

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT FROM MEETING HELD ON 6 SEPTEMBER 2007

1. This report summarises briefly the principal issues considered at the 6 September 2007 Executive Cabinet meeting. A report on the one item requires that a separate Council decision appears elsewhere on the Council's agenda.

Sports Village – Feasibility Study

2. The Director of Leisure and Cultural Services submitted a report introducing the findings of a feasibility study into the development of a Sports Village project in the Borough. The study was undertaken by Strategic Leisure Limited on the Council's behalf with funding from the North West Development Agency. Mr P Woodland from Strategic Leisure attended the meeting to make a short presentation on the outcome of the feasibility study.
3. Mr Woodland outlined the Consultant's approach and methodology in conducting the research, which had assessed the need for a Sports Village and considered the location, scale and facility mix of the facility if the concept was to be developed in Chorley.
4. The report has, however, identified the following issues which could impact significantly on plans to progress the initiative:
 - The development of a Sports Village is not currently included in either the Borough's Community Strategy or Corporate Strategy, nor is it a strategic objective of major partner organisations. The diversion of resources to the project will impede delivery of other key priorities.
 - The capital costs for the project are envisaged at approximately £10m, with annual revenue costs of around £330,000. The Council is not currently in a position to commit funding on that scale and potential external funding from other sources cannot be guaranteed.
5. Consequently, whilst Members support the fundamental concept of a Sports Village for the Borough, the Executive Cabinet considered that it has no alternative but to accept the Consultants and Officer's recommendation that the Council does not currently progress the project.
6. However, the Consultants' report also identified a series of actions that can be considered as a prerequisite to any further re-examination of the project. In the light of those comments, the Director of Leisure and Cultural Services has indicated that the Officers will review the suggestions with respective Executive Members and include them in future Directorate Improvement Plans, as appropriate.

Chorley Partnership – Progress Report

7. The Executive Cabinet received and noted a report of the Director of Policy and Performance (Assistant Chief Executive) on the progress that has been made to improve the structure and effectiveness of the Chorley Partnership (the Local Strategic Partnership for Chorley).
7. We were pleased to note the major development of the LSP, its expanded membership to encompass all sectors of the community and its commitment to the delivery of a number of initiatives and projects being guided by the six Theme Groups with substantial external funding, with the ultimate aim of improving services and the quality of life for Chorley residents.

8. The LSP is currently progressing a re-freshed Community Strategy for Chorley and is expected to play a major role in the Council's bid for Comprehensive Area Reassessment in 2008.

A Sustainable Community Strategy for Chorley, 2007-2025

9. We received a report from the Director of Policy and Performance (Assistant Chief Executive) seeking Members' comments on the draft re-fresh of the Community Strategy, now rebranded by the Government as the Sustainable Community Strategy for Chorley for 2007-2025.
10. The revised Strategy builds upon the current Strategy, whilst taking account of the improved LSP structure, new priorities and the need to comply with the re-freshed county-wide Strategy ('Ambition Lancashire') and Lancashire Area Agreement. The new Sustainable Community Strategy has been developed around the following five key priorities, under which a series of objectives and indicators have been identified:
 - Ensuring that Chorley is the pulse of a thriving central Lancashire economy;
 - Improving life chances for all;
 - Developing local solutions to global climate change;
 - Developing the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live, work and play;
 - Building Stronger Communities with improved access to service.
11. The re-freshed Strategy, which has evolved through an extensive consultation exercise (including a series of workshops with LSP partners), will be presented for endorsement to the 13 September 2007 meeting of the Chorley Partnership Board. All Councillors will also be invited to attend the 20 September meeting of the Local Development Framework and Community Strategy Working Group for a presentation on the Strategy.

Strategic Housing Priorities

12. The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Director of Development and Regeneration on the strategic key priorities to be addressed by the Strategic Housing Team established in the wake of the transfer of the housing stock to Chorley Community Housing in March 2007.
13. The report identifies and comments on each of the priority areas and objectives. Detailed action plans for each work area are currently being devised to take account of collated data on the local and sub-regional housing market.
14. Our discussion focused, in particular, on the following two priority areas:
 - (a) Homelessness and Housing Options

A few Members expressed concern at the increasing use of bed and breakfast accommodation and the frequency of judicial challenges to the Council on decisions on applications from homeless applicants. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested the preparation of a report analysing the homelessness statistics to explain the principal causes of homelessness and general data on applicants.

In this context we were advised that Housing Options Partnership Steering Group has been set up to address current issues, including the review and revision of the policies and procedures used for the determination of applications for homeless people.

(b) Affordable Housing

The report comments on the factors influencing the difficulties in providing sufficient numbers of affordable housing units to meet increasing demand for social rented accommodation and home ownership.

We discussed feasible means of bringing vacant private sector housing back into residential use in collaboration with Registered Social Landlords or local developers. In this connection, we were told that the Council's Strategic Housing Manager had been requested to examine creative and innovative means of increasing the provision of housing units throughout the Borough.

15. The Members were also advised that a Strategic Housing Partnership has been formed between all key stakeholders to monitor the delivery of the existing Housing Strategy's objectives and to inform the development of a new strategy for 2009-2012.

Car Parking Strategy

16. We were presented with a report by the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment on means of providing additional car parking spaces in the town centre in order to meet the temporary shortfalls expected in 2008/09.
17. The construction of a new Register Office on part of the West Street Car Park and the development of Phase 2 of Market Walk on part of the Flat Iron Car Park is likely to result in the loss of up to 271 spaces until the developments are completed. The Market Walk development is envisaged to yield around 560 extra spaces, which will, of course, more than offset the temporary losses. However, in order to address the expected temporary loss of car parking spaces, we have considered proposals aimed at increasing the number of car parking spaces in the town centre during the construction periods.
18. Consequently, the Executive Cabinet has authorised the implementation of a number of measures which aim to enhance the capacity of a number of town centre car parks, subject to the necessary statutory processes. These plans include reduction of the maximum stay on the Flat Iron, Portland Street, Farington Street, St Mary's and West Car Park Park to 3 hours (which should increase turnover and provide more short stay capacity); the re-marking and reconfiguration of the Portland Street and Fleet Street Car Parks; and the exploration of feasible options for the Flat Iron Car Park with interested parties.
19. It is anticipated that up to 307 additional car park spaces could be provided by this rationalisation exercise.
20. The estimated £10,000 costs of the works at Fleet Street and Portland Street are expected to be met from unallocated Section 106 monies.

Refuse and Recycling Contract – Option Appraisal

21. The Executive Cabinet considered a confidential report of the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment on identified options for a redesigned household refuse and recycling collection contract to commence on 1 April 2009.
22. A recent customer consultation exercise has concluded that there is widespread support for both the continuation of an alternate weekly collection service and a re-designed recycling collection service that utilises a wheeled-bin for recycled materials.
23. On the advice of the Officers, the Executive Cabinet has agreed to the new refuse collection and recycling service to be operated from 1 April 2009 to be tendered on the basis of a 10

year contract life. Tenderers will be invited to submit proposals based on the service design specification identified as Option B in the submitted report. The adoption of service plans based around this specification is expected to assist the Council's achievement of its long term recycling target of 58% by 2015 and provide a service that will meet customer expectations.

Recommendation

24. That Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR P GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

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There are no background papers to this report.