

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met twice since the last Ordinary Council meeting on 22 April 2008. This report summarises briefly the principal items considered at the two meetings on 29 May and 26 June 2008. Separate reports on the matters that require a specific Council decision appear elsewhere on the Council's agenda.

Meeting held on 29 May 2008

Scrutiny Inquiry Reports on Absence management and Efficiency Gains

2. The Executive Cabinet had been presented at its meeting on 27 March 2008 with the findings and recommendations of the former Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel's inquiries into (a) Absence Management and (b) Efficiency Gains.
3. Since that meeting, we have had the opportunity of assessing the reports' findings and the Corporate Director of Human Resources and Operational Development and the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) submitted a further report to the 29 May meeting detailing the Executive's response to each of the two Inquiries' reports' recommendations, highlighting the actions that have either already been instigated or are currently being pursued by the Officers.
4. We endorsed the suggested responses, which essentially approve and adopt the two Inquiries' reports' recommendations, subject to the minor revision of one of the recommendations in the Efficiency Gains report in order to allow an investigation into the extent to which Members might be included in the health and well-being initiative provided for Council staff, rather than its immediate implementation.
5. We thanked the members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its former Panel for their input into the two Inquiries, the results of which will strengthen the good practices already put in place and further enhance the Authority's performance.

Chorley's Performance Improvement Journey

6. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) gave a short presentation to the Executive Cabinet to highlight the Council's commendable performance journey over the past three years, in advance of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Council during the week commencing 16 June 2008.
7. We were reminded of the Authority's steady year on year improvement in both the number of improved or consistent Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) which now equate to 85% of the total BVPIs monitored, and the number of BVPIs in the top national quartile. Improvements are also evident in many areas, which are not subject to the BVPI regime (e.g. increasing numbers of visits to All Season Leisure Centre and the town centre, an increasing number of new businesses being established in the Borough and a substantial reduction in the number of complaints lodged with the Ombudsman).
8. The impressive sustainment and improvement of the Council's performance over the past few years has, to a large extent, been achieved through the most efficient use of limited resources, which, along with a host of other innovations and achievements, has been nationally recognised and awarded.

9. The presentation concluded with references to the actions on which the Council will be focusing in the coming year (e.g. the introduction of new neighbourhood working arrangements and delivery of the Lancashire Local Area Agreement with partners) to ensure that our performance is even further enhanced.

Performance Monitoring Report – Fourth Quarter of 2007/08

10. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted her quarterly update report reviewing the Authority's performance on both the delivery of the key projects and measures in the Corporate Strategy and against national Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) during the fourth quarter of 2007/08.
11. Commendably, 81% of the refreshed Corporate Strategy's key projects have either been completed or are progressing on or ahead of plan. The six projects that are currently behind schedule are expected to be completed in the near future. In addition, the report confirms a good overall BVPI performance, with an increased 46% of indicators in the top national quartile and 70% of indicators having achieved their targets.
12. The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee advised the Executive Cabinet at the meeting of the comments and recommendations of his Committee on the Vulnerable Families project; the proposals to develop a Community Plan for Buckshaw; and issues surrounding the Astley Park improvement proposals. The issues raised were accepted and the Executives' response intimated at the meeting.
13. The update report was welcomed by the Executive Cabinet, who authorised the development of Neighbourhood Action Plans in substitution for the key project to produce action plans for Community Forum areas, which is not now relevant.

Climate Change Strategy and Associated Sustainable Procurement Policy

14. We approved and adopted a Climate Change Strategy for the Authority, together with an associated Sustainable Procurement Policy to implement the actions contained in the Flexible Framework Action Plan.
15. The Climate Change Strategy brings together in a coherent and consistent manner good practice by identifying a number of potential actions aimed at reducing the Council's carbon emissions and costs. We have also approved in principle the related programme of actions which will need to be examined, costed and developed further in advance of further consideration by the Executive Cabinet.
16. The associated Sustainable Procurement Policy and Action Plan recognises the Council's vital role in furthering sustainable development through its procurement of goods and services by good practice methods.

Workforce Development Plan

17. In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Pay and Workforce Strategy, the Executive Cabinet approved and adopted a Workforce Development Plan for the three year period up to 2011, which defines how the Council will anticipate and address both current and future key workforce challenges.
18. The introduction of the plan forms an essential part of the Council's improved planning culture by ensuring that the Authority will possess the skills, attitudes and commitment needed within its workforce to deliver the Council's vision. As such, the plan is a key element within the Corporate Strategy by which to support the long-term outcome to provide and procure high quality, priority services.

Year End progress on the Performance of Key Partnerships

19. The Executive Cabinet received and considered a confidential report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reviewing the performance of the Council's key partnership arrangements during 2007/08 against the criteria laid down in the adopted Framework for Partnership Working.
20. The report draws attention to a small number of instances where partnership performance or risk issues have been identified, including issues relating to the operation of the Indoor Leisure contract, which had led to certain monitoring arrangements being put into place, which will be closely observed by the Corporate Director (People). In general, however, the report confirms the key partnerships' observance of best practice and governance arrangements as set out in the Framework document and points to good progress in the achievement of the partnerships' goals and objectives.
21. We accepted the report and approved the updated Framework for Partnership working.

Meeting held on 26 June 2008

Affordable Housing Framework

22. The Executive Cabinet approved and adopted an Affordable Housing Framework which outlines a revised definition of affordable housing for the Borough and sets out clear procedures and measures to be followed on the negotiation of affordable housing on relevant sites.
23. The framework recommends the adoption of a new definition of affordable housing by linking affordability to the median household income and a multiplier of 2.5. The framework also adopts (i) a new procedure for the negotiation of affordable housing units within developments; (ii) a new eligibility criteria for low cost housing schemes; (iii) a policy requiring discounted open market value properties to be requested on development, whenever deemed appropriate, to ensure that properties remain affordable in perpetuity; and (iv) a requirement that all appropriate Section 106 agreements should include a requirement that Housing Associations must recycle funding obtained from the sale of affordable housing in Chorley back into housing provision within the Borough.
24. In the light of the decline of new house building in the current financial market, we have also requested a further report to a future meeting on investigations into alternative funding mechanisms for affordable housing.

Proposed Pilot Merge of Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships

25. We received and considered a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the outcome of the extended consultation period on the proposals to merge the Chorley, South Ribble and West Lancashire Community Safety Partnerships
26. The recent discussions with the Chorley Community Safety Partnership and the Chorley Partnership Board and Executive highlighted, in particular, the need both to retain the commitment and participation of local voluntary and community groups on community safety issues and for assurances that Chorley will not be disadvantaged by the allocation of funds across the strategic partnership area. In the light of the extended consultation, a draft local framework structure has been produced which aims to set up a forum for local community engagement during the period of the projected trial project.
27. Since the merger of the three partnerships was suggested, West Lancashire Council has decided not to participate in the trial project. However, South Ribble Council has intimated

its willingness to proceed and the Police, Chorley LSP and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee have also confirmed their general support of the merger plans.

28. After taking account of the assurances offered and the proposed framework for local arrangements in Chorley, the Executive Cabinet have authorised the implementation of the 12 months pilot project to merge the Community Safety Partnerships of Chorley and South Ribble into a strategic Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership. I have been granted delegated authority, along with the Executive Member (Neighbourhoods), to finalise the Constitution and membership of the pilot body.

Revenue Budget – Provisional Outturn for 2007/08

29. The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the provisional outturn figures for the Council's 2007/08 General Fund revenue budget and the Housing Revenue Account.
30. The report reveals an overall underspend of £321,000 at the end of the year, £213,000 of which relates to a "windfall" from the capitalisation of interest previously charged to revenue, but now capitalised as a result of a government decision.
31. The General Fund level of working balances as at 31 March 2008 totals £1,778,000, including the transfer of £896,000 from the Housing Revenue Account surplus. Although this amount falls beyond the range recommended in our Medium Term Financial Strategy, we accepted the Officers' advice to maintain that level of resources in the light of the current uncertainty on a number of budgeting factors, such as the prospective costs of operating the new concessionary travel scheme.
32. During consideration of the report, we were asked by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider his Committee's request for peak time concessionary travel passes to be granted to persons over 60 years, particularly to assist disabled people who were required to travel before 9.30am. We have undertaken to reconsider the request when a clearer indication of the ultimate financial implications of the concessionary travel scheme and the situation affecting other Lancashire Authorities is known.

Regional Spatial Strategy Partial Review – Response to Draft Options

33. We were informed by the Corporate Director (Business) that the North West Regional Assembly was seeking responses by 30 June 2008 to its consultation on the Draft Option's emerging from the Regional Spatial Strategy Partial Review.
34. The Assembly commenced a partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy in February 2008 and have issued Draft Options on the partial review matters of Housing; Gypsies and Travellers; Travelling Showpeople; Waste (Broad locations); Renewable Energy (Broad Locations); and Car parking.
35. I accepted consideration of the Corporate Director's report as a matter of urgency at the meeting and, following Members' assessment and debate of the various options, the Executive Cabinet selected the Draft Options it wished to support in relation to the identified matters.

Household Refuse and Recycling Collections and Ancillary Services – Award of Contract

36. The Executive Cabinet was presented with a confidential report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the outcome of the evaluation of the tenders received for the award of the new Household Refuse and Recycling Collection and Ancillary Services contract upon the expiry of the current contract in March 2009.

37. Tenders were invited on the agreed specification, which aimed to enhance the Authority's recycling performance and improve customer satisfaction through a rationalisation of containers and a reduction of collection vehicles. In addition, variant bids which could demonstrate the same level of service delivery through alternative collection methods were invited.
38. Nine tender submissions (including three variant bids) have each been assessed and evaluated against the agreed evaluation criteria, which allows a greater weighting to qualitative factors than to costs. The Corporate Director's report contains details of the tender quotations and scoring awarded to each bid, together with details of the precise services on offer from each tenderer.
39. Following careful examination of the outcome of the evaluation process, we accepted the Officer's recommendation and agreed to award the new Household Refuse and Recycling Collection and Ancillary Services contract to the identified contractor for a term of 10 years commencing 1 April 2009, with an option to extend the contract for a further two years. We concur with the view that the selected contractor has provided the most economically advantageous bid for the Authority.

Business Directorate – Strategic Housing Services Section - Restructure

40. We were presented with a confidential report of the Corporate Director (Business) and have approved for consultation purposes a proposed new staffing structure for the Strategic Housing Services Section in the Business Directorate.
41. The restructure aims to create a multi-disciplinary Strategic Housing Services Section that will be capable of managing the recently transferred homelessness function effectively and ensuring that resources within the Section are best deployed to meet the strategic priorities of the Council.

Recommendation

42. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR P GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report.

AU/LM