

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 2 October 2008

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Eric Bell, Peter Malpas and John Walker

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillor Rosemary Russell (Lead Member for Health and Older People)

Other Members: Councillors Ken Ball, Julia Berry, Anthony Gee, Laura Lennox, Adrian Lowe, June Molyneaux, Debra Platt, Geoffrey Russell, Ralph Snape, Stella Walsh and Peter Wilson

08.EC.85 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillor Alan Cullens (Executive Member (Resources) and Councillor Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing).

08.EC.86 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest by any of the Executive members on any of the agenda items.

08.EC.87 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 4 September 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

08.EC.88 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Executive Leader reported that there had been no requests from any members of the public to speak at the meeting.

08.EC.89 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY - PROGRESS ON IMPLEMENTATION

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) on the progress on the implementation of the Council's Climate Change Strategy adopted in May 2008 and seeking authority to use funds from the available budget allocation for climate change measures to progress specific schemes.

The report outlined measures instigated so far by the Council and proposed the release of £120,000 in 2008/09 and an additional £60,000 in 2009/10. It was envisaged that the available funding in the current financial year would be allocated as follows:

- £60,000 for business grants;
- £20,000 for grants for domestic solar panels;
- £10,000 for Greening Chorley Markets;
- £30,000 to bridge match funding gaps for individuals, the 'Third Sector' and Small/Medium Enterprises.

The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 29 September 2008 and a note circulated at the meeting summarised its views and recommendations. In particular, the Committee had expressed reservations about the effectiveness and costs of installing solar panels and had advocated the use of the £20,000 earmarked for domestic solar panel grants to be widened to allow other energy saving initiatives to be examined. In this context, the

Corporate Director (Business) clarified the potential for the Council's current budget allocation of £200,000 for insulation projects to be increased to £600,000 with other Government funding sources.

Decisions made:

1. That the progress of the Climate Change Strategy be noted and that approval be given to the release of £120,000 of the Climate Change Fund within the financial year 2008/09 and an additional £60,000 in the next financial year.
2. That the £20,000 allocation for grants towards domestic solar panels be widened to encourage more innovative ways of generating and/or saving energy in the domestic sector.
3. That the current restrictions placed on listed buildings (for example, to prevent the installation of double glazing and other energy saving measures) be examined.

Reasons for Decision:

The financial assistance of energy saving projects is aimed at reducing Chorley Council's impact on Climate Change; providing visible community leadership; and helping Chorley's local businesses to save money and become environmental leaders.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The Council could expend monies on other activities that could be financed from other sources.

08.EC.90 GROWTH POINT - PROGRAMME OF DEVELOPMENT

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report on the current position in relation to the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point initiative following the Government's approval of the submitted expression of interest.

The Government had subsequently requested the submission by 27 October 2008 of a Programme of Development which would identify proposed development sites, expected development timescales and associated infrastructure costs.

The Executive Cabinet was reminded that Chorley's expectations were that the initiative would accelerate the development of more affordable housing units and assist the funding of the Buckshaw Village Railway Station. Chorley's participation in the initiative would be dependent on the amount of new housing development specified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (ie 455 houses per annum) not being exceeded and no greenfield sites in the Green Belt being developed.

The Council's ultimate commitment to the initiative could not, therefore, be confirmed until the required assurances and information were given as part of the settlement details.

A note was also circulated at the meeting indicating the Overview and Scrutiny's request to be advised of the issue of further guidance on the nature of growth point ventures.

Decisions made:

1. That the report be noted and that the action being taken to develop the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point Programme of Development for submission by the deadline of 27 October 2008 be endorsed.
2. That the Corporate Director (Business) be authorised to submit the Programme of Development on behalf of the Council, following consultation with the Executive Leader and the Executive Member (Business).
3. That it be noted that the Council's involvement in the Growth Point initiative will be subject to Executive Cabinet approval following the Government's announcement on any settlement, up to which time the Council reserves the right to withdraw from the process.
4. That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be kept informed when further guidance becomes available about the nature of growth point.

08.EC.91 INTRODUCTION OF FREE SWIMMING PROGRAMME

The Executive Cabinet, at its last meeting on 4 September 2008 had confirmed its participation in the scheme to provide free swimming and public sessions for persons aged 60 years and over and had expressed an interest in the scheme to provide free swimming for persons aged 16 and under on the understanding that the financial implications and risks would need to be evaluated before a definite commitment was made to provide free swimming for younger persons.

The Corporate Director (People) reported that, while NHS Central Lancashire had confirmed its intention to contribute £25,000 per year in 2008/09 and 2009/10 towards the cost of the free swimming programme for persons aged 16 and under, confirmation of the Government's grant aid was still awaited.

The Council would need to be satisfied that the current income of Community Leisure Services was substantially met by the Government grant and the Primary Care Trust's contribution. As the Council would need to state its intentions in respect of the 16 and under programme before the next Executive Cabinet meeting, it was recommended that the final decision be delegated to the relevant Executive Members.

Decision made:

That the decision on whether or not the Council commits to participation in the scheme to provide free swimming to persons aged 16 and under be delegated to the Executive Member (Resources) and Executive Member (People).

Reason for decision:

The delegation to the Executive Members will ensure that the Government's deadline for Authorities to indicate their intentions with regard to the element of the free swimming programme related to persons of 16 years and under can be met.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.92 CAPITAL PROGRAMME, 2008/09 AND ONWARDS - MONITORING

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presented a report recommending changes to the 2008/09 Capital Programme and reviewing the availability of capital resources required for the financing of the programme.

The report proposed the reduction of the 2008/09 Capital Programme by £970,270 to £9,227,320 made up of the following amendments:

- slippage of £949,000 to 2009/10 and other reductions of £20,870;
- a net increase of £45,800 in respect of the Covered Market;
- an increase in the externally financed Clayton Brook Play Area budget of £13,740;
- deletion of the £80,410 allocation for the Astley Park Woodland Management project and its transfer to the revenue budget.

The Assistant Director (Business Transformation) explained that the majority of the slippage on the affordable housing budget related to the development of Council owned surplus sites, and the consequent dependence on partners' actions. The Council would endeavour to ensure the development of as many parcels of land as possible whenever appropriate funding sources became available.

The Chief Executive also reported that she had requested the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) to present a report to an early meeting of the Executive Cabinet on the likely impact of the present international financial crisis on the Council's capital and revenue budgets and investments.

Decision made:

That the Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme for 2008/09 at a total cost of £9,227,320, as set out in the appendix to the submitted report.

Reason for decision:

To ensure that the 2008/09 Capital Programme is accurately updated.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.93 EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC AND PRESS

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 1982.

08.EC.94 MANAGEMENT OF COTSWOLD HOUSE AND OTHER HOMELESSNESS RELATED MATTERS

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) seeking Members instructions on the future management of Cotswold House, which provides temporary accommodation for homeless families, and on a number of other associated matters.

Following the recent transfer back to the Council of responsibility for the homelessness function, the Council had commissioned a report from a Housing Consultant on a review of the governance arrangement for the hostel, which had identified alternative options for its future management. The report recommended the

transfer back to the Council of the management of the hostel from Chorley Community Housing (CCH) by CCH either surrendering the management agreement or being served with the required notice. This would allow the Council to implement improvements to both the building and the management systems.

The Executive Leader raised no objection to the Consultant's report being presented for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chorley Community Housing Task Group. The Executive Leader also recommended the immediate implementation of one of the recommendations on the Consultant's report to undertake a scheme of refurbishment of Cotswold House within a budget not exceeding £50,000.

The Executive Cabinet was also advised to examine the alternative uses of the Government's Homelessness Grant, which was currently utilised to fund an independent housing advice service from the Citizens' Advice Bureau. The review would explore the feasibility of other options for the funding within the Council's Strategic Housing function as a means of increasing capacity. In response to a Members' query, the Corporate Director (Business) gave an assurance that the need to retain a facility for the provision of independent housing advice to customers would be addressed as part of the review.

The Executive Cabinet was also recommended to agree the establishment of a small budget head of £50,000 to be used with the consent of the Executive Member (Business) in cases which might prevent homelessness occurring.

Decisions made:

- 1. That Chorley Community Housing be requested to agree a date of termination of the agreement for the management of Cotswold House Homeless Hostel, but that, in the event of the failure to negotiate a termination date, Chorley Community Housing be served with notice to terminate the agreement.**
- 2. That the Strategic Housing Manager be requested to undertake a review of the Independent Housing Advisor post currently funded through the Homelessness Grant and explore other options which may increase capacity.**
- 3. That approval be given to the use of the £5,000 allocated for measures to prevent homelessness in accordance with the policy approved by the Executive Member (Business).**
- 4. That approval be given to the implementation of the improvement and refurbishment works to Cotswold House at a sum of up to £50,000 as recommended in the report of the Housing Consultants commissioned to review options for the Hostel.**

Reasons for Decisions:

1. The transference of the management of Cotswold House back to the Council would enable the Council to develop a rent structure which would adequately reflect the costs incurred in the proper management and maintenance of the hostel, which in turn will drive up performance and deliver a better service for customers.
2. The Homeless Prevention Grant could fund a full time Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer, capable of providing specialist advice on mortgage arrears, if provided within the Council.
3. There is a need for a small pot of money to be available in order to prevent cases of homelessness, some of which would otherwise result in costs to the Council

(ie temporary accommodation) and which is not always in the best interest of the customer.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Allowing the management of Cotswold House to remain with Chorley Community Housing.

08.EC.95 FUTURE CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR CIVIL PARKING ENFORCEMENT IN CHORLEY

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the current negotiations with the Lancashire County Council and the other District Councils on the operational arrangements and financial structures to be applied to the civil parking enforcement regime upon the termination of the present arrangements in September 2009.

The County Council's proposals for the future management of on-street parking in each of the District Councils would substantially reduce the level of on-street enforcement and the costs attributed to managing enforcement by the District Councils. Whilst Chorley Council shared other Districts wish to continue collaboration with the County Council and improve the present contractual arrangements, significant concerns had been raised with regard to the soundness and viability of the County Council's proposals.

The Council would need to determine whether it wished to continue working in partnership with the County Council in on-street enforcement; limit itself to enforcement of its own car parks; or undertake either of the options in partnership with one or more other authorities.

Decisions made:

- 1. That agreement in principle be given to the continuation of the Council's partnership with the Lancashire County Council in relation to the enforcement of on-street parking offences, subject to the negotiation of acceptable terms.**
- 2. That the Officers be authorised to examine the option of sharing services with other authorities in relation to off-street and on-street parking enforcement.**
- 3. That the Officers be authorised to notify the County Council that Chorley Council considers its proposals to be unacceptable in their present form, but wishes to work toward an acceptable financial arrangement, including the sourcing of enforcement and back-office services from the County Council.**

Reason for Decision:

At the present time there is no proposal under discussion that will be broadly acceptable. The authorities sought will allow further negotiation to reach a conclusion on a preferred option and an acceptable financial arrangement.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

Acceptance of the Lancashire County Council's current proposals.

08.EC.96 BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION - RESTRUCTURE

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presented a report on recommendations to amend the staffing structure, roles and responsibilities of the

Council's support directorates to enhance their capability to support the Council's business and transformation agenda.

The amendments suggested in the report had been designed principally to deliver the following efficiencies:

- a need to refocus roles on helping to deliver efficiencies and service improvements for the benefit of Members, other staff and external customers;
- the delivery of efficiencies in the region of £60,000 annually which would assist in meeting the expected budget gap in 2008/10.

Decisions made:

1. That the proposals outlined in the submitted report to alter the staffing structure, roles and responsibilities within the Council's support Directorates in order to enhance their capability to support the Council's business and transformation agenda be approved for consultation purposes.

2. That delegated authority be granted to the Executive Member (Resources) to agree any minor changes to the restructure proposals at the conclusion of the consultation exercise.

Reason for Decisions:

To improve the effectiveness of the Council's support services in helping the organisation to refocus on and deliver change to enhance capacity where needed in some areas.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

Executive Leader