

**POLICY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2013**

**PRESENT** –*The Mayor Councillor S. Mulla (in the Chair), Councillors Bateson, Brookfield, Browne, Connor, Cottam, Daley, Davies, Desai, Entwistle, Evans, Foster D., Foster K., Gee, Groves, Hardman, Harling, Hollern, Humphrys, Hussain F., Hussain I., Hussain S., Jan-Virmani, Johnson, Kay, Khan M., Khan Z., Khonat H., Khonat S., Lee, Liddle, Mahmood, McFall, Nuttall, O’Keeffe, Oldfield, Patel, Pearson D., Pearson J., Rehman, Rigby C., Riley, Shorrocks, Sidat, Slater Jacqueline, Slater John, Slater Julie, Smith D., Smith J., Solkar, Talbot, Tapp, Taylor, Thayne, Walsh C., Whalley and Wright.*

**RESOLUTIONS**

**51. Notice Convening Meeting**

The Chief Executive read of the notice convening the meeting.

**52. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Akhtar, Hirst, Hollings, Maxfield, Rigby J, Surve and Walsh D.

**53. Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013**

**RESOLVED** – That the minutes of the Council Forum meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2013 be approved as a correct record.

**54. Declarations of interest**

No Declarations of Interest were received.

**55. Mayoral Communications**

The Mayor updated the meeting on a number of events he had recently attended with his Mayoresses.

Particular reference was made to the Remembrance Services across the Borough and the remarkable attendance for all the Services, and to the excellent organisation of the events.

A number of visits to schools had taken place for morning assemblies and presentation evenings as well as attendance at the sod cutting for the new Blackburn Leisure development and both Christmas Light Switch On events in Blackburn and Darwen.

The Mayor also updated the meeting on the recent Mayor's Charity events and made reference to the collection for the Foodbank outside the Council Chamber that evening.

The Mayor also advised that this would be the last meeting that Lisa Bibby would attend and thanked her for her excellent work and wished her well for the future.

Finally, the Mayor wished all present a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

*At this point the Chief Executive advised that in line with Constitution, the Policy Council would now be held in Committee.*

## **56. Council Vision and Priorities – The Corporate Plan 2013-2015 Challenges and Opportunities for Change**

Ahead of discussion on the report submitted with the agenda outlining key national and local policy challenges and proposals regarding the Council's positioning on future policy areas in Blackburn with Darwen, the Leader of the Council delivered a presentation which set out future priorities and ambitions.

The presentation set out key achievements expected to be delivered by 2015, particular reference was made to putting residents first and of the importance of Your Call events and thanks were expressed for the positive attitude of staff of the Council and the efforts made to assist the Foodbank. The presentation was followed by two videos, the first outlining recent Your Call activities, the second being a recent staff briefing video which outlined the positive work being undertaken via the One Council / One Team banner and the volunteering efforts of local residents working with the Council under Your Call.

The Corporate Plan for 2013-2015, as refreshed at Finance Council, was attached at Appendix A and Policy Council were asked to reaffirm the Corporate Plan, to ensure that this continued to form the mandate for the Council's budget strategy and transformation programme for the same period.

The 2013 Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS), outlined projections for the 2015/16 budget based on information available at the time of reporting to Finance Council in March. The indicative figures in the summer 2014 Spending Review showed bigger cuts in funding than had been anticipated. Latest estimates suggested that there could be an additional figure of £4 million to be found on top of the worst case scenario in the 2013 MTFS which indicated potential cuts of around £15M in 2015/16.

The future financial picture also continued to be influenced by Government policy announcements which were being belatedly brought forward prior to the end of the parliamentary term, the cumulative effect of which were

almost impossible to gauge at present. Clarity was expected to come in the Autumn Statement and the 2014-15 Local Government Finance Settlement.

The 2015/16 position would also be impacted by the ability to meet the required savings for 2014/15. The impact of welfare reform; delays in Universal Credit implementation and increasing demographic and economic pressures all had potential to derail savings plans and have an impact on future budget planning.

In addition there were further changes in Public Health responsibilities and a number of implications for the health and social care framework as a result of the Care Bill and a national drive for integrated service provision, which would also impact in 2015/16.

The financial context would require the Council very quickly, in 2014, to bring forward proposals for how it would achieve the required savings for 2015 and beyond, whilst continuing to deliver on key priorities. Tough decisions would, again, have to be made and it was important that all options for making savings and changing the way services were delivered were explored. These changes would be fundamental, and they had to be right and fit for purpose to see the Council into the next medium term budget cycle.

The attached Appendix B aimed to offer Policy Council an overview of current commentary on key national policy areas, linked to the Council's corporate plan priorities.

Considering the national policy directions, alongside local issues and concerns, it was important that the Council maintained a clear and focused programme of policy initiatives over the next twelve to eighteen months, to ensure that the corporate priorities continued to be addressed. A summary of the proposed programme of policy initiatives for 2013-2015 were also included within Appendix B.

In implementing these policy commitments, the Leader stated her commitment to ensuring that the Council continued to ensure that every opportunity was taken to forge a new relationship with residents under the Your Call banner, address issues of inequality for residents, and foster cohesion within and between communities.

The Leader reported that the Council's new relationship with citizens was going from strength to strength and the breadth of activities delivered under Your Call, continued to harness the pride of the Council residents and their enthusiasm and commitment for their local areas.

It was further reported that the Council was committed to continuing to grow this community spirit and over the coming months would explore more ways in which it could support residents; voluntary, community and faith groups and other providers to respond to the Your Call challenge and help deliver continuous service improvements and value for money.

In terms of the Living Wage, following the progressive and far-sighted motion at Policy Council 2012, to explore the feasibility of moving towards a Living Wage for Blackburn with Darwen, extensive analysis had been undertaken to understand more around the possibilities; implications and benefits of this for the Council and the Borough.

For the Council it was estimated that the introduction of a Living Wage, would apply to approximately 474 posts (permanent; fixed term; casual and those currently vacant, both full time and part time) who were currently on grades A and B of the green book pay scale. At the current time the Campaign exempted apprenticeships. These calculations used a full establishment report as at 1 October 2013.

Introducing a Living Wage of £7.45 for Blackburn with Darwen would equate to a full time equivalent annual salary (37 hours per week) of £14,333, compared to 12,267 (bottom of A grade) and £14,013 (top of B Grade).

It was estimated that the cost to the Council of implementing a Blackburn with Darwen Living Wage, across the 474 posts referred to, would be around £242,000.

Alongside the Trade Unions and staff, consultation on the proposed implementation would need to be undertaken with the schools currently maintained by the authority.

The opinions of residents, gauged through Ward Solutions meetings and the Council's annual resident's survey, continued to act as a barometer to the continued relevance of the corporate priorities. An overview of key priorities raised by residents was outlined in the report, all of these key issues continue to be reflected and prioritised within the refreshed Corporate Plan for 2013-2015.

There followed a wide ranging debate on the key issues arising.

#### **RESOLVED –**

1. That the Council's Corporate Plan 2013-15 priorities and subsequent performance framework as agreed at Policy Council in 2012 and Finance Council in 2013, be reaffirmed to ensure that this continues to form the mandate for the Council's budget strategy and transformation programme for the same period;
2. That the proposals from the Leader regarding the Council's positioning for the future, including priority initiatives that will assist the Council to respond to current and future policy challenges be endorsed; and
3. That the commitment made – at Policy Council 2012 – to explore the feasibility of a 'Living Wage' for Blackburn with Darwen residents, and

agree to implement a localised approach to a Living Wage for Council employees, in 2014/15, pending consultation with trade unions and affected parties be re-enforced.

**57. Year Planner for 2014/15**

Following submission of the draft Year Planner for 2014/15 to the meeting of the Council Forum on 7th November 2013, Policy Council was asked to approve the Year Planner for 2014/15.

**RESOLVED** – That the Year Planner for 2014/15 be approved.

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

MAYOR