

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met once on 29 September 2005 since the last ordinary Council meeting and this report summarises briefly the principal matters considered at that meeting. Separate reports have been prepared in respect of those items which require Council decisions.

Off-Road Motorcycling in the Borough

2. Our views were sought by the Head of Property Services on the possible establishment of an off-road dedicated motorcycling facility in the Borough in the light of an increasing incidence of unauthorised motorcycling in Country Parks and other areas of open space.
3. A Working Group of Officers had suggested consideration of the use of the former Duxbury Colliery at Wigan Lane, Chorley. However, although no formal consultation has taken place, the proposal has generated a number of objections from Coppull Parish Council, Adlington Town Council, Chorley's Member of Parliament and a number of local residents, each of whom has suggested that the Council should seek a more suitable site elsewhere. As it has not been possible to identify an alternative site which might feasibly be used as a dedicated off-road motorcycling facility, the Executive Cabinet decided to take no further action.

Revenue Budget 2005/06 - Monitoring

4. The Executive Cabinet considered a further monitoring report of the Director of Finance on the present position in respect of the current year's General Fund and Housing Revenue Accounts' budgets and efficiency savings.
5. The report revealed that further progress has been made towards achieving both the corporate savings target of £228,000 and the efficiency savings target of £100,000, and that the situation is being closely monitored to identify all possible additional savings. In this situation, we have:
 - agreed to maintain the freezing of further expenditure from the remaining Contingency Fund without the Cabinet's express approval;
 - authorised the use of £20,000 from the Contingency Fund to fund the cost of the Property Services Unit outsourcing work on legal agreements;
 - determined that vacant positions be only filled by agency staff with the express permission of a Group Director until such time as the budget position improves;
 - authorised a comprehensive review of each Service Unit's budget prior to the production of next month's monitoring statement;
 - requested the Management Team to consider in detail the current position in respect of procurement related efficiency savings.
6. Whilst some cost pressures are continuing to cause an increase in HRA expenditure, the reduction in the right to buy sales is generating additional rental for the Account, which is resulting in the overall budget remaining on target.

Value for Money Self Assessment submission to the Audit Commission

7. We approved, for submission to the Audit Commission, a Value for Money Self-Assessment statement, with the proviso that the Director of Finance be granted delegated authority to make minor amendments to the document following the final drafting and quality check.
8. The assessment complements the work on the annual efficiency statement and forms part of the 'Use of Resources' submission that will ultimately influence the Council's next Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
9. The value for money self assessment document will be scrutinised by the Audit Commission, whose conclusions will be included in its Annual Audit letter which will be presented in the later part of the current financial year.

Draft Regional Economic Strategy

10. We received a report of the Head of Economic Regeneration commenting on the content of the Consultation Draft of the Regional Economic Strategy, the region's rolling 20 year strategy which aims to shape the future economic direction of the North West, with a particular focus on the next three years. The overall vision of the strategy will be delivered through five key themes (ie Business, Skills and Employment, Regeneration, Infrastructure and Quality of Life). The briefing note attached to the report summarised the content for each theme, its objectives and some of the relevant actions required to deliver the objectives.
11. The review is being developed in the context of national and European policies, as well as other regional and sub-regional strategies. In response to this situation, the Councils of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble have agreed a joint working approach to address the role and potential of the Core Area of the Central Lancashire City Region, comprising the three districts, and have commissioned a sub-regional study.
12. We have accepted the comments set out in the submitted report as the basis for the Borough Council's response to the Draft Regional Economic Strategy to be sent directly to the North West Development Agency and as this Council's contribution to the joint response to the draft document from the three Central Lancashire City Region authorities.

Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign

13. We received a letter from the Local Government Association drawing attention to the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign for local governments to show their commitment to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals, a set of global antipoverty targets for 2015 adopted by world leaders in 2000.
14. We endorsed the campaign and noted the respective suggested actions.

Housing Stock Transfer - Update

15. We were presented with a progress report of the Head of Housing Services which sought our approval to a number of constitutional and procedural issues in relation to the proposed transfer of the housing stock.
16. Following consideration of the detailed report, we made the undermentioned decisions:
 - to name the new Registered Social Landlord (RSL) as 'Chorley Community Housing Limited' (CCH) to be established as an Industrial and Providential Society with charitable status; (The name for the RSL reflects the aspirations for a strong, local identify and its status will enable the organisation to take advantage of the tax and other financial benefits available to charities.)

- to approve the revised statement of visions, values and aspirations, together with the list of essential requirements for partner selection, which have been developed to ensure the selection of a RSL partner for CCH with whom the Council can work with in the long term and that is able to deliver both the Council's and tenants' aspirations;
- to approve the housing transfer employment protocol, which sets out the principles under which staff will transfer to the new RSL;
- to effect the stock transfer at no net additional cost to the General Fund.

Strategic Housing Function

17. We considered a report of the Head of Housing Services seeking our instructions on proposals to establish a new Strategic Housing Services staffing structure. The principal aim of the proposals was to effect the separation of the strategic housing function from the management function in the light of the projected transfer of the housing stock and the creation of a new Home Improvement Agency as a joint venture with South Ribble Borough Council.
18. The report, which contained a number of options for consideration, was accompanied by a copy of a report compiled by Tribal HCH, the Council's recently appointed local housing stock transfer consultants.
19. After consideration of each of the options, we agreed:
 - the establishment of a stand-alone Strategic Housing Service within the new Development and Regeneration Unit for implementation at the earliest opportunity;
 - the staffing structure as set out in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, with a review in the Autumn of 2007 (or 12 months after transfer);
 - to defer consideration of the proposed posts of Home Energy Efficiency Officer and Housing Standards Technician until the respective business cases for each post can be judged against the Council's new corporate priorities and other budget requirements.

Shared Services Contact Centre Partnership

20. We received an update report from the Head of Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services on the general progress in respect of the prestigious Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre Partnership scheme.
21. The scheme, to be implemented on a phased basis, will deliver a fully operational contact centre, with underlying technology and hardware, for the participating authorities and we were pleased to note that the Chorley Branch went 'live' on 30 June 2005.

Customer Focused Access and Service Design Strategy

22. We received a report from the Head of Customer, Democratic and Office Support Services and the Head of Information, Communication and Technical Services and gave our approval to the adoption of the Customer Focused Access and Service Design Strategy, which has been developed following an extensive consultation exercise.
23. The Strategy will allow the Council to gain a fuller understanding of its customers and their requirements and use the information to target resources to improve take-up, service quality and efficiency.

Area Forum Working Group - Pilot Schemes

24. We received the minutes and recommendations of the Area Forum Working Group from its meeting on 22 September 2005, which, in turn, had taken account of the earlier preliminary consultation meetings that had been held in the areas of each of the three prospective Area Forum pilot schemes.
25. We accepted the recommendation of the Working Group that the boundary of the Area Forum pilot for Clayton should be defined as the Clayton-le-Woods North Ward, which comprises the area of Clayton Brook. This is, in fact, in line with the consensus view expressed at the consultation meeting on 13 September.
26. We also approved the suggested arrangements for the introduction of the three Area Forum Pilot schemes within the areas of Clayton-le-Woods North Ward, Coppull Parish area and Lostock Ward. The Officers will now be progressing the initiative in liaison with our respective partners with a view to proposals for the dates and venues for the initial Forum meetings, procedure rules and promotional arrangements being presented to the next meeting of the Area Forum Working Group.

Lancashire Local Area Agreement

27. The Executive Cabinet received a progress report from the Head of Corporate and Policy Services on the development of the Lancashire Local Area Agreement and the emerging priority outcomes.
28. Local Area Agreements (LAAs) represent a new approach to the improvement of co-ordination between central government and local authorities and their partners, working through Local Strategic Partnerships. While central government will continue to set strategic priorities, LAAs are intended to provide the scope for more local control, with local solutions developed within the LAAs to achieve Government targets and local priorities.
29. We accepted the report and endorsed the suggested approach to resourcing the LAA by the identification of a Management Team Champion (the Deputy Chief Executive) and the establishment of an LAA Core Team (led by the Head of Corporate and Policy Services) and a Partner Group or 'public service forum'.

Lancashire Highways Partnership

30. The Head of Public Space Services presented a report updating the Executive Cabinet on developments since the decision of the Lancashire County Council's Cabinet to undertake consultations with District Councils on the proposed termination of the Lancashire Highways Partnership on 30 June 2006 was reported to the last Executive Cabinet meeting on 8 September.
31. In order to meet the deadline for the submission of comments to the County Council, a provisional response had been sent on 23 September on behalf of the Borough Council. The response was consistent with our opposition to the County Council's decisions and concerns in respect of the future management of highway functions as expressed at our meeting on 8 September. The content of the response also reflected Officer advice received on the implications of the termination of the Partnership. We re-affirmed our opposition to the County Council's plans and endorsed the content of the provisional reply to the consultation as our formal response.
32. We were reminded that the County Council's Cabinet was due to meet again on 6 October 2005 to consider the results on the consultation.

Recommendation

33. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR J WILSON
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report.

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