



# BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Corporate Plan 2011-13

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## **Your money, your services**

# **Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council Corporate Plan 2011-2013**

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## **Your money, your services**

### **Introduction from Councillor Kate Hollern Leader of Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council**



As many of us are aware Blackburn with Darwen faces greater disadvantages than other places across the country, but the Council, working with other organisations and our communities, has a good track record for meeting tough challenges.

Despite the unprecedented reduction in government funding that the Council is facing, in the the region of £48m over the next two years, we remain committed to providing good quality services and making every penny work hard by focusing on things that can make the biggest difference. As you may have read, the budget cuts have been 'front loaded' which means that £28m must be saved this coming year along with the unexpected loss of over £5m of special grants previously given because of our borough's extra needs. That is a total of £33m. The size and scale of this reduction in spending means that no service can be fully protected.

We have agreed that front line services, those which you value most, will be protected where possible, with higher savings targets (of up to 40 per cent) set for managerial, administrative and 'back office' functions. The package of savings that we are delivering is, inevitably reducing some services, but it also means we are taking a look at each of the Council's 800 plus service areas, to make sure they are running as efficiently as possible.

Our massive savings programme is currently delivering on track, which now means that we can consider focusing any of the limited funds still available to respond to the things that you have told us are most important to you. You have told us that having clean streets and roads free from potholes are things that you value the most, so we have now re-directed some money to respond to your requests.

£178,000 has been allocated to an environmental programme which in 2011-2012 will pay for additional grass cutting and dealing with problems such as overhanging branches and trees. £1m will also be provided to resurface some of the roads in the worst condition in the borough.

And, importantly, we are committed to doing all of this without passing additional burden onto you as tax payers, so we have agreed that there will be no increase in Council tax in 2011-2012.

However, I would like to personally call upon all of you, as residents, to help support us through this tough time, and consider how you can help yourselves and your neighbours. This could be from encouraging people not to drop litter, to organising a fun day for your neighbours, or taking part in a community clean up - anything that could help us make the resources we have stretch further.

Our Corporate Plan sets out the key things that we hope to achieve for you, our residents, over the next two years, including outlining how you will be able to tell if we are achieving what we say we will.

### **Tough Times, Tough Choices: How your views helped....**

In the run up to the Council setting its budget on March 7, we held a series of public consultation meetings and launched an online consultation to explain the situation. The consultation gave you the chance to say where money should be spent, saved or generated and see what the consequences of those decisions might be.

Hundreds of people from all age groups responded and all those views were taken into account in setting the coming year's budget.

Details of feedback received at all the [consultation](#) events is available online.

### **What you said...**

We looked at all the services that you said you wanted us to protect as much as we could, the services mentioned the most times were:

- Community safety (including PCSOs)
- Street cleaning and refuse collection
- Children and adult's social care/protection
- Education
- Public transport
- Leisure facilities
- Key infrastructure projects

### **What we did...**

Whilst we still face a huge challenge to deliver the £33m savings required of us, we have listened to your feedback and as a Council have agreed to:

- Continue to provide £220,000 contribution to PCSOs
- Commit over £3.5million on street cleaning and refuse collection and provide an additional £178,000 for grass cutting
- Maintain investment in children's and adult social care despite grant reductions from government
- Continue the level of investment in education
- Commit £3.4million supporting public transport, including subsidising bus routes; concessionary fares and community/welfare transport

- Continue to invest £1.65million (jointly with the NHS Care Trust Plus) in the Re:refresh scheme, providing as much free leisure as possible
- Continue to invest in Building Schools for the Future, re-development of the old Blackburn market and Darwen railway station improvements.

### **What we will do for you during 2011-2013**

Despite the financial challenges that we face as a Council, we remain committed to continuing to provide as many high quality services as we can with the money we have available over the next two years. We will continue to work with our partners to improve the borough in the long term, but in the first instance we want to respond to those issues that you say are your key concerns.

We have provided over £1.1million of additional funding in 2011 to deliver what you tell us are your top two priorities which are to:

- Ensure the cleanliness of our streets and open spaces
- Ensure our roads are in a good condition

Alongside this we will continue to:

- Keep our children and vulnerable adults safe
- Improve Blackburn and Darwen town centres
- Help our residents into work
- Improve the health of our residents
- Improve the housing offer and condition
- Continue to improve educational performance
- Encourage our residents to play a more active role in their local area
- Ensure that the Council makes the best use of its resources and continues to deliver services which offer value for money
- Work with our partners to achieve our 2030 Vision including:
  - Improving the prosperity of our towns
  - Supporting the development of connected communities
  - Maintaining clean places
  - Supporting people to remain safe and healthy

You can see details of the [2030 Vision](#) online.

You can see full details of how we will measure our [priorities](#) online

Full details of what our services will be delivering during the 2011-2012 are set out in our [departmental business plans](#) which you can read online.

We will review our commitments every year and publish an update to the Corporate Plan. We will check with you, our residents, to ensure we are still delivering the services that you want to see.

## **How we will spend your money in 2011-2012**

The council is planning to spend a total of £455.5 million in 2011/12. This spending is divided into:

- £404 million on the day to day running costs of providing services
- £51.5 million of capital investment in equipment and physical infrastructure like roads and buildings.

Whilst the capital spend planned for the year 2011/12 sees a significant reduction from the previous year (from £98M), the Council has capital investment plans for the next four years amounting to £200m. This excludes further investment into new and improved schools by way of the private finance initiative of around £119m.

The day to day running costs of services has seen a reduction of £20m compared to the previous year, but the budget of £404m is nevertheless still substantial.

Whilst our exact financial settlement for each coming year is not confirmed by government until December every year, we do have an initial idea of what our budget allocations are likely to be for future years. Our assumptions on these allocations are outlined in our medium term financial strategy, which can be read [here](#).

You can see details of the [Medium Term Financial Strategy](#) online.

You can see full details of the [Council Budget Book](#) for 2011-2012 online.

## **How did we perform against our priorities last year?**

2010-2011 would have been the final year of the borough's three year Local Area Agreement (LAA), which was a statement of commitments that the Council and Local Strategic Partnership agreed with government that they would achieve.

In October 2010 the Secretary of State for Local Government wrote to all local authority chief executives and leaders to notify them that the government would no longer be monitoring the performance against the current LAA targets and that there would no longer be a requirement to prepare a new LAA from April 2011.

However, despite the LAA being cancelled, it is important that the Council's achievements against its key priorities over the past few years are communicated so that you are able to see what we have delivered.

We have been able to collect data for 56 out of the 67 measures that were included within last year's corporate plan. Where we have not been able to get data, this has been mainly due to the cancellation of national data collections by the government. Out of the 56 priorities, that can be measured, the Council has improved 61% (34) of the measures, whilst 30% (17) have worsened; the remainder have not changed or performance is not comparable.

A full breakdown of our [performance](#) against all of the priorities can be found online.