

POLICY COUNCIL

SUMMARY OF DECISIONS

THURSDAY, 5TH DECEMBER, 2024

(Note: any verbal updates provided by Executive Members and the Youth MPs will be summarised in the Minutes of the meeting)

	ITEM	RECOMMENDATION	Key Action
	Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain followed by Welcome and Apologies	Following the reading of the Notice convening the meeting by the Chief Executive, there then followed prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain. Apologies were received from Councillors S. Ali, S. Brookfield, K. Fielding, M. Gibson, A. Kapadia, V. McGurk, J. Rigby and M. Russell.	Determined
	Minutes of the Previous Meeting	That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 rd October 2024 be agreed as a correct record.	Determined
	Notices of Motion	<p>(a) Ban on arms sales to Israel, immediate unconditional ceasefire and compliance with the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice rulings</p> <p>For nearly a year, Blackburn with Darwen residents have gathered in solidarity, protesting the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Many have expressed deep concerns to their local representatives, urging action to stop arms sales to Israel and calling for an immediate ceasefire.</p> <p>The trauma from witnessing the devastation in Palestine has</p>	Determined

deeply affected our communities, leading to a rise in Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism. As a Council, we must listen to our residents and press the government to work towards lasting peace and justice.

Airstrikes have continued and intensified the humanitarian crisis, causing significant civilian casualties, including children, and further escalating the situation. These actions are part of what the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and global human rights organisations have confirmed as genocide, with Israel's policies in occupied Palestinian territories violating international law, including illegal settlements and systematic oppression. The humanitarian crisis demands urgent international intervention.

This Council calls on the government to:

Revoke all arms export licenses to Israel and suspend future sales.

Advocate for an unconditional ceasefire and prioritise the protection of civilians.

Increase diplomatic pressure to halt illegal settlements and resume peace talks, in line with the ICJ rulings.

Support international investigations into human rights violations, including the confirmed genocide and war crimes.

Welcome and comply with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant and Mohammed Deif.

Facilitate peace talks that respect the security and rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, while holding all parties accountable to international legal standards.

The Council further requests that:

The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council write to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to halt arms sales, call for an immediate ceasefire, and ensure adherence to international law, including compliance with ICJ and ICC rulings.

The Council resolves to support humanitarian aid efforts, foster local dialogue to counter hate, and back peaceful initiatives that promote justice and long-term peace for both sides of the conflict.

Additionally, the Council urges the government to review trade agreements with companies involved in illegal activities in the region, ensure no complicity in acts of genocide, and increase humanitarian support for Gaza's civilians.

Moved by Councillor Salim Sidat

Seconded by Councillor Mustafa Desai

Following debate, an Amended Motion was circulated to Members as follows (amendments in italics and bold):

Amendment to the Motion on the ban on arms sales to Israel, immediate unconditional ceasefire and

compliance with the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice rulings

For nearly a year, Blackburn with Darwen residents have gathered in solidarity, protesting the ongoing conflict in Gaza. Many have expressed deep concerns to their local representatives, urging action to stop arms sales to Israel and calling for an immediate cease fire.

The trauma from witnessing the devastation in Palestine has deeply affected our communities, leading to a rise in Islamophobia and Antisemitism. As a Council, we must listen to our residents and press the government to work towards lasting peace and justice.

Airstrikes have continued and intensified the humanitarian crisis, causing significant civilian casualties, including children, and further escalating the situation. These actions are part of what the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and global human rights organisations have confirmed as genocide, with Israel's policies in occupied Palestinian territories violating international law, including illegal settlements and systematic oppression. ***While the humanitarian crisis demands urgent international intervention, it is vital that the international community recognises that the only long-term solution will be through a two-state solution secured through UN involvement.***

This Council calls on the government to:

Revoke all arms export licenses to Israel and suspend future sales.

Advocate for an unconditional ceasefire and prioritise the protection of civilians, ***with release of all hostages and prisoners on both sides, whilst working towards lasting peace and a two-state solution as agreed per UN resolution.***

Continue to monitor the conflicted area and make sure access for humanitarian aid is allowed in Gaza.

Increase diplomatic pressure to halt illegal settlements and resume peace talks, in line with the ICJ rulings.

Support international investigations into human rights violations, including the confirmed genocide and war crimes.

Welcome and comply with the International Criminal Court's (ICC) arrest warrants for Benjamin Netanyahu, Yoav Gallant and Mohammed Deif.

Facilitate peace talks that respect the security and rights of both Palestinians and Israelis, while holding all parties accountable to international legal standards.

The Council request that:

The Chief Executive and Leader of the Council write to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary to halt arms sales, call for an immediate ceasefire ***with lasting peace and a two-state solution as outlined in the Labour Party manifesto***, and ensure adherence to international law, including compliance with ICJ and ICC rulings.

The council resolves to support humanitarian aid efforts, foster local dialogue to counter hate, and back peaceful initiatives that promote justice and long-term peace for both sides of the conflict.

Additionally, the Council urges the government to review trade agreements with companies involved in illegal activities in the region, ensure no complicity in acts of genocide, and increase humanitarian support for Gaza's civilians.

***Moved by Councillor Qesir Mahmood
Seconded by Councillor Mahfooz Hussain***

This amendment was put to the vote and CARRIED, the amended Motion, now being the Substantive Motion, was put to the vote:

RESOLVED – That the Substantive Motion be CARRIED.

(b) Council Tax

At Prime Ministers Questions on 13th November Keir Starmer was non-committal when asked by the Leader of the Opposition to confirm if he would keep the cap on Council Tax.

This failure to rule out changes came amid fiscal reforms rolled out by the Chancellor during the Autumn Budget.

Downing Street has since said that the 5% cap will remain,

this is three times the current rate of inflation; and if fully enacted by councils will add to the financial pressures being felt by households. Whilst this was a definite statement of intent it will not inspire public confidence given the chancellor's propensity to change the tax raising promises she repeatedly made during the General Election.

At the Executive Board meeting on 13th June this year, the Executive Member for Growth and Development highlighted the performance of the borough's growth programme which included:

- House building continuing to perform well with 598 housing completions delivered in 2023/24 – the highest ever recorded in the borough including new build homes as well as re-purposing existing buildings.
- Since 2015/16 there have been 3,415 housing completions across the borough; with 2,934 new homes and 481 conversions.
- The new Local Plan identifying a pipeline of circa 7,000 homes over the next 15 years with 56% already benefitting from planning permission.
- In 2015/16 the council forecasted a total Section 106 income of £1.4m for infrastructure investment as a result of development, with the current Section 106 developers' contributions forecast now being more than £12m and growing.
- More than 6,000 additional jobs generated since 2017 with the borough home to nearly 5,000 businesses with one of the highest rates of new business growth in the North West.

		<p>This council recognises the contribution this level of growth has made to generating significant income.</p> <p>In order to remove doubt about future Government policy changes to Council Tax and to protect our residents from further financial hardship, we request that the Executive member for Finance and Governance present to the Finance Council a budget that will include a recommendation to cap Council Tax at the rate of inflation or 5% whichever is the lower until 2026.</p> <p>Further there is a commitment that any proposed change by Government to banding or single persons discount will be vigorously resisted.</p> <p>Moved by Councillor Kevin Connor Seconded by Councillor John Slater</p> <p>Following debate, the Motion was put to the vote:</p> <p>RESOLVED – that the Motion be LOST</p>	
	<p>National Policy Reflections, Delivering the Corporate Plan and Achieving Borough Wide Outcomes</p>	<p>(1) That the report be noted.</p> <p>(2) That the core missions in the Council’s Corporate Plan 2023/27 be reaffirmed and it be noted how the missions were aligned to government priorities.</p> <p>(3) That plans to widen out the outcomes in the Corporate Plan be progressed to incorporate partnership activity and ensure there was no one left behind in the borough.</p>	<p>Determined</p>

	<p>(4) That 2nd April 2025 be agreed as the date for the next Partnership Conference and themes highlighted within the report for discussion be noted.</p> <p>(5) That the commissioning of a new residents' survey within the next 12 months be agreed.</p> <p>(6) That the performance of the Council between April to September 2024 be noted.</p>	
Year Planner 2025/26	That the draft Year Planner for 2025/26 be noted.	Determined

Reports for the meeting can be accessed via the following link:

<https://democracy.blackburn.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=162&MIId=1545&Ver=4>