

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet met on 8 September 2005 and this report summarises briefly the principal matters considered at the meeting. Separate reports have been prepared in respect of those items considered which require Council decisions.

Lancashire Highways Partnership

2. The Executive Cabinet considered as an urgent item, a report by the Head of Public Space Services on the decision taken by the Lancashire County Council Cabinet on 1 September 2005 to carry out consultations with District Councils on the termination of the Lancashire Highways Partnership.
3. The report indicated that the County Council Cabinet intended to consider the results of consultations at its next meeting on 6 October 2005 and that officers were currently seeking to clarify with the County Council, its intentions for staff transfers and the on-going arrangements for the delivery of client and contractor highway functions subsequent to the termination of the Partnership by the built-in end date of 30 June 2006, if it takes place.
4. The Chief Executive reported that this issue had been discussed at a meeting of the Lancashire District Council Chief Executives held that week, from which it was apparent that all of the District Councils were opposed to the decision taken by the County Council Cabinet without any discussions been held with District Councils on the current operation of the Partnership.
5. The Executive Cabinet expressed its opposition to the decision taken by the County Council Cabinet and their concerns in respect of the future management of highway functions (in particular traffic calming schemes) within Chorley. We authorised officers to enter into discussions with County Council officers on the County Council's proposal and have requested the Lancashire County Council Cabinet to delay any decision on this issue for a period of four months to allow meaningful consultations with District Councils.
6. A further report will be submitted to the Executive Cabinet meeting on 29 September 2005 for consideration of a formal response to the County Council. The Chief Executive will advise Members of the Council of the current position on this issue at the Council meeting.

Customer Access and Focus Best Value Inspection Report

7. We received and noted with great pleasure a report by the Group Director on the outcome of the recent Best Value Inspection on the Council's approach to Customer Access and Focus, which incorporated a copy of the Inspection Report published by the Audit Commission in August 2005. The report indicated that "the Council is assessed as having a three star approach to customer access and focus that has excellent prospects for improvement". This is the highest award that the Inspectors can give in an inspection and puts the Council at the top nationally in the whole of local government for this key priority area.
8. The Executive Cabinet noted the reference in the Inspection Report to "the way the customer focus was embedded in the culture of the Council" and paid tribute to the Council's employees for providing an excellent customer orientated service.
9. In pursuance of one of the recommendations in the Inspection Report, the Executive Cabinet has requested the Community Overview and Scrutiny Panel to "analyse what approach to area forums would be best for the Borough based on a clear assessment of the

effectiveness of current local groups and the best way to integrate them”, during the scrutiny inquiry into Public Participation in the Council’s Decision-making Process.

Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report 2004/05

10. We received and noted the Overview and Scrutiny Annual Report for 2004/05 which had been produced by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The report gave details of the areas of work and scrutiny inquiries undertaken by the Committee and the three Overview and Scrutiny Panels during the last municipal year.
11. Reference was made in the report to the Overview and Scrutiny Self Assessment Workshop event for Members of the Council and Chief Officers to be held on 20 October 2005, which will facilitate the production of an Overview and Scrutiny Improvement Plan. It would be appreciated if all Councillors could endeavour to attend this important event.
12. To take into account the Overview and Scrutiny Committees role in policy development, the Executive Cabinet agreed that the Committee should be allowed the opportunity to scrutinise policy and strategy documents before they are agreed for consultation purposes.

Revenue Budget 2005/06 - Monitoring

13. The Executive Cabinet considered a report by the Director of Finance on the current position in respect of the current year’s budgets and efficiency savings for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account.
14. The report revealed that reasonable progress has been made towards the achievement of the corporate savings target of £228,000 for 2005/06 with further savings anticipated as the year progresses. Progress was being made towards the efficiency savings target of £100,000, but this remains one of the areas to be addressed and monitored. In this situation, we have agreed to freeze any additional expenditure financed from the Contingency Fund except by the approval of the Executive Cabinet.
15. Whilst some cost pressures are causing an increase in HRA expenditure, the reduction on the right to buy sales means that additional rental is being generated for the Account, which is resulting in the overall budget remaining on target.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2004/05

16. We received and noted a report by the Director of Finance which summarised the work of the Internal Audit Service during 2004/05, appraised the performance of the Service and provided an assessment of the adequacy and effectiveness of the control systems within the Authority. The overall opinion was that the Council, in general, contributes to operate within a sound controlled environment.

Draft Corporate Strategy 2006/07 - 2008/09

17. We approved, for consultation purposes, the new draft Corporate Strategy for the next three year period for 2006/07 to 2008/09. The revised draft strategy sets out the Council’s medium term vision, ambitions and priorities for the next three years.
18. The new strategy will need to be aligned well and support the Borough’s new Community Strategy (developed under the guidance of the Chorley Partnership) to ensure that community aspirations are addressed. In turn the corporate strategy will influence the Council’s spending plans and Service Units’ projects and activities.

Best Value and Key Performance Indicators - Update

19. We received and noted monitoring reports submitted by the Head of Corporate and Policy Services on the performance against the Council's Best Value and Key Performance Indicators for the current Municipal Year up to 30 June 2005 to ensure that effective performance management is operating within the Authority.

Astley Park Restoration Project - Appointment of Consultants

20. On the advice of the Head of Economic Development, we gave approval to the re-appointment of Chris Burnett Associates and Allen Todd Architects as the lead consultants on the restoration of Astley Park and to a contract being entered into the professional team to deliver the project as set out in the Heritage Lottery Fund grant.
21. Over the last few years the Council have used Chris Burnett Associates – Landscape Consultants as the lead consultants and Allen Todd Architects as the Architectural advisors at Stage 1 and Stage 2 of the bid process. They were appointed in 2000 following interviews and tender selection process to put together the Stage 1 bid. This included Surveys, Master plan and Outline Business Plan. They were re-appointed in May 2004 to put together the Stage 2 application which was approved in March this year. The appointment of Chris Burnett Associates and his team will reduce the time needed before development commences on site as they have detailed knowledge of the park and the buildings and the issues which relate to them.

Delivering the Drugs Strategy within Lancashire

22. We received a report by the Head of Corporate and Policy Services on a request received from the Lancashire Drug Action Team for funding towards the countywide Enhanced Arrest Referral Scheme for the three year period 2005/06 to 2007/08. All District Councils within the County have been requested to contribute to the Enhanced Arrest Referral Scheme and the Lancashire Constabulary has indicated that the scheme will be withdrawn from those areas that are not able to financially support it.
23. The Executive Cabinet gave approval to a contribution of £5,000 being made to the Enhanced Arrest Referral Scheme for the current year to be funded from within existing cash budgets, and has requested the Lancashire Drug Action Team to submit further information on the operation of the scheme prior to consideration being given to the provision of funding for 2006/07 and 2007/08.

Recommendation

24. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR J WILSON
Executive Leader

BACKGROUND PAPERS			
DOCUMENT	DATE	FILE	PLACE OF INSPECTION
Executive Cabinet Agenda Reports for the meeting held on 8 September 2005	16/9/2005	-	Town Hall, Chorley

SLP