

# Executive Cabinet

## Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 4 September 2008

**Present:** Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Eric Bell, Alan Cullens, Peter Malpas and John Walker

**Also in attendance:**

**Lead Members:** Councillors Rosemary Russell (Lead Member for Health and Older People) and Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing)

**Other Members:** Councillors Ken Ball, Terry Brown, Mike Devaney, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Laura Lennox, Adrian Lowe, Geoffrey Russell, Ralph Snape and Peter Wilson

### 08.EC.74 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Executive Members on any of the agenda items.

### 08.EC.75 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 14 August 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

### 08.EC.76 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

A request had been received from a local town centre trader for the opportunity to ask a question in relation to the petition on short stay car parking which had been referred to the Executive Cabinet by the Council at its last meeting.

The request was accommodated by the Executive Cabinet during their discussion of the item at Minute 08.EC.84.

### 08.EC.77 FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Cabinet received the Council's September Forward Plan, which set out the detail of the potential key decisions to be made by the Executive Cabinet or individual Executive Members during the four months period commencing 1 September 2008.

**Decision made:**

**That the September Plan, as now presented, be noted.**

### 08.EC.78 DELIVERING EFFICIENCY AND VALUE FOR MONEY - REFLECTING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) submitted a final position statement on the Council's performance in reaching the efficiency targets to be achieved during the Spending Review period from 2005 to 2008, which confirmed that the Council had substantially exceeded the efficiency savings target of £1.29m.

While there was no specific requirement for the Council to set a local target for efficiency gains during the Comprehensive Spending Review covering the period 2008 to 2011, the report recommended that a local target of £1.26m be set. This figure had been calculated following advice from the Department for Communities and Local

Government and after taking account of the fact that the Council was able to carry over the £726,404 excess savings from the previous spending review.

The Officer's report sets out the key areas on which the Council should focus and explained how Officers intend to manage and achieve the savings targets. The Authority would need to ensure that services were procured by the optimum method, processes and systems were streamlined through service transformation and that the Council's assets were used most effectively.

**Decisions made:**

1. **That the report be noted.**
2. **That the strategic way forward set out in the report be approved as a platform for the delivery of efficiency gains and the achievement of value for money.**
3. **That an efficiency target of £1.26m be approved as local target for the Council during the Comprehensive Spending Review for the three year period 2008 to 2011.**
4. **That the Executive Member (Resources) be nominated to act as Value for Money Champion for the Authority.**
5. **That an annual update to monitor progress on the efficiency gains be presented to the Executive Cabinet.**

**Reason for decision:**

In order to ensure that Members are appraised of the issues and demands presented by the continuing efficiency agenda and the strategy to achieve successes.

**Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:**

Unlike the 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), there are no individual efficiency targets set in the 2007 CSR. However, in order to ensure maximum internal focus, it is essential that local targets be set for future efficiency gains.

**08.EC.79 PREVENTION OF HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY FOR CHORLEY, 2008 - 2013**

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) enclosing a draft Prevention of Homelessness Strategy to cover the period 2008-2013 to replace the initial Strategy produced in 2003.

The purpose of the Strategy was to enable local authorities to have an accurate picture of the levels of homelessness throughout the Borough and to outline the steps to be taken to tackle and prevent homelessness. This would be pursued through an Action Plan which would concentrate on improving services to customers; reducing the use of temporary accommodation and improving standards; and developing early interventions and enhanced options.

Other Members present at the meeting requested the Executive Member (Resources) to examine the progress on the provision of new affordable housing units throughout the Borough to ascertain whether stipulated targets were being met and the correlation between reducing housing waiting lists and the limited availability of affordable dwellings.

**Decisions made:**

1. **That the draft Prevention of Homelessness Strategy, as now presented, be approved for consultation purposes.**

2. **That the Executive Member (Business) be granted delegated power to agree the final Strategy document after taking account of the outcome of the consultation exercise.**

**Reason for decisions:**

All partners must be consulted on the Prevention of Homelessness Strategy, in order to ensure that the Strategy is 'fit for purpose' and to identify any omissions and ensure that all agencies take 'ownership' of the action plan to ensure its deliverability.

**Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:**

None.

**08.EC.80 INTRODUCTION OF FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME**

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) which outlined the Government's plans to encourage local authorities to participate in schemes to allow free swimming for persons aged 60 years or over and for persons aged 16 years and under during public sessions, and commented on its implications for Chorley.

Authorities wishing to participate in the 60 plus free swimming scheme and express an interest to participate in the under 16 scheme were required to confirm their intentions by 15 September 2008.

The Government had undertaken to contribute towards the costs of the free swimming programme for an initial two year period, after which the scheme would be evaluated to consider the possibility of future funding beyond that period. The Corporate Director's report confirmed the likelihood of the costs of free swimming for 60 plus persons being contained within the Government grant during the first two year period. However, the comments of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reminded Members of the current uncertainties in relation to the funding of the under 16s element of the programme in so far as the level of Government grant and the Primary Care Trust's possible contribution was concerned. The Council would also need to assess the risks if, in subsequent years, the Government grant was reduced or removed and consider the implications of Community Leisure Services' future pricing policies.

The Executive Cabinet accepted the Officers' reservations but agreed to pursue the Authority's potential involvement in the free swimming programme on the understanding that a further report would be submitted to an early Executive Cabinet meeting.

**Decision made:**

**That, at this stage, the Council confirms its participation in the scheme to provide free swimming at public sessions for persons aged 60 and over and expresses an interest in the scheme to provide free swimming for persons aged 16 and under.**

**Reasons for decision:**

The Government expects the majority of local authorities to participate in some elements of the free swimming programme to encourage residents to take part in a popular form of physical activity that has proven health benefits. The financial implications and risks will need to be evaluated before a definite commitment is made to provide free swimming for persons aged 16 and under.

**Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:**

The only alternative option is not to participate in any element of the programme.

**08.EC.81 COPPULL LEISURE CENTRE - OPTIONS FOR FUTURE OPERATION**

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) seeking instructions on the future operation of Coppull Leisure Centre.

The Council's 15 year Indoor Leisure Contract with Community Leisure Services (CLS), which now covered All Seasons Leisure Centre, Clayton Green Leisure Centre and Brinscall Pool, had commenced in November 2006. The contract was supported by a side agreement with CLS in respect of the Coppull Leisure Centre, which was currently leased by the Council from the Coppull Community Association.

The Leisure Centre lease was due to expire in 2011 and the Council would, therefore, need to determine its policy and preferred method of future operation if the Council was to ensure that the agreed arrangements were in place by 2011.

The report outlined a number of options for the future management and operation of the Coppull Leisure Centre, but recommended the commencement of negotiations with the Coppull Community Association and Community Leisure Services with a view to the current level of operations being continued at the Leisure Centre for the remaining period of the Indoor Leisure Contract.

**Decision made:**

**That approval be given to the commencement of negotiations with the Coppull Community Association and Community Leisure Services on the continuation of the current level of operations at the Coppull Leisure Centre for the remaining period of the Indoor Leisure Contract.**

**Reason for decision:**

The proposal will ensure that there is a continuous provision for sport and physical activity within the Borough and Coppull, in particular, which, in turn, will assist the achievement of challenging targets.

**Alternative option(s) considered and reported:**

The two options assessed and rejected would be not to extend the lease or subsidise the operation of Coppull Leisure Centre or transfer the responsibility for the operation of the Centre to community management.

**08.EC.82 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS**

**Decision made:**

**That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the ground that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.**

**08.EC.83 BUSINESS DIRECTORATE - RESTRUCTURE OF STRATEGIC HOUSING SECTION**

The Executive Cabinet considered a confidential report of the Corporate Director (Business) on the results of the consultation exercise on the draft proposals to restructure the Strategic Housing Section of the Business Directorate.

The revised structure would reduce the number of Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers from three to two and create a temporary Affordable Housing Officer for a period of two years. The change of emphasis was aimed at strengthening the Section's ability to encourage and pursue the provision of more affordable housing within the Borough in accordance with national and local priorities.

The additional costs of the restructuring proposals could be met from a budget virement.

**Decision made:**

**That the proposals to restructure the Strategic Housing Section of the Business Directorate, as amended to take account of the outcome of the consultation exercise and outlined in the submitted report, be approved and adopted.**

**Reasons for decision:**

The revised structure will provide a 'fit for purpose' strategic housing function aligned to the needs of the service and will ensure the allocation of sufficient resources and capacity to the strategic priority of the Council to provide adequate units of affordable housing.

(The meeting was re-opened to the press and public at this stage)

**08.EC.84 SHORT STAY CAR PARKS - PETITION REFERRED BY COUNCIL AT ITS MEETING ON 15 JULY 2008**

The Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) presented a report in response to the petition against the 3 hours maximum limit for parking on short stay car parks introduced in April 2008 that that been submitted to the last Council meeting and referred for consideration by the Executive Cabinet.

Recent research into town centre car park usage had revealed that a significant majority of visitors and shoppers using the short stay car parks generally stayed for less than 2 hours and that, whilst the Flat Iron Car Park was well used on Tuesdays and Saturdays, there was ample capacity for parking within the short and long star car parks at most times. Alternative long stay provision was also readily available within easy access of the town centre.

The instigator of the petition attended the Executive Cabinet meeting and was allowed to present a further letter in support of the petition.

A comprehensive debate ensued on the issues raised by the petition, during which a number of suggested schemes aimed at meeting local traders concerns (eg the introduction of pay on exit parking; the extension of the maximum stay on short stay car parks to four hours on payment of a premium charge for the fourth hour) were raised. The Council was also requested to improve the directional signage to the location of town car parks at each gateway to the town.

At the conclusion of the debate, the Executive Cabinet considered that, on balance, in order to maintain a relatively low car parking fee structure and to encourage greater turnover on short-stay car parks, the current policy should be continued. The car parking issues should, however, be monitored and kept under review with an examination of all viable and realistic options.

**Decisions made:**

- 1. That the report be noted.**

2. That, on the basis of the evidence presented in the report, the car parking strategy approved by the Executive Cabinet at its meeting on 6 September 2007 be reaffirmed.
3. That the petitioner, along with other local retail outlets, be provided with details of the long stay car parks located within the town centre which they can provide to customers.
4. That the situation in respect of town centre parking and the fee structure be kept under review, with an examination of all feasible options to assist visitor parking and maintain satisfactory income levels.

**Reason for decisions:**

Initial analysis of the issues raised in the petition has revealed that there is no evidence to warrant an alteration of the current car parking policy and associated tariff charges. An on-going review, however, will allow an assessment of the concerns expressed and an examination of all feasible options.

**Alternative options(s) considered and rejected:**

None.

Executive Leader