

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met once on 5 October 2006 since the last ordinary meeting and this report summarises briefly the principal matters considered at the meeting. A separate report has been prepared in respect of the item which requires a Council decision.

Concessionary Travel – Use of Smart Cards

2. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had, at its meeting on 5 September 2006, recommended the Executive Cabinet to support the abandonment of the use of smart cards in relation to concessionary travel passes. We were told by the Chair of the Committee, Councillor D Edgerley, however, that the Committee had, at its subsequent meeting on 4 October, requested the preparation of a report on the operation and likely financial implications of the concessionary travel scheme in the light of the planned revision to the scheme on 1 April 2007.
3. In the circumstances, we agreed that it would be prudent to defer the discussions on the future use of smart cards pending the submission of the further report by the Director of Finance to both the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Executive Cabinet. We will be better able to make an informal decision on smart cards when the anticipated costs of the scheme are known.

Revenue Budget, 2006/07 – Monitoring Report

4. We received and considered a report of the Director of Finance monitoring the current financial position of the Council in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency saving targets for 2006/07 in respect of the General Fund and the Housing Revenue Account.
5. The report explained the significant budget variations that had occurred since the last monitoring report, which had effectively increased the projected overspend of the General Fund from £66,000 to £170,000. A number of budget areas will need to be monitored closely over the remaining year and each Service Director has been instructed to review their respective budgets to identify cost reductions and potential savings that will enable our savings targets for 2006/07 to be met.
6. The Housing Revenue Account balances are expected to increase to £837,000 as a result of the Executive Cabinet's authorisation at its meeting on 24 August 2006 of the use of £150,000 of the regional Housing Capital Grant to replace the HRA contribution to capital.
7. The Director of Finance currently presents revenue budget monitoring reports regularly to our monthly Executive Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings. The frequency of the financial monitoring report was raised at the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting and the Executive Member for Resources, Councillor G Morgan, has agreed to examine the frequency of the reporting procedures with the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Quarterly Best Value Performance Indicators, 2006/07 – Monitoring Report as at 30 June 2006

8. We received and considered a report prepared by the Director of Policy and Performance monitoring the Council's performance during the first quarter period of 2006/07 against the

Best Value key Performance Indicators, which are national indicators defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

9. The report indicates a positive and improving position so far as the Authority's performance during the quarter period is concerned. There are, however, a number of areas where the identified targets have not been reached by a margin of 5% or more and action plans have been drawn up to enhance the performance of these areas.
10. The Director also advised the Members of plans to strengthen the Authority's performance management arrangements through the introduction of quarterly "Round Table" meetings between herself and the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance and with each Executive Member and their respective Directors. The purpose of these meetings will be to enable poor or deteriorating areas of performance to be highlighted and measures agreed to resolve identified issues.

Chorley Town Centre Strategy

11. The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration on the draft Chorley Town Centre Strategy and the Director gave a short presentation on the Strategy being presented for approval.
12. The Director explained how the Town Centre Strategy had evolved from the Economic Development Strategy and the study undertaken by White Young Green in May 2005 into the town centre and the wider retail and leisure needs of the Borough. A draft strategy for the town centre had subsequently been compiled after a wide and thorough consultation process.
13. The principal objectives of the 10-year strategy are to realise the potential of the town centre and improve its vitality and viability. The strategy aims to provide a co-ordinated framework for policy and actions that will build on the town's strengths and attract investment through a greater range of quality outlets. The strategy is divided into the following four key elements, under each of which initial targets and action plans to implement the strategy have been drawn up:
 - Town Centre Diversification, which plans to broaden the town centre's economic base by encouraging new small and middle-range outlets and stimulating the expansion of the evening economy.
 - Town Centre Environment with plans to maintain and enhance the town's physical fabric through, for example, improvements to the town's gateway areas and design guides for shop fronts.
 - Accessibility and Movement, which aims to build upon the current high levels of accessibility by reviewing existing car parking provision and pedestrian linkages within the town centre.
 - Business Promotion and Support which will aim to market and promote Chorley as a "Contemporary Market Town" and develop effective partnership working as a crucial tool in the delivery of the strategy.
14. In response to queries raised at the meeting, we were told that town centre management issues will be examined as part of the review of the planned measures through which the strategy will be implemented, as requested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In addition, we were assured that community safety issues associated with the Strategy will be addressed within the Action Plan for the improvement of the Town Centre Environment.

15. At the conclusion of the Director's presentation and debate, we welcomed the Strategy as the foundation for the future development and promotion of Chorley Town Centre and approved the Strategy for adoption.

Recommendation

16. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR P GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

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There are no background papers to this report.