

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 24 May 2007

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 Mrs Marie Gray (Lead Member for Town Centre), 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, David Dickinson, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Catherine Hoyle, Laura Lennox, Marion Lowe, Ralph Snape and Mrs Stella Walsh

07.EC.50 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

07.EC.51 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 29 March 2007 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Chair.

07.EC.52 GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOTANY/GREAT KNOWLEY SITE

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration seeking approval to a Guiding Principles Document for the development of the prestigious Botany/Great Knowley site at Chorley.

The site had been allocated in the adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review for Class B1 (Offices/Light Industry) and Class B2 (General Industry) uses.

The draft guidance note set out guiding principles and criteria for the development of the site to advise and assist any potential developers in order to ensure the best high quality development. The document had been produced following consultation with the Lancashire County Council, the Highways Agency, British Waterways, the landowners and other stakeholders, and had been revised to reflect a number of representations received.

The Chair welcomed three members of the public who had each requested the opportunity to ask a question on the agenda item. The respective questions relating principally to issues concerning the consultation process, compliance with national and regional planning policies, and the necessity for the provision of additional industrial land were answered at the meeting by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration (Councillor P Malpas).

A number of Cabinet members and other Councillors present at the meeting contributed to the ensuing debate on the item, highlighting, in particular:

- the possibility of measures being instigated to secure the removal of the site allocation for employment purposes in the light of the availability of other potential employment sites at Buckshaw Village and other locations in the Borough and the need to avoid an over-supply of employment land;

- the adequacy of the consultation process on the draft Guiding Principles document;
- the impact of any potential development of the site on local traffic and the ecology of the area.

The Members were also advised that the Development Control Committee, following its consideration of the draft Guiding Principles document at its last meeting on 22 May, had recommended the Executive Cabinet to be minded not to receive the report until wider consultation had taken place with local residents.

In conclusion, the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration confirmed that no planning application for development of the site had yet been received. The Executive Member clarified that any revision of the Local Plan Review policies would involve long and complex processes within the new Local Development Framework regime. There was a need to provide a variety and mix of employment opportunities throughout the Borough and the Guiding Principles document, which had taken account of relevant highways and ecological considerations, had been compiled as guidance and advice to potential developers in order to ensure the best development design and layout for the Botany/Great Knowley site.

Decisions made:

- (1) That the Guiding Principles for the development of the Botany/Great Knowley site be noted at this stage to await the preparation and submission of a further report by the Director of Development and Regeneration on (i) the feasibility or otherwise of procedures to secure the release of the site's current allocation as employment land in the Local Plan Review; and (ii) the implications of any re-allocation of the site.**
- (2) That, in the event of any re-allocation of the site proving unfeasible, a further consultation exercise on the details set out in the guidance note be undertaken.**

Reasons for decisions:

The preparation of the additional report will enable an informed decision to be taken on the approval or otherwise of the development guidelines.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The immediate approval of the Guiding Principles document.

07.EC.53 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY SUB-GROUP - FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY SUB-GROUP

The Director of Policy and Performance presented a report on the deliberations and recommendations of the Equality and Diversity Sub-Group of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee following its review of the Council's approach to the embodiment of equality and diversity in the culture of the Authority.

The Sub-Group had visited Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and had concluded that, while many measures and actions to promote equality and diversity were being implemented in isolation throughout the Council, there was a need to ensure that all actions were recorded and measures undertaken in a more co-ordinated and integrated fashion throughout the Authority.

The report contained a series of recommendations for measures aimed at ensuring that the Council's services were delivered against equality and diversity objectives so that all communities were afforded equality of access, outcome and opportunity.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the implementation of the recommended measures contained in the report which can be implemented within existing resources and that consideration of the measures and actions which are likely to incur additional costs be deferred to await details of the estimated costs.

Reason for decision:

Implementation of the measures and recommendations will assist progress in meeting the Comprehensive Performance Assessment requirements for equality and diversity.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Rejection of the recommendations were not considered a viable proposition.

07.EC.54 CIVIC EVENTS WORKING GROUP

The Executive Cabinet received and considered the minutes and recommendations of the Civic Events Working Group from its meeting on 12 April 2007.

The Group had considered and made recommendations on the commemoration of the Falklands 25th anniversary, the arrangements for the Mayoral Evening on 18 May and the Freedom of the Borough event on 9 June 2007 and the Council's twinning links with the Hungarian town of Szekesfehervar. The view was expressed that the nature of the Authority's links with the Hungarian town should be reviewed with, perhaps, greater emphasis on the cultural and trade exchanges.

Decision made:

That the recommendations of the Civic Events Working Group, as now presented, be approved and adopted.

Reason for decision:

To ensure that the major civic events in 2007 are organised and regulated in accordance with the Council's policies and budgetary constraints.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.55 FOURTH QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT, 2006/07 - MONITORING REPORT FOR 12 MONTHS PERIOD ENDING 31 MARCH 2007

The Director of Policy and Performance presented a report monitoring the Council's performance over the 2006/07 year against the key projects identified in the Council's Corporate Strategy and the Council's Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs).

The report confirmed that, overall, the Council's performance was commendable, with an excellent record in respect of the Authority's key projects, 95.5% of which had either been completed or were progressing on or ahead of plan. Only two key projects had been identified as being behind schedule and the Members' instructions were sought on the adoption of one of two options in respect of one of the projects.

The report also indicated that 77% of performance indicators had showed maintained or improved performance from 2005/06 to 2006/07, with 54% of indicators showing an improved performance over the past year. Clear action plans had been identified to address and improve the areas where either performance was declining or targets were being missed by more than 5%.

The Council would need to set challenging, feasible targets for 2007/08 and continue its focus on effective performance management if it was to maintain and improve its excellent record.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) advised the Members of the Committee's discussion on the report at its last meeting on 21 May, highlighting the areas on which the Committee had requested further explanatory reports.

Decisions made:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That, given the lack of control over the key project to 'develop a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with the Lancashire County Council to deliver the Local Area Agreement and Community Strategy priorities' the project be closed down, but that, if and when the SLA is issued by the County Council, Chorley Council will respond accordingly, with the work sitting outside of the Corporate Strategy Key Projects.

Reason for decision:

The production of an SLA is beyond the Council's control. The proposed development of a Locality Plan for Chorley will allow the identification of joint priorities and targets in addition to the LAA and allow the Council more control over their delivery and performance monitoring.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Await the issue of a revised Service Level Agreement, the production of which is already significantly behind schedule.

07.EC.56 CONTACT CENTRE EFFICIENCIES AND PARTNERSHIP WITH LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - SCRUTINY INQUIRY REPORT

The Executive Cabinet gave further consideration to the final report of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel's Inquiry into the Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre which had been presented to the last meeting on 29 March 2007.

The report had made a number of recommendations aimed primarily at maximizing the efficiencies within the Contact Centre, particularly through the introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system, and improving both the effectiveness of partnership arrangements and customers' access to services at the Centre.

The Chair of the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Councillor G Russell) commended the report's recommendations for approval, which had been compiled to assist the achievement of the three year vision for the Contact Centre. In this context, the Executive Member for Customer, Democratic and Legal Services (Councillor J Walker) indicated that he was optimistic that the administrative formalities would be finalised shortly, with a view to the Centre being fully operational by early 2008.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the implementation of the recommended measures contained in the report which can be implemented within existing resources and that consideration of the measures and actions which are likely to incur additional costs be deferred to await details of the estimated costs.

Reasons for decision:

The immediate implementation of the majority of the report's recommendations will help to maximize the efficiency of the Contact Centre and further considerations of the remainder of the recommendations will allow the financial implications to be taken into account.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The rejection of the report's findings.

07.EC.57 VARIATION OF HOME REPAIR AND ADAPTATION GRANTS SCHEMES IN CHORLEY

The Director of Development and Regeneration presented a report seeking approval of a draft revised Housing Renewal Grant Policy for the next three years up to 2010 to replace the current policy and guide Officers' work for the next three years.

The new policy made provision for the following four grant regimes:

- Home Repair Assistance (Energy) Grants;
- Home Repair Assistance (Repairs) Grants;
- Disabled Facilities Grants;
- Handyperson Scheme.

The policy document set out the Council's proposals for the period up to 2010 in respect of discretionary and mandatory grants to assist vulnerable households to maintain, adapt and improve their homes. It contained detailed guidance for Officers on the delivery of financial assistance in the form of grants for the repair, improvement and adaptation of private sector housing.

During the Members' debate on the policy, a Councillor requested the views of the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration on the measures being adopted to bring empty properties back into use.

Decision made:

That the draft Housing Renewal Grant Policy for 2007 – 2010, which sets out proposal for the next three years in respect of discretionary and mandatory grants to assist vulnerable households to maintain, adapt and improve their homes, be approved for consultation purposes.

Reason for decision:

The schemes will ensure that an effective spectrum of House Renovation and Improvement Grants is maintained to protect vulnerable groups, to assist in maintaining the district's housing stock and promote energy efficiency.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.58 ASTLEY PARK PROJECT - UPDATE

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services updating Members on the progress of the works to regenerate and enhance Astley Park.

The project was being implemented through a number of individual contracts (ie Woodland and Tree clearance contract; Lake contract; Demolitions contract; Landscape contract, and Building Contract). The report updated Members on the current situation in respect of the contacts and other elements of the project.

The tenders received for the building works were in excess of the budget provision and the Members were requested to consider the submission of a bid for additional Heritage Lottery funding towards 78% of the anticipated shortfall on the Building Contract and the costs of park furniture and the construction of a wall between Astley Hall and the boiler house to enhance the walled garden and improve security.

Decision made:

That progress on the project be noted and that the recommendation to approach Heritage Lottery Fund for additional funds for the Building contract, site furniture and the erection of an additional wall to the rear of Astley Hall be approved.

Reasons for decision:

The expansion of the budget provision will enable the execution of the Building Contract without jeopardizing the design and quality of the renovation project. Similarly, the inclusion of park furniture and the construction of the additional wall will complement and enhance the scheme.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.59 A FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The Executive Cabinet considered a joint report of the Director of Policy and Performance and the Director of Finance recommending endorsement of a 'Framework for Partnership Working' which had been produced by the Internal Audit Section, taking account of the adopted definition of a partnership as 'an agreement between two or more independent bodies to work collectively to achieve an objective'.

The document set out the recommended governance and management procedures to be applied to the Authority's partnership ventures if they were to comply with best practice. It outlined, in particular, the control procedures and processes that Members and Officers would need to apply to all partnership working, together with the monitoring and assessment procedures to gauge whether the partnerships were adding value to the Council's functions.

Decisions made:

(1) That the report be noted and that the revised Framework for Partnership working be approved.

(2) That all key partnership initiatives be presented to the Executive Cabinet prior to any agreement being put in place.

(3) That an annual report on all key partnerships' performance and, where appropriate, financial well-being be presented to the Executive Cabinet by the Director of Finance.

Reason for decisions:

Adoption of the framework will ensure that the Council continues to encompass best practice in partnership working in accordance with the recommendations of the Audit Commission in its recent Use of Resources report.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.60 ACHIEVING VALUE FOR MONEY

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Finance recommending adoption of a 3 year Value for Money Review Programme.

The Council had recently been awarded the highest score of 4 following submission to the Audit Commission of the Authority's annual Use of Resources self-assessment on Value for Money for 2006.

The 3 year Best Value Review Programme aimed to ensure that the current high level of performance was maintained and enhanced by subjecting each of the Council's services to a Best Value Review over the 3 year period, commencing with the Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment Directorate in 2007/08. The framework document set out the various procedures and performance management tools that would be used in reviewing and assessing the services in order to ensure that they were continuing to deliver value for money.

Decisions made:

(1) That the progress on establishing Value for Money within the organisation and the 3 year programme of reviews be noted.

(2) That Outcome reports on each of the reviews carried out be presented to the Executive Cabinet and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(3) That the appropriate Executive Cabinet portfolio holder sits on the Project Board for each of the Value for Money reviews.

Reason for decisions:

To ensure that the Council continues to make progress on embedding Value for Money within the organisational culture and to ensure that the specific recommendations made by the Audit Commission in the 2006 Use of Resources report are effectively addressed.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.61 EXCLUSION OF 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 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

07.EC.62 COMMUNITY MANAGED COMMUNITY CENTRES

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services on the future management arrangements for the Tatton Community Centre.

The report proposed the transfer of the management of the Centre from Chorley Council to Tatton Community Association, a not-for-profit voluntary management committee, in accordance with the Executive Cabinet's previous approval of the concept of community management for the Authority's four directly managed Community Centres in line with the Council's objective of developing greater community cohesion and involvement.

The report also clarified and commented on the staffing implications of the proposal.

Decisions made:

(1) That approval be given to the proposal to transfer the management function for the Tatton Community Centre from Chorley Council to Tatton Community Association with effect from 1 September 2007 at the earliest, subject to:

- (i) consultation with the affected staff and trade unions; and**
- (ii) the lease and management agreement being finalised and agreed between both parties prior to 1 September 2007.**

(2) That the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services and the Director of Human Resources, in consultation with the Executive Member for Health, Leisure and Well-Being, be granted delegated authority to agree variations to the report following consultations.

Reasons for decisions:

The proposal will enable Officers to progress community management and address the staffing issue with clarity. The concept of community management has been in development for a number of years, with the Council having transferred other assets, most notably playing pitches, to community groups. Community management is prominent within the Local Government White Paper, as the Government encourages further community ownership and management of assets, having completed numerous studies that recognise the benefits this approach brings.

The majority of community centres and village halls throughout the Borough are, in fact, run by voluntary and community sector groups.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The alternative option is to keep Tatton Community Centre in Chorley Council's management. The disadvantages of this approach are that the community benefits and efficiency savings will be lost.

Executive Leader