

POLICY COUNCIL

Thursday 30th November 2023

PRESENT – *The Deputy Mayor Councillor Sylvia Liddle, Akhtar H, Baldwin, Brookfield, Casey, Connor, Desai M, Desai S, Fazal, Fielding, Floyd, Gee, Gibson, Gunn, Hardman, Humphrys, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Irfan, Imtiaz, Jackson, Khonat, Mahmood, Marrow, McCaughran, McGurk, Patel Ab, Patel Alt, Patel S, Raja, Riley, Russell, Shaw, Shorrocks, Sidat, Slater Jacq, Slater Jo, Slater Ju, Slater N, Smith D, Smith J, Talbot, Taylor and Whittingham.*

RESOLUTIONS

36 Welcome and Apologies

The Chief Executive read out the notice convening the meeting.

There then followed Prayers by the Mayor's Chaplain, followed by a Minutes Silence in memory of all the victims of the conflict in Israel and Gaza, former Councillors Len Proos and Maurice Whittle, and members of staff who had recently passed away.

Apologies were received from the Mayor, Councillor Parwaiz Akhtar, and Councillors Ali, Harling, Khan S, Khan Z and Rigby.

37 Minutes Of The Previous Meeting

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Council Forum Meeting held on 5th October 2023 were agreed as a correct record.

38 Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were received.

39 Devolution to Lancashire – Proposal and Consultation

A report was submitted, which advised that as part of the Autumn Budget Statement on 22 November 2023, the Government announced the opportunity for a devolution deal for Lancashire and proposed the creation of a Combined County Authority for the administrative area covered by the three upper tier councils, Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council.

To progress the potential devolution deal, under the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, consultation was required on the draft Combined

County Authority (CCA) Proposal ('the Proposal'), which was attached at Appendix A.

Following consultation, the three Councils would need to submit their final Proposal to Government, which would take account of the outcome of the consultation, and which, if appropriate, would formally propose the creation of the CCA.

Council was asked to approve the draft Proposal and agree to consult formally upon it with the residents and other stakeholders of the wider CCA area for a period of 8 weeks commencing on 1 December 2023.

It was anticipated that a further meeting of each of the three Councils in March 2024 would consider the results of the consultation and agree whether or not to formally submit the final Proposal to Government.

All three Councils were considering the same report and recommendations at respective Full Council meetings at the end of November 2023.

RESOLVED –

That Policy Council:

- i. note the Deal Document as announced by the Government, linked here <http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/lancashire-devolution-deal>
- ii. approve the draft Proposal attached at Appendix A to this report to create a Lancashire Combined County Authority (CCA) for the administrative areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Lancashire
- iii. approve a formal consultation on the draft Proposal with the residents and other stakeholders of the wider CCA area, in a partnership between Blackburn with Darwen Council, Blackpool Council and Lancashire County Council
- iv. approve the approach to the consultation as set out in the Proposal document
- v. delegate authority to the Chief Executive to approve any minor amendments to the draft Proposal or consultation arrangements. This delegation is to be exercised in consultation with the Leader of the Council and is conditional upon such amendments being agreed by all three upper tier Councils
- vi. note the draft Equality Impact Assessment at Appendix B
- vii. receive and consider the results of the consultation and whether to formally submit a final Proposal document to Government at a meeting of Full Council in March 2024 and

- viii. reschedule the Council Forum meeting from 21st March 2024 to 14th March 2024, and consequently reschedule the meeting of the Planning & Highways Committee from 14th March 2024 to 13th March 2024.

40 **Motions**

The Chief Executive announced that one Notice of Motion had been submitted under Procedure Rule 12 as follows:

Motion on the situation in Gaza

This Council notes with horror, the increasing number of deaths in Gaza as a result of the Israeli response to the Hamas attack on Israel of the 7th October.

The Council condemns Hamas for its unprovoked attack on Israel, and in taking over 200 hostages – many being civilians, including innocent women and children.

Israel's response to the attack has, however, been utterly out of proportion, with over 12,000 innocent Gazan citizens killed at the time of writing. In addition to those killed, over 2 million Gazans have been impacted either through the loss of their homes, loss of family members, lack of food, water, energy or medicine supplies – all of which have been stopped by Israel. This Council believes such measures which amount to collective punishment to be in breach of international humanitarian law.

This Council also recognises that there will inevitably be large numbers of orphaned children as a result of the continuing violence and calls upon the government to put in place a scheme whereby such orphans can be adopted by families in the UK – this would be similar to the schemes introduced for Ukrainian orphans.

The only sustainable solution to the dispute in Palestine and Israel is for peaceful negotiations to take place with the ultimate aim of a two state

solution where both Palestinians and Israelis can exist independently in autonomous states.

This Council therefore calls for an immediate ceasefire; the release of the hostages taken by Hamas and a resumption of all humanitarian aid including food, water, sanitary products and fuel to the population of Gaza. We call on our national leaders of all political parties to support the calls for a ceasefire, following which we ask our Prime Minister to work with other world leaders to facilitate peace talks.

This Council calls on our Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary, and our Members of Parliament, to seek the implementation of these requests.

Moved by: Cllr Shaukat Hussain

Seconded by: Cllr Sabahat Imtiaz

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

Amendment to the motion on the situation in Gaza

This Council notes with horror, the increasing number of deaths in Gaza as a result of the Israeli response to the Hamas attack on Israel of the 7th October.

The Council condemns Hamas for its unprovoked attack on Israel, and in taking over 200 hostages – many being civilians, including innocent women and children.

Israel's response to the attack has, however, been utterly out of proportion, with over **14,500** innocent Gazan citizens killed at the time of writing **and thousands unaccounted**. In addition to those killed, over 2 million Gazans have been impacted either through the loss of their homes, loss of family members, lack of food, water, energy or medicine supplies – all of which have been stopped by Israel. This Council believes such measures which amount to collective punishment to be in breach of international humanitarian law. ***The council stresses the need for accountability for the actions taken by Israel and Hamas, emphasising that this accountability must be***

pursued through the international Criminal Court for crimes against humanity.

The council stands against any form of violence or indiscriminate attacks targeting Palestinian or Israeli civilians. We call on Hamas and Israel to release all hostages and for our political leaders to take definitive action to ensure that the freedoms and human rights of all people within the region are realised. We call on our politicians to stand against all human suffering without discrimination or generalisation.

The only sustainable solution to the dispute in Palestine and Israel is for peaceful negotiations to take place with the ultimate aim of a two state solution where both Palestinians and Israelis can exist independently in autonomous states.

This Council therefore calls for an ***immediate, unconditional and permanent humanitarian*** ceasefire and a resumption of all humanitarian aid including food, water, sanitary products and fuel to the population of Gaza. We call on our national leaders of all political parties to support the calls for a ceasefire, following which we ask our Prime Minister to work with other world leaders to facilitate peace talks.

This Council also recognises that there will inevitably be large numbers of orphaned children as a result of the continuing violence and calls upon the government to put in place a scheme whereby such orphans can be adopted by families in the UK – this would be similar to the schemes introduced for Ukrainian orphans.

This Council calls on our Chief Executive to write to the Prime Minister, Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Secretary, and our Members of Parliament, to seek the implementation of these requests.

Moved by: Cllr Mustafa Desai

Seconded by: Cllr Salim Sidat

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 Motion be carried.

Councillor Phil Riley, moved suspension of Council Procedure Rule 1 ahead of the next agenda item, which was agreed by Policy Council.

Procedure Rule 1 suspended for the following item:

41 Council Appointments Update

Members received an update on the composition and the political balance of the Council as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report submitted, and were asked to approve the revised Council appointments for the remainder of Council year 2023/24.

Further to the updated Council Appointments approved at Council Forum on 5 October 2023 (reporting the updated political composition and appointments following the resignation of Councillor Hussain Akhtar from the Council's Labour Group, and Councillor Altaf Patel from the Conservative Group), Councillors Mustafa Desai, Sajid Ali, Salim Sidat, Samim Desai, Suleman Khonat, Salma Patel and Abdul Patel had formally resigned from the Council's Labour Group. Councillor Mohammed Irfan had also left the Council's Labour Group.

Under Regulation 8 of the Local Government (Committees and Political Groups) Regulations 1990, a new political group, "4BwD Independent Group" had been constituted consisting of: Councillors Mustafa Desai, Sajid Ali, Salim Sidat MBE, Samim Desai, Mohammed Irfan, Suleman Khonat, Salma Patel, and Abdul Patel. The Leader of new political group was Councillor Mustafa Desai and the Deputy Leader(s) were Councillor Salim Sidat MBE and Councillor Suleman Khonat.

In light of the change to the political composition, the proportionality and allocation of seats on council committees to political groups had been reviewed and detailed in Appendix 2 of the report submitted.

Councillor John Slater advised of a couple of minor errors in the list of his Group's appointments, which had been amended and the agenda pack updated accordingly ahead of the meeting.

RESOLVED –

That Policy Council:

- 1) notes the current political composition and political balance on the Council, as referred to in **Appendix 1**;
- 2) note the Leader's appointment of the Executive Board Members, Deputy Leaders and Assistant Executive Members; (as detailed in the **Appendix 2**)
- 3) notes the Shadow Executive Members and Shadow Assistant Executive Members; (as detailed in the **Appendix 2**),

- 4) Approve the appointment of Chairs, Vice Chairs and Members to the Committees as detailed in **Appendix 2**.

42 Polling Districts Review

Policy Council was asked to consider and approve the final recommendations following the recent Polling Districts Review and public consultation.

The latest compulsory review period was between 1 October 2023 and 31 January 2025, but in view of the volume of anticipated changes and the impact of boundary changes for UK Parliamentary constituencies, the review had been undertaken at the earliest time during the compulsory period.

The review has taken into consideration the recommendations for changes to the UK Parliamentary constituency boundaries and the impact of the voter ID requirements introduced by the Elections Act 2022.

The review of parliamentary polling districts had been combined with that of local polling districts and covered both parliamentary and local government polling arrangements within the administrative boundary of Blackburn with Darwen. This would ensure that polling districts for local elections were the same as for parliamentary elections. The (Acting) Returning Officer for the Rossendale and Darwen constituency had been formally notified of the Council's review and proposals and was invited for any representations during the consultation period.

The Returning Officer's proposals and representations were published on the Council website for public consultation, which took place between 2 October 2023 and 10 November 2023.

During the consultation period representations and comments were invited from any interested parties, including Members, the two Members of Parliament, the Returning Officer for the Rossendale and Darwen constituency, local disability groups and other interested parties. A hard copy of the Returning Officer's proposals and representations was also available for inspection at the Town Hall by contacting the Elections Team (Appendix 1 of the report submitted).

The review and the recommendations involved considering the feedback received from the recent election held and visiting/accessing a number of existing and proposed polling places and stations in Blackburn and Darwen.

All comments and representations received during the consultation period were considered before the Returning Officer's final recommendations were prepared and, subsequently, these were published on the website on 22 November 2023, including ward maps. The web link of the final recommendations was also sent to all Members, the offices of the two MPs, and the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Rossendale and Darwen constituency.

The Council's approval of the final recommendations would complete the review and the new polling arrangements would be implemented at the next scheduled local government elections on 2 May 2024 (or earlier in the event of a General Election or a referendum).

The implementation of the new polling arrangements will require some changes to the electoral register. The new electoral register would be published on 1 February 2024, following a statutory 14 day notice period.

Finally, acknowledging that there may be circumstances that require changes to polling districts, polling places and/or polling stations before the next formal review, the Council was requested to note the existing delegated authority to the Chief Executive, to make such changes as and when the need to do so arose.

RESOLVED –

The Council:

- 1 Note the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations commenced on 2 October 2023.
- 2 Approve the final recommendations of the review and changes to polling districts, polling places and polling stations for parliamentary and local government elections.
- 3 Subject to 2 above, note the publication date (1 February 2024) of the revised electoral register and implementation of the review from 2 May 2024 (or earlier in the event of a General Election or a referendum).
- 4 Note the existing delegation to the Chief Executive to make any appropriate changes to the polling districts, polling places and polling stations following approval of the final recommendations whenever such needs arise, until the next formal review.

43 Draft Year Planner

Policy Council received the draft Year Planner for 2024/25, ahead of submission of the final version to Council Forum on 25th January 2024.

RESOLVED – That the draft Year Planner for 2024/25 be noted.

In line with the Constitution page 111 (3.2 (ii)) The Policy Council meeting moved into Committee.

44 National Policy Reflections and Delivering on our Corporate Plan Core Missions

Members were asked to note progress and key achievements since the Corporate Plan (2023-2027) was adopted, and were provided with an update on performance against core missions. The report also identified some of the main national policy challenges impacting on the Council and invited Members to debate the Council's position on these issues.

The Autumn Statement set out the Government's tax and spending plans for the year ahead, and the report highlighted the key measures and updates within the Statement.

The report also updated Members on:

- The King's Speech
- Electoral Changes
- Devolution and Levelling Up
- The Procurement Act
- Health and Social Care Integration
- Social Care Reform
- Housing Reform
- Children's and Education Reform
- Covid Inquiry
- Environment Act
- Partnership Conference Plans
- Core Missions
- Portfolio Priorities
- Managing Performance
- Corporate Peer Challenge.

RESOLVED –

That Policy Council:

- Note the report
- Note the current national policy drivers
- Note the Council's core missions
- Note the key actions by portfolio
- Note the performance against the Corporate Plan
- Note the progress against the Corporate Peer Challenge Action Plan.

The Meeting then moved out of Committee.

At the close of the Meeting, Councillor Phil Riley thanked the Deputy Mayor for her Chairing of the Meeting.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum

On Thursday 25th January 2024

(being the ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR