

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 9 November 2006

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Mrs Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Eric Bell, Alan Cullens, Peter Malpas, Mark Perks and John Walker

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillors Peter Baker (Lead Member for Information Communication Technology), Alan Cain (Lead Member Human Resources), Francis Culshaw (Lead Member for Housing), David Dickinson (Lead Member for Parish Councils), Mrs Marie Gray (Lead Member for Town Centre), Harold Heaton (Lead Member for Development Control), Geoffrey Russell (Lead Member for Finance), Rosemary Russell (Lead Member for Health and Older People) and Mrs Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing)

Other Members: Councillors Kenneth Ball, Dennis Edgerley (Overview and Scrutiny Committee Chair), Anthony Gee, Daniel Gee, Hasina Khan, Roy Lees, Adrian Lowe and Ralph Snape

06.EC.127 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by the Executive Members in any of the agenda items.

06.EC.128 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 5 October 2006 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

06.EC.129 MATTERS REFERRED BY THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) advised the Executive Cabinet that the Committee had, at its meeting the previous day, 8 November, commented and made certain recommendations on a number of items for consideration on the Executive Cabinet's agenda. A summary sheet of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee's views was circulated at the meeting.

The Executive Cabinet agreed to take account of the views during their deliberations on the respective items.

06.EC.130 A PLAY STRATEGY FOR THE BOROUGH

The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services presented a report seeking approval to the adoption of a Play Strategy for Chorley.

The Council's prospective bid for Big Lottery funding of a play initiative in the sum of £208,000 would be strengthened by the involvement of the former Chorley Play Forum into the Chorley Play Partnership and the production of a strategy to highlight the play needs of the Borough.

The Play Strategy had been compiled by the Play Partnership to take account of the responses to a wide consultation exercise and was designed to cover a 10 year period up to 2016. The Strategy was supported by a preliminary action plan to be reviewed annually.

The action plan identified a wide range of projected initiatives and activities designed to improve access to quality play opportunities. The delivery of the proposals would

be dependent upon the attraction of external funding (including the Big Lottery funding), effective partnership working and the alignment of available Council resources to the Strategy objectives.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Edgerley) informed the Members of the differing opinions expressed at the last meeting of the Committee regarding the possible appointment of a non-Executive member of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the panel of assessors to consider projects to form part of the Big Lottery bid. The Executive Member for Health, Leisure and Well-Being (Councillor Perks), however, queried whether such an appointment would prejudice the Members' participation in any future scrutiny of the Play Strategy by the Panel.

Councillor Khan also requested the Executive Cabinet to ensure that the implementation of the Strategy encompassed all black and ethnic minority groups (including female and young people's groups) and suggested that the Executive Cabinet should receive the minutes of meetings of the Ethnic Minorities Consultative Committee.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the Play Strategy for Chorley, as now presented, be approved, subject to the Officers' examination of the ethics and appropriateness of a non-Executive Member of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel being appointed to the small panel to be set up to assess projects to form part of the bid for Big Lottery funding.**
- (2) That the Executive Leader be delegated authority to agree the finalised Play Strategy for adoption.**
- (3) That the minutes of future meetings of the Ethic Minorities Consultative Committee be presented to the Executive Cabinet.**

Reason for decisions:

Approval of the Strategy will enable progress on the action plan and will enhance partnership working, which, in turn, will ultimately help to reduce inequalities; stimulate greater involvement; improve access to quality play opportunities; and develop Chorley as a good place to live and play.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The alternative option not to apply for Big Lottery funding, thus precluding the need for the Play Strategy, has previously been rejected.

06.EC.131 LANCASHIRE PARTNERSHIP - STRATEGY FOR AN AGEING POPULATION

The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services presented a report requesting the Executive Cabinet's agreement to a response to the Lancashire Partnership's Strategy for an Ageing Population, the Executive Summary of which was attached to the report.

The strategy which had been developed following an extensive consultation exercise, broadly aimed to improve equality of opportunities and services to meet the changing needs of an ageing population, with the overall objective of improving the quality of life for older people within the County. The strategy included a framework for the delivery of its objectives through five identified outcomes to maximise the opportunities for older people and to promote their health, safety and independence.

The Director's report contained a suggested response to the Strategy, which, if accepted, would welcome the need for, and production of, the strategy and highlight a few elements that could be strengthened or reviewed.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Edgerley) reported that the Committee, at its last meeting, had supported the suggested response to the draft Strategy, but had recommended the addition of a further comment to highlight the impact and contribution older people can make to the community with their skills and experience and to encourage greater use of the resource.

Decision made:

That the Lancashire Partnership's Strategy for an Ageing Population be noted and that the comments contained within Paragraphs 13 to 18 of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services' submitted report, augmented to include the suggested comments of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, be approved to form the basis of this Council's response to the consultation.

Reason for Decision:

In order to ensure that the views of Chorley Council are considered by the Lancashire Partnership before its final determination of the Strategy for an Ageing Population.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The Council's views would not be able to be taken into account if no response to the Consultation was submitted.

06.EC.132 FORWARD PLAN

The Council's Forward Plan for the four month period 1 November 2006 to 28 February 2007 was submitted for the information and comment of the Executive Cabinet. The Plan set out the details of the key decisions which the Executive Cabinet, individual Executive Members or Officers were expected to take during the four months period.

The Chief Executive stated that, following a thorough review, the Forward Plan had been made more inclusive and transparent. A further review would hope to ensure that more accurate and definitive expected decision dates were shown in the Plan.

The Forward Plan had been presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting the previous evening, 8 November 2006, which had identified a number of items it wished to examine before their submission to the Executive Cabinet.

Decision made:

That the Council's Forward Plan for the four months period 1 November 2006 to 28 February 2007, as now presented, be noted.

06.EC.133 UPDATED CORPORATE STRATEGY

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Policy and Performance seeking approval to a number of amendments to the Council's Corporate Strategy for 2006-2009.

The Corporate Strategy set out the Council's vision and corporate priorities for the 3 year period up to 2009, together with work programme for the coming year, and stood as the key document in taking forward the Council's agenda for improvement.

The Executive Cabinet and Strategy Group had recently undertaken a thorough review of the Corporate Strategy's commitments to assess their feasibility and reflection of the key objectives of the new administration. The review had identified a number of recommended changes to the Corporate Strategy which are detailed in the Director's report. These included the amendment and expansion of the Vision Statement in order to clarify more precisely the Council's aims and overarching vision for the future of the Borough. A number of changes to the Council's strategic objectives, measures and targets, and key projects were also proposed.

The suggested alterations were highlighted in an annotated copy of the Corporate Strategy appended to the report.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Edgerley) drew attention to the following views and recommendations of the Committee in relation to the revised Strategy, which were debated by the Executive Cabinet:

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had welcomed the proposed expansion of the Corporate Strategy's Vision Statement.
- The Committee had expressed concern at the proposal to alter one of the strategic objectives from 'Reduce Pockets of Inequality' to 'Improving equality of opportunity and life chances', fearing that resources for improvement would be lost.

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance (Councillor Mrs P Case) responded to clarify the Executive Cabinet's intention to highlight the positive intention of the objective, and to confirm that the proposed measures to achieve equality of opportunities would not be diluted.

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had expressed disappointment at the deletion of the key project to 'develop and deliver a strategy and action plan to increase voter turnout at Borough Council elections'.

The Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance clarified that the Executive Cabinet's overall objective was to increase public involvement in the decision making process of the Authority as a whole.

- A number of members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered that the proposed new key project to 'develop a strategy to deliver a 0% Council Tax increase in 2007/08' should be revised to 'develop a strategy to maximise resources and reduce costs through the pursuance of efficiencies to enable service improvements and the development of new services'.

In response, the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance stated that the new key project had been added to clarify one of the Conservative Group's election promises, which would be achieved by use of the measures suggested by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendation that the new key project to 'prepare a Business Case to support new Local Government Structures' should be revised to 'maximise the opportunities given by the White Paper' was accepted by the Executive Cabinet.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee had welcomed the proposed new key project to 'strengthen links with Parish Councils, Faith and Community Groups, and Voluntary Agencies'.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) To approve the suggested changes to the Council's Corporate Strategy and Vision for the Borough, as now presented and highlighted in the submitted Corporate Strategy document, subject to the substitution of the new key project to 'prepare a Business Case to support new Local Government structures' by a proposal to 'maximise the opportunities given by the White Paper', in line with the outlined rationale.**
- (2) To agree the updated Corporate Strategy as the key strategic document for the Authority.**

Reason for recommendation:

The Corporate Strategy is the key driver for the Authority. The changes agreed have been made to ensure that all projects to which the Council are committed to deliver over the next three years are achievable and will deliver real improvements for the community.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.EC.134 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT - DIRECTION OF TRAVEL SELF ASSESSMENT, 2006

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Policy and Performance presenting the Direction of Travel Self-Assessment for 2006.

The Self-Assessment was required to inform the work of the Audit Commission in its annual assessment of the Council's progress in delivering key outcomes and improvements. It was important, therefore, for the assessment to reflect the Council's achievements during the period September 2005 to September 2006 and clarify the key areas of focus for future work, highlighting the significant service improvements the Council had delivered for its customers and the instances where the Authority had been recognised externally as a model of excellence and innovation.

In addition, the Self-Assessment would be critical to the Council's application for re-assessment under the revised Comprehensive Performance Assessment Framework.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee(Councillor Edgerley) reported that the principal issues still requiring to be addressed had been highlighted at the last Committee meeting.

Decision made:

That the report and Direction of Travel Self-Assessment for 2006, as now presented, be noted.

06.EC.135 COLLABORATIVE WORKING UPDATE

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Finance which outlined a number of areas where opportunities for collaborative working arrangements were either being delivered or pursued.

The report highlighted the benefits to be derived from partnership collaborations in sustaining and enhancing service performance and achieving economies of scale.

In particular, the report identified elements of the Human Resources and Financial Services functions where collaborative working opportunities were currently being explored.

An arrangement had been agreed with Stockport Council for the provision of part-time senior management support to the Human Resources Directorate pending the arrival of the newly appointed Director. As a result of the recent loss of Health and Safety staff, a temporary arrangement had been agreed whereby Bolton Council would provide health and safety support to Chorley Council for an initial trial period of 12 months.

Limited staffing resources within the Finance Units of both Chorley and South Ribble Councils had also prompted an exploration, with the North West Centre of Excellence, into shared working opportunities. Consequently, both Councils were currently producing a detailed business case into the feasibility of future partnership working in the areas of Accountancy and Audit services; Exchequer services; Property services; and Procurement. It was expected that the business case, including the likely financial and governance implications, would be available for consideration before the end of the financial year.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

06.EC.136 MANAGING HOUSING LAND SUPPLY

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration outlining the reasons for changes to the existing approach to the management of housing land in the Borough and setting out the various options for change.

Currently, the release of land for housing development was controlled by (i) the adopted Interim Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) on Windfall Housing Developments that sought to manage the release of unallocated sites; and (ii) the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan which regulated housing developments on both allocated (ie identified in local plans) and unallocated site.

The report pointed out the likely changes to national and regional policies that were likely to allow the annual construction of a greater number of houses in the Borough.

In the circumstances, the report advocated the discontinuance of the use of the Windfall Housing SPG, accepting that the provisions of the Structure Plan would continue to apply on proposed developments of 10 dwellings or more which were referred to the County Council for comment. However, this would allow scope to negotiate greater proportions of affordable/special needs housing in the larger development schemes and support mixed use regeneration schemes. There was, in fact, justification for raising the proportion of affordable housing required on sites of 1 hectare or more and yielding at least 25 dwellings from 20% to 30%.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) to cease use forthwith of the Windfall Housing Developments Supplementary Planning Guidance in favour of sole reliance upon the application of Structure Plan restrictions in respect of schemes of 10 or more dwellings, subject to the limitations and safeguards identified in the submitted report; and**

- (2) **to seek at least a 30% proportion of affordable or special needs housing on market housing schemes of 25 or more dwellings on sites of 1 hectare or more in size.**

Reason for recommendations:

The proposals respond to emerging national and regional policy changes and mitigate any undesirable impact of the current SPG, whilst ensuring that the Borough's housing land supply continues to be appropriately controlled.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The formal amendment of the existing Windfall Housing SPG and/or its replacement by a Local Development Framework style Supplementary Planning Document.

06.EC.137 GROUNDWORK WIGAN AND CHORLEY - PROPOSED MERGER

The Director of Development and Regeneration presented a report on proposals to merge the existing Groundwork Wigan and Chorley with Groundwork Lancashire West.

The proposed new Groundwork Trust would cover a much wider area (ie Wigan, Chorley, Preston, South Ribble, West Lancashire, Blackpool and Lancashire) and be able to focus on areas of high levels of deprivation, thus enabling new Trust work to be targeted against identified areas of Chorley.

Chorley Council would continue to appoint a representative to serve on the Board of the proposed new Groundwork Wigan and Lancashire West.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the proposed merger of Groundwork Wigan and Chorley and Groundwork Lancashire West, subject to a Service Level Agreement being drawn up and agreed prior to the establishment of the new Trust.

Reason for decision:

Groundwork Trust has access to funding to which the Council does not have access and, over the years, has supported a number of community projects, leveraging in over £1m. The new Trust will continue to deliver projects and a new Service Level Agreement will be used to manage and monitor the Trust.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

06.EC.138 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Decision made:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

06.EC.139 HOUSING TRANSFER COMMITTEE - MINUTES

The Executive Cabinet received, for information, the minutes of the first two meetings of the Housing Transfer Committee held on 12 September and 10 October 2006.

The Committee had been set-up to oversee the housing stock transfer process, take action under delegated powers and recommend to the Council the final Transfer Contract setting out the proposed terms of the housing stock disposal.

The Executive Leader confirmed that all current indications pointed to the housing stock transfer remaining on track for completion on the target date of 26 March 2007.

The Director of Property Services also reminded Members that details of the specific HRA property assets proposed to be transferred or retained were available for their inspection within his Section.

Decision made:

That the minutes of the two meetings of the Housing Transfer Committee be noted.

06.EC.140 APPOINTMENT OF SERVICE PROVIDER FOR THE PROPERTY SERVICES FUNCTION

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Executive Director – Corporate and Customer recommending the appointment of a service provider to deliver a full range of property related services to the Council.

As a consequence of the budget enabling process for 2005/06, the Executive Cabinet had authorised pursuance of a procurement exercise to secure a partner service provider for the property services function. With the aid of an external consultant, a Project Team had evaluated the seven submissions lodged in response to the invitation for expressions of interest, from which three prospective partners had been invited to submit detailed tenders. The report summarised the outcome of the Project Team's evaluation and assessment of the three bids.

Subsequently, the Project Team had recommended acceptance of the bid of Liberata UK Ltd, as the bid had complied with the identified specification, cost model and contractual requirements. The company had been able to demonstrate a capacity and capability to deliver the full range of property services required by the Council. In addition, the conclusion of the due diligence exercise had confirmed Liberata's experience, professionalism and financial standing to deliver the requirements of the service specification.

The Executive Cabinet were recommended to agree the award of a contract for a fixed annual capital and revenue sum, with the contractor standing the risk of overspend, particularly on revenue repairs. A report on the projected contract management arrangements would be presented to a future meeting.

It was anticipated that the contract would generate annual revenue savings in the region of £80,000.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor Edgerley) advised the Executive Cabinet that the Committee, at its last meeting, had accepted the principle of the outsourcing proposals.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the award of a contract to Liberata UK Ltd for the delivery of a comprehensive property services function on the following basis:

- **Maintenance of all corporate buildings;**
- **Management of non-operational property;**
- **Consultancy and advisory services on all property matters;**
- **Additional specialist services as required;**
- **An initial contract period of 7 years, with an option to renew for a further 3 years (subject to satisfactory performance);**
- **An initial charge of £600,000 to include all core services and maintenance costs, with additional services based on an agreed rate.**

Reason for Decision:

Liberata UK Ltd offers the best value solution to the procurement of professional and contracting property services required by the Council.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

A number of alternative options (including retention in-house and variations on the outsourcing/partnering theme) were considered, but were rejected in favour of the procurement route selected, following application of the approved methodology.

Executive Leader