

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met twice since the last Ordinary Council meeting on 15 July 2008. This report summarises briefly the principal items considered at the two meetings on 14 August and 4 September 2008. A separate report on the Capital Programme for 2008/09 that requires a specific Council decision appears elsewhere on the Council's agenda.

MEETING HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2008

Performance Monitoring Report – First Quarter of 2008/09

2. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted her first performance monitoring report of 2008/09, which reviewed the Authority's performance during the first quarter of the current municipal year both in respect of the delivery of the 31 projects included in the Corporate Strategy and against the new National Indicators for which the Council is responsible.
3. Commendably, 81% of the Corporate Strategy key projects have either been completed or are progressing on or ahead of plan. Four of the six key projects that are currently behind schedule are expected to be brought back on track shortly. One of the remaining projects was considered separately at the meeting.
4. The former Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) have been replaced by a new set of National Indicators which alter the focus from service delivery to broader outcomes more related to quality of life issues. While baseline targets for a number of the new indicators have not yet been released, the majority of the indicators that we are currently able to measure are on target. Action plans have been devised for those remaining indicators where performance is lower than anticipated.
5. Particular reference was made at the meeting to the progression of the Vulnerable Households project being developed and administered by the National Children's Home with LSP funding. We were told that a Project Coordinator has now been appointed to take forward the innovative venture that aims to co-ordinate all sources of assistance to selected families in Chorley and South Ribble. We appreciate the outcomes expected of this project and have requested arrangements to be made for a representative of the National Children's Home to be invited to attend an early Members' Learning session to update us on the progress of this project (now to be known as 'Families First' programme) and to clarify the intended management procedures.

Chorley Partnership – Annual Performance Report for 2007/08

6. We were presented with the Chorley Partnership's end of year performance report for 2007/08. The report reviews the Partnership's activities and performance throughout the present year, highlighting the progress of the LSP sponsored projects and how they are contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Community Strategy. 71% of measurable targets have been met, representing an 86% improvement on the past year.
7. The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) underwent an external peer review by the Improvement and Development Agency in November 2007, which recognised and commended the Partnership's progress over the year, particularly in relation to its encouragement of partners to contribute match funding.

8. 11 projects have been identified for sponsorship by the LSP in 2008/09, each of which will be pursued by the respective Thematic Groups.

Chorley Partnership – Performance Report for First Quarter of 2008/09

9. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) submitted a report on the current activities and work being coordinated and planned by the LSP for the first quarter of 2008/09.
10. Allan Jones, Managing Director of Porter Lancastrian Limited, has been appointed as the new Chair of the Chorley LSP Board. A new Lancashire Local Area Agreement has been signed off with the Government and the LSP's Thematic Groups are pursuing 11 new cross-cutting projects, which have so far generated in the region of £300,000 additional funding from partners.
11. The Chorley LSP has progressed significantly and its Annual Report highlights the areas where the LSP had added value to services and the quality of life for Chorley residents in 2007/08.

Revenue Budget, 2008/09 – Monitoring

12. The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) monitoring the Council's financial performance during the first quarter of 2008/09 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the current financial year.
13. While the report forecast an overspend of £188,000, we were informed that savings in the region of £150,000 has already been achieved and it is envisaged that further efficiency savings will be made in order to achieve a balanced budget by the financial year end.
14. The Executive Cabinet accepted the report and has authorised the transfer of £50,000 from working balances to a specific resource in order to meet the anticipated costs of equal pay claims.
15. In response to the concern expressed by a Member at the ability of District Councils to meet the costs of the Government's recent concessionary travel scheme, we were told by the Chief Executive that, whilst the precise level of the expected shortfall and local authorities funding of the scheme is not yet known, Chorley Council had been requested to make representations to the Government on behalf of the Lancashire authorities seeking Central Government aid in meeting the anticipated funding shortfall. The Government's response to the representations will be reported to a future Executive Cabinet meeting. The Chief Executive also reported that, in the interim, the Lancashire County Council have agreed to fund the costs of allowing disabled persons and companions to travel throughout Lancashire during peak time hours (ie prior to 9.30am).

Neighbourhoods Directorate – Value for Money Review

16. The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presented a report which commented on the findings, conclusions and recommendations contained within the report of an internal Panel's value for money review of the Council's Neighbourhood Directorate.
17. The internal review had been set up to assess how well value for money was being delivered within the Neighbourhoods Directorate, with a view to the production of a long-term action plan focused on the Council's Business Transformation agenda.
18. Each service and function within the Directorate have been evaluated and scored against five agreed criteria to assess how well value for money is being achieved. Conclusions and recommendations have then been compiled to identify the measures and actions that can be

taken in order to meet the Government's efficiency targets and the Council's aspirations for neighbourhood working.

19. The Executive Cabinet approved the final report of the Value for Money Review for publication and consultation purposes. The lessons learned from this initial review will be used to improve the methodology for future reviews undertaken within the next 3 year review programme.

Central Lancashire Local Development Framework Preferred Core Strategy

20. We were requested by the Corporate Director (Business) to endorse for consultation purposes the Central Lancashire Local Development Framework (LDF) Preferred Core Strategy, which, when approved and adopted, will constitute the key overarching document of the LDF to which all other subsidiary documents within the Framework will need to conform.
21. The Core Strategy aims to direct the future location of new development and infrastructure within the Central Lancashire area, focusing, in Chorley, on brownfield sites and regeneration sites. The report highlights the nine principal themes that underpin the draft Core Strategy options, together with the criteria that will be used to ensure delivery of associated infrastructure.
22. The Executive Cabinet was also reminded that, in the event of the 'Growth Point' initiative proceeding, the Core Strategy will need a spatial option to accommodate accelerated growth within the Central Lancashire and Blackpool areas. In this context, a note was circulated at the Executive Cabinet meeting containing alterations to the respective draft Core Strategy Chapter on the Growth Point Update and we were recommended by the Executive Member for Business to add the following text in the chapter.

"Although the Growth Point has been supported by the Government not all the respective Councils are firmly committed until more information on funding, timescales and other details is made available."
23. The production of a Core Strategy is a statutory requirement of the LDF process and the Executive Cabinet approved the submitted Preferred Core Strategy document, subject to the revision of the respective chapter on the Growth Point Update.

Food Safety Service – External Audit Report and Intervention Programme

24. The Executive Cabinet were presented with a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the outcome of the Food Standard Agency's (FSA) external audit of the Council's food safety service. The FSA's report had concluded that, overall, the Council's service provision is deemed to be effective and comprehensive. Consequently, a short action plan has been drawn up to implement the procedural improvements advised by the Agency.
25. In addition, the FSA has published revised Codes of Practice for the inspection of food premises, which effectively permit local authorities to reduce the burden of inspection on low risk food businesses and, alternatively, provide advice and information and undertake targeted visits and surveillance exercises. A food hygiene intervention programme prepared to take account of the FSA's revised guidance has been adopted by the Executive Cabinet.

Communications and Marketing Review

26. We received and noted a confidential report of the Chief Executive on plans to consult staff and trade unions on proposals to alter and improve the structure of the Communications Section.

27. The restructure, which entails the redesignation and refocusing of the responsibilities of existing posts and the creation of a Modern Apprentice post, aims to achieve desired improvements in tourism and events activity, whilst maintaining an effective communications and marketing function. The envisaged additional costs of the restructure are to be met from existing budget provision.

Neighbourhoods Directorate – Restructure

28. The Executive Cabinet approved for consultation purposes plans to restructure a number of sections within the Neighbourhoods Directorate.
29. The restructure is aimed at creating a more 'fit for purpose' Directorate capable of delivering, in particular, the new Neighbourhoods working agenda. The Value for Money review identified opportunities to redress imbalances in the management and supervision elements of the existing structure. The new proposals take account of those opportunities and allow for greater resource allocation and decision making at the front line of service delivery. It is envisaged that the proposals will generate annual savings in the region of £70,000.

Review of Customer Relationship Management and Automated Call Distribution Systems

30. The Corporate Director (People) presented a confidential report on the outcome of a review of the effectiveness of the Northgate Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system since its implementation in late 2007 to support the Shared Contact Centre partnership between the Lancashire County Council and six Lancashire Districts, including Chorley.
31. Considerable problems have been encountered since its installation and it is apparent that the CRM system is not operating and functioning as satisfactorily as planned. Consequently, a number of options to address the situation have been assessed, and the Executive Cabinet has accepted that the most viable and preferred option for Chorley is to opt out of the use of the Northgate CRM and Macfarlane Automated Call Distribution systems deployed in the Contact Centre and pursue the procurement of an alternative Microsoft Dynamics CRM and extend the current corporate telephone installation to include the Siemens HiPath ProCentre ACD systems.
32. The move to the new systems is expected to provide an effective solution, with the potential for financial savings, whilst protecting the integrity of the partnership's venture with the Lancashire County Council.

MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2008

Delivering Efficiency and Value for Money – Reflecting Back and Looking Forward

33. The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) submitted a final position statement on the Council's performance in reaching the efficiency targets to be achieved during the Spending Review period from 2005 to 2008. We were pleased to note that the Council has substantially exceeded the efficiency savings target of £1.29m.
34. While there is no specific requirement for the Council to set a local target for efficiency gains during the Comprehensive Spending Review which covers the period 2008 to 2011, we agreed that it will be expedient to set a local target of £1.26m. This figure has been calculated following advice from the Department for Communities and Local Government and after taking account of the fact that we are able to carry over the £726,404 excess savings from the previous spending review.
35. The Officer's report sets out the key areas on which the Council should focus and explains how Officers intend to manage and achieve the savings targets. We will need to ensure that

services are procured by the optimum method, processes and systems are streamlined through service transformation and our assets are used most effectively. This will then enable us to pursue the savings targets and, equally importantly, free up resources for future investment in priority areas.

36. We have also appointed the Executive Member (Resources), as the Council's Value for Money champion.

Prevention of Homelessness Strategy

37. The Executive Cabinet approved, for consultation purposes, a draft Prevention of Homelessness Strategy to cover the period 2008-2013, which will replace the initial Strategy produced in 2003.
38. The purpose of the Strategy is to enable local authorities to have an accurate picture of the levels of homelessness throughout the Borough and to outline the steps to be taken to tackle and prevent homelessness. This will be pursued through an Action Plan which will concentrate on improving services to customers; reducing the use of temporary accommodation and improving standards; and developing early interventions and enhanced options.

Short Stay Car Parks – Petition referred by Council at meeting on 15 July 2008

39. The Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) presented a report in response to the petition that had been submitted to the last Council meeting against the 3 hours maximum limit for parking on short stay car parks introduced in April 2008.
40. Recent research into town centre car park usage has revealed that a significant majority of visitors and shoppers using the short stay car parks stay for less than 2 hours and that, whilst the Flat Iron Car Park is well used on Tuesdays and Saturdays, there is generally ample capacity for parking within the short and long stay car parks at most times. Alternative long stay provision is readily available within easy access of the town centre.
41. The instigator of the petition attended the Executive Cabinet meeting and was allowed to present a further letter in support of the petition. However, after taking account of the survey results, we accepted that there was no evidence to warrant a change to the current policy and we have, therefore, reaffirmed the car parking strategy approved by the Executive Cabinet on 6 September 2007.
42. We are, nevertheless, appreciative of the concerns of the petitioners and have agreed to keep the situation in respect of town centre parking and the fee structure under review, with an examination of all feasible actions to assist visitor parking and maintain satisfactory income levels (including the feasibility of extending the duration of short stay parking to four hours). In addition, we have requested the Officers to ensure that town centre retail outlets are supplied with details of the long stay car parks located within the town centre which they can provide to customers.

Introduction of Free Swimming Programme

43. We received and considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) which outlined the Government's plans to encourage local authorities to participate in schemes to allow free swimming for persons aged 60 years or over and for persons aged 16 years and under during public sessions, and commented on its implications for Chorley.
44. Authorities wishing to participate in the 60 plus free swimming scheme and express an interest to participate in the under 16 scheme are required to confirm their intentions by 15 September 2008.

45. The Government has undertaken to contribute towards the costs of the free swimming programme for an initial two year period, after which the scheme will be evaluated to consider the possibility of future funding beyond that period. The Corporate Director's report confirms the likelihood of the costs of free swimming for 60 plus persons being contained within the Government grant during the first two year period. However, the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) has reminded us of the current uncertainties in relation to the funding of the 16 plus element of the programme in so far as the level of Government grant and the Primary Care Trust's possible contribution is concerned. We will also need to assess the risks if, in subsequent years, the Government grant is reduced or removed and the implications of Community Leisure Services' future pricing policies.
46. We accept the Officer's reservations and, on the understanding that a further report will be submitted to the next Executive Cabinet in October, agreed to confirm the Council's willingness to participate in the over 60s free swimming scheme and to express an interest at this stage in the scheme to provide free swimming for persons of 16 years and under.

Coppull Leisure Centre – Options for future operation

47. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) seeking instructions on the future operation of Coppull Leisure Centre.
48. The Council's 15 year Indoor Leisure Contract with Community Leisure Services (CLS), which now covers All Seasons Leisure Centre, Clayton Green Leisure Centre and Brinscall Pool, commenced in November 2006. The contract is supported by a side agreement with CLS in respect of the Coppull Leisure Centre, which is currently leased by the Council from the Coppull Community Association, who, in turn lease the land from Coppull Parish Council.
49. The Leisure Centre lease is due to expire in 2011 and the Council will, therefore, need to determine its policy and preferred method of future operation if we are to ensure that the agreed arrangements are in place by 2011.
50. The report outlines a number of options for the future management and operation of the Coppull Leisure Centre, but, after taking account of the Officer's comments and recommendations, we have authorised the commencement of negotiations with the Coppull Community Association and Community Leisure Services on the continuation of the current level of operation at the Leisure Centre for the remaining period of the Indoor Leisure Contract. This will ensure that there is a continuous provision for sport and physical activity within the Borough and Coppull, in particular, which, in turn, will assist the achievement of challenging targets in this field.

Business Directorate – Restructure of Strategic Housing Section

51. We considered a confidential report of the Corporate Director (Business) on the results of the consultation exercise on the draft proposals to restructure the Strategic Housing Section of the Business Directorate and have approved for adoption the subsequent amended structure of the Section.
52. The revised structure reduces the number of Homelessness and Housing Advice Officers from three to two and creates a temporary Affordable Housing Officer for a period of two years. This change of emphasis will strengthen the Section's ability to encourage and pursue the provision of more affordable housing within the Borough in accordance with national and local priorities.
53. The additional costs of the restructuring proposals can be met from a budget virement.

Recommendation

54. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR P GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

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There are no background papers to this report.