

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT FROM 6 DECEMBER 2007 MEETING

1. This report summarises briefly the principal items considered at the 6 December 2007 meeting of the Executive Cabinet. A report on the main issues debated at the 15 November meeting, together with separate reports that require specific Council decisions, appears elsewhere on the Council's agenda.

Introduction of Neighbourhood Working in Chorley

2. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) presented the Committee's recommendations on the findings of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel following its inquiry into methods of neighbourhood working. The Committee had recommended:
 - the creation of 8 Neighbourhood Areas based on the Neighbourhood Policing Areas;
 - consideration be given to Parishing the non-parished areas of Chorley;
 - consideration be given to the future of Target Area Partnerships due to expire in March 2008.
3. A Sub-Group of the Executive has been set up to consider the Committee's recommendations in the wider context of neighbourhood working and we have, therefore, deferred further consideration of the report to await the Sub-Group's findings, expected to be ready for submission to the 14 February 2008 meeting of the Executive Cabinet. This will allow all factors relating to capacity, costings and likely effectiveness of proposals to be assessed.

Joint District and Lancashire County Council Locality Plan for Chorley

4. The Executive Cabinet approved and adopted a Joint Locality Plan for Chorley which has been produced by the Lancashire County Council and Chorley Council. Delegated authority has been granted to the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance to agree any textual alterations or amendments recommended by Lancashire County Council's Cabinet or the Lancashire Locals Committee for Chorley.
5. The Plan has emerged from the enhanced two-tier working arrangements between the County Council and Lancashire District Authorities. Its aim is to identify and clarify the main objectives and projects linked to the corporate priorities of the County Council and Chorley Council to be pursued over the next 12 months by both Authorities either separately or jointly. While it was accepted that the Locality Plan could be made to be slightly more specific in its identification of projects, the Executive Member emphasised that the Plan represents only an indicative illustration of the separate and joint functions of the two Authorities which can be used as the broad framework through which to monitor the achievement of the identified objectives.

Chorley Partnership – Progress Update

6. We received the quarterly progress report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) on the continuing improvement and effectiveness of the Chorley Partnership.
7. The LSP has been instrumental in the compilation and adoption of the Sustainable Community Strategy for Chorley and is currently considering its response to the consultation on the 40 indicators appropriate for Chorley that the LSP could recommend for inclusion in the revised Local Area Agreement for Lancashire.

8. The Improvement and Development Agency has recently conducted a Peer Review of the Chorley LSP. Its draft findings are, for the most part, extremely positive and complimentary in its recognition of the LSP's progress and innovative working on a number of projects. An LSP Improvement Plan will be prepared to address the areas identified for further development.

Housing and Planning Delivery Grant – Consultation on Allocation Mechanism

9. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) on plans to alter the allocation mechanism for the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.
10. The consultation paper recommends that future grants be allocated on the basis of the following two elements:

- (a) The Plan Making Element

This will require Councils to identify and ensure the delivery of both a 5 and 15 year supply of housing land and to deliver sound Development Plan Documents. This Council is already able to identify a 5 year supply of potential housing sites and work is continuing to identify the 15 year supply. We are also likely to benefit from the proposal to award authorities for joint working on Development Plan Documents and Strategic Housing Market Assessments.

- (b) The Housing Element

This element aims to reward authorities that construct additional housing at a level equivalent to at least 0.75% of the existing housing stock. In Chorley, this will require more than 336 houses to be built each year to secure the grant, but this is, in fact, fewer than the housing target set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy Panel report.

11. We approved the Corporate Director's suggested response to the Government's consultation document.

Growth Point Designation – Expression of Interest Bid

12. The Executive Cabinet endorsed the submission of an Expression of Interest Bid for Growth Point designation of the Central Lancashire (Chorley, Preston and South Ribble) and Blackpool areas.
13. Councils in the North of England have been invited by the Government to apply to become Growth Points and, on the advice of the Government Office for the North West, Consultants were appointed to prepare an Expression of Interest Bid for the designation of the Central Lancashire and Blackpool areas, with costs being shared equally by the respective Authorities.
14. Growth Point designation will relax the stipulations in the Regional Spatial Strategy that restrict housing growth in order to allow the acceleration of house building across Central Lancashire and Blackpool over the next 9 years. The designation will also provide additional funding for the provision of infrastructure and increased opportunities for the delivery of up to 4,000 affordable homes.
15. The bid represents only an expression of interest in the Growth Point designation at this stage and does not commit any of the Authorities to a specific degree of growth or development, which will, in turn, be determined by the Local Development Framework process.

Draft Capital Programme, 2008/09 – 2010/11 and Draft General Fund Revenue Budget for 2008/09

16. The Executive Cabinet approved, for consultation purposes, the draft Capital Programme for the three year period from 2008/09 to 2010/11, together with the draft General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2008/09.
17. The draft Capital Programme focuses primarily on projects aimed at supporting the key priorities of the Corporate Strategy to secure the provision of affordable housing units in the Borough and the regeneration of the town centre, but will also allow development in other important areas. The programme has also been drafted with the aim of containing the overall borrowing requirements and maximising Government grant assistance.
18. The draft General Fund revenue budget has been compiled to take account of the need to bridge a projected budget deficit of £640,000 and to maintain a sufficiently high level of working balances. The savings proposed, additional income to be generated and a prospective 3% increase in Chorley's proportion of Council Tax is expected not only to achieve a balanced budget, but also an opportunity to invest up to £265,000 in projects linked to the Council's key priorities.
19. Representations received during the consultation period will be answered before the final Programme and revenue budget are determined.

Medium Term Financial Strategy, 2008/09 – 2010/11

20. The Executive Cabinet has approved and adopted the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2008/09 to 2010/11. The Strategy sets out in financial terms the expected resources required to finance the Council's policy commitments and identifies the likely sources and methods of funding the General Fund and Capital Programme over the three year period.
21. The Strategy contains a series of assumptions and forecasts on the various levels of Council Tax, Government grant aid and borrowing required to sustain the Capital Programme and revenue budget, each of which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

People Directorate – Management Restructure

22. We agreed proposals submitted by the Corporate Director (People) to alter the management structure of his Directorate for the purpose of consultation with affected staff and trade unions.
23. The proposed new structure has been compiled to take account of the functions that were transferred to the Directorate following the recent Business Process Architecture restructure and to create greater capacity to develop partnership working in the areas of health, children and young people, and older people.

Financial Shared Services

24. The Executive Cabinet gave authority to progress the projected partnership venture with South Ribble Borough Council for the delivery of shared financial services on the basis of the key principles and terms outlined in a report submitted by the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation).
25. This follows the conclusions of the feasibility study commissioned by the two Authorities and the North West Centre of Excellence that there is potential to develop a shared service solution to a number of financial issues facing both Councils. The negotiations on the innovative project will, therefore, be pursued on the following key broad principles, on the understanding and acceptance that a number of issues (particularly in relation to property

and asset management) will need further examination before final agreement can be reached:

- the creation of a Joint Committee structure to oversee the implementation and management of the venture;
- the hosting of identified elements of the financial services by individual Councils;
- the creation of two joint senior posts to manage the Financial and Assurance functions;
- the development of a cost sharing agreement that would share the main costs of the project equally between the two Councils.

26. We envisage that this partnership project will ultimately deliver efficiency savings, although additional costs may be incurred during the initial implementation stages.

Recommendation

27. 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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