

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet have met twice on 21 October and 13 November 2008 since the last Council meeting and this report summarises briefly the decisions taken at those meetings.

Meeting held on 21 October 2008

Climate Change Strategy – Progress on Implementation

2. 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 which sought authority to use funds from the available budget allocation for climate change measures to progress specific schemes.
3. The report outlines measures instigated so far by the Council and proposes the release of £120,000 in 2008/09 and an additional £60,000 in 2009/10. It is envisaged that the available funding in the current financial year will 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.
4. Following consideration of the report we agreed the release of the £120,000 within 2008/09 and an additional £60,000 in 2009/10. We have also recommended that the £20,000 allocation for grants towards domestic solar panels be widened to encourage more innovative ways of generating and/or sourcing energy in the domestic sector, and suggested an examination of the current restrictions placed on listed buildings.

Growth Point – Programme of Development

5. The Corporate Director (Business) presented us with 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.
6. 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.
7. The Executive Cabinet was reminded that Chorley's expectations are that the initiative will accelerate the development of more affordable housing units and assist the funding of the Buckshaw Village Railway Station. Chorley's participation in the initiative will 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.
8. The Council's ultimate commitment to the initiative cannot, therefore, be confirmed until the required assurances and information are given as part of the settlement details.
9. We authorised the Corporate Director (Business) to submit the Programme of Development on behalf of the Council, following consultation with the Executive Leader and Executive Member (Business) on the distinct understanding that the Council's involvement in the Growth Point initiative will be subject to the Cabinet's approval following the Government's

announcement on any settlement, up to which time the Council reserves the right to withdraw from the process.

Introduction of Free Swimming Programme

10. The Executive Cabinet, at its last meeting on 4 September 2008 had confirmed its participation in the scheme to provide free swimming during 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.
11. The Corporate Director (People) reported to the October meeting 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.
12. As the Council needed to state its intentions in respect of the 16 and under programme before the Executive Cabinet meeting in November, we granted delegated power to the Executive Members for Resources and People to confirm, or otherwise, the Council's commitment to participate in the scheme to provide free swimming to persons aged 16 and under.

Management of Cotswold House and Other Homelessness Related Matters

13. The Executive Cabinet considered a confidential 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.
14. 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 arrangements 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 will allow the Council to implement improvements to both the building and the management systems.
15. After considering the implications of the report, the Executive Cabinet agreed:
 - (i) to request Chorley Community Housing 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;
 - (ii) to request the Strategic Housing Manager to undertake a review of the Independent Housing Advisor post currently funded through the Homelessness Grant and explore other options which may increase capacity;
 - (iii) to approve the use of the £5,000 allocated for measures to prevent homelessness in accordance with the policy approved by the Executive Member (Business);
 - (iv) to approve 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

Future Contractual Arrangements for Civil Parking Enforcement in Chorley

16. The Executive Cabinet considered a confidential 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.
17. The Council will need to determine whether it wishes 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.
18. Following consideration of the report and its implications, we agreed:
 - (i) to agree in principle 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;
 - (ii) to authorise the Officers to examine the option of sharing services with other authorities in relation to off-street and on-street parking enforcement;
 - (iii) to authorise Officers 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.

Business Transformation – Restructure

19. The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) presented the Executive Cabinet with a confidential 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.
20. The amendments suggested in the report were 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 will assist in meeting the expected budget gap in 2008/10.
21. The Executive Cabinet accepted the proposals outlined in the report for consultation purposes and we granted delegated authority to the Executive Member (Resources) to agree any revised changes to the restructure proposals at the conclusion of the consultation stage.

Meeting held on 13 November 2008

Chorley Town Centre Audit and Urban Design Strategy

22. The Corporate Director (Business) presented the Executive Cabinet with a report seeking endorsement of the Chorley Town Audit and Urban Design Strategy.
23. The Town Centre Audit was undertaken by Consultants in the winter/spring of 2007/08 to establish a snapshot survey of the town centre through a series of surveys, workshops and consultation events. The Audit identifies the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre and recommends ways in which the issues might be addressed. The Audit's

recommendations then formed the basis of the Urban Design Strategy which sets out ten objectives which, if implemented, will result in a much improved town centre.

24. The Strategy aims to co-ordinate a range of initiatives already underway in the town centre in order to realise the identified objectives over the coming five years through a suggested implementation timetable.
25. We endorsed the Town Centre Audit and Urban Design Strategy as a guide for future town centre interventions, including the 10 objectives and related projects set out in the Implementation Timetable, subject to a review of the medium term financial strategy and agreement of the budget for 2009/10.

Business Start-Up and Support Project

26. The Corporate Director (Business) presented the Executive Cabinet with a report which outlined proposed new arrangements for the provision of support for new business start-ups to be delivered through a new contract with the North West Regional Development Agency with effect from April 2009.
27. The new contract aims to ensure the provision of specialist and intensive business start-up support to target groups and areas in order to meet local needs and achieve a more simplified structure in each locality.
28. The report also referred to the complex funding formula, with weighted factors, which determined local authorities' share of the project funding. We have expressed concern at the amount of funding allocated to Chorley under the formula as compared to other Lancashire districts, and the Corporate Director (Business) advised that negotiations are continuing with the NWDA with a view to the allocation formula being altered in Chorley's favour for future years.
29. Following assessment of the report, we noted the update on the existing provision of support to new business start-ups and agreed, in relation to the new Business Start-Up and Support Contract:
 - to support the adoption of local delivery 'Option B', which aims to ensure the provision of specialist and intensive business start-up support to target groups and areas by grouping Chorley with South Ribble and Preston (with support from the County Council) in the Central Lancashire group;
 - to endorse the nomination of Chorley Council to act as the Accountable Body within the Central Lancashire grouping;
 - to endorse the performance reward grant from the Economic Development Block of the Local Area Agreement as the preferred option for co-financing;
 - to endorse the concept of targeted support to persons in a worklessness situation or under threat of redundancy and ex-offenders.

Performance Monitoring Report – Second Quarter of 2008/09

30. The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) which set out and reviewed the Authority's performance both in respect of the delivery of the 31 key projects included in the Corporate Strategy and against the new National Indicators for which the Council was responsible, during the second quarter of 2008/09 ending on 30 September 2008.
31. The report reveals an overall commendable performance on the delivery of the Corporate Strategy Key projects, with 87% of the projects either having been completed or progressing on or ahead of plan. Seven of the 11 uncompleted projects remain on track for completion and the Officers are optimistic that three of the remaining four projects will be brought back

on course shortly. The one remaining project to deliver Phase 2 of Market Walk has been adversely affected by both the failure to reach a financially viable agreement with the prospective developers and the economic downturn.

32. The report also reveals a good performance in respect of the national indicators that can currently be measured, with 10 out of 15 being on target and an improved performance in relation to 14 indicators. Action plans have been adopted in respect of the indicators where performance has been lower than expected.

Chorley Partnership – Second Quarter report

33. The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented us with a report updating the Executive Cabinet on the activities of the Chorley Local Strategic Partnership (LSP), particularly through its delivery of 11 strategic projects and its performance in relation to the Local Area Agreement (LAA) and targeted key performance indicators from the Sustainable Community Strategy, over the second quarter of 2008/09.
34. The report reveals that delivery of the LSP's projects remains largely on track and good progress is being achieved in relation to the delivery of the LAA targets. The scope of the 'Circle of Need' project has been re-designed and work has recently commenced on the Timebanks pilot volunteering project following the selection of Age Concern as the lead management agent.
35. Measurement of the relevant performance indicators show that the overall level of crime throughout the Borough has reduced by 3.1% since April 2008 and that the level of household recycling has increased to 51%.

Trees at Black Croft, Clayton-le-Woods

36. The Executive Cabinet received and noted a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the action that has been taken in response to the letters submitted to the last meeting of the Council from residents of Black Croft, Clayton-le-Woods requesting action to control the height and spread of trees planted as part of the former Central Lancashire New Town to screen residential property from noise from the adjacent road system.
37. We noted that the Corporate Director had subsequently written to the residents explaining that the Council's limited resources will not permit the level of tree maintenance sought on the number of 'shelter belts' located throughout the Borough. The letter explains that the Council endeavours to maintain lower growth in a reasonable and presentable condition and to prune overhanging branches whenever necessary, but that it has not been the authority's practice to reduce the size or spread of trees.

Revenue Budget, 2008/09 – Second Quarter Monitoring Report

38. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) monitoring the Council's financial performance during the second quarter of 2008/09 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the current financial year.
39. The report confirms that the Council is on course to achieve its overall savings target of £320,000 by the end of the financial year, with savings in the region of £234,000 having already been achieved.
40. The situation in respect of a number of funding areas (eg contributions to corporate savings and efficiency targets; major income streams; concessionary travel costs; and benefits costs) is being closely monitored. The report also comments on the potential overspending of up to

£250,000 in respect of concessionary travel costs, recommending the development of contingency plans to identify further savings to mitigate any significant overspend.

41. We accepted the report and agreed:

- (i) to remove an additional sum of £10,800 from working balances for allocation to a specific reserve to meet the final costs of equal pay claims;
- (ii) to develop contingency plans to identify additional savings to mitigate the impact of a potential overspending on concessionary travel of up to £250,000 in 2008/09.

Recommendations

42. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR PETER GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

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There are no background papers to this report.