

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 6 December 2007

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council) 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, Terry Brown, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Catherine Hoyle, Laura Lennox, Ralph Snape and Mrs Stella Walsh

07.EC.136 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

07.EC.137 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 15 November 2007 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

07.EC.138 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.139 INTRODUCTION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD WORKING IN CHORLEY

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment on the findings of the Environment and Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel following the inquiry into methods of neighbourhood working.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor D Edgerley, reported that the Committee, after assessing the potential options considered by the Panel, had recommended the Executive Cabinet to support the adoption of the following system of neighbourhood engagement:

- 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, which were due to expire in March 2008.

In response, the Executive Leader indicated that a Sub-Group of the Executive had been appointed to consider the report's recommendations in the wider context of neighbourhood working across the Borough. The Sub-Group aimed to report its recommendations on an appropriate neighbourhood working structure for the Borough to the 14 February 2008 Executive Cabinet meeting.

A Member present at the meeting drew attention to a local authority mentoring service on neighbourhood engagement issues offered by the Improvement and Development

Agency and the Executive Leader gave an assurance that the scheme would be examined.

Decision made:

That the report be noted and that further consideration of the way forward on neighbourhood working be deferred to await the findings and recommendations of the Executive Sub-Group appointed to examine available options.

Reason for decision:

Deferment to await the Sub-Group's recommendations will allow all factors relating to capacity, costings and likely effectiveness of proposals to be assessed.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Acceptance of the Panel's report and recommendations is considered premature at this stage.

07.EC.140 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 coming on 1 December 2007.

Decision made:

That the Forward Plan be noted.

07.EC.141 JOINT DISTRICT AND LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL LOCALITY PLAN FOR CHORLEY

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a report introducing the Joint Locality Plan for Chorley which had been produced by the Lancashire County Council and Chorley Council.

The Plan had emerged from the enhanced two-tier working arrangements and aimed to identify the main objectives and projects linked to each Council's corporate priorities to be pursued over the next 12 months by both Authorities either separately or jointly.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) reported that, while the Committee had commented that there were areas of the Plan that could be improved or made more specific, its Members had generally welcomed the production of the Locality Plan.

In response, the Executive Member clarified that, while the Locality Plan was an indicative illustration of the separate and joint functions of Chorley Council and the County Council, the draft plan would be amended slightly to take on board the Members' comments.

Decision made:

That the proposed Joint Locality Plan be approved and adopted, subject to the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance being delegated with authority to approve any amendments made by the Lancashire County Council's Cabinet or the Lancashire Locals Committee for Chorley.

Reasons for decision:

The development and publication of a Joint Locality Plan is a key element of the two-tier working arrangement between Chorley Council and Lancashire County Council and is a key project within the Corporate Strategy.

The joint nature of the plan means that some small changes may be made after approval by Executive Cabinet. Delegating responsibility to the Executive Member for Corporate Policy and Performance will ensure the plan is published in an efficient and timely manner.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.142 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP - PROGRESS UPDATE

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented a quarterly report on the continuing progress and improvement of the effectiveness of the Chorley Partnership.

The report, in particular, highlighted the work that had been actioned in respect of the following four priority areas:

- The Sustainable Community Strategy for Chorley, containing five key priorities, had been published;
- The LSP was examining potential partnership projects for 2008/09 to build on its success of the current year's projects;
- The LSP had been consulted on the 40 indicators Chorley would prefer to be included in the revised Local Area Agreement for Lancashire;
- The findings of the Improvement and Development Agency Peer Review of the Partnership attached to the report had been extremely positive in its recognition of the LSP's progress and innovative working. An LSP Improvement Plan would be prepared to address the areas identified for further development.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

07.EC.143 HOUSING AND PLANNING DELIVERY GRANT - CONSULTATION ON ALLOCATION MECHANISM

The Corporate Director (Business) submitted a report seeking the Executive Cabinet's response to a Government consultation document on plans to alter the allocation mechanism for the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant.

The consultation paper proposed that future Government grants would be allocated on the basis of the following two elements:

(a) The Plan Making Element

This would require Council's to identify and ensure the delivery of both a 5 and 15 year supply of housing land and to deliver sound Development Plan Documents. The Council was already able to identify a 5 year supply of potential housing sites and work would continue to identify the 15 year supply. Chorley Council was 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 aimed to reward authorities that ensured the construction of additional housing at a level equivalent to at least 0.75% of the existing housing stock. In Chorley, this would require more than 336 houses being built each year to secure the grant, which was, in fact, fewer than the housing target set out in the draft Regional Spatial Strategy Panel report.

A suggested response to the consultation document was appended to the report. The Corporate Director (Business) emphasised that the new grant system would be mandatory and would encourage the authority to achieve, or, exceed, housing targets to attain higher grants.

Decision made:

That the report be noted and that the suggested response to the Government's consultation document be approved for submission to the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Reason for decision:

To ensure that the Council's expressed views on the proposed allocation mechanism for the Housing and Planning Delivery Grant are communicated to the Government.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.144 GROWTH POINT DESIGNATION - EXPRESSION OF INTEREST BID

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director (Business) seeking endorsement of the submission of an Expression of Interest Bid for the designation of the Central Lancashire and Blackpool areas as a 'Growth Point',

Councils in the North of England had been invited by the Government to apply to become Growth Points and, on the advice of the Government Office for the North West, Consultants had been appointed to prepare an Expression of Interest Bid for the designation of the Central Lancashire (Chorley, Preston and South Ribble) and Blackpool areas, with costs being shared equally by the Authorities.

Growth Point designation would relax the stipulations in the Regional Spatial Strategy restricting housing growth in order to allow the acceleration of house building across Central Lancashire and Blackpool over the next 9 years, including the provision of 4,000 affordable homes. The designation would also provide additional funding for the provision of infrastructure and increased opportunities for the delivery of affordable housing.

The Corporate Director (Business) emphasised that the bid represented only an expression of interest in the Growth Point designation at this stage and that the bid did not commit any of the Authorities to any degree of growth and development, which would in turn be determined by the Local Development Framework process.

Decision made:

That the submission of the Expression of Interest Bid for Growth Point designation of the Central Lancashire and Blackpool areas be endorsed.

Reason for decision:

Growth Point designation is expected to provide greater opportunities for more affordable housing and associated infrastructure.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.145 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2007/08 - MONITORING

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) updating Members on the progress of the 2007/08 Capital Programme and seeking recommendations for the revision of the Programme.

The report outlined the reasons for the recommended revision and increase of the agreed capital budget of £8,798,310 to £10,175,240. Appendices to the report included a scheme-by-scheme analysis of the programme, and identified the proposed changes and slippage to 2008/09.

The report, in particular, drew attention to the proposed increase in the overall budget for the Astley Park project as match funding for the additional grant offered by the Heritage Lottery Fund, following a redesign of certain elements of the scheme.

Decisions made:

That the Council be recommended:

(1) to accept an additional grant award of £373,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund towards the cost of the Astley Park capital project and approve contributions of £106,000 towards the cost of the grant eligible expenditure and £17,000 for additional design fees not eligible for grant;

(2) to approve the revised capital programme for 2007/08 in the sum of £10,175,240, after taking account of the slippage of £1,176,650 expenditure to 2008/09.

Reason for decisions:

To ensure that the Capital Programme reflects and is capable of assisting the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.146 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2008/09 - 2010/11

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presenting the proposals for the Capital Programme over the three year period 2008/9 to 2010/11.

The draft Programme had been formulated to focus primarily on projects that would support 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 would also allow development in other important areas. The programme had also been drafted with the aim of containing the overall borrowing requirements and maximising Government grant assistance.

It was intended that the draft Capital Programme, if endorsed, would form part of the budget consultation exercise for the next financial year.

Decision made:

That the draft Capital Programme for 2008/9 to 2010/11, as now presented, be approved for consultation purposes.

Reason for decision:

Approval of the proposed three year Capital Programme will allow all representations received to be evaluated before formal decisions are made.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.147 DRAFT GENERAL FUND REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2008/09

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presenting the draft 2008/09 revenue budget proposals for approval for consultation purposes.

The draft revenue budget had been compiled to take account of the need to bridge a projected budget deficit of £640,000 and to maintain working balances at a sufficiently high level.

The proposed savings, additional income generation and a 3% Council Tax increase were expected not only to achieve a balanced budget position but also an opportunity to invest up to £265,000 in projects linked to the Council's key priorities.

Decisions made:

(1) That the draft General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2008/09, as now presented, be approved for consultation in accordance with the process outlined in the submitted report.

(2) That the advice within the report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the draft budget, in accordance with Section 25 of the Local Government Act 2003, particularly in relation to the need to maintain working balances within the range set in the Medium Term Financial Strategy, be noted.

Reason for decisions:

Approval of the draft budget proposals for 2008/09 will enable the commencement of the statutory consultation exercise.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.148 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY, 2008/09 - 2010/11

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presented the draft Medium Term Financial Strategy for the three year period 2008/09 to 2010/11.

The purpose of the strategy was to set out in financial terms the expected resources required to finance the Council's policy commitments and to identify the likely sources and methods of funding the General Fund and Capital Investment Programmes over the three year period.

The draft Strategy contained 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 would be continually reviewed and updated.

Decision made:

That the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2008/09 to 2010/11, as now presented, be approved and adopted.

Reason for decision:

The Financial Strategy will provide a framework whereby the Council can:

- restrain the levels of Council Tax rises to below retail price inflation;
- continue to provide value for money for Chorley Council Tax payers;
- continue to invest in the services that matter to the people of Chorley.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

07.EC.149 CENTRAL LANCASHIRE PRIMARY CARE TRUST - HEALTH CENTRE PROPOSALS

The Chief Executive reported, for the information of Members, that the Board of Central Lancashire Primary Care Trust had agreed to progress proposals for Health Centre developments on two separate areas of land at Buckshaw Village and Friday Street, Chorley.

Decision made:

That the report be welcomed.

07.EC.150 DIRECTOR OF STREETSCENE, NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENVIRONMENT

The Executive Leader reminded Members of the imminent retirement of Mr John Lechmere from the post of Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods and Environment.

Councillor Goldsworthy thanked Mr Lechmere for his contribution to the Authority over his long period of service, especially in the field of waste collection, recycling and community safety, and wished John well in his retirement.

Councillors Ball, Bell, Edgerley and R Snape each paid their own tribute to Mr Lechmere's past service.

07.EC.151 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

Decision made:

That the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the ground that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

07.EC.152 MARKET WALK - PHASE 2 UPDATE

The Executive Cabinet considered a joint report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) and the Corporate Director (Business) updating Members on the negotiations with Rreef on the development of Phase 2 of Market Walk.

The report explained the implications of the Developers' current negotiations to secure the occupancy of the anchor store by a major retailer. Prevailing market conditions had required a revision of the original financial appraisal in order to secure the involvement of the retailer. The revised offer would retain the capital receipt as originally offered to the Council, but would entail the withdrawal of the proposed contributions towards the Markets redevelopment costs and the Town Centre Manager post (for which budget provision had already been made). In addition, the revised financial offer would include provision for the Council's reimbursement of the Developers' losses in the event of car park income targets not being met.

The Council's Consultant Advisors considered that the reimbursement risks were minimal and that the revised financial proposals represented value for money for the Authority.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to approve and accept the revised financial offer proposed by Rreef in respect of the Market Walk Phase II development scheme as outlined in the submitted report.

Reason for decision:

To ensure the development of Market Walk Phase II in order to maintain the vitality and viability of the town centre.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Insistence on the original offer would preclude the Developers' conclusion of a settlement with the significant retailer, with the risk of the Developers withdrawing from the scheme. Consequently, the Council's objectives within both the Town Centre Strategy and the Corporate Strategy would not be achieved, with a resultant detrimental affect on the town centre.

07.EC.153 PEOPLE DIRECTORATE - MANAGEMENT RESTRUCTURE

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of Corporate Director (People) on proposals to alter the management structure of his Directorate.

The proposed new structure had been compiled to take account of the functions that had been 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.

The Corporate Director (People) indicated that the restructure would precede future proposals for a future middle management restructure.

Decision made:

That the proposals for the management restructure of the People Directorate, as outlined in the submitted report, be approved for the purpose of consultation with affected staff and trade unions.

Reason for decision:

The new structure will provide capacity to manage the various services in the Directorate, develop cross-cutting work across the Council and with partners, and provide capacity for the Corporate Director to champion the needs of the customer and contribute to the effective management of the Council.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The combination of the senior management restructure with a wider review of the Directorate structure would delay its implementation well into 2008, which would, in turn, impact on the Directorate's ability to deliver its objectives.

07.EC.154 FINANCIAL SHARED SERVICES

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) seeking authority to progress the projected partnership venture with South Ribble Borough on the delivery of shared financial services.

A feasibility study commissioned by the two Authorities and the North West Centre of Excellence had concluded that there was potential to develop a shared service solution to a number of financial management issues facing the Councils. The findings had been assessed by the Joint Partnership Board, which had recommended progression of the project on the basis of the following key broad principles, on the understanding and acceptance that further examination of a number of issues (eg property and asset management, technical and legal issues) would be necessary before final agreements could 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.

While additional costs may be incurred during the initial implementation stages, it was expected that the partnership project would ultimately deliver efficiency savings.

Decision made:

That approval be given to the progression and continuation of the Financial Shared Services partnership project with South Ribble Borough Council on the basis of the key principles and terms outlined in the submitted report.

Reason for decision:

The agreed terms of progression of the joint venture establish a set of principles on which to develop a feasible partnership agreement.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

Executive Leader

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