

## Agenda Item



<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>LEADER OF THE COUNCIL</b>
<b>TO:</b>	<b>POLICY COUNCIL</b>
<b>ON:</b>	<b>THURSDAY 4<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2014</b>

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## **ACHIEVING FOR ALL – The Corporate Plan 2015-2018**

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### **1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

A report from the Leader of the Council updating on our Corporate Plan.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Policy Council is invited to: -

1. Reaffirm the Council's Corporate Plan priorities and subsequent performance framework as agreed at Finance Council in 2014, to extend into 2015-2018.

### **3. BACKGROUND**

Policy Council 2013 agreed the Corporate Plan for 2013-2015 and with it reaffirmed six key priorities that were to drive the Council's business and ensure that improved outcomes were achieved for residents. In line with the Council's policy and decision making framework, this report updates on the progress made on delivering these key priorities to date, alongside an overview of future delivery objectives for the Council for the 2015-2018 Corporate Plan. It also offers Policy Council the opportunity to debate the current national policy context and offer an opinion on future policy directions for the Council.

### **4. RATIONALE**

#### Corporate priorities – The Corporate Plan

Despite the financial challenges facing Blackburn with Darwen, this Council has continued with its ambitions and commitments to deliver high quality services and achieve key outcomes for all of our residents. For the past two years, these commitments have been articulated within the Corporate Plan and they have ensured that all Council services have maintained a clear focus on the most important outcomes. The detail, including delivery objectives and performance measures, of the Corporate Plan is refreshed on an annual basis, with the most recent refresh being

adopted at Financial Council in March 2014, to ensure its continued relevance, however no fundamental changes were made and the priorities remain as follows:

The Council's priority objectives for residents are: -

1. Creating more **jobs** and supporting business growth
2. Improving **housing** quality and building more houses
3. Improving **health and well-being**;
4. Improving outcomes for our **young people**
5. Safeguarding the most **vulnerable people**
6. **Making your money go further**

We will achieve these priority objectives by: -

1. Managing the impact of national reforms on residents and the Council – particularly around the welfare system, health services and educational provision
2. Working with you – working together with residents; businesses and our partners - developing local solutions via local problem solving
3. Delivering high quality services – a well-managed authority which is fit for the future; efficient and effective; and continuing to use the best possible business models to deliver excellent services

The Corporate Plan was refreshed at Finance Council in 2014, Policy Council are asked to reaffirm the corporate priorities as outlined above, to ensure that this continues to form the mandate for the Council's budget strategy and transformation programme for the same period for 2015-2018.

#### Financial context

Council Forum in September received details of the updated Medium Term Financial Strategy, and latest predicted budget position for 2015-2018. Council also agreed a range of advance budget savings proposals for early implementation to enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget for 2015/16 and make further savings in the following two years.

	2015/16 £000's	2016/17 £000's	2017/18 £000's
Forecast shortfall – MTFS March 2014	19,093	28,083	N/K
Updated:			
Funding reductions	11,788	14,756	16,938
Cost pressures	7,305	12,795	13,956
Forecast shortfall – latest September 2014	19,093	27,551	30,894
Advance savings proposals agreed at Council Forum in September	15,998	22,646	26,232
Remaining budget gap	3,105	4,905	4,662

Plans are now in place to deliver these savings particularly those required for 2015/16 and unfortunately this means a number of staff have had to be put at risk of redundancy. A number of public consultations exercises have also commenced in some service areas and Finance Council will consider the position further in the New Year.

## **5. KEY ISSUES**

### **National Policy Context**

Since the Corporate Plan was put in place in 2012 the Council has been working hard to deliver the six priorities against a backdrop of key national policy changes. These have included:

- Welfare Reforms
- Health and Social Care reforms
- Educational reforms
- Troubled Families Programme
- Role of OFSTED - Safeguarding / Social Care

### **Impact in Blackburn with Darwen**

The Council has faced unprecedented severe reductions in funding each year since the change in Government in 2010, for the funding periods 2011-13 and 2013-15. At the same time we have had to respond to key changes in policy and financial reforms relating to a new local council tax support scheme, welfare reform, local business rates retention scheme and changes to schools funding to name a few. We continue to face budget reductions which will impact on services for our residents.

Over the last 12 months we have seen a decrease in JSA claimants, however we have more people working less than 10 hours compared to regional and national averages. Despite living in working households many of our families face in-work poverty which is demonstrated through increasing demands for our local foodbank. In the long-term these conditions will increase child poverty and impact on nutrition and the health of children and families. The national squeeze on wages and the rising cost of living is reducing the spending power of our residents. This along with the cuts in public spending which have seen a reduction in the numbers of full-time jobs has resulted in shrinking local spending thereby having an impact on small local businesses.

In addition to the above, following on-going national delays, the Government's flagship Universal Credit scheme has recently started to be implemented in the borough. At this stage only new claims from single people and couples will be processed through the Universal Credit system – despite promises of 1m people being on the new system by April 2014, only a few thousand claims had been registered. Applications are only on-line and we have therefore made provision at the libraries and in partnership with the college for residents who need support with IT. New claims take up to five weeks to process and therefore we may need to offer additional short-term support. We are also working with partners to support claimants who need help managing their finances as payments are made direct to bank accounts once a month.

There have also been significant changes around the Education system which has impacted severely on local educational delivery. Some schools have been forced to convert to Academy status whilst others have chosen to make this change. There has also been an increase in the number of local free schools. This in turn, has impacted on the role of the local authority within the local education system and combined with the funding changes we have seen areas of traditional local authority control handed over to schools to run.

Ofsted continue to raise expectations around children's social care services. The current inspection framework, implemented in November 2014, introduced lengthier inspections with a more intensive process and from April 2015, there will be full multi-

agency inspections under an integrated inspection framework. This will see the local authority inspected alongside health services, the Police and Probation Services by five inspectorates working alongside one another. This is a significant change from previous inspection regimes the local authority participated in.

### **Our response**

There is no denying that the financial context and savings requirements outlined above have and will hit all of the Council's services very hard, which will have a knock on impact for our residents. Despite these pressures we have faced we have continued to deliver for our residents and we continue to work in partnership.

A key part of this will be the development of new relationships with residents. This will recognise that our residents are our biggest resource and that co-producing services, is fundamental. The Council will build on the successes of Your Call to implement innovative working with residents to encourage and enable them to take responsibility for places (localities) and themselves.

At the heart of our plans to continue to improve Blackburn with Darwen as a place will be three cross cutting key partnership plans to help deliver our priorities:

1. Prosperity Plan (LSP Board and Hive Network)
2. Community Safety Strategy (Community Safety partnership)
3. Health and Wellbeing strategy (Health and Wellbeing Board)

Running through all of this will be a commitment to the development of an inclusion strategy which embodies the principles of Fairness. Some initial steps towards fairness for Council employees has seen the implementation a local living wage for council workers.

Over the coming years will see a continuing positive focus on the image of Blackburn with Darwen to encourage investment into the borough. Building on the positive image of the Borough and marketing our assets will support our approach for growth in business, housing and people.

## **6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

The Corporate Plan sets out the priorities of the Council for 2015 and beyond, and in order to provide clear strategic direction, such priorities should be reflected across the organisation, throughout departmental business plans, service plans and individuals' performance plans.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The policy context and Corporate Plan has and will continue to inform Elected Members' decisions during the budget setting process for 2015-16 and beyond, alongside the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Similarly, the transformation programme is, in part, designed and structured according to these priorities and analysis.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct legal implications of this report. Any legal matters arising during the delivery of these priorities, are a matter for consideration through the usual constitutional processes.

## **9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

Any additional resource requirements that may be required by the services, following the agreement of the recommendations outlined within this report are a matter for consideration by either Executive Board or the relevant Executive Member according to delegated powers.

## **10. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS**

A full Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the Corporate Plan, which was refreshed in August 2014.

<http://www.blackburn.gov.uk/General%20EIA/Corporate-Plan-2013-15%20-EIA-v2-2-Refresh-Aug%202014.pdf>

## **11. CONSULTATIONS**

Previously extensive consultation on the priorities was undertaken with the Leader; Executive Members, Chief Officers, political groups, residents, young people and cross party members via the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

Consultation and engagement with residents and staff continue to be undertaken in a variety of ways and is on-going. These help to shape policies and also service delivery. Some specific examples include; two events which have helped to shape and launch the Prosperity Plan, young people's takeover day of the Council, youth employer event, good friend's event and health events. In addition to these councillors continue to consult with residents through resident meetings and other forums.

The extensive programme of staff engagement activities conducted by the Leader of the Council and Chief Executive throughout November has, once again, offered the opportunity to test staff opinion on the priorities and explore opportunities for future service developments.

### **Chief Officer**

Contact Officer: Denise Park, Executive Director Resources and Transformation  
(Deputy Chief Executive)

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014

BACKGROUND PAPERS: