

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 15 November 2007

Present: Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council in the Chair) 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), Harold Heaton (Lead Member for Development Control), Geoffrey Russell (Lead Member for Finance) and Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing)

Other Members: Councillors Ken Ball, Henry Counce, David Dickinson, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Daniel Gee and Mrs Stella Walsh

07.EC.119 APOLOGY FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of the Executive Leader and Chair (Councillor Peter Goldsworthy).

07.EC.120 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

07.EC.121 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 4 October 2007 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

07.EC.122 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Cabinet had not received any requests from members of the public to ask a question(s) on any of the meeting's agenda items.

07.EC.123 AUDIT COMMISSION - APPLICATION FOR CPA RE-CATEGORISATION

The Deputy Leader of the Council reported receipt of a letter from the Audit Commission confirming that the Regional Panel that had considered the Council's application for CPA re-categorisation had determined that the Council had submitted sufficient evidence of improvement to warrant a corporate re-assessment of the Council's current score. The application had been assessed against a criterion that there would be a reasonable prospect of the Council ultimately achieving a reclassified score.

The Council would be notified in due course when the Authority's CPA score would be re-assessed within a national programme.

Decision made:

That the notification be welcomed.

07.EC.124 FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Cabinet received the Council's Forward Plan setting out details of the potential key decisions to be made by the Executive Cabinet or individual Executive Members during the four months period commencing 1 November 2007.

Decision made:

That the November Forward Plan be noted.

07.EC.125 JOINT WORKING WITH BLACKPOOL COUNCIL ON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE

The Chief Executive submitted a report on a proposal for Chorley Council to work jointly with Blackpool Borough Council in the field of policy and performance management.

Blackpool Council had requested the support of Chorley Council's Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) and her team of Performance Advisors and Communications Manager in the restructure of its Policy Team, a review of the Authority's LSP and its Community, Corporate and Marketing/Communities Strategies, and strengthening of its performance management frameworks.

The report highlighted the potential benefits of the initiative to both Authorities, pointing out that the proposal acknowledged the skills and abilities within Chorley Council's Policy and Performance Directorate; would provide existing staff with valuable experience of working within a unitary authority; and accorded with the concept of shared value for money services. The part-time joint working venture was expected to operate initially up to March 2008 and would generate a flat fee income to Chorley Council of £25,000.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the commencement of the joint working initiative between Chorley and Blackpool Borough Council in the field of policy and performance management.

Reason for decision:

The proposal is in line with the Council's ambition to develop shared services with other Councils, to reduce costs, and to improve service quality.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.126 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - SECOND QUARTER OF 2007/08

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) which set out and reviewed the Authority's performance in the delivery of the key projects and measures in the Corporate Strategy and against national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPs) during the second quarter of 2007/08 ending on 30 September 2007.

The report revealed an overall commendable performance in the delivery of the Corporate Strategy's key projects, with 30 of the 44 projects having been completed and the remaining 14 progressing on course. 75% of the Corporate Strategy indicators had either met or exceeded their target.

Overall, BVPI performance had been good and the Council's quartile positioning remained positive with 58% of BVPIs showing consistent or improved performance. 18

(55%) of indicators were included in the top quartile nationally, with 66% of BVPIs being on course to meet their target by the year end.

The members were informed that only 2 indicators relating to early retirement and the average length of stay in bed and breakfast accommodation were included in the bottom quartile nationally. Action Plans to improve performance had been produced for each of the BVPIs which had failed to reach its target over the last two quarters. With regard to BVPI performance in respect of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation, both the action plan and a later report on the Executive Cabinet's agenda would be recommending the transfer back to the Council of responsibility for homelessness services.

In response to the opinion expressed by a few Members present at the meeting that the broader strategic housing issues impacting on the demand to accommodate homeless people should be addressed, the Corporate Director (Business) confirmed that all factors influencing the BVPI, including current processes and procedures, the causes of homelessness and the provision of affordable houses for sale or rent, would be assessed.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

07.EC.127 DIRECTION OF TRAVEL SELF ASSESSMENT, 2007

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) which enclosed a copy of the Council's Direction of Travel Self-Assessment report for 2007. The document had been sent to the Audit Commission to be taken into account in the production of its Direction of Travel Assessment of the Council to be included in the Annual Audit and Inspection letter to be published in March 2008.

The report demonstrated and highlighted each of the significant achievements of the Authority across each of its four priority areas over the past 12 months in its quest to deliver better services and outcomes to its residents. The achievements had been recognised by a number of external bodies through awards and commendations, which were listed in the Self Assessment document.

The Executive Member for Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment reported receipt of a letter from the Home Office acknowledging the Council's achievements in the field of community safety and the Member complimented the Chief Executive and the Council's staff who had contributed to the high level of service provision.

Decision made:

That the report and Direction of Travel Self Assessment for 2007 be noted.

07.EC.128 MOVING FORWARD WITH PROJECT AND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) reviewing the Council's project and programme management achievements and outlining the planned actions to further strengthen the systems.

The report, firstly, provided an overview of the Council's past achievements in the field of project and programme management, including the development of a management toolkit, which had been recognised nationally as a best practice tool.

Secondly, the report outlined the actions put in place to address the small number of risks identified by the recent internal audit of project management.

Finally, the report referred to the outcome of a recent regional survey commissioned by the North West E-Government Group which had compared the Council's project management performance with other regional authorities. The survey had revealed the maturity of the Council's management approach and processes to be above average for six of the nine themes measured.

The report concluded that, overall, the authority's project and management systems were robust and effective, and that the Officers were actively addressing the means of improving a small number of areas (eg training, capacity and governance arrangements) in order to maintain the Council's high reputation in the area of project management.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

07.EC.129 CIVIC EVENTS WORKING GROUP

The Executive Cabinet received the minutes of the Civic Events Working Group held on 12 October 2007.

The Working Group had considered both the arrangements for the Mayoral Civic Event to be held on Friday, 16 May 2008 following the inauguration of the new Mayor at the Annual Meeting on 17 May, and an update of the plans for the civic commemoration of Remembrance Sunday, 11 November 2007.

A number of Members commended the past services of Peter Doyle who had resigned recently from the post of Mayor's Attendant.

Decision made:

That the minutes of the Civic Events Working Group be noted and approved.

07.EC.130 FORMALISING JOINT LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK WORKING AND PRODUCTION OF JOINT CORE STRATEGY

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking Members' instructions on the adoption of the most appropriate means of formalising the current joint working arrangements between Chorley, Preston and South Ribble Councils on the Local Development Framework (LDF) Core Strategy and other planning policies with a view to the production of a joint Core Strategy for the Central Lancashire area.

A formalised working arrangement would entail the three authorities entering into a local agreement to cover relevant areas (ie governance; project management and co-ordination; administration; procurement; and conflict resolution).

The report explained and commented on the two options for formalised models of joint working laid out in Sections 28 and 29 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. The Section 29 option would involve a more formal joint working approach requiring the establishment of a Joint Committee. The three authorities, however had recommended the adoption of a more informal approach under Section 28, under which the three authorities would enter into an agreement to prepare a joint Core Strategy. It would be possible for that agreement to include provision for an informal Joint Advisory Body, which would make recommendations on aspects of the Core Strategy to the constituent authorities for their determination. Decisions at key stages would still need to be taken by each authority's Executive or full Council.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to support the Section 28 option in principle to formalise the joint working arrangements between the Chorley, South Ribble and Preston Councils leading to the production of a joint LDF Core Strategy, subject to the detailed wording and later approval of a local agreement document.

Reason for decision:

The adoption of the Section 28 option will allow the Council to continue with joint working with Preston and South Ribble Councils on a formal basis that still requires final decisions to be taken by the respective Councils.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The other statutory options would be more formal and reduce/remove decision making powers from individual Councils. The only other option is to not formalise our arrangements and just work together on evidence gathering and sharing practice. However this would mean a joint Core Strategy involving Chorley could not be produced and so the opportunity to full co-ordinate LDF planning across Central Lancashire would be missed.

07.EC.131 CHORLEY COUNCIL'S ACTIONS TO REDUCE CARBON EMISSIONS AND IMPACT ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) detailing the actions and measures that the Council had either instigated or were proposing to develop to reduce its carbon emissions in order to mitigate the impact of global climate change.

The initiatives initiated by the Council in its community leadership role to combat climate change included:

- the formation of the Climate Change Task Group comprising all Heads of Service with a remit to examine all the Council's activities and produce a Climate Change Strategy within the next 6 months to reduce the Council's environment footprint;
- the Council's membership of the Local Government Information Unit Carbon Trading Pilot Project set up to assist and advise local authorities and organisations on the reduction of carbon emissions;
- the provision of a baseline survey on energy consumption within the Council's operational properties by Liberata;
- the introduction of a sustainable procurement policy; and
- the addition of a new priority to develop local solutions to global climate change in the LSP's refreshed Community Strategy.

The current activities would form part of the wider Climate Change Strategy, which would also contain further programmed actions.

Decision made:

That the report be noted and that the future actions proposed be supported.

07.EC.132 SALE OF LAND AT FAIRVIEW FARM, ADLINGTON

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking approval to the transfer of an area of land at Fairview Farm, Adlington to Places for People Housing Association at a nil value for the development of affordable housing.

The Executive Cabinet, at its meeting in June 2007, had supported the transfer of the land for the purpose of providing 42 units of social rented or low cost houses for sale.

The Corporate Director of Governance advised the Members that a general consent of the Secretary of State would apply to the proposal to improve the social wellbeing of the area, as the value of the land to be disposed of did not exceed £2m.

Members requested the provision of measures to safeguard the affordability of the proposed dwellings and to ensure that the best balance of houses available for sale and rent was achieved.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended:

- (1) to approve the transfer of land at Fairview Farm, Adlington to Places for People Housing Association at nil value, subject to the Association obtaining funding from the Housing Corporation in the 2008-2011 National Affordable Housing Programme and satisfactory nomination rights being negotiated;**
- (2) to authorise the Officers to examine appropriate mechanisms which can be agreed to ensure that the dwellings constructed retain their affordability upon resale or reletting.**

Reasons for decision:

1. To ensure that a supply of low cost and social housing is maintained in the Borough.
2. The Council has a corporate target of providing 250 units of affordable housing by 2009, last year a total of 9 units were completed and none were granted planning permission. This development alone has the potential to provide almost 20% of the corporate target.
3. Places for People have also indicated that they will recycle £900,000 of their Social Homebuy Grant on the development, which in turn reduce the amount that is requested from the Housing Corporation.
4. The development of the site was identified in the Council's 2005 Housing Strategy as a proposed development of key strategic relevance.
5. If successful the development will provide approximately 42 units of affordable housing, It is currently proposed to place five 2-bed houses and nine 3-bed house on the site for social renting, and twelve 2-bed houses, three larger 2-bed houses, and thirteen 3-bed houses for low cost sale, however ongoing discussions are taking place with Development Control.
6. If Places for People Housing Association are unsuccessful in the bid for funds, the land would remain in Council ownership and it would be able to enter into negotiations with other providers.

7. The Housing team are currently negotiating over nomination rights to the development. Although not agreed it is envisaged that the Council will have 100% nomination rights to initial lets and 50% of all subsequent lets.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

8. Transfer of the land at market value, the scheme would be at risk due to the additional funding required from the upcoming National Affordable Housing Program 2008-2011. The consequence of requesting additional funding is less funding will be available for other proposed new developments within the borough. The Housing Corporation who fund the National Affordable Housing Program may choose not to offer funding to the development due to high costs per unit.
9. Transfer the land to another Registered Social Landlord. The Council could negotiate with another social housing provider, however, discussions with Places for People have been ongoing for a number of years and any agreement reached with another Association would 'sour' the working relationship between the Council and Places for People, who are the borough's second largest housing provider. Any Housing Association would be faced with the same difficulties in securing funding if purchasing the land at market value.

07.EC.133 CENTRAL LANCASHIRE HEALTH AND WELL BEING BOARD

The Corporate Director (People) submitted a report recommending the Council's membership of the Central Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board to be established by the Central Lancashire Primary Care Trust.

The principal intention of the Board would be to maximise partnership working between the PCT and local authorities with the general aim of improving the health and wellbeing of local residents.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the Council's membership of the Central Lancashire Health and Wellbeing Board.

Reason for Decision:

The Board will enable senior decision makers to foster good relationships, to develop joint training opportunities across their structures and explore innovative approaches to improving the population's health and wellbeing and to reduce health inequalities.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None

07.EC.134 REFUSE AND RECYCLING CONTRACT - PROCUREMENT EVALUATION MODEL

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment seeking Members approval of the criteria to be used in the evaluation of tenders received for the new Refuse and Recycling Collection Contract in accordance with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules.

The suggested criteria based on an evaluation of various weightings would allow Members' engagement in the assessment process.

Decision made:

That the evaluation criteria and weighting system proposed in the submitted report be approved for use in the evaluation of the tenders submitted as part of the procurement of the next refuse and recycling contract.

Reason for decision:

To ensure that the procurement process complies with the Council's Contract Procurement Rules and ensures that the Council can obtain the most economically advantageous bid for the service.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.135 REVENUE BUDGET, 2007/08 - MONITORING

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) monitoring the Council's financial performance during the second quarter period of 2007/08 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the current financial year in respect of the General Fund.

The report revealed a forecast overspend of £91,000, but envisaged that further savings to be identified during the remainder of the financial year would ensure that a balanced budget was achieved at the year end.

While no specific remedial action was recommended at this stage, the report pointed to a number of areas that would require close monitoring (ie the achievement of corporate savings and efficiency targets; increased refuse collection costs; concessionary travel and benefit costs).

The report also recommended the transfer back to the Borough Council of responsibility for the management of homelessness from Chorley Community Housing.

Decisions made:

1. That the report be noted.
2. That notice be given to Chorley Community Housing that it is the Council's intention to terminate the current agreement for them to provide the Homelessness service for the Council.

Reasons for decisions:

To ensure that the Council's budgetary targets are achieved and that satisfactory and effective processes are adopted for the management of the homelessness service.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

Executive Leader