

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT FROM MEETING HELD ON 9 AUGUST 2007

1. The Executive Cabinet has met twice on 9 August and 6 September 2007 since the last ordinary Council meeting and this report summarises briefly the principal matters considered at the first meeting. Separate reports appear on the Council's agenda in respect of both the principal items considered at the 6 September meeting and the one matter that requires a specific Council decision.

Proposed new Chorley Register Officer

2. The Superintendent Registrar for Lancashire County Council, Ms G Greeson, attended our meeting to advise us of the Lancashire County Council's proposals to construct a new Chorley Register Office on part of the West Street Car Park Area. Sketch plans of the Office layout were displayed, showing separate entrances and waiting areas for wedding parties and persons registering births and deaths. We have been assured that the new facility will be fully accessible by disabled persons.
3. We were told that there will be a limited number of disabled car parking spaces for persons visiting the Register Officer to compensate for the spaces that will have to be lost to accommodate the building. The provision of car parking spaces in the town centre generally was reviewed by the Executive Cabinet at its subsequent meeting on 6 September with its decisions being recorded in the report of that meeting.
4. Without prejudicing any right to comment on the detailed construction plans when the Borough Council is eventually consulted by the Lancashire County Council on the application for planning permission for the new Register Officer, the Councillors present generally welcomed and supported the principle of the plans to develop a new Register Office in line with one of the objectives of the Council's Corporate Strategy.

First Quarter Performance Monitoring Report for 2007/08

5. The Executive Cabinet received a report from the Director of Policy and Performance (Assistant Chief Executive) setting out and reviewing the Authority's performance on the delivery of key projects in the Corporate Strategy and against national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) during the first quarter of 2007/08.
6. The report reveals an overall commendable performance on the delivery of the Corporate Strategy's key projects 66% of which have been completed and a further 25% are progressing on course. Only four projects are currently behind schedule for completion, owing to varying degrees of over-run on time, but we are optimistic that the projects will be delivered ultimately.
7. The Council's performance against the Best Value Performance Indicators also continues to improve, with only limited instances of deteriorating performance which are being carefully monitored. 66% of the indicators have shown consistent or improved performance, and action plans have been developed to bring back on target the four BVPIs where performance is 5% or more below target.
8. We were also assured by the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance that mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that regular reports monitoring the performance of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership in its delivery of identified key projects will be presented to future Executive Cabinet meetings.

Planning for a Sustainable Future - White Paper

9. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration on the principal features of the Government's White Paper entitled 'Planning for a Sustainable Future', which outlined the likely implications of the proposals for the Council.
10. Amongst other proposals and provisions, the White Paper contains plans for:
 - a new policy framework for encouraging sustainable economic development;
 - an independent Infrastructure Planning Commission to decide major infrastructure schemes and mechanisms to allow more opportunities for public engagement and Parliamentary scrutiny of the process;
 - greater freedoms and flexibilities for minor extensions to homes, businesses and micro generation projects.
 - the streamlining of the planning application process;
 - the possible discretion for Councils to set planning application fee rates.
11. Whilst much of the White Paper concentrates on the streamlining of the processes required to deliver major physical infrastructure projects, few, if any, such schemes are likely to be undertaken in the Borough. The extension of permitted development rights will reduce the processing workload, but the need to respond to an increased number of enquiries into the types of development that would require permission, and more applications for lawful development certificates, is likely to necessitate fees being charged to cover the advisory service. The possible discretion to allow local planning authorities to fix their own scale of fees for planning applications is also welcomed, provided that the current income source is not jeopardized.
12. The Director's observations on the White Paper proposals outlined in the submitted report, which were generally supportive with a few cautionary concerns, were accepted by the Executive Cabinet as the Council's response to the White Paper.

North West Regional Spatial Strategy - Examination in Ribble Panel's Report

13. The Director of Development and Regeneration presented a report on the key recommendations of the Panel appointed to hear and consider evidence on topics contained in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy for North West England produced by the North West Regional Assembly, in so far as the recommendations related to the joint representations of Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Councils on the draft Strategy. The new Regional Strategy will replace the current North West Regional Planning Guidance and will set out the strategic planning policies and issues for the region.
14. A number of the suggestions contained in the three authorities joint representations have been accepted the Panel, whilst others have been rejected.
15. The Panel has identified a number of weaknesses in the draft Strategy which it considers can only be rectified through a further partial review.
16. There is no formal opportunity for representations to be made on the Panel's findings, which will be considered by the Secretary of State prior to his publication of Proposed Changes to the Regional Spatial Strategy, expected in October 2007.
17. The Local Development Framework (LDF) is required to conform generally to, and derive much of its strategic content from, the Regional Strategy. Therefore, as the deficiencies on the draft Regional Strategy are likely to delay the production of the LDF if a further review of the Regional Strategy is required, we have authorised immediate representations to the Government Office for the North West. We shall express concern at the Panel's findings of

deficiencies in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy and its recommendations concerning a partial review of the Strategy, urging the Secretary of State to find ways to bridge the deficiencies so that the LDF production can progress on schedule on a firm strategic policy foundation.

A Customer Focused Council - Implementing the Outcomes of Chorley's Business Process Architecture Project

18. The Executive Cabined was presented with a confidential report of the Chief Executive on the outcome of a recent major exercise to review the whole of the Council's business processes.
19. We accepted the findings and have agreed the adoption of a revised to top level management and organisational structure, which will entail the disestablishment of one top post and the pursuance of shared financial services with South Ribble Borough Council. The new structure will assist the Authority's efforts to achieve 'excellent' status by ensuring that our priorities are focused on tailoring services to the needs of customers.

Recommendation

20. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR P GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report.

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