

## **Report of Executive Cabinet**

### **General report of meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009**

1. The Executive Cabinet has met three times on 1<sup>st</sup> October, 12<sup>th</sup> November and 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 since the last ordinary Council meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2009. This report summarises briefly the principal items debated and decisions reached at the first two meetings. A separate report on the December meeting will be prepared and circulated in advance of the Council meeting.

#### **Meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2009**

##### **Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry – Chorley Local Strategic Partnership.**

2. At an earlier meeting of the Executive Cabinet, we had been presented with the findings and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Task Group which had conducted an inquiry into the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The purpose of the inquiry had been to understand how the LSP operates with the Council and the extra value it provides in the identified areas.
3. The Chair of the Task Group (Councillor Mike Devaney) and the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Dennis Edgerley) highlighted that the Task Group had, in particular:
  - supported the concentration on funding resources on fewer projects in order to assist effective delivery; and
  - commended the work of the Preston Intervention Unit which provided direct advice and assistance to vulnerable persons and had recommended the replication of the service in Chorley as part of the campaign to reduce the number of alcohol harm related hospital admissions.
4. Following consideration of the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance), we endorsed the recommended response to the Task Group's findings and recommendations for submission to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

##### **Refresh of the Locality Plan.**

5. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a report which outlined the progress made in the delivery of the projects included in the 2008 Locality Plan and presented the draft Locality Plan for 2009.
6. The Plan clarifies the projects expected of the Lancashire County Council and Chorley Council both separately and together over the next 12 months

and is supported by an action plan which sets out timescales and clarifies persons responsible for the various initiatives.

7. The Lancashire Local Committee for Chorley had suggested a number of amendments to the 2008 Locality Plan which were to be recommended to the County Council's Cabinet for approval the following week. We accepted the planned changes and approved the revised Joint Locality Plan for adoption. We also granted delegated authority to the Executive Member for Policy and Performance to agree any necessary further amendments following the decision of the County Council's Cabinet.

### **Update on the First Year of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan.**

8. The Executive Cabinet received a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) and the Corporate Director (Business) on the progress made by the Council in its delivery of the first year's programme of the Climate Change Action Plan.
9. The Council has been assessed as being at Level 1 of the national standard for 'Planning to adapt to Climate change'. In order to reach Level 2 of the indicator, the Council needs to influence its Local Strategic Partnership Partners' risk assessments of the effects of extreme weather conditions on local services, and the Executive Cabinet approved the actions outlined in the submitted report that will be required in 2010 in order to achieve the second level of National Indicator 188.
10. One of the actions includes the offer of assistance towards the delivery of a combined heat and power source at All Seasons Leisure Centre and the Cabinet agreed a virement of £90,000 from the under-utilised grants scheme for local businesses to fund the project. In this context, the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) confirmed that the possibility of any resultant energy cost savings being used to reduce the All Seasons Leisure Centre management costs will be pursued.

### **Allocations Policy**

11. The Executive Cabinet approved and adopted a revised Allocations Policy for Chorley which clarifies the Authority's policies and procedures in respect of social rented housing vacancies for which the Council has nominated rights.
12. The Policy has evolved over a comprehensive consultation exercise and introduces a simple banding system for the assessment of applicants' housing needs in order to ensure that those in the greatest need receive priority. The policy also sets out the procedures that will be adopted to ensure that applicants are offered the most suitable accommodation.

## **St Laurence's Conservation Area and Rivington Conservation Area – Appraisal.**

13. We received and considered reports of the Corporate Director (Business) on the principal findings of separate appraisals of the St. Laurence's Conservation Area and the Rivington Conservation Area.
14. The comprehensive reviews had resulted in the compilation of an Appraisal and Management Plan for each area which highlights the opportunities and challenges facing each Conservation Area and contains a number of objectives and associated projects / actions to enhance the appearance of both areas.
15. The plan of action for St Laurence's Conservation Area aims, in particular, to:
  - I. examine opportunities to enhance the public realm and reduce the impact of indiscriminate street parking;
  - II. encourage the redevelopment of negative sites or buildings;
  - III. explore the potential for grant aid to assist with the reversal of inappropriate alterations to buildings, to help with repairs and appropriate improvements, including the reinstatement of original features for buildings with the Conservation Area; and
  - IV. change the Conservation Area boundary to enhance and further protect its setting.
16. The plan of action for Rivington Conservation Area aims to:
  - I. explore with the Highways Authority options for enhanced traffic calming;
  - II. examine opportunities for the introduction of an Article 4 (2) Direction for the control of permitted development rights to further protect the buildings in the Conservation Area from harmful alterations;
  - III. explore the potential for grant aid to assist with repairs and appropriate improvements, including the reinstatement of original features for buildings within the Conservation Area; and
  - IV. explore with the relevant agencies and landowners the options for the provision of alternative parking areas.
17. The Executive Cabinet endorsed both Appraisal and Management Proposal Documents in relation to the St Laurence's Conservation Area and the Rivington Conservation Area and approved for adoption the actions contained in the respective Documents as the basis for future improvement and control of development, subject to the availability of funding. We also agreed the introduction of a Direction under Article 4 (2) of the Town and County Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 1995 to increase control over additions and alterations in the Rivington Conservation Area.

## **Rural Economic Diversification – Lancashire West Local Action Group.**

18. We received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) on the opportunities available within the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programme for England for the support of the diversification of Chorley's rural economy.
19. Following the successful delivery of the pilot Rural Economic Diversification Project, further financial resources totalling £2,391,636 have been made available from the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) to support the creation of new businesses and the diversification of the rural economy in eligible Wards. The Programme, which is to run for five years up to March 2014, is to be channelled through three Local Action Groups in Lancashire. The Lancashire West Local Action Group Forum, covering the Chorley, Preston, South Ribble and West Lancashire Boroughs, will comprise partners from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors.
20. We welcomed the initiative and approved the nomination of the Corporate Director (Business), or her representative, to serve on the Officer- based Local Action Group for Lancashire West in order to provide regular feedback to the Executive Member ( Business).

## **Meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2009.**

### **Chorley Partnership – Performance Report for Second Quarter of 2009/10**

21. The Executive Cabinet received an update report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) on the activities of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), particularly through its delivery of the 9 projects being supported by the LSP and its performance in relation to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and key indicators from the Sustainable Community Strategy, over the second quarter of 2009/10.
22. Among the most significant statistics and trends revealed in the report we noted that the number of primary fires in Chorley had fallen; the number of households living in temporary accommodation had reduced to 9 (which is well below the target number); and the target for street cleanliness has been exceeded. However, despite performing well against the LAA targets, the overall level of crime in the Borough has risen, on average, by 5.4% over the past year. The Police were unable to attend the meeting, but a note reported to the meeting explained how small fluctuations in the number of crime incidents made significant impact on statistics calculated from a low base level.

### **Performance Monitoring Report – Second Quarter of 2009/10**

23. The Executive Cabinet received and noted a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) which set out and reviewed the

Authority's performance both in respect of the 36 key projects included in the refreshed Corporate Strategy and against the new National Indicators for which the Council was responsible, during the second quarter of 2009/10 ending on 30<sup>th</sup> September 2009.

24. The report reveals a commendable performance in the delivery of the 36 projects, with 20 completed projects and 14 on track for delivery. Only 2 projects have been forecast to overrun, both of which were being addressed and rolled forward into the new Corporate Strategy. We also noted that 74% of the key performance measures included in the 2008/09 Corporate Strategy have achieved, or exceeded, their target level.
25. in addition, the report confirmed that 13 of the 15 National Indicators that were able to be measured during the second quarter had matched or exceeded target, and that action plans have been prepared to address the two performance indicators that have missed their targets by more than 5%.

### **Concessionary Travel Scheme.**

26. The Monitoring Officer submitted a report under his statutory obligation to seek our response to the findings of the Local Government Ombudsman on a complaint made by the Royal Institute of the Blind on behalf of the complainants living in various parts of the country about the loss of the discretionary element of the concessionary travel scheme introduced in April 2008 in respect of travel before 9.30am.
27. The ombudsman had subsequently found maladministration by each of the Councils against whom the complaint had been brought, which, in Lancashire, were Chorley, South Ribble and Ribble Valley Boroughs.
28. Consequently, the provision for concessionary travel for disabled persons and their companions prior to 9.30am was re-introduced in October 2008. In addition, the Council has agreed to pay the respective complainants £100 in compensation for their time and trouble in making the complaint. We decided that no further action is necessary as the Ombudsman has already indicated his satisfaction with the Council's resolution of the issue.

### **Neighbourhood Working and Neighbourhood Action Plans – Update**

29. The Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) presented a report highlighting the benefits and likely outcomes to be achieved from the new Neighbourhood Working regime.
30. Seven Neighbourhood Areas have been established, each with its own Action Plan devised to target priority issues and projects through partnership working, and with the aid of a total initial £150,000 'pump-prime' funding from the Council.

31. We welcomed the progress report and approved the continued involvement of the initiative through the development of the partnership links and liaison; the establishment of realistic projects for inclusion in future Neighbourhood Action Plans; and the exploration of further opportunities for additional external funding.

### **Achieving Level 2 of the North West Employers Elected Member Development Charter**

32. Following the Authority's achievement of Level 1 of the North West Employers Elected Member Development Charter in 2006, we were pleased to note a report of the Corporate Director of Governance on the Council's successful achievement of the Level 2 Charter.
33. The Level 2 Charter had presented a much greater challenge, examining the impact that training and development has on Councillors and their work within the community. The bid was focused around the Council's new Neighbourhood Working regime, which had been selected as a new initiative in which Members' engagement and role had been critical to its success.

### **Revised Customer Care Policy and Complaints Procedure**

34. The Executive Cabinet approved for adoption on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 a revised and combined Customer Care Policy and Complaint Procedure.
35. The existing Customer Care and Complaints policies require to be updated in order to reflect changes in customer expectations and the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) introduced to improve customer contact. The amended policy aims, in particular, to reduce the time for initial electronic responses to customers from 10 to 2 working days; provide CRM monitoring of responses to complaints, emails and the majority of face-to-face contact; and the introduction of new performance indicators to monitor implementation.

### **Update on Petitions relating to Redwing Play Area; Tatton Recreation Ground Skate Park; and Chorley Moor Community Centre**

36. Following the submission to recent Council meetings of three petitions in respect of the Redwing Drive Play Area, the Tatton Recreation Ground skate park and the Chorley Moor Community Centre, the Corporate Director (People) submitted a report which summarised the action that has been taken to address the issues raised in the three petitions.
37. The report also referred to the proposals for the revision of the Council's Constitution to be considered at the next Council meeting, under which future petitions received would be directly referred to the respective Directorate for attention and the subsequent action taken reported to the next Council meeting.

## **Treasury Management Activity, 2009/10**

38. We received and noted a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reviewing the Council's Treasury Management activity and performance during the second quarter of 2009/10 and the year to date.
39. During the first half of the financial year, the Council's surplus cash balances have averaged at £6.9m, on which a return of 0.56% had been received. Since June 2009, in the interest of security, but in return for a lower rate on interest, the majority of deposits have been made in the Government backed Debt Management Office account.
40. An appendix to the report also set out the commentary of the Council's treasury advisors, Sector Financial Services Limited, on the current economic situation, confirming that the Council's investments comply with the guidelines specified in the Investment Strategy. In response to Members' comments, the Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the tendering process for the renewal of the contact for the provision of investment advice to the Council is currently being examined.

## **Revenue Budget, 2009/10 – Monitoring Report**

41. The Executive Cabinet considered and noted a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) monitoring the Council's financial performance during the second quarter of 2009/10, in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the financial year.
42. The report reveals that well over 50% of the target savings for the year has already been achieved, and that it is expected that further procurement, efficiency and other identified savings will ensure that the required savings will be achieved. However, it is now evident that further savings of £42,000 will be required to achieve a balanced budget at the year end to offset lower than anticipated income levels. While no specific action is considered necessary at this stage, a number of spending areas are being monitored with a view to identifying any feasible efficiencies.

## **Pension Fund – Recommendation from Audit Committee**

43. The General Report of the Audit Committee meeting on 24 September 2009 (to be considered at a later item on the Council's agenda) refers to its discussions on the future viability of the Lancashire Pension Fund, at the conclusion of which the following recommendation was made to the Executive Cabinet:

“That the Audit Committee's concern at the possibility of investment returns being insufficient to meet the future demands on the Pension Fund be conveyed to the Executive Cabinet and that the Executive Cabinet be requested to consider, as part of the triennial review, any

action deemed necessary to address and mitigate the impact of a possible shortfall in the Fund.”

44. We appreciate that diminishing investment returns and an increasing strain on pension funds are issues of national concern that are likely to require political decisions ultimately.
45. In the interim, however, as a member of the Lancashire Pension Service Committee, I undertook to raise the Audit Committee’s concerns with the Pensions Service, with a view to any appropriate remedial action being examined as part of the triennial review.

### **Senior Management Restructure**

46. The Executive Cabinet considered a confidential report of the Chief Executive and approved for consultation purposes proposals to revise the senior management structure of the Council.
47. The proposals have been drawn up in light of substantial and increasing pressure facing local government and public services and are intended, in particular, to strengthen the linkages between Council Services and examine the development of shared services with other Councils, in addition to achieving significant cost savings.
48. Responses to the consultation would be reported for consideration to the 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2009 Executive Cabinet meeting.

### **Recommendation**

49. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR PETER GOLDSWORTHY  
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report

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