

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met twice on 12 August and 2 September 2010 since the last ordinary Council meeting in July 2010. This report summarises briefly the principal items considered and decisions taken at the two meetings.

Meeting held on 12 August 2010

Chorley Council Performance Monitoring Report – First Quarter of 2010/11

2. We received and noted 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.
3. We were pleased to note that 88% of the key projects either have been completed or are on track for completion. Factors mainly outside the control of the Authority have affected the remaining 12% of projects, but only one of the amber rated schemes is unlikely to be brought back on track by the next quarter period.
4. 65% of the key measures identified in the Corporate Strategy are performing either above target or within the 5% tolerance and action plans have been compiled to improve the below target performance.

Chorley Partnership – Performance Monitoring Report for First Quarter of 2010/11

5. We received a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy on the activities of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership, particularly through the delivery of the objectives of the Lancashire Area Agreement and the Sustainable Communities Strategy over the first quarter of 2010/11.
6. The Executive Member (Policy and Performance) drew our attention, in particular to the following significant statistics and trends revealed in the report:
 - Overall crime statistics have increased by 6% when compared to a low overall base in 2009/10, but the crime level statistic for Chorley still remains below the Lancashire average.
 - The number of households living in temporary accommodation has fallen to 4; well below the target figure of 13.
 - Unemployment has fallen by 0.6% over the last quarter period, with significantly fewer people claiming benefits.
 - 6 of the 9 projects commissioned by the Chorley Partnership in 2010/11 are proceeding on or ahead of schedule.

Pausing the Local Development Framework

7. Following the coalition Government's announcements to introduce legislation to abolish regional spatial strategies and return decision-making powers on housing and planning to local Councils, the Executive Cabinet considered the decision to postpone the publication of the Central Lancashire LDF Core Strategy. This will allow further discussions between Members and officers of the three Central Lancashire authorities (Chorley, Preston and South Ribble), particularly around the housing supply policies and consideration given to other emerging guidance from the Government.

8. In the interim, work will continue on the Issues and Options stage of the Site Allocations Development Plan Documents, as this work will enable unsuitable development sites to be identified at an early stage.

Residential Developments in Gardens

9. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy seeking endorsement of the Interim Planning Policy Statement aiming to control private garden developments in the Borough, in order to reflect the coalition Government's recent decision to alter the classification of garden land in planning policy from Brownfield to Greenfield.
10. A revised draft Interim Policy Statement was circulated at the meeting, proposing the adoption of a policy that will only permit, within the boundaries of settlements, developments within private residential gardens on sites not allocated in saved Local Plan Policy HS1 for:
 - (a) agricultural workers/dependents dwellings 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 will have significant urban regeneration benefits.
11. 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 can demonstrate that the proposed development was in keeping with the character of the local area.
12. We endorsed the draft Interim Policy Statement in the form circulated at the meeting for the purposes of a 6 weeks consultation period. If the Policy Statement is ultimately adopted, it will restore a degree of discretion to the Local Planning Authority to determine garden development applications on relevant planning policy and material consideration grounds.

Allotments – Action Plan 2010/11

13. 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.
14. The Executive Cabinet agreed to commence a public consultation process on plans to provide additional allotment plots on the potential sites at Rothwell Road, Anderton and Manor Road, Clayton-le-Woods. We are also carrying out further site investigations into the potential conversion of land at Duke Street, Chorley into allotment plots. Should these investigations prove favourable, we will commence the necessary public consultation exercise.
15. We also noted that an Overview and Scrutiny Task Group is currently examining allotment issues and we suggested that the review should encompass the issue of guidance on the use, management and maintenance of allotment plots.

2012 Olympic Games – Action Plan

16. 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. This will offer opportunities to encourage people to participate in sport and other community, volunteering and cultural activities.
17. The Executive Cabinet endorsed the suggested programme of potential initiatives, events and activities to form the basis of the Council's action plan to maximise the benefits arising from the 2012 Olympic Games.

Staff Survey, 2009

18. The Director of Transformation presented 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.
19. We noted that a commendable 78% response rate had been achieved from staff in the midst of the last major senior restructure. Some of the significant findings from the survey are that:
 - 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 to do their job.
20. A number of areas identified for development (eg inter-team and inter-departmental communication), will be addressed by management.

Treasury Management Activity, 2010/11

21. The Director of Transformation presented a report on the Council's Treasury management activity and performance up to 30 June 2010.
22. We were advised that the Council received a return of 0.73% on its average surplus cash balance of £5.8m during the first quarter of 2010/11 and we were assured that investments continue to be made with only highly rated institutions for short periods.
23. The report also confirmed that the Council's is complying with the prudential indicators specified in the adopted Treasury and Investment Strategies and it is intended to continue with adherence to the current treasury management strategy.

Revenue Budget, 2010/11 – Monitoring

24. We received and noted a report of the Director of Transformation 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.
25. The report reveals that the first quarter's savings target of £75,000 has been achieved and that it is anticipated that further savings will be made during the year sufficient to meet the expected annual saving of £300,000 from management of the establishment. The projected outturn shows 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 will, therefore, contribute to the remaining savings target.
26. Whilst no further action or measures are deemed necessary at this stage, a number of identified budgetary areas will be monitored closely over the next months to ensure that the budget savings remain on track.

CCTV – Service and Maintenance Contract

27. We received and noted a report of the Director of Transformation informing us that the Officers had agreed a short term extension of the contract for the servicing and maintenance of the Council's CCTV infrastructure, which is due to expire at the end of December 2010.
28. Team Lancashire is currently examining a potential joint procurement for future servicing and maintenance of CCTV networks, provided the contract arrangements are co-terminus with other District Councils, whose current contracts, in the main, expire at the end of 2011.
29. The negotiation of a short term extension to the current contract, therefore, provides 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.

Alleygates Schemes

30. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of People and Places reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's alleygate project, which has seen the introduction of 53 separate schemes across Chorley since April, 2005.
31. We were also presented with a confidential report on the Police's findings and conclusions following their evaluation of the alleygate schemes that have been in operation for at least 12 months. 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.
32. We are, of course, aware that the schemes have been successful in helping to reduce residents' fear of crime and assisting their perception of safety. However, since the introduction of the alleygates project, several other cost effective initiatives and measures have been introduced to tackle crime, anti-social behaviour and depositing of litter.
33. In the light of the Police's evaluation report and the fact each of the Council's programmes now require to be measured against their cost and operational effectiveness, the Cabinet authorised the discontinuance of the installation of alleygates within the Borough on the grounds that the initiative is not now achieving its original objective and is not now cost effective.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) – Restructure

34. 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 structural changes.
35. The introduction of the corporate Citrix programme has resulted in the need for specialist technical skills to support and maintain the new infrastructure. We approved the proposed new structure which aims to provide the specialist Citrix support, as well as capacity to support other technical calls to the ICT helpdesk, for consultation with the affected staff.

Meeting held on 2 September 2010

Refresh of Chorley's Economic Regeneration Strategy and development of Action Plan

36. Following our endorsement in March 2010 of a draft revised Economic Regeneration Strategy for consultation purposes, we approved for adoption the updated and refreshed Strategy and associated action plan.
37. The refreshed strategy has been compiled to highlight the successful achievement of identified initiatives in the 2006 Strategy and to define future key priorities and actions that reflect current economic circumstances. The action plan, focusing on the following priority themes to deliver the strategic objectives over the next three to five years, was devised at Chorley Partnership workshops and meetings:
 - Promoting knowledge-based inward investment;
 - Creating a thriving "Contemporary Market Town";
 - Supporting a strong indigenous business base;
 - Ensuring residents and communities reach their full economic potential.
38. In addition, we were also advised by the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy that, following the coalition Government's plans to abolish the North West Regional Development Agency, local authorities' views have been invited on the establishment of a Local Economic Partnership network for the region. We are, consequently, currently in liaison with the Lancashire County Council and other District Councils with a view to proposals being put forward to the Government for the creation of an Economic Partnership based around a Lancashire-wide footprint.

Action Plan to deliver the Town Centre Strategy – Creating a Thriving "Contemporary Market Town"

39. Following consideration of a report of the Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy, the Executive Cabinet approved a proposed list of short term and medium to long term projects aimed at enhancing the town centre through the delivery of the Town Centre Strategy's objectives and a number of the recommendations which emerged from the recent Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry into the vitality of the town centre.
40. Whilst the envisaged funding requirements and implications were outlined in the Officer's report, we accept that appropriate funding streams and sources will have to be identified either from within the Council's own budget or external sources if the action plan is to be implemented.

Enhancement of Flat Iron Market

41. The Executive Cabinet received both a report and a short presentation to explain and illustrate plans to improve and revitalise the Flat Iron Market area in line with the key priority within the refreshed Economic Regeneration Strategy to create a thriving "Contemporary Market Town".
42. These proposals envisage the re-alignment of stalls and the phased introduction of gazebo style stalls to enhance the visual appearance of the area. The project aims to introduce the new gazebos on four units initially and, if the trial proves successful, all the remaining stalls will be replaced by the new gazebos over two further phases. Whilst the costs of the Market improvements are expected to be recovered by the generation of additional revenue, it is intended that the capital costs will be funded from the current invest to save budget and other virements within the Capital Programme.

43. We accepted the principle of the long term plans for the Flat Iron Market area and approved for development the proposals for the phased introduction of gazebo style stalls, together with the envisaged financing arrangements.

Allocation of Play and Recreation Fund

44. The Director of Partnerships, Planning and Policy presented a report on the recommended allocation of the Play and Recreation Fund created from Section 106 contributions towards Borough-wide open space provision.
45. The Council received 20 applications from Parish and Town Councils, Community Groups and the Borough Council for the funding of identified projects, with a total funding bid of £407,746.35. The total amount available within the Fund is £324,159.
46. Each of the bids has been assessed against agreed criteria which takes into account the legislative context for Section 106 contributions and the requirement to meet an identified need for the provision and access to open space. In order to ensure that we adopt a uniform and equitable approach, the application of a threshold was considered appropriate, whereby bids in excess of £10,000 will be restricted to a grant equivalent to a maximum 75% of the project value.
47. By applying this criteria, we agreed to support 16 of the 20 bids received which met the criteria, with a total allocation of £316,313.76. Each of the organisations offered funding aid will be required to enter into a Play and Recreation Fund Agreement with the Council, which will set out the appropriate terms and conditions of the grant. This will leave approximately £7,000 remaining in the Fund, which can be used to meet future bids.

Recommendation

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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