

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 12 August 2010

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), and Councillors Eric Bell, Kevin Joyce, Greg Morgan and John Walker

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillors Harold Heaton and Keith Iddon

Other Members: Councillors Judith Boothman, Alan Cullens, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, June Molyneaux, Mick Muncaster (Clayton-Le-Woods West and Cuerden), Alan Platt, Debra Platt, Ralph Snape and Peter Wilson

10.EC.177 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council), Councillor Peter Malpas (Executive Member (Planning and Partnerships) and Councillors Alistair Bradley, Henry Counce, Mike Devaney, Geoffrey Russell and Rosemary Russell.

10.EC.178 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

10.EC.179 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 3 June 2010 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

10.EC.180 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

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

10.EC.181 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP'S INQUIRY INTO HIGHWAYS ISSUES - EXECUTIVE'S RESPONSE

The Executive Cabinet were reminded that the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group's inquiry into highway issues had made numerous recommendations reported to an earlier Cabinet meeting, the majority of which related to the Council's joint working with Lancashire County Council.

Chorley Council was currently in discussion with the County Council on Public Realm and Locality Working issues and it was, therefore, intended to delay the Executive's response to the inquiry's findings until the outcome of the discussions was known.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.182 PETITIONS SCHEME

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Transformation seeking endorsement of a Petitions Scheme for the Council under the requirements of the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009.

The draft scheme presented to Members had been based on a Government model, adapted to take account of the practices currently in force at Chorley. The scheme clarified how petitions should be organised and presented and the processes that should be adopted by the Council in assessing, deliberating and reporting back on the petitions.

In particular, the scheme made provision for petitions containing at least 750 signatures to be debated at a public meeting of the Executive Cabinet, with petitions containing more than 1500 signatures being submitted to the full Council for debate. A separate policy outlining the processes for dealing with e-petitions was included within the scheme.

The Executive Cabinet was assured that the outcome of petitions would be reported both to the lead petitioner and to the Council.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the Petitions Scheme, as now submitted, be endorsed and that the Council be recommended to approve the scheme for adoption and inclusion in the Council's Constitution.**
- (2) That approval be given to the implementation of the e-petitions proposals and procedures as outlined in the Petitions Scheme.**

Reason for decision:

The adoption of the scheme will satisfy one of the Council's statutory requirements.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.183 CHORLEY COUNCIL PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - FIRST QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy, which set out and reviewed the Authority's performance in respect of the key projects and performance measures included in the Corporate Strategy, together with a number of other national indicators measured locally, during the first quarter of 2010/11.

The report revealed a good overall performance, with 88% of the key projects either having been completed or on track for completion. Factors mainly outside the control of the Authority had affected the remaining 12% of projects, and only one of the amber rated schemes was unlikely to be brought back on track by the next quarter period.

65% of the key measures identified in the Corporate Strategy were performing either above target or within the 5% tolerance and action plans had been compiled to improve the below target performance.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.184 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP - PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR FIRST QUARTER OF 2010/11

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy on the activities of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), particularly through the delivery of the objectives of the Lancashire Area Agreement and the Sustainable Communities Strategy over the first quarter of 2010/11.

The Executive Member (Policy and Performance) highlighted the following significant statistics and trends revealed in the report;

- Overall crime statistics had increased by 6% when compared to a low overall base in 2009/10, but the crime level statistic for Chorley was still below the Lancashire average.
- The number of households living in temporary accommodation had fallen to 4, well below the target figure of 13.
- Unemployment had fallen by 0.6% over the last quarter period, with significantly more people claiming benefits.
- 6 of the 9 projects commissioned by the Chorley Partnership in 2010/11 were proceeding on or ahead of schedule.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.185 PAUSING THE LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

The Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy presented a report on the implications of recent Government announcements on the future stages of the Local Development Framework processes.

The new coalition Government had announced its intention to introduce legislation to abolish regional spatial strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local Councils. Consequently, decisions on future housing supplies would rest with Local Planning Authorities without the framework of regional numbers and plans.

It had subsequently been agreed that it would be logical to postpone the publication of the Central Lancashire LDF Core Strategy in the light of further discussions between Members and Officers of the Central Lancashire (Chorley, Preston and South Ribble), particularly on the housing supply policies, and to await further guidance from the Government.

In the interim, it was proposed that work would continue on the Issues and Options stage of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document, as it would enable unsuitable development sites to be identified at an early stage.

Decision made:

That the Executive Cabinet notes:

- (1) That publication of the Central Lancashire LDF Core Strategy has been delayed to allow Officers and Members of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Councils to consider the situation and take account of any emerging guidance from Central Government on planning and housing powers;**
- (2) That the position in relation to the Core Strategy will be considered at the next meeting of the Central Lancashire LDF Joint Advisory Committee with a view to a way forward being agreed;**

- (3) That, in the interim, Officers will revise the Publication Version of the Core Strategy to reflect recent changes in national policy;
- (4) That Officers will continue with the preparation of the Issues and Options stage of the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

Reasons for decisions:

To ensure an appropriate way forward for further LDF activity.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.186 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENTS IN GARDENS

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy drawing attention to the decision of the coalition Government to alter the definition of garden land in planning policy, reclassifying such land as Greenfield, rather than Brownfield, in the light of growing concern at the impact at the amount of housing development taking place in residential gardens.

The report sought endorsement of an Interim Policy Statement that sought to control private garden development in the Borough in order to reflect the recent policy changes.

A revised draft Interim Policy Statement was circulated at the meeting, which, if adopted, would introduce a policy that would only permit, within the boundaries of settlements, development within private residential gardens on sites not allocated in saved Local Plan Policy HS1 for:

- (a) agricultural workers dwellings/dependants where there is a proven need and where they need to be located in a specific location;
- (b) appropriately designed and located replacement dwellings where there is no more than one for one replacement;
- (c) the conversion and extension of buildings, provided they are not allocated for, currently used for, or their last use was for, employment uses, and the conversion would have significant urban regeneration benefits.

In addition, the draft Policy stated that, beyond the above criteria, garden development may be considered in exceptional circumstances, subject to other material planning considerations, providing the developer could demonstrate that the proposed development was in keeping with the character of the local area.

The Executive Cabinet was recommended to endorse, for consultation purposes, the draft Interim Policy Statement with the objective of restoring a degree of discretion to the Local Planning Authority to determine garden development applications on relevant planning policy and material consideration grounds, following the reclassification of garden land as Greenfield.

Decision made:

That the draft Interim Policy Statement proposed for use as a development control tool when assessing proposals for new developments in residential gardens, in the form circulated at the meeting, be endorsed for the purposes of a 6 weeks consultation period.

Reason for decision:

To ensure an appropriate response to the coalition Government changes to planning policy and to reflect local concerns.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.187 ALLOTMENTS - ACTION PLAN. 2010/11

The Director of People and Places submitted a report on the outcome of a recent review and examination of future potential allotment sites throughout the Borough, following the allocation of £40,000 in the 2010/11 revenue budget for the development of new allotment sites in an endeavour to reduce the numbers on the allotments waiting list.

The report commented on the outcome of the Officer investigations and feasibility studies which had resulted in the identification of land at Rothwell Road, Anderton and Manor Road, Clayton-le-Woods as potential areas for development as allotment plots and community growing areas. A further area of land at Duke Street, Chorley required further investigations before development options were pursued.

While demand for allotments exceeded supply, the Council would continue to examine the potential for the development of additional plots in conjunction with partners.

The Executive Cabinet was also reminded that an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group had recently been set up to consider allotments issues. The Chair and Cabinet members hoped that the Task Group's review would encompass the issue of guidance on the use, management and maintenance of allotment plots.

Decisions made:

- (1) That approval be given to the commencement of the public consultation process on the plans to provide additional allotment plots on the potential sites at Rothwell Road, Anderton and Manor Road, Clayton-le-Woods.**
- (2) That further site investigations around ground conditions and potential land transfer issues be undertaken in respect of land at Duke Street, Chorley and that, in the event of investigations to convert the land into allotment plots proving favourable, the required public consultation exercise be commenced.**

Reasons for decisions:

The decisions will allow public consultation to commence on the sites identified for future development, with a view to an increase in the future allotments provision in order to address public demand for plots.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.188 2012 OLYMPIC GAMES - ACTION PLAN

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of People and Places on ways in which a programme of initiatives supported by the Council could complement the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games in London.

The would offer opportunities to encourage people to participate in sport and other community, volunteering and cultural activities.

The report outlined a programme of existing events, activities and initiatives that could be organised and expanded in 2012, either through normal budget provision or with external funding aid from partners, to link into the promotion of the 2012 Olympics.

Decision made:

That the programme of potential initiatives, events and activities identified in the submitted report form the basis of the Council's action plan to maximise the benefits arising from the 2012 Olympic Games.

Reason for decision:

To maximise the benefits arising from the 2012 Olympic Games.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

1. Take no action.
2. A more ambitious programme was rejected given the lack of funding opportunities to support such a programme.

10.EC.189 STAFF SURVEY, 2009

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Transformation which gave an overview of the results of the Council's staff survey undertaken in the autumn of 2009 by the Council in conjunction with a specialist market research company.

A commendable 78% response rate had been achieved and the report highlighted the following significant findings from the survey:

- 91% of staff are satisfied in their job;
- 96% understand what the Council's priorities are;
- 92% are proud to work for Chorley Council;
- 99% feel that they have the skills and knowledge needed to do their job.

The survey also revealed a number of areas for development (eg inter-team and inter-departmental communication), which would require to be addressed.

The Members commented on the significantly high response rate of staff, which had been achieved in the midst of a major senior restructure.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.190 TREASURY MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY, 2010/11

The Director of Transformation presented a report on the Council's Treasury management activity and performance up to 30 June 2010.

The report indicated that the Council had received a return of 0.73% on its average surplus cash balance of £5.8m during the first quarter of 2010/11 and confirmed that investments continued to be made with only highly rated institutions for short periods.

The Council's treasury advisor was satisfied that the Council was complying with the prudential indicators specified in the adopted Treasury and Investment Strategies and, therefore, it was intended to continue with adherence to the current treasury management strategy.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.191 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2010/11 TO 2012/13 - MONITORING

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Transformation on proposals to revise the Council's Capital Programme for 2010/11 to 2012/13.

It was proposed to increase the Capital Programme for the three year period from £12,037,260 to £13,327,540 as a result of the rephrasing of £728, 830 expenditure from 2009/10 and the financing of new projects by external contributions of viirement from other existing capital budgets.

The report clarified that there would be no additional borrowing requirement to fund the increased Capital Programme beyond that previously budgeted to finance part of the expenditure rephrased from 2009/10. However, the report also emphasised the importance of securing all budgeted resources (eg VAT Shelter income from Chorley Community Housing and capital receipts from the disposal of surplus assets) if any increase in borrowing was to be avoided. In the event of the anticipated income and receipts not being realised, it would be necessary to reconsider the Capital Programme.

Decisions Made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2010/11, as presented in Appendix 1 to the submitted report;**
- (2) to note the amendments to the provisional Capital Programmes for 2011/12 and 2012/13, as presented in Appendix 2 to the submitted report.**

Reason for decisions:

To update the three year Capital Programme for 2010 to 2013 to take account of the rephrasing of expenditure and other changes to the resources available to fund the programme.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.192 REVENUE BUDGET, 2010/11 - MONITORING

The Director of Transformation presented a report monitoring the Council's financial performance during the first quarter of 2010/11 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the financial year.

The report revealed that the first quarter's savings target of £75,000 had been achieved and that it was anticipated that further savings would be made during the year sufficient to meet the expected annual saving of £300,000 from management of the establishment. The projected outturn showed a forecast underspend of around £64,000, despite the loss of £127,000 from the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant for 2010/11. The underspend would, therefore, contribute to the remaining savings target.

Reference was made, in particular, to the budget shortfall likely to be incurred as a result of the larger than anticipated inflationary increase contractually required to be added to the cost of the waste collection contract.

Whilst no further action or measures were deemed necessary at this stage, a number of identified budgetary areas would be monitored closely over the next months to ensure that the budget savings remained on track.

Decision Made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.193 CCTV - SERVICE AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACT

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Transformation informing Members of a short term extension of the contract for the servicing and maintenance of the Council's CCTV infrastructure.

The current contract was due to expire at the end of December 2010, but the Council had the opportunity to participate in Team Lancashire's procurement exercise for future servicing and maintenance, provided the contract arrangements were co-terminus with other District Councils, whose current contracts, in the main, expired at the end of 2011.

The Director considered that the negotiation of a short term extension to the current contract provided a better value for money solution than the letting of a separate short term contract in anticipation of the joint procurement arrangements at the end of 2011.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

10.EC.194 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Decision Made:

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

(There were no members of the public or press present at the meeting.)

10.EC.195 ALLEYGATES SCHEMES

The Executive Cabinet considered a non-restricted report of the Director of People and Places reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's alleygate project, which had introduced 53 separate schemes across Chorley between April, 2005 and March, 2010, and putting forward recommendations for the future of the of the initiative.

Lancashire Constabulary had been commissioned to evaluate a number of the alleygate schemes that had been in operation for at least 12 months and the Members took account of a confidential report of the Police's findings and conclusions. The findings report assessed the impact the installation of alleygates had had on crime levels and residents' perceptions and confidence in the schemes. The report concluded that there was little evidence to suggest problems with crime facilitated by alleyways in Chorley, with statistics indicating that less than 2% of all crime involved crimes where entry to property had been gained via an alleyway.

In the light of the Police's evaluation report, the Executive Cabinet was recommended to discontinue the alleygates programme on the basis that the initiative was not now achieving its original objective and was not now cost effective. Discontinuance of the programme would result in significant capital and revenue cost savings.

Members were aware of the success of the scheme in helping to reduce residents' fear of crime and assisting their perception of safety. It was, however, pointed out that, since the introduction of the alleygates project, several other cost effective initiatives and measures had been introduced to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and depositing of litter. Each of the Council's programmes now required to be measured against their cost and operational effectiveness.

Decision made:

That, based upon restricted Police evidence and a re-evaluation of the project, the installation of alleygates within the Borough be discontinued.

Reason for decision:

There is little evidence to suggest that the implementation of alleygates in Chorley has reduced crime in the respective areas in which they have been installed.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

10.EC.196 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY SERVICES (ICT) - RESTRUCTURE

The Director of Transformation presented a confidential report on a proposed revision to the staffing structure of the Technical Support Team within the ICT Section as the first phase of changes.

The introduction of the corporate Citrix programme had resulted in the need for specialist technical skills to support and maintain the new infrastructure. The proposed new structure, entailing the deletion of two posts and the creation of two replacement posts, aimed to provide the specialist Citrix support, as well as capacity to support other technical calls to the ICT helpdesk.

Decision made:

- (1) That the proposals to alter the structure of the Information and Communications Technology Section of the Transformation**

Directorate, as outlined in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, be approved for consultation with the affected staff.

- (2) That all Officers in deleted posts who are risk of redundancy be given the opportunity to apply for the newly created posts as potential suitable alternative employment.

Reason for decision:

The need to provide Citrix specific technical skills is critical to the maximisation of the use of the technology and improvement of the use experience.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

Executive Leader