

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 8 January 2009

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair) and Councillors Eric Bell, Alan Cullens, Peter Malpas and John Walker

Also in attendance:

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

Other Members: Councillors Julia Berry, Alistair Bradley, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, Catherine Hoyle, Adrian Lowe, June Molyneaux, Debra Platt, Geoffrey Russell, Ralph Snape and Peter Wilson

09.EC.01 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of the Deputy Leader of the Council (Councillor Pat Case).

09.EC.02 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

09.EC.03 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 11th December 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

09.EC.04 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Leader reported that there had been no requests from any member of the public to speak at the meeting.

09.EC.05 SHORT STAY CAR PARKS - RESPONSE TO PETITION AND NOTICE OF MOTION

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the findings and recommendations of the Car Park Strategy Group, comprising Executive and other Members, officers and representatives from the Chamber of Trade and local retailers, which has been set up to examine the issues raised in both the petition and subsequent Notice of Motion presented to the Council on 15 July and 23 September 2008 respectively.

The petition had objected to the 3 hour maximum limit allowed for parking on short stay car parks and the Notice of Motion had suggested the introduction of an ability to park up to 4 hours at a premium rate, together with the designation of the Hollinshead Street staff car park to a long stay public car park.

The Car Park Strategy Group had assessed in depth all the implications and practicalities of the proposals and had compared Chorley's policies and practices in relation to car parking schemes and tariffs with a number of other authorities. The Group had ultimately concluded that, whilst it could not support the proposals contained in the Notice of Motion, other revisions could be made to the Council's car parking scheme, and the Executive Member (Business) explained the factors that had influenced the conclusions and recommendations.

Decisions made:

1. That the proposal to extend parking to 4 hours on short stay car parks at a premium rate be rejected, but that the Portland Street car park be re-designated from a short stay to a mixed stay tariff.
2. That the suggestion to relocate the staff car parking from Hollinshead Street car park to the Water Street car park and re-designate the Hollinshead Street car park to a long stay car park be not approved.
3. That the facility for free car parking for up to 3 hours for Blue Badge holders be continued, but that this issue of free parking provision be referred to the Lancashire County Council for discussion at the District Parking Forum.

Reason for decisions:

There is no evidence to support the practical viability of either changing the current tariff policy for short stay car parking provision in the Borough, the Blue Badge scheme, or the designation of the Hollinshead Street car park to a long stay car park.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The Car Park Strategy Group requested and considered information of car park schemes and parking tariffs from other local authorities. This included consideration of a free parking trial introduced by Chesterfield Borough Council where it hadn't achieved the objective of increasing new visitors but encouraged a behavioural change in parking times of existing visitors. In addition, consideration was given to the trials on schemes of using mobile phones to make car park payments in York and Cornwall. A 10% commission rate is charged by the phone company, which would not make this scheme cost effective for Chorley.

09.EC.06 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INQUIRIES

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) presented for the Executive Cabinet's consideration the findings and recommendations of two Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups as contained in their respective reports of inquiries into (a) Chorley Community Housing and (b) Streetscene issues.

(a) **Chorley Community Housing**

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a Task Group of 11 Members, under the chairmanship of Councillor Mike Devaney, had undertaken a review of the performance of Chorley Community Housing since the transfer of the housing stock in March 2007.

The inquiry had aimed to examine the feasibility of the promised services and home improvements being delivered by Chorley Community Housing; to identify any barriers to delivery; and to suggest any required improvements.

The Task Group had, at the conclusion of the review, agreed 13 specific recommendations, which had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(b) **Streetscene**

At the request of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a Task Group of 10 Members, under the chairmanship of Councillor Adrian Lowe, had undertaken in review of issues around the Council's streetscene service.

The inquiry had aimed to examine the manner in which the Neighbourhoods Directorate's activities were organised; to assess the current service provision; and to identify any suggested improvements.

The Task Group had, at the conclusion of the review, agreed 25 specific recommendations, which had been endorsed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Decision made:

That the findings and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups on their respective inquiries into (a) Chorley Community Housing and (b) Streetscene issues, be received and accepted for consideration, with a view to the Executive Cabinet's decisions on the recommendations being reported to a future meeting.

Reason for decision:

In order to allow the Executive Cabinet the opportunity to consider, evaluate and determine its response to the two scrutiny inquiry reports.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.07 UPDATE ON APPLICATION FOR BEACON STATUS IN 2009

The Executive Cabinet received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) updating Members on the progress of the Council's application for Beacon Status around the theme of 'Better outcomes for People and Places' in the 2009 final Beacon round. The overarching theme was recognised as the 'gold standard to which all Councils should aspire'.

The Council had been short-listed for the award with four other authorities from 16 national applicants. An Assessment Team had visited Chorley, as a result of which the Council had been awarded an overall 'excellent plus' 5.5 out of 6 rating. A copy of the Assessment Team's findings had been attached to the report.

The Chief Executive gave a complementary short presentation on the bid, highlighting the positive feedback from the assessors who had been particularly impressed with the Authority's strong leadership and Corporate Strategy; customer focus; productive partnerships; effective customer engagement and communications; and total commitment and ambition to achieve the Council's priorities. This had been reflected in a 13% increase in residents' overall satisfaction rating of the authority.

The Chief Executive also advised the Members that a delegation from the Council, including representatives of the Citizens' Panel and a partner organisation, would shortly address a specific panel, in advance of the final announcement on the Beacon award in March 2009. The award of Beacon status (in addition to the existing Beacon award for 'Transforming Services: Citizen Engagement and Empowerment') would result in the generation of £80,000 for the Council to expend in the dissemination of good practice and the development of new initiatives to improve services.

Decision made:

That the report and presentation be noted.

09.EC.08 CHORLEY HERITAGE AND CONSERVATION STRATEGY, 2009 - 2013

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking endorsement of the Chorley Heritage and Conservation Strategy for 2009 to 2013 and its associated action plan.

The aim of the Strategy was to detail the precise procedures and action plan through which the Council would continue to preserve and enhance the Council's listed and other historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of its historic environment, including ancient monuments and registered parks and gardens.

The Corporate Director (Business) also urged Members to notify the Council's Conservation Officer of any buildings within the Borough that they considered worthy of preservation in order for the building(s) to be examined and assessed.

Decision made:

That the Heritage and Conservation Strategy and its associated Action Plan, as now presented, be approved and adopted as a structure and programme for the Council's conservation and heritage work up to 2013.

Reasons for decision:

The structure will enable a structured and co-ordinated approach to be adopted in the conservation and enhancement of the Council's historic environment.

Alternative options(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.09 INFORMATION SECURITY FRAMEWORK

The Corporate Director for Information and Communications Technology presented a report seeking endorsement of a new Information and Security Framework to supersede the existing Security Policy.

The report highlighted the Council's increasing dependence on its information systems to deliver services and the necessity to ensure that policies and procedures were put in place to protect those systems from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification or destruction. The new framework would ensure that security policies were put in place to address the primary principles of information security (i.e. confidentiality, integrity and availability).

The new framework had been compiled to reflect recent changes in working practices (e.g. mobile and home working) and to mitigate resultant risks.

All existing and new employees of the Council would be required to sign to signify that they had read and understood the new policy.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the adoption of the new Information Security Framework to replace the existing IT Security Policy.

Reason for decision:

The existing IT Security Policy requires updating and does not effectively deal with the threats facing the Council. The new framework is designed to move the Council towards the recognised international security standard ISO 27001.

09.EC.10 DRAFT BUDGET PROPOSALS FOR 2009/10

(a) Treasury Management Strategy, 2009/10

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) submitted a report which summarised the background surrounding the current global financial crisis and economic downturn.

The report also set out a number of treasury management options for the Council to consider in terms of balancing investment risks against likely rewards on the use of the Council's cash assets before agreeing the authority's financial management strategy for the forthcoming financial year.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) favoured a treasury management strategy, which would:

- continue investments in institutions with strong financial strength;
- use counterparties only where there was either a Government backed guarantee or the Government had the strongest rated sovereign strengths;
- require further investment decisions to be based upon the counterparties individual circumstances whenever counterpart parties were placed on negative rating watch; and
- allow a DMAF account to be opened with the Government as an option for depositing cash.

During a debate on the report, a Member questioned the effectiveness of the Council's dealings with advisors and suggested consideration of the purchase of income generating assets as an alternative to monetary investments.

Decision made:

That the options outlined in the submitted report as the basis of a treasury management strategy for 2009/10 be approved for consultation purposes as part of the Council's budget setting process.

Reason for decision:

The consultation exercise will allow an opportunity for the submission and consideration of views before decisions on the development of a financial management strategy are agreed.

(b) Approval of Draft Revenue Budget for 2009/10 for consultation purposes

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presenting the draft 2009/10 revenue budget proposals for approval for consultation purposes.

The draft budget had been compiled in the context of the difficult national financial situation, restricted levels of additional Government grant and the need to make significant savings in order to maintain the current level of front line services.

The budget proposals envisaged the transfer of £264,000 from working balances in 2009/10 to meet the anticipated budget deficit, on the assumption of a 3.5% Council Tax increase; a revision of the Council Tax base; significant expenditure savings; and additional income generation. The report also pointed to the likelihood of further savings in the region of £500,000 being required in both 2010/11 and 2011/12 in order to achieve a balanced budget over the medium term.

Decisions made:

- (1) **That the draft General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2009/10, as now presented, be approved for consultation in accordance with the process outlined in the submitted report.**
- (2) **That the advice within the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the draft budget in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, particularly in relation to the need to maintain working balances within the identified range, be noted.**

Reason for decisions:

Approval of the draft budget proposals for 2009/10 will enable the commencement of the statutory consultation exercise.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

(c) Concessionary Travel - Pooling Arrangements across Lancashire

The Executive Leader submitted a report updating Members on the outcome of the discussion between the Lancashire Leaders on the agreed formula for the pooling of resources for concessionary travel costs in Lancashire.

The Lancashire Leaders had agreed unanimously a pooling arrangement put forward by Pendle Council which was anticipated to reduce Chorley Council's expected budget shortfall by £81,000 over the two year period 2008/09 and 2009/10 on the assumption of an eventual outturn of costs for Chorley of £1.355m and £1.388m in 2008/09 and 2009/10 respectively.

Counsel's opinion on the legality of the pooling arrangement was being sought and a Task Group had been set up to oversee the implementation of the pooling arrangements. In addition, a meeting was to be held shortly with Government representatives to negotiate changes to the allocation system.

Decision made:

That the arrangements approved by the Lancashire Leaders in respect of the pooling of resources to address the expected shortfall in meeting the cost of concessionary travel in Lancashire, as outlined on the submitted report, subject to identified caveats, be endorsed.

Reason for decision:

The pooling arrangement is aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the costs of concessionary travel to Chorley Council.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Several alternative pooling formulas were explored by the Lancashire Leaders.

(d) Monitoring of Capital Programme for 2008/09 and Draft Capital Programme for 2009/10 to 2011/12

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) which (a) proposed changes to the 2008/09 Capital Programme; and (b) updated the 2009/10 and 2010/11 draft programmes, indicating the commitments to continue into 2011/12.

The report outlined the reasons for the recommended revision and reduction of the 2008/09 Capital Programme by £644,700 as a result of a £1,297,580 slippage to 2009/10 and 2010/11 and other net increases totalling £652,880. An appendix to the report analysed the revised programme for the current financial year and identified the projected changes to slippages to future years.

The report also reviewed and commented on the financing arrangements and borrowing requirements for the 4 year programme. Whilst there would be a requirement for additional borrowing to finance the 2008/09 programme, proposed changes to the financing of capital expenditure in 2009/10 and 2010/11 should counterbalance the increase by bringing the total borrowing requirement for the 4 year period from 2007/08 to 2010/11 up to £3.625m as previously agreed.

In addition, the report also set out a draft programme for 2011/12, identifying schemes to be funded from the £1.175m committed expenditure to continue into 2011/12.

It was intended that the draft Capital Programme for 2009/10 to 2011/12, if endorsed, would form part of the budget consultation exercise for the next financial year.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2008/09 set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, at a total cost of £8,582,620.**
- (2) That approval be given the addition of committed schemes totalling £1.175m to the 2011/12 Capital Programme and that the 2009/10 to 2011/12 Capital Programme be endorsed for consultation purposes.**

Reason for decisions:

The revision of the 2008/09 Capital Programme will ensure that it reflects and is capable of assisting the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities. Endorsement of the 3 year Capital Programme up to 2012 will allow all representations received to be evaluated before formal decisions are made.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.11 COTSWOLD HOUSE TRANSFER

The Executive Leader accepted as urgent consideration of this item not included on the meeting's agenda in order to ensure that adequate arrangements for the accommodation of homeless customers were continued beyond 1 April 2009.

The Corporate Director (Business) submitted a report updating Members on the arrangements to effect the transfer back to the Council of the management of Cotswold House, which provides temporary accommodation for homeless persons.

A draft Heads of Terms agreement had been negotiated with Chorley Community Housing in anticipation of the management of the premises to the Business Directorate. In order to effect the transfer on 1 April, the report recommended the Executive Cabinet's endorsement of the proposed outlined budget, together with the suggested staffing structure, headed by a full-time Hostel Co-ordinator.

In response to a Members' query, the Corporate Director (Business) confirmed that the proposals had been supported by Supporting People, whose funding of the facility would continue. The new concierge service was expected to improve the service and liaison with neighbouring residents.

Decisions made:

1. That the proposed budget for 2009/10 and staffing structure for the homeless accommodation facilities at Cotswold House, as outlined in the submitted report, be approved.

2. That the following rental and service charges for accommodation at Cotswold House be agreed:

**Rental charge - £97.01 per week;
Eligible services charge - £81.40 per week;
Ineligible services charge – £12.00 per week.**

Reason for decisions:

Early agreement of the budget and staffing structure is essential if the management of Cotswold House is to transfer to the Borough Council on 1 April 2009.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.12 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972.

09.EC.13 DISPOSAL OF SURPLUS LAND AND ASSETS

The Executive Cabinet considered a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) and the Corporate Director (Business) on the outcome of a review of the Council's non-operational land and building assets.

The first phase of the review had been undertaken with the aim of identifying:

- (a) non-operational assets which were surplus to requirements or were not achieving an acceptable rate of return; and
- (b) land assets that would be suitable for development of affordable housing units.

An appendix to the report identified several sites, including a number of garage colonies, having the potential for disposal for development by affordable housing units, provided the capital receipts generated from the sales equated to at least the current low cost valuation of the sites.

The report also identified a number of other Council owned sites recommended for disposal at market value, currently estimated at £3.4m, the capital receipt from which would be used towards the funding of the 3 year Capital Programme.

The Executive Member for Resources also proposed at the meeting the inclusion of the site of 16 garages at Queensway, Brinscall in the list of proposed sites for disposal. While the garage site was not suitable for redevelopment by affordable housing, other alternative uses could be examined.

Decision Made:

1. **That approval be given to the disposal of the surplus land and building assets identified in the submitted report, together with the site of 16 garages at Queensway, Brinscall.**
2. **That Adactus be appointed as the Council's preferred development partner to develop housing scheme proposals for the sites identified as potential housing redevelopment sites.**

Reason for decisions:

The disposal of the surplus land and building assets is aimed at achieving the optimum, most beneficial use of the respective sites.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Retention of the land and buildings is not considered economically viable.

Executive Leader