

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 29 March 2012

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Ken Ball (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Eric Bell, Alan Cullens, Greg Morgan and John Walker

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillor Stella Walsh

Other Members: Councillors Alison Hansford, Keith Iddon, Paul Leadbetter, June Molyneaux, Geoffrey Russell and Peter Wilson

Members of the public: One.

12.EC.91 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Kevin Joyce (Executive Member for Resources), Harold Heaton (Lead Member for Development Control), Rosemary Russell (Lead Member for Licensing), Henry Counce and Mick Muncaster.

12.EC.92 MINUTES

RESOLVED - The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 23 February 2012 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Executive Leader.

12.EC.93 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Members declared an interest in respect of items on the agenda.

12.EC.94 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Leader reported that there had been no requests from members of the public to speak on any of the meeting's agenda items.

12.EC.95 REVIEW OF COMMITTEES AND NEW STANDARDS REQUIREMENTS

The Executive Leader presented a report outlining a review Committees and the impact of the new Standards Regime proposed under the Localism Act 2011.

The proposals had been discussed in full at All Party Leaders Liaison and had cross Party support. The Monitoring Officer would submit a report to the next meeting of the Executive Cabinet on 21 June to propose a new Code of Conduct and supporting standards regime in order for there to be a scheme in place for 1 July 2012. Further Government guidance was expected shortly.

Decision made

- 1. To recommend Council not to pursue the Independent Remuneration Panel's request that a merger of the Overview and Scrutiny and Audit Committees be considered, in order to maintain compliance with CIPFA (Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) best practice recommendations that scrutiny and audit should remain independent of each other.**
- 2. To recommend Council merge the Audit and Standards Committees to form a Governance Committee overseeing the Council's ethical framework. Under the new standards requirements the Council could operate both functions**

through one decision making body with Sub Committees established to deal with any standards cases.

3. That in view of the fact that the Council is awaiting further Government guidance on the introduction of a new standards regime, the Council agree that the Monitoring Officer should submit a report to the Executive Cabinet meeting on 21 June which proposes a new Code of Conduct and supporting standards regime in order for there to be a scheme in place for 1 July 2012 as required under the Localism Act 2011. This would require endorsement by Council on 17 July 2012.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The recommendations ensure the continued independence of the Audit and Overview and Scrutiny Committees and seek to deal with changes to decision making structures under the new standards regime.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

An alternative option would be to ignore CIPFA best practice advice on the merger of committees proposed by the IRP. In relation to standards changes there is no provision for Standards Committees in future and it is essential that the Council addresses the changes to the standards regime.

12.EC.96 UPLIFT TIME CREDITS PROGRAMME

The Executive Member for People presented a report in relation to the Uplift time credits programme.

Lancashire County Council (LCC) had successfully bid to the Department for Health to become a 'showcase' area for a time credits system. The time credit system was a development of time banking schemes that aimed to encourage volunteering and the development of relationships between communities.

In the Uplift time credit programme, an individual would be given a credit for time that they gave to support the community. One credit would be received for each hour of time, and these could be exchanged for access to events, training and leisure services, or to "trade" time with neighbours. The model had been developed in response to the consequences of high unemployment and, amongst other things, had been shown to have improved community cohesion and reduced anti social behaviour.

To support the development and launch of the programme, Spice would appoint a local facilitator who would engage with local organisations to develop the time in and time out menus and oversee the launch of the scheme. Support would also be provided by Lancashire County Council and other employees of Spice as required. The SPICE scheme was a pilot and Chorley were the only Authority in Lancashire taking part. At present this was not a mainstream scheme.

Members noted the potential of this scheme.

Decision made

1. **Approval to Chorley Council's involvement in the Uplift time credits programme. This would include providing office accommodation to a local facilitator, who would be employed and paid for by other partners in the programme.**
2. **Approval to the development of a 'time out' menu which included activities offered by Chorley Council, and delegation for approval of the 'time out' menu to the Executive Member for People.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The time credits programme supported the council's long term outcomes of 'support the ageing population to be healthy and independent'; 'communities that residents actively take care of and improve'; 'cohesive communities where people get on well together' and 'an excellent community leader'.

In addition, involvement in the programme would ensure the borough would benefit from over £100,000 of funding from the Department of Health and Lancashire County Council. It also provided Chorley with an opportunity to be involved in innovative and groundbreaking work.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

To not be involved in the programme.

12.EC.97 CHANGES TO DEBTORS RECOVERY

The Head of Shared Financial Services presented a report which set out proposals to make changes to the way miscellaneous invoices (sundry debtors) were processed and collected by the Council.

Changes had been made over the last twelve months to enhance and improve the service which now included the use of barcodes to streamline receipting, simplified stationery and use of a new web desktop for users. Further changes were now being considered to enhance the service that would help improve productivity and cash flow in the medium to longer term.

Decision made

- 1. Removal of the due date from the invoice to state payment was due immediately although no recovery action would commence until 14 days had lapsed from the date of the invoice. This was a significant and important change as currently the implied suggestion was that customers had almost a month to pay for services which in the main had already been delivered by the Council. Removal of the due date was intended to encourage behavioural change so that action was taken to settle the bill immediately rather than prolong payment. These changes excluded Market invoices and garage rentals which were covered by the pay monthly scheme.**
- 2. Movement to a paperless direct debit scheme to align with the Revenues Service.**
- 3. To take advantage of the late payment legislation for commercial invoices although again in reality this would in the main act only to encourage prompt payment of invoices.**
- 4. Implementation of changes to improve the delivery of documents to customers through email by December 2012.**
- 5. The Corporate Debt Recovery Policy to be updated to reflect these changes.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The changes put forward would improve cash flow, productivity and use of resources in the collection of miscellaneous invoices by the Council and improve the flow of information to customers.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

None.

12.EC.98 PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Executive Member for Partnerships and Planning presented a report which set out the legal responsibility placed on the Council to produce a Prevention of Homelessness Strategy and Review, provided an overview of the draft strategy and sought approval for consultation with partners and customers.

The review included detailed statistics on homelessness and a summary of the trends in each borough. These were translated into key priorities for the strategy and linked into the strategy action plan. Chorley and South Ribble Councils regularly work collaboratively on housing initiatives and shared best practice on housing matters. There were similarities in the issues in each respective housing market faces and in particular, relating to homelessness. It had been agreed that, in order to make best use of resources and to pool expertise in producing this strategy, colleagues at both Councils would work collaboratively to produce a shared document.

The strategy would be circulated to all partners engaged in housing or housing related functions, including internal and external, as well as customers. There would be a full integrated equality impact assessment undertaken and following this, feedback would be considered and any necessary changes made prior to the strategy being formally adopted and implemented.

Decision made

Approval to the draft Chorley and South Ribble Prevention of Homelessness Strategy and Review 2012-2016 for consultation purposes.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The publication of a Prevention of Homelessness Strategy and Review was a statutory requirement and the previous strategy was in need of a refresh, alongside a renewed programme of prevention measures and interventions to improve performance and meet the Councils corporate objectives.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

Developing a Chorley only Prevention Strategy and Review was considered however given the opportunity for collaborative working, it was decided this was not the best approach.

12.EC.99 SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Executive Member for Partnerships and Planning presented a report updating Members of the progress in preparing a Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD).

The Design SPD focused on the way in which Central Lancashire authorities would encourage good design by setting out the key design principles that would be used in dealing with planning applications. It was one of five SPDs currently being finalised for public consultation. Officers clarified that the document supported the published Development Plan documents.

Decision made

- 1. Endorsement of the Design SPD for public consultation as detailed in Appendix 2, after which they would be reviewed and reported back to Cabinet in order to be approved and adopted for use.**
- 2. Delegation be granted to the Executive Member in liaison with the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy for approval of minor amendments to the documents, if needed, prior to formal consultation.**

Reasons for recommendation(s)

To approve the draft document for statutory public consultation.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

None.

12.EC.100 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED - That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

12.EC.101 CONTRACT FOR PROVISION OF GENERALIST DEBT ADVICE AND SUPPORT SERVICES IN CHORLEY

The Executive Member for People presented a confidential report outlining the quote from Chorley, South Ribble and District Citizens Advice Bureaux for provision of generalist debt advice and support services in Chorley, to commence on 1 April 2012, in line with specified performance monitoring requirements.

Decision made

That the contract for provision of generalist debt advice and support services be awarded to Chorley, South Ribble and District Citizens Advice Bureaux.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

Awarding the contract for generalist debt advice and support services to the CAB would ensure that this service was maintained for the residents of Chorley and delivered by an organisation with evidence of providing good value for money. Last year the CAB demonstrated excellent performance in Core Funding monitoring and to date have delivered 270 advice appointments, well exceeding their YTD target of 120.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

The alternative option would be not to allocate this contract to the CAB however this would mean a lengthy tendering process to identify a suitable alternative provider. This would be counter-productive given that Chorley Council have developed a good working relationship with the CAB who have been delivering this crucial service successfully Chorley for a number of years and shown to be providing good value for money.

12.EC.102 CORE FUNDING 2012/13

The Executive Member for People presented a confidential report which outlined the Core Funding allocation for 2012/13.

Decision made

Approval to the recommendations in Appendix A, subject to agreeing and signing contracts and or grants with the organisations.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

To provide local voluntary, community and faith sector organisations with Core Funding for 2012/13, to enable them to deliver services in the borough which contribute towards the delivery of the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

Not to award Core Funding Grants in 2012/13.

12.EC.103 CATERING OPPORTUNITIES AT YARROW VALLEY COUNTRY PARK AND CORONATION RECREATION GROUND, CHORLEY

The Executive Member for People presented a confidential report updating Members on progress with investigations into opportunities for revenue generation at Yarrow Valley Country Park and Coronation Recreation Ground Chorley.

Decision made

1. Approval to declare Yarrow Valley Visitors Centre surplus to the Council's operational requirements to enable a commercial letting.
2. Authorisation for the Director of People and Places, in consultation with the Executive Member for People and Places, to identify the most appropriate tenant in line with the criteria identified within this report for the Yarrow Valley Visitors Centre and award a lease to them on terms to be agreed.
3. Authorisation for Liberata Property Services to negotiate terms with a view to the grant of a 10 year lease at Yarrow Valley Country Park, terms agreed to protect public access and to oblige the incoming tenant to work in partnership with the Council to maintain the level of customer service, education facilities, information and exhibition space and access to the public conveniences for all members of the public.
4. To report agreed terms and conditions to the Executive Member for People and Places for approval in due course.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

To declare the Yarrow Valley Country Park Visitors' Centre surplus to Council requirements in order to agree terms for the granting of a lease for the operation of catering facilities in Yarrow Valley Country Park. It was anticipated that the successful applicant would be responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the premises, the costs for which would otherwise remain with the Council.

Alternative options considered and rejected

1. To offer the opportunity to run a catering service at both Yarrow Valley Country Park and Coronation Recreation Ground. This was originally advertised in the summer of 2011 when only one submission was received which made an offer to run a Yarrow Valley Country Park cafe only. Feed back from interested parties suggested that the investment required to fit out Coronation Recreation Ground would be too great for the anticipated returns.
2. For the Council to retain the day to day control of the Yarrow Valley Country Park Visitor Centre which would contain a kiosk type catering facility. There had been no proposals received for this following the advertising and as due to the lack of interest it was not felt this was a commercially viable option. In addition the Council would have continuing maintenance and cleaning responsibilities which would be avoided by a lease.
3. Not to have a catering facility in either location. This would not satisfy the needs identified by consultation with the public.

12.EC.104 REVIEW OF CLEANING SERVICES

The Executive Member for People presented a confidential report advising of a review current cleaning services within the Council.

Decision made

To approve the recommendations within the report.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The recommendations should improve the quality of services and frequency of cleaning being delivered in some locations; they bring all staff back in house giving greater flexibility and value for money.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

The Superclean toilet cleaning contract could be reviewed, expanded and retendered but the additional service requirements will mean a significant increase in contract costs.

12.EC.105 DISPOSAL OF GARDEN EXTENSIONS AT LAND REAR OF FAIRVIEW DRIVE, ADLINGTON

The Monitoring Officer presented a confidential report the disposal of an area of land to individual occupiers as garden extensions.

Decision made

To approve the recommendations within the report.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

1. The sale of the garden extensions would alleviate the problems associated with the public using the land as a walk-through and dogs fouling on the site. The residents would benefit from enhanced garden areas. The creation of garden extensions should assist with controlling security issues.
2. There could potentially be receipts from the sale of the proposed garden extensions (subject to payment of consideration for release or modification of the open space covenant payable to Westbury Homes). In addition the Council might seek to recoup fees and any costs to be recharged including planning application fees and advertising of open space.
3. Chorley Borough Council would no longer be required to maintain this land. This would result in a saving for the Council's maintenance budget.
4. The above was subject to all the occupiers taking a piece of garden land and that there would be no irregular strips of land left over to maintain.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

1. A decision not to allow the parcel to be used for separate garden extensions would result in the land remaining open to the public for a walk-through with its associated safety issues with dog fouling which the residents have complained about.
2. Providing a tree wooded area had been considered as not viable pending proposals for the surface water sewer which would run along the rear of properties 52 – 72 Fairview Drive.
3. A Gating Order under the Highways Act was not available as the land was open space rather than a public highway. Such orders were only possible in relation to public highway. An alternative "alleygating" scheme to be funded by adjacent residents would involve enclosing the open space with keys provided to residents, the emergency services and United Utilities. This process was not completed by the resident carrying out the canvassing of all the other residents.

12.EC.106 SHARED FINANCIAL SERVICES BUDGET REVIEW

The Head of Shared Financial Services presented a confidential report which sought approval following a recommendation made at the Joint Management Committee for Shared Services with South Ribble Council on Monday 26 March 2012.

Decision made

To approve the recommendations within the report for consultation.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

The recommendations are aimed at achieving the following:-

- Succession planning and staff development.
- Review resources to match the service's future work programme.
- Responding to changing customer needs linked to achieving continued value for money through efficiencies.
- Review into two tier grading structure for Accountant's posts in the accountancy functions.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected

The review process undertaken and the restructuring proposals put forward were considered to be the optimum solution to achieve the objectives of the review.

Executive Leader