issues around national policy decisions, national legislation, local context and local financial issues.

Policy Council was also asked to consider proposals from the Leader regarding the Council's positioning for the future, including implementing a series of transformational initiatives to respond to the challenges being faced.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted and that the proposals from the Leader on page 9 regarding the Council's positioning for the future, including implementing a series of transformational initiatives to respond to the challenges being faced, be approved.

58. Council Vision and Priorities

A report was submitted which presented the Council's vision and corporate priorities for Members' consideration and decision.

Policy Council was asked to affirm the Council's vision and priorities for 2012/13 as recently highlighted within the Corporate Plan, and as outlined on page 12 of the report submitted.

Additionally, consultation prior to Policy Council had resulted in the suggestion that the Council could also define an 'internal strap-line' to guide the activities of the Transformation Programme, and provide staff with clarity around areas of focus.

On the basis of consultation to date, it was proposed that the following strap-line be adopted by the Council's Transformation Programme: -

A 'Co-operative Council' – partnering, supporting and working together to deliver the best service we can.

Councillor Michael Lee, seconded by Councillor Michael Law-Riding, moved an amendment to the strap-line as follows:

"A 'Collaborative Council' – partnering and working together with residents, businesses and services to deliver a more prosperous town".

Following a debate, Members voted on the proposed amendment which was not carried.

RESOLVED -

- That Policy Council affirms the Council's vision and priorities for 2012/13. The vision and priorities will guide the business planning process and provide context for Finance Council in 2012; and
- That Policy Council approves the internal strap-line for the Council's Transformation Programme, thereby providing a mandate for internal changes within the Council in 2012/13.

59. Our Plans for 2012/2013

Policy Council was asked to endorse the Council's Corporate Plan for 2011-2013 and the Council's pre Budget Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2012-2013.

The Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2011–2015 was formally approved at Finance Council on 7th March 2011. Whilst this was a four year strategy the report contained within the appendix of the report submitted was the first stage in the preparation of an updated MTFS to cover the three year period 2012–2015.

This would influence the formulation of a rolled forward 3 year budget over the coming months, leading to a final MTFS to be incorporated within the Council's Corporate Plan and approved at the Finance Council in March 2012.

RESOLVED –

1. That the Council endorses the 2 year budget strategy agreed in March 2011, of which 2012/13 was the second year;
2. That Portfolios take steps to ensure they continue to balance their budgets within their provisional cash limits, taking into account the Council's overall priorities;
3. That options are formulated for consideration and appraisal which reflect the Council's priorities and ensure a balanced budget for the financial year 2012/13 is set at Finance Council in March 2012, whilst ensuring a minimum level of balances is maintained; and
4. To consider a Council Tax policy that seeks to minimise increases each year in the light of the impact of the economic situation and any consequent changes to funding and grant settlements to the Council, taking into account particularly the implications arising from the further one year only Council Tax free freeze grant offered for 2012/13 to enable the Council to set a nil increase for that year only.

60. Schedule of Meetings for 2012/13

Following submission of the draft Schedule of Meetings for 2012-13 to the last meeting of Council, Policy Council was asked to approve the final Schedule of Meetings for 2012/13.

RESOLVED - That the Schedule of Meetings for 2012/13 be approved.

61. 2013 Review of Parliamentary Constituencies Proposed Boundary Changes

Members were asked to consider the proposed changes to electoral ward boundaries recently announced by the Electoral Commission, and endorse the Chief Executive providing a response reflecting the Council's views.

The Boundary Commission for England were currently conducting a review of Parliamentary Constituency boundaries on the basis of new rules laid down by Parliament. These rules involved a significant reduction in the number of constituencies in England from 533 to 502 and required every constituency must have an electorate that was no smaller than 72,801 and no larger than 80,473. The initial proposals were published on 13 September 2011 and the consultation period ended on 5 December 2011.

The North West region had been allocated 68 constituencies – a reduction of seven from the current arrangement. Minimal change has been proposed to the existing Blackburn constituency, the only proposed change being to incorporate Fernhurst ward. The electorate for the new Blackburn constituency would be 76,468. The remainder of the Borough wards that were currently located in the Rossendale and Darwen constituency would be included in the new Darwen and Haslingden CC constituency. The electorate for this constituency was 79,436 and would likely be administered by Hyndburn Borough Council as they had the largest share of the electorate.

Following a debate, Members voted on the proposals as outlined in the report and these were carried.

RESOLVED – That the Chief Executive be requested to provide a response to the Electoral Commission reflecting the Council's view that the constituencies as proposed were acceptable.

Signed at a meeting of the council
on the day of
(being) the next ensuing meeting of
the Council) by

Mayor.