

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director (People)	Executive Member Decision Meeting with Executive Member for Health, Leisure and Well-being	05/02/08

INFORMATION AND ADVICE CENTRE, MARKET STREET – PARTNERSHIP WITH LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To approve a new partnership arrangement with Lancashire County Council regarding advice services at the Information and Advice Centre, Market Street, Chorley.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That (a) Chorley Council enter into a new agreement with Lancashire County Council and revises the current lease as outlined in Sections 14 and 15, and, (b) a review of the Partnership and Centre and its future operation be undertaken during the first quarter of 2008/09.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT

3. The report describes the original arrangements put in place back in 1999 and changes Lancashire County Council will be making regarding the provision of Information Services. The report then outlines a proposal for the Welfare Rights Service to occupy the vacated space and provide reception services for all partners in the centre. The proposal ensures the smooth operation of this well used Centre and provides a £25,000 annual saving for Chorley Council. The report also recommends that a review of the partnership and the Centre be conducted.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The recommendations will (a) ensure the continued smooth operation of the Centre, (b) create a period of time to look at the long term future of the partnership and the centre, and (c) provide a full year saving of £25,000.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

5. An alternative option could have been to withdraw all Chorley Council financial support to Lancashire County Council. This would have put the smooth operation of the facility at risk. It would also have left part of the building vacant with no realistic chance of securing a suitable tenant, given the nature of the operation. The financial loss to the Council would be the same as the funding awarded.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

6. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region		Develop local solutions to climate change.	
Improving equality of opportunity and life chances		Develop the Character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving people in their communities	✓	Ensure Chorley Borough Council is a performing organization	

BACKGROUND

7. In 1999 the Council entered into a partnership to develop an Information and Advice Centre on Market Street. The partners include Chorley Council, Lancashire County Council, Chorley, South Ribble and Districts Citizens Advice Bureaux and the Member of Parliament.
8. The partnership involves the Council leasing the premises at 35-39 Market Street. The Council's lease runs until 2014 with a break clause in June 2009. The Council maintains the building and deals with utilities and insurance. The partner organisations then pay the Council a rent and a service charge. This is designed so that the net cost to the Council is zero.
9. Performance information provided by Welfare Rights and the CAB show that the Centre is well used and the services provided are of a high quality.

LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

10. Chorley Council entered into an agreement with Lancashire County Council that covered the premises issues mentioned above. It also required Lancashire County Council to locate the Information Services officers at the Centre and they would provide a reception service for all partners. The agreement also requires Chorley Council to fund a Welfare Rights Officer post. This cost of the Welfare Rights Officer post is linked to inflation and currently costs Chorley Council £33,000 a year.
11. Lancashire County Council have informed us that they plan to stop the provision of information services from the Centre by, at the latest, 1 April 2008. They have served the required period of notice so this effectively brings the agreement to an end on 31 March 2008.
12. The Welfare Rights Service want to retain their presence in the Centre and have offered to occupy the ground floor space vacated by Information Services. They have offered to provide a reception service to all other partners in the Centre. In return, they have asked for Chorley Council to cover the rent for this additional space. This amounts to £8,000 per year.
13. Officers have reviewed the funding of the Welfare Rights Officer Post and the arrangement in Chorley is one of only two similar arrangements in Lancashire.

FUTURE OPERATION OF THE CENTRE AND PROPOSALS

14. Given (a) the length of the lease and the break clause options, and (b) the wider agenda of looking to integrate the delivery of services which result in improvements to the customer; it is recommended that a review of the Centre and its future operation be undertaken during the first 3 months of 2008/09.
15. It is recommended that Chorley Council enters into a new agreement and revise the current lease with Lancashire County Council, in which:
- (i) Lancashire County Council occupy the space currently used by their Welfare Rights Service and pay the existing rent.
 - (ii) Lancashire County Council Welfare Rights occupy the space vacated by the Information Service and provide a reception service for all partners and Chorley Council pay the rent on this element.
 - (iii) Chorley Council do not contribute towards a Welfare Rights Officer post.
 - (iv) The agreement be on a rolling 12 month basis, pending a review of the future operation of the Centre.
16. This proposal safeguards the smooth running of the Centre and provides a financial saving to Chorley Council of £25,000 per year.
17. The Executive Member for Resources has been consulted, given the potential property implications that could arise from the review of the Centre, and he is in agreement with the proposal to undertake a review.

IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

18. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant officer comments are included:

Finance	✓	Customer Services	
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

COMMENTS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF EXECUTIVE (TRANSFORMATION)

19. As mentioned in the report, the proposal provides a £25,000 annual saving. This saving has been factored into the Council's budget for 2008/09.

JAMIE CARSON
CORPORATE DIRECTOR (PEOPLE)

There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Jamie Carson	5815	24/01/08	***