

Report of	Meeting	Date
Director of Development and Regeneration (Introduced by the Executive Member for Economic Development and Regeneration)	Executive Cabinet	26/06/07

ELWOOD JOINT VENTURE AGREEMENT

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To advise the Cabinet on the Elwood Joint Venture Agreement (JVA) and seek authorisation for the Director of Legal Services to sign the document on behalf of the Council.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- Participation in the Elwood partnership remains directly relevant to the Council's vision to make Chorley the place of choice for living, working and investing and to the Council's Strategic Objective of developing the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live.

RISK ISSUES

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

Strategy	3	Information	
Reputation	3	Regulatory/Legal	3
Financial	3	Operational	3
People		Other	

- The Council has been an active member of the Elwood Partnership for a number of years. A failure to become a signatory to the JVA is likely to have adverse implications for the Councils' reputation as a partner and in terms of the working arrangements and outcomes of the project and hence for the Council's corporate vision and objectives.

BACKGROUND

- Elwood is a programme that has been rolled out across the local authority areas of Blackburn with Darwen, Burnley, Hyndburn, Pendle, Ribble Valley, Rossendale and Chorley (east of the M61), with the aim of making a major contribution to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area, through the creation of a network of new and improved woodland. The Elwood vision statement is:

Creating a multi-use sustainable woodland landscape throughout East Lancashire, developed by and contributing to the quality of life of the people who live and work there.

6. An active funding programme has been operating since 2000, using resources from a consortium of funders. Following the NWDA's approval of SRB funding towards Elwood, in 2004, a core team was appointed within Groundwork (East Lancashire), which has undertaken the role of managing agent for the project. The management team has been overseen by a steering group, comprised of representatives of the partner bodies. To date major benefits achieved include new woodland planting, the creation of woodland management schemes, the involvement of schools and volunteers and the construction of paths and other forms of access. The core aims and priorities of the project are presented in Appendix A to this report, along with a diagram showing the management structure.
7. One example in Chorley is at Bibby's Farm Scout Centre, where 4.4 hectares of high quality woodland landscape has been planted on slopes alongside the M61. This project was co-ordinated by Bolton East Explorer Scouts, Bolton West Explorer Scouts, Chorley Explorer Scouts, Farnworth Explorer Scouts and Chorley Borough Council. Moreover, the scheme, costing less than £25,000, was jointly funded by the Forestry Commission, Elwood and the Council and involved volunteers in the planting and launching the site. It is a good example of how the partnership approach, which is central to Elwood, has been able to lever funding and deliver social and environmental benefits in the Borough.
8. The JVA formalises the Council's participation in the delivery partnership for the East Lancashire Woodland Strategy (ELWOOD). The purpose of the agreement is to facilitate the working arrangements of the Elwood Steering Group and, in particular, to facilitate delivery of the woodland element of the Regional Park (SRB6) programme. To date, several other partners have chosen to sign the agreement, which is being forwarded, progressively, from partner to partner.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF LEGAL SERVICES

9. It would appear that the JVA regularises what has in effect been operating for a number of years. So no adverse implications envisaged.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF HUMAN RESOURCES

10. There are no direct HR implications from the report.

COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

11. The purpose of this agreement is predominantly to promote the development of strategic woodland through partnership. The agreement commits the Council to working in the partnership which will work up bids for funding and promote schemes. The terms of the agreement are that each party is jointly and severally liable for any claims against the partnership in the event that a claim occurs which is not as a result of another party's negligence. Therefore, the agreement exposes the Council to some financial risk, which can be managed as the Council has the right to veto schemes it does not think are appropriate. I would suggest that any schemes of any significant financial nature are considered by the Council prior to submission so as to limit any potential liability, which in any event is likely to be small in most cases.

RECOMMENDATION

12. That the Executive Cabinet authorise the Director of Legal Services to sign the document on behalf of the Council.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

13. To formalise the Council's existing participation in the oversight and implementation of the East Lancashire Woodland Strategy (ELWOOD) and, by facilitating the working

arrangements of the Elwood Steering Group, assist delivery of the woodland element of the Regional Park (SRB6) programme.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

14. None

JANE E MEEK
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Background Papers			
Document	Date	File	Place of Inspection
Elwood Joint Venture Agreement	-	-	Regeneration Section, Union St Offices

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Mary Clemence	5286	4 June 2007	ADMINREP/1106LM3