

POLICY COUNCIL

Thursday, 6 December 2018

PRESENT –*The Deputy Mayor Councillor Jim Shorrocks, Councillors Afzal, Akhtar H, Akhtar P, Batan, Bateson, Casey, Connor, Daley, Davies, Floyd, Gee, Groves, Gunn, Harling, Hussain I, Hussain M, Hussain S, Jan-Virmani, Kay, Khan M, Khan Z, Khonat, Liddle, Mahmood, Marrow, McGurk, Oates, Patel, Pearson, Richards, Rigby J, Riley, Salton, Sidat, Slater Ja, Slater Jo, Slater N, Smith D, Smith J, Surve, Talbot, Taylor and Whittle.*

RESOLUTIONS

38 Notice Convening Meeting

The Chief Executive read the notice convening the meeting.

39 Minutes Silence in Memory of former Councillor Ron O’Keeffe

A minutes silence was observed in memory of former Councillor Ron O’Keeffe. A number of tributes were made by Members.

40 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of the Mayor, Councillor Pat McFall, and Councillors Brookfield, Fazal, Hardman, Hussain F, Rigby C, and Slater Ju.

41 Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were received in relation to Agenda Item No.9, (Council Tax Support Policy) from Councillors Batan, Groves, Khan M, Khonat, Mahmood, McGurk, Patel, Sidat, Surve, Talbot, Taylor, Connor, Hardman and Marrow.

42 Appointment of Chief Executive

A report was submitted containing recommendations from the Chief Executive Employment Committee regarding the appointment of a new Chief Executive and the departure of the current Chief Executive from 30th April 2019.

The Chief Executive Employment Committee met on 26th November 2018 and considered an option for achieving a reduction in the numbers of Chief Officers consequent of the departure of the current Chief Executive.

When the Chief Executive Employment Committee met they considered a number of factors relating to the executive and senior management of the Council in the context of the ongoing uncertain financial position from 2019/20. In this context the Committee was presented with an option for an efficient internal management restructure and reduction in executive level posts from two to one. The opportunity for this change and the consequential savings being provided by the current Chief Executive proposing and the Employment Committee accepting a joint agreement for his employment to end on 30th April 2019. The Committee was also aware

of the opportunity presented by the experience, knowledge skills and abilities of the current Deputy Chief Executive to take on the Chief Executive role from May 2019.

The reduction in two posts to one, the costs of which would be contained within the first year saving, would secure an ongoing full year net saving of approximately £130,000 per annum from 2020/21.

RESOLVED -

That the following recommendations of the Chief Executive Employment Committee be confirmed:-

1. The release of the current Chief Executive on 30th April 2019 as set out in the report;
2. Approve a restructure of the senior management team of the Council incorporating the deletion of the post of Deputy Chief Executive to achieve financial savings for the Council as set out in the report;
3. Appoint Denise Park as Chief Executive/Head of paid Service with effect from 1st May 2019 on the existing Chief Executive grade of £142,277- £155,463;
4. Request the Chief Executive designate, Denise Park, to develop proposals for revisions to the Chief Officer structure of the Council to ensure the continued effectiveness of service delivery and request these proposals to be presented to the Chief Officers Employment Committee for consideration, with a view to final recommendations being presented to the Finance Council on 25th February 2019 for the implementation of a new senior management team structure on 1st May 2019;
5. In accordance with the Council's Constitution (Part 3 - Section 17) to confirm that Denise Park be appointed from 1st May 2019 as Acting Returning Officer for any constituency or part of a constituency coterminous with or contained in the Borough of Blackburn with Darwen, and Returning Officer for the elections of councillors for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council. In addition to act as Electoral Registration Officer for Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council; and
6. To place on record the thanks of the Council for the Services of Harry Catherall over the last 21 years as a senior officer and last 6 years as Chief Executive of the Council.

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

43 Corporate Plan and priorities beyond 2020

A report was submitted which outlined the key national and local policy challenges and proposals regarding the Council's positioning on future policy areas for the benefit of residents in Blackburn with Darwen. The

Leader of the Council introduced the report and the Chief Executive presented a video which contained highlights and achievements from the last 12 months.

The report outlined the current corporate priorities and four development themes, and key activities and achievements in 2018, along with the latest position relating to the Medium Term Financial Strategy and progress against the Corporate Plan KPIs 2018/19 and the National Policy Direction.

Members were advised of the key activities for each portfolio that would be delivered by March 2020.

The Corporate Plan would be refreshed to reflect the changes in Council structure and the range of initiatives, new partnerships and interventions put in place in recent years alongside the changing landscape in local government and the wider public sector. The report outlined the recent activity undertaken to help the Council make an informed decision on future priorities and objectives.

Over the next few weeks, officers would be developing five or six key corporate priorities for the Council to 2023 which would reflect the evidence base and emerging local and national policy issues whilst building on the existing six priorities.

Emerging themes based on the points set out in this report included inclusive growth and social mobility; supporting young people and raising aspirations; safeguarding and supporting the most vulnerable people; connected communities and integration; reducing health inequalities and improving health outcomes; strengthening partnership working; and financial resilience.

The Corporate Priorities and Plan would be underpinned by an action plan with key corporate and portfolio performance measures so that progress could be monitored to ensure achievement of the priorities.

The final Plan would be available for consideration by Members, stakeholders and communities in January 2019 with a final report to Council Forum on 28th March 2019 to approve the new Corporate Plan and Priorities.

RESOLVED – That the Policy Council note:

1. The content of the report;
2. The national policy direction and the Council's response to current and future policy changes;
3. The next steps to developing a new Corporate Plan and Corporate Priorities to 2023; and
4. The overall performance against the delivery of the Council's strategic objectives.

At this point of the meeting, the Chief Executive advised that in line with the

**44 Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations
October 2018**

A report was submitted that requested Council to consider and approve the final recommendations following the review and public consultation.

The review and the recommendations involved visiting and accessing a number of existing and proposed polling places stations in Blackburn and Darwen. In designating polling places/stations the Council ensured that a set criteria was met relating to the location, facilities, accessibility to and within the polling place/station (including disable access), health and safety and space. The review also included an evaluation of temporary polling stations (mobiles) to determine whether their continued use and location provided the best option, and taking into account the feedback the council had received from residents and electors over the years. In drawing up recommendations consideration was also need to be given to the number of polling stations allocated for a given electorate. The physical geography of a ward including, railway lines, dual carriageways, hills, the shape of the ward itself was also taken into account. Other factors taken into consideration included the situation of polling places/stations in relation to wider amenities and the main transport routes within a ward. In order to predict the likely number of electors at a polling station in the future, turnout figures from the May 2018 'all out' elections were used. Other information referred to during the review included availability and accessibility of polling places and previous representations made by candidates, agents and polling station staff.

All comments and representations received during the consultation period were considered before the Returning Officer's final recommendations were prepared. The Returning Officer's final recommendations were due to be published on the website by 30 November and information/ward maps on display in the Council Chamber from week commencing 3 December. When the final recommendations were published on the Council website, a web link was sent to all Members, the offices of the 2 MPs, the (Acting) Returning Officer for the Rossendale & Darwen constituency and local disability groups.

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 in May 2019 (or earlier in the event of a General Election or a referendum).

The implementation of the new polling arrangements would require some changes to the electoral register. The new electoral register would be published on 1 February 2019, following a statutory 14 day notice period.

RESOLVED – That the Council:

- 1 Note the review of polling districts, polling places and polling stations commenced on 1 October 2018;
- 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 Note the publication date (1 February 2019) of the revised electoral register and implementation of the review from 2 May 2019 (or earlier in the event of a General Election or a referendum);
- 4 Delegate to the Chief Executive, as the (Acting) Returning Officer 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; and
- 5 Authorise the Director of HR, Legal & Governance to make any necessary changes to the Council's Constitution.

45 Council Tax Support Policy

Members considered a report containing recommendations relating to the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2019/20.

Since the requirement to introduce a localised Council Tax Support scheme in 2013, the Council had maintained a scheme that had been broadly in line with the previous national Council Tax Benefit scheme rules and Housing Benefit legislation.

A wide ranging review of the scheme in recent months had recommended that a number of changes should be introduced. The proposals were based on a number of key considerations, which included;

- alignment of the scheme with Universal Credit, which in turn will mitigate the increase in the volume of changes in financial circumstances and subsequent reissue of council tax bills;
- simplification of the scheme, and;
- to reduce the overall level of Council Tax Support awards to working age claimants which will, as a consequence, result in a potential budgetary saving to the Council.

The proposed changes were outlined in report submitted, along with the full scheme.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and the Council Tax Support Scheme for the financial year 2019/20 be approved.

46 Report of the Standards Committee

A report was submitted which provided an update on complaints and the Work Programme for the Committee. The report also outlined a Protocol on Member to Member relations, following discussion on this topic at the Committee which would compliment the Members Code of Conduct, and the Protocol was submitted at Appendix A of the report. Subject to agreement, the Protocol would be included in the Council's Constitution.

RESOLVED – That the report be noted and that the Protocol on Member to Member relations as recommended by the Standards Committee be adopted and incorporated in the Council’s Constitution.

Signed at a meeting of the Council Forum
on 24th January 2019
(being the ensuing meeting of the Council) by

MAYOR