

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Development and Regeneration (Introduced by Executive Member for Economic Regeneration and Regeneration)	Executive Cabinet	29 June 2006

CENTRAL LANCASHIRE CITY – LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK CORE STRATEGY – JOINT ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To present the joint Issues and Options Paper and to approve it for consultation purposes.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- This matter particularly relates to the Strategic Objectives to put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire Sub-Region and develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live.

RISK ISSUES

- The issue raised and recommendations made in this report involve risk considerations in the following categories:

Strategy	✓	Information	✓
Reputation	✓	Regulatory/Legal	✓
Financial		Operational	✓
People		Other	

- Although there are numerous advantages in working jointly there are risks if the process is not properly managed and not done in a transparent way.

BACKGROUND

- Of all the Local Development Framework (LDF) documents the Core Strategy is of prime importance. It sets the overall strategic planning approach by interpreting the Regional Spatial Strategy at the local level. All other Development Plan Documents that make up the LDF have to conform with the Core Strategy.
- The issues and options stage is the first in the preparation of an LDF Development Plan Document. For Core Strategy preparation it is proposed to do this stage jointly with the three Councils working together. This is because many of the issues appear to be common across the combined area and there is the potential to solve these jointly in ways that offer greater benefits than would be achieved by trying to pursue them separately. Joint working also offers economies of scale, will enable consultees common to the three districts to respond once instead of to three separate documents and it enables a consistent approach to involvement to be followed.
- The proposal at this stage is to merely carry out the issues and options stage as a combined exercise. It does not commit the authorities to continue to work up a joint Core Strategy at subsequent stages. However starting in this way will enable a joint Core Strategy to be produced and finally adopted but each stage will need separate approval of each Council's



Cabinet (and Full Council). The Government is supportive of joint working in this way. Each Council will be free to prepare all other Development Plan Documents separately but there may well be other opportunities to work jointly if that is subsequently agreed.

8. Joint work on a Core Strategy does raise a number of potential problems. Chorley have already done consultation (in September/October 2004) on potential LDF issues and options as the culmination of several months work involved in reviewing the Community Strategy. So this would partially be a repeat of that work which may confuse local people and organisations in this Borough. Also combined work may be seen by some as the three authorities seeking to prepare the way to become one unitary Council in the future. Joint LDF working does not depend on or presume such a change. These potential problems could distract attention from the planning merits of combined working so they will need to be faced head-on to clearly explain the authorities' intentions.
9. Councils have a lot of discretion on how to consult and involve organisations and individuals at the issues and options stage. There are no set time periods or prescribed techniques although the methods of consultation used should conform to the minimum set out in each authority's Statement of Community Involvement. There is not even a requirement to produce an issues and options paper although this is generally what is done to offer some ideas and encourage participation and responses.
10. The Government puts great store in extensive community involvement at the early stages of Development Plan Document preparation. The issues and options stage should not be seen as comprising a single consultation event but be made up of various involvement activities forming a continuous process. The intention is to try to reveal all the relevant issues and potential options for solving them before a preferred set of options are selected for the next stage of consultation. Some options will complement one another, others will be in opposition. The most important aspect is not to rule out or foreclose any way forward at this stage. Respondents need to feel encouraged to offer their own ideas without being inhibited by what appears in the report.
11. The intention is to start the community involvement in September this year. At later stages of Development Plan Preparation the consultation periods are prescribed as being six weeks long. There is no such regulation at the issues and options stage so a longer period could be adopted. For the three authorities there are no particularly pressing time constraints although in Chorley other LDF documents will be out for six weeks consultation in September. Also the Regional Spatial Strategy Examination in Public starts at the very end of October so Officer time commitments to prepare for and attend that event need to be taken into account. Officers propose that they be left discretion as to what engagement methods are used and how long this first phase of community involvement takes place and what types of on going dialogue is pursued. The next, formal stage, of involvement (into preferred options) is not due until to take place until September 2007.

ISSUES AND OPTIONS

12. The text of the proposed Issues and Options Paper is attached for Members consideration. It is proposed that the published version will be presented in colour with photographs to encourage interest. It will also need some maps as well as other graphics to show key statistics and trends. Successful involvement also depends on evidence being made available to support the substance of the issues. Additional factual information may need to be added to the paper or a separate technical annex produced. The paper identifies possible issues and options for solving them under eight themes. This is just one way of grouping the issues. For future stages it may prove appropriate to present topics in a different way. However the themes suggested are:
 - Locating new development;
 - Meeting housing needs;

- Fulfilling economic growth;
 - Improving accessibility;
 - Protecting the environment;
 - Improving the quality of life;
 - Sustaining rural areas;
 - Thriving centres.
13. Initial consultation has been carried out as to whether these themes are likely to cover all the relevant spatial planning issues in the three authorities' areas. Contact has been made with the Government Office for the North West, North West Regional Assembly, North West Development Agency, Lancashire County Council and the three Local Strategic Partnerships covering Chorley, Preston and South Ribble. Some comments have been received and attempts made to reflect the views in the worked up paper.
 14. The Government is keen to see Local Development Frameworks well related to Community Strategies which is why each local one (plus Ambition Lancashire) are referred to near the start of the paper. Full recognition of other relevant strategies is also set out. A proposed vision is suggested although again this is presented as a draft for consultation.
 15. Under each theme a summary of the local characteristics is set out leading to an objective for the end date (2021) of the Core Strategy, as a lead-in to presenting a number of issues. The options under each issue can be combined in some instances or be discrete but respondents are each time asked to consider whether anything is missing and suggest their own solutions.
 16. Sustainability Appraisal (SA), aimed at reducing adverse social, environmental and economic impacts and maximising benefits, is a key part of Local Development Framework production. For the Core Strategy issues and options paper initial SA scoping work has been done and indications of the potential impacts of the options will be included in a separate accompanying report and/or as part of the published paper so as to guide respondents.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

17. There are no immediate Human Resources implications of this report although in future there could be a sharing of staff resources with potential savings.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

18. The existing Local Development Framework budget can meet most of the costs arising from joint working including the joint commissioning of appropriate studies. If further funding is needed it could be made available through the Planning Delivery Grant.

CONCLUSION

19. The Issues and Options Paper has been considered by a joint meeting of the three authorities Local Development Framework member working groups and aims to identify the key strategic spatial planning issues affecting Central Lancashire City. It tries to do this in a thought provoking way to encourage participants to respond to these as well as offering their own options for solving problems. It represents the start of a process that will enable a joint Core Strategy to be produced and therefore allow a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to spatial planning across the three authorities.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

20. That the text of the Issues and Options Paper be approved (subject to Full Council ratification) as a consultation document subject to any major changes proposed by either Preston or South Ribble Councils being approved by an Executive Member Decision and minor revisions of a factual or technical nature being delegated to the Director of Development and Regeneration.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

21. To ensure the paper is fully supported by all three Councils and is properly presented for consultation purposes.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

22. The only alternative would be to work separately on producing an individual Core Strategy for Chorley but this would limit the scope to solve issues and miss the economies of scale associated with combined working.

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There are no background papers to this report.

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