

Non-Scheduled Executive Cabinet

Public Minutes of Non-Scheduled Executive Cabinet meeting held on Thursday, 23 February 2006

Present: Councillor J Wilson (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor D Edgerley (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors T Brown, A Gee, C Hoyle, L Lennox, A Lowe and R Snape

Also in attendance: Councillors E Bell, Mrs P Case, Miss I Iddon and J Walker

06.DC.31 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

06.DC.32 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors K Ball and D Gee.

06.DC.33 TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS 2006/07

The Chief Executive presented a report seeking the Executive Cabinet's endorsement of the draft timetable of meetings for the 2006/07 Municipal Year from the Annual Meeting on 16 May 2006.

With the exception of the summer holiday period, the timetable proposed a six weekly cycle of Council and Licensing and Safety Committee meetings, and an average four week frequency of meetings of the Executive Cabinet, Development Control Committee and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Associate Panels. The draft schedule also took account of local school holiday weeks and the need to arrange appropriate meetings in line with the budget scrutiny exercise. In addition, dates had been allocated for two further meetings of the three Area Forum pilots, three Borough/Parish Council Liaison meetings, monthly Member Development Steering Group meetings and quarterly meetings of a number of other liaison group bodies.

The Members asked to be supplied with larger copies of the timetable which clearly identified respective meetings.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to approve the timetable of meetings to be held during the 2006/07 Municipal Year as illustrated in the schedule presented.

Reason for decision:

The timetable determines the arrangements for meetings of the Council, Committees and various other Council bodies during the forthcoming Municipal Year.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.DC.34 CORPORATE STRATEGY, 2006/07 - 2008/09

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Head of Corporate and Policy Services seeking endorsement of the draft Corporate Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09.

The draft Strategy set out the Council's vision, priorities and strategic objectives for the next three year period up to 2009 and identified a series of measures, targets and key proposals for delivery in 2006/07.

The Strategy had been developed through a series of focus meetings and consultation sessions with Council Members, Officers and community groups to highlight the relevant issues raised during the Authority's Comprehensive Performance Assessment and to reflect the adopted Community Strategy's five priorities.

The key projects identified in the draft Strategy had influenced the budget consideration for 2006/07, and progress on the achievement of the projects would be reviewed annually.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to approve the Corporate Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09 as now presented.

Reason for decision:

The new Corporate Strategy will redefine the Council's priorities and will provide a strategic framework for business and financial planning during the three year period.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.DC.35 PERFORMANCE AGREEMENT, 2006/07

The Head of Corporate and Policy Services submitted a report seeking the Executive Cabinet's endorsement of the Performance Agreement for 2006/07.

The Agreement identified a series of key corporate projects for the forthcoming year, which were aligned to the Community and Corporate Strategies' objectives and priority outcomes.

While overall responsibility for each of the projects would be assigned annually to an Executive Member and a Group Director, Chief Officers and senior managers would be responsible for the day to day project management of the initiatives. Subsequently, all elements of the Performance Agreement would be monitored through the Council's performance management database (Performance Plus), with periodic reports being presented to the Executive Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny bodies.

The document still required the insertion of appropriate data and the Executive Member for Environment and Community Safety reminded the Members that the list of key achievements in 2005/06 should include the International Green Apple Award granted to the Council.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to approve the Performance Agreement for 2006/07 as now presented.

Reason for decision:

The aim of the Performance Agreement is to ensure delivery in 2006/07 of the key projects that will contribute to the achievement of the new priorities and strategic objectives identified in the Corporate Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.DC.36 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2006/07 - 2008/09

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance on proposals for the revision of the 2005/06 Capital Programme and the formulation of the Capital Programme for 2006/07 to 2008/09.

The revised Capital Programme agreed in January 2006 had totalled £15,749,770, but the latest forecast, after taking account of slippages to 2006/07 and additional expenditure on the Strategic Regional Site at Euxton, had revealed a reduction in total expenditure to £15,202,760.

The report identified, in Appendix 1, the Category A and B schemes included in the three year Capital Programme from 2006/07 to 2008/09, classified into the respective corporate priorities, the expenditure for which totalled £14,659,970, after taking account of changes to the phasing of programmes and slippage of expenditure in other schemes.

The report also included, at Appendix 2, a list of reserve schemes in respect of which outline business cases had been presented to the Capital Programme Board. The Executive Cabinet would need to determine which, if any of the reserve Category C schemes should be added to the three year Capital Programme, following production of feasible business cases and consideration of the revenue consequences of projects requiring financing by borrowing.

Decisions made:

That the Council be recommended:

(1) to approve the reduction of the 2005/06 Capital Programme from £15,749,770 to £15,202,760;

(2) to approve the Capital Programme for 2006/07 to 2008/09 comprising the Category A and B schemes identified in Appendix 1 to the submitted report, at a total expenditure of £14,659,970; and

(3) to defer approval of any schemes from the reserve list pending further detailed consideration of the relative merits and costs of each individual scheme.

Reasons for decision:

The phasing of expenditure on schemes approved to be implemented during 2005/06 needs to be updated on the advice of external consultants and the Council's project managers.

The Capital Programme for 2006/07 to 2008/09 needs to be updated to take account of slippage and other changes to the phasing of schemes and schemes added to the programme since the 2005/06 - 2007/08 Financial Strategy was approved on 1 March 2005.

The Council needs to be assured of the justification for the schemes, and informed of the respective revenue implications, before authorising any of the pending projects on the reserve list.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.DC.37 2006/07 BUDGET AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

(a) General Fund Revenue Budget and Council Tax, 2006/07

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Leader putting forward proposals for the General Fund revenue budget and Council Tax levels for 2006/07, with a view to the Executive Cabinet's recommendations being considered by the Council on 7 March 2006.

The Executive Leader explained that the updated draft net budget requirement had been increased from £13,634,000, as proposed in the consultation draft, to £13,751,000. This revision had taken account of the outcome of the consultation exercise, a reduced level of savings and other budget adjustments.

The Executive Leader emphasised that the draft budget proposals had been compiled with the primary objective of addressing the key issues and objectives identified in the Community and Corporate Strategies. The proposed budget would allow capacity for £245,000 expenditure on potential growth items and restore General Fund reserves to £1m for a projected 4.83% increase in Council Tax.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor J Walker) drew the Members' attention to the recommendations of the Committee following the three Associate Panels' review of the budgets of Environmental Services, Revenues and Benefits and Planning Services, primarily to establish reasons for the apparent high costs of the services as compared to other Authorities in the Council's 'family group'.

The details of the budget proposals, including the adjustments to the consultation budget, were set out in the following appendices to the report:

- Appendix 1 (Summary of consultation responses);
- Appendix 2 (Summary of variations);
- Appendix 3 (Savings items);
- Appendix 4 (Growth items);
- Appendix 5 (Special Expenses and Parish Precepts); and
- Appendix 6 (Formal Council Tax resolutions and explanatory notes).

Decisions made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) to approve the budget spending proposals for 2006/07, anticipating an expenditure requirement of £13,751,100, as set out in Appendix 2 to the submitted report, subject to the alteration in Appendix 4 of one of the objective of the proposed Neighbourhood Co-ordinator post to read 'Ensure agreed actions from fora are implemented'; and
- (2) to approve the formal Council Tax resolutions in relation to the budget proposals as set out in Appendices 5 and 6 to the submitted report.

Reason for decisions:

In order to achieve a balanced budget for 2006/07 aligned to the Council's corporate priorities and objectives.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

(b) Statutory Report on the Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance which set out the statutory advice which the Director was required to provide to the Council under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003.

The report also sought approval of the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09, which incorporated the Annual Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators. The strategy document outlined the framework and financial rules and regulations under which the Council would need to operate and comply with during the financial year.

Decisions made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) **to note the advice of the Chief Finance Officer under Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, as set out in the submitted report, and have regard to it when considering the budget for 2006/07; and**
- (2) **to approve the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2006/07 - 2008/09, including the Treasury Management Strategy and Prudential Indicators, as shown in the Appendix to the submitted report.**

Reason for decisions:

The Financial Strategy sets out the means of continuing the financial stability enjoyed by the Council.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.DC.38 EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Decision made:

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

06.DC.39 MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The Executive Cabinet approved, for consultation purposes with the Trade Unions and staff, the proposals contained within the Chief Executive's report to revise the Council's corporate management structure.

Chair