

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 26 March 2009

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 Rosie Russell (Lead Member for Health and Older People) and Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing).

Other Members: Councillors Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, Pat Haughton, Catherine Hoyle, Keith Iddon, Roy Lees, Laura Lennox, Adrian Lowe, June Molyneaux, Mick Muncaster, Debra Platt and Ralph Snape.

09.EC.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Henry Counce and Geoffrey Russell.

09.EC.26 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

09.EC.27 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 12 February 2009 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

09.EC.28 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.29 ANNUAL AUDIT AND INSPECTION LETTER FOR 2007/08

The Executive Cabinet received and considered the Audit Commission's Annual Audit and Inspection Letter which summarised the areas examined and the outcome of the Auditor's work on the Council's 2007/08 activities.

The Executive Cabinet were appreciative of the generally positive tone of the letter, which commended the Authority on its acknowledged efforts and achievements in improving the delivery and access to services across the Borough. The Cabinet noted, in particular, the Council's retention of the highest score of 4 for its overall use of resources.

While representatives of the Commission's Inspection Team were unable to attend the meeting, Councillor Anthony Gee (Chair of the Audit Committee) reported the views of the Audit Committee during its debate on the audit letter at its meeting on 19 March. In particular, the following issues commented on by the Audit Commission were highlighted:

- It was likely that the Council would face difficulties in maintaining a continuous stream of improvement in the face of the current economic downturn.

- While the Audit letter acknowledged the progress that was being made to exceed the Local Area Agreement target for the provision of affordable housing units in 2008/09, the number of units provided in 2006/07 and 2007/08 were below the target figure. The Audit Committee members had requested the Executive, in consultation with the Group Leaders, to devise an action plan for measures to secure the delivery of more affordable housing units, in order to meet past LAA targets, taking account of expanding housing waiting lists.
- The Audit Commission had drawn attention to the need for more effective collaborative partnership working to reduce the level of health inequalities across Lancashire. The view was also expressed that more specific and proactive measures that would address the situation in Chorley were required.

In response to the expressed concerns, the Chair referred to the Executive's efforts to address the matters by pursuing the following actions:

- Having made substantial adjustments to the base budget for 2009/10, the Executive was optimistic that the Council would achieve a balanced budget by the end of the 2009/10 financial year if the agreed monitoring arrangements were maintained.
- A Task Group had been formed to work with local Developers and Registered Social Landlords to identify and examine innovative means of accelerating the development of allocated sites for affordable housing; accessing available funding sources; and mechanisms to bring empty properties back into occupation.
- The Council accepted the need to address the present health inequalities within the Borough and was examining relevant statistics with the Primary Care Trust and appropriate partners, with a view to the production of a Health Equalities Plan.

Decision made:

That the Audit and Inspection Letter for 2007/08, together with the expressed views of the Audit Committee and other Members, be noted and considered.

09.EC.30 DEVELOPING EMPLOYEES AND ELECTED MEMBERS

The Corporate Director (Human Resources and Organisational Development) presented a report outlining the Council's performance over the past year in its delivery of the Workforce Development Plan adopted in May 2008, which aimed to clarify how the Authority anticipated and addressed current and future key workforce challenges.

In addition to the Plan's identified actions, training sessions had also been organised around project management skills; climate change awareness; equality and diversity issues; and NVQ2 business improvement techniques, together with an Organisational Development Programme for Directors and Managers to develop the Officers' knowledge, skills and attitudes.

The report also summarised several activities that had been arranged over the past year as part of a comprehensive programme to develop and improve Members' skills and knowledge base. In this context, in addition to the Authority's reassessment for Level 1 of the North West Employers Member Development Charter, the Council would be seeking the higher Level 2 Charter, citing Members' involvement in the new Neighbourhood Working regime as its main theme.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

09.EC.31 FINAL SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT ON SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking the Executive Cabinet's approval and adoption of the revised draft Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document, after taking account of the responses to the recent consultation exercise.

The purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was to implement the policies of the Sustainable Resources Development Plan Document approved in September 2008 by providing practical advice and guidance to developers on how to incorporate the sustainable use of resources into new developments.

43 representations had been received during the six weeks consultation on the draft SPD, the majority of which had sought minor changes and/or clarification of a number of issues. Consequently, a few amendments to the SPD maps had been made, together with a number of textual changes, principally to include reference to the designated sites of local, County or regional importance (eg geological or biological heritage sites, historic parks or gardens and local nature reserves).

Decision made:

That the amended Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document be approved and adopted, subject to the Corporate Director (Business) being delegated with authority to agree any minor textual amendments to the Document before final publication.

Reason for decision:

In order to ensure that the views expressed during the statutory consultation period on the Supplementary Planning Document are taken into account and are able to influence the content of the final SPD, which supplements the Sustainable Resources Development Plan Document.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.32 NEIGHBOURHOOD ACTION PLANS

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the current initiatives to progress the Neighbourhood Working model aimed at improving outcomes at the local level through effective collaboration between partner agencies, organisations and residents.

Since the designation of the seven Neighbourhood Areas covering the whole of the Borough, Neighbourhood Profiles had been compiled for each Area from a variety of intelligence and information sources. Ward Walks, led by the respective Councillors, had been held across each of the 20 Borough Wards and a number of consultation meetings and events had been arranged and various mechanisms employed to identify pertinent issues within each Ward.

The results of the consultation exercise had informed the content of draft Neighbourhood Action Plans which set out a series of actions and projects to address the identified issues.

The Corporate Director also gave assurances that further walks around the respective neighbourhoods would be organised early in the new municipal year, as an opportunity for Members to identify issues in other parts of the respective Wards, and that the action plan projects would be monitored closely over the next 12 months period.

Decision made:

That the report be noted and that delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods), following consultation with the Lead Member for Neighbourhoods and the relevant Ward Members, to approve the final versions of the seven Neighbourhood Action Plans.

Reason for Decision:

Neighbourhood working is an important area of development for Chorley. It is, therefore, important that an appropriate approval and monitoring process is agreed for the Neighbourhood Action Plans. It is essential to secure the support of the Executive Member, the Lead Member and the ward members and to ensure that actions are agreed and monitoring arrangements are in place. Delivery of the actions is the responsibility of a number of agencies, including specifically Chorley Council, and it is essential that an element of ownership of the actions, and financial spend, is established from the outset.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

09.EC.33 APPROVAL OF CORE FUNDING GRANTS FOR 2009/10

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) seeking the Members' instructions on applications for grant assistance from the Council's Core Fund budget provision in 2009/10.

The report contained the Corporate Director's recommendations on the award of grant aid to the organisations whose activities contributed towards the Council's strategic objectives and themes within the Sustainable Community Strategy.

The Corporate Director also reminded the Executive Cabinet that the Council's Core Funding grants represented only one of a number of grant sources for community and voluntary organisations. The Corporate Director considered that a review of the core funding streams might provide an opportunity to improve the co-ordination of the grants systems between partners.

Decisions made:

(1) That approval be given to the making of the following Core Fund grants, subject to the Corporate Director (People) agreeing and signing off a Core Funding Agreement with each organisation:

- **Chorley and South Ribble Shopmobility – Grant of £10,500;**
- **Preston and West Lancashire Racial Equality Council – Grant of £1,500;**
- **Chorley Women's Centre – Grant of £4,460;**
- **Chorley and South Ribble Council for Voluntary Service – Grant of £4,165;**

- **Chorley Lifestyle Centre 50+ - Grant of £2,250, plus £4,270 towards accommodation costs and other additional support during the organisation's transitional period;**
 - **The Arts Partnership – Grant of £7,000, subject to the Partnership providing an analysis of activity across Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire districts and funding from each district;**
 - **Help the Homeless (Chorley) – Grant of £650;**
 - **Chorley, South Ribble and District Citizens' Advice Bureau – Grant of £67, 240 to be paid in two 6 monthly payments in advance, plus £18,200 to cover administration costs, subject to the Bureau providing the same level of service during 2009/10 are provided in 2008/09 as a minimum, maintaining the Community Legal Services Quality Mark and agreeing a process for the referral of people for debt advice by the Council;**
 - **Chorley and District Sports Forum – Grant of £5,435, subject to a robust methodology being put in place and a limit being placed on the grants made to talented individuals;**
 - **Chorley Pensioners' Association – Grant of £350;**
 - **Lancashire Sport – Grant of £5,125;**
 - **Home-Start Chorley and South Ribble – Grant of £5,125;**
 - **Central Lancashire Dial-A-Ride – An in-principle grant of £2,080, subject to clarification of other sources of external funding provided to the organisation;**
 - **Preston and Lancashire Survivors – Grant of £410;**
 - **Groundwork Lancashire West and Wigan – Grant of £22,000.**
- (2) **That no core fund grant be made to Victim Support, pending clarification of the organisation's impact in the Borough.**
- (3) **That the Saheliyaan Asian Women's Forum be offered both support to develop its business case and advice on the submission of applications for funding.**
- (4) **That no core fund grant be made to Age Concern Lancashire at this stage, but that Officers be requested to assist with the Lancashire County Council, the Community Legal Service and other partners to discuss how gaps in advice provision within the Borough can be funded.**
- (5) **That a report be presented to a future Executive Cabinet meeting on the outcome of a review of the various sources of core funding aid to local organisations to examine the potential improvement of the co-ordination of future financial support.**

Executive Leader