

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 13 November 2008

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

Also in attendance:

Lead Members: Councillors Rosie Russell (Lead Member for Health and Older People) and Iris Smith (Lead Member for Licensing)

Other Members: Councillors Ken Ball, Julia Berry, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Pat Haughton, Keith Iddon (Eccleston and Mawdesley), Roy Lees, Laura Lennox, June Molyneaux, Geoffrey Russell, Stella Walsh and Peter Wilson (Lancashire County Councillor / Lindsay Hoyle MP)

08.EC.97 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Members present expressed their best wishes for the early recovery to health of Councillors Eric Bell and Ralph Snape, following their recently short stays in hospital.

08.EC.98 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

08.EC.99 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 2 October 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

08.EC.100 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.101 CHORLEY TOWN CENTRE AUDIT AND DESIGN STRATEGY

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking endorsement of the Chorley Town Audit and Urban Design Strategy.

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 identified the strengths and weaknesses of the town centre and recommended ways in which the issues might be addressed. The Audit's recommendations had formed the basis of the Urban Design Strategy which set out ten objectives which, if implemented, would result in a much improved town centre.

The Strategy aimed 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 the implementation timetable attached to the report.

The Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reminded the Members of the current provision of just over £1m in the Capital Programme to finance town centre projects over the next three years, indicating that, in the light of the present economic

climate, it would be prudent to review the Capital Programme as part of the budget cycle for 2009/10 to ensure that the town centre plans were still affordable.

The Members welcomed the Strategy and hoped that as much as possible of the implementation programme could be undertaken as a means of attracting new investment into the town centre.

Decisions made:

- 1. That the Town Centre Audit and Urban Design Strategy, as now presented, be endorsed as a guide to future town centre interventions.**
- 2. That the 10 objectives and related projects, as set out in the Implementation Timetable, be approved and adopted, subject to a review of the medium term financial strategy and agreement of the budget for 2009/10.**

Reason for decisions:

The project to enhance the town centre and the economy of the Borough directly accords with the Corporate Strategy and the achievement of the strategic objective to put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the Central Lancashire sub-region.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.102 BUSINESS START-UP AND SUPPORT PROJECT

The Corporate Director (Business) presented 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.

The new contract aimed to ensure the provision of specialist and intensive business start-ups and support to target groups and areas in order to meet local needs and achieve a more simplified structure in each locality.

The Executive Cabinet's instructions were sought on its preference for one of the two alternative delivery options, with the Officers favouring the adoption of Option B which grouped the Lancashire County Council and the Lancashire District and Unitary Authorities into five groupings based on acknowledged economic footprints and geography. It was proposed that Chorley would be included in the Central Lancashire group along with South Ribble and Preston, and supported by the County Council, with Chorley Council acting as the Accountable Body, provided sufficient financial support for the role was available from the NWDA.

The Executive Cabinet were also recommended to endorse the use of the performance reward grant from the Economic Development Block of the Local Area Agreement as the preferred option for the co-financing of the NWDA contract. This would allow the mainstream funding to be kept free to support non-priority groupings.

The report also referred to the complex funding formula with weighted factors which determined local authorities' share of the project funding. Members expressed concern at the amount of funding allocated to Chorley under the formula as compared to other Lancashire districts, and the Corporate Director (Business) intimated that negotiations were continuing with the NWDA with a view to the allocation formula being altered in Chorley's favour for future years.

Decision made:

That the update on the existing provision of support to new business start-ups be noted and that, in relation to the new Business Start-Up and Support Contract:

- The adoption of local delivery 'Option B', which aims to ensure the provision of specialist and intensive business start-up and 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, be supported.
- The nomination of Chorley Council to act as the Accountable Body within the Central Lancashire grouping be endorsed.
- The performance reward grant from the Economic Development Block of the Local Area Agreement be endorsed as the preferred option for co-financing.
- That, given the current economic climate and likely recession, targeted support to persons in a worklessness situation or under threat of redundancy and ex-offenders be supported.

Reason for decision:

The promotion of entrepreneurship and the creation of new business start-ups and survival are crucial to creating a vibrant local economy. The recommended approach to delivering the new Business Start-Up and Support project will maximise the opportunities for Chorley and its Central Lancashire sub-region, and in particular in the light of the economic downturn and likely recession.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.103 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT - SECOND QUARTER OF 2008/09

The Executive Cabinet considered 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.

The report revealed 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 remained on track for completion and the Officers were optimistic that three of the remaining four projects would be brought back on course shortly. The one remaining project to deliver Phase 2 of Market Walk had been adversely affected by both the failure to reach a financially viable agreement with the prospective developers and the economic downturn.

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

Questions were raised by Members in respect of the project to reduce teenage pregnancies, the 'Families First' initiatives and the 'Chorley Smile' campaign.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

08.EC.104 CHORLEY PARTNERSHIP - 2008/09 SECOND QUARTER REPORT

The Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) presented 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.

The report revealed that delivery of the LSP's projects remained largely on track and good progress was being achieved in relation to the delivery of the LAA targets. The scope of the 'Circle of Need' project had been re-designed and work had recently commenced on the Timebanks pilot volunteering project following the selection of Age Concern as the lead management agent.

Measurement of the relevant performance indicators showed that the overall level of crime throughout the Borough had reduced by 3.1% since April 2008 and that the level of household recycling had increased to 51%.

In response to a Members' enquiry, the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) reported that information was still being sought from the Central Lancashire PCT before the Mental Health Awareness project was able to be progressed.

Decision made:

That the report be noted.

08.EC.105 TREES AT BLACK CROFT, CLAYTON-LE-WOODS - UPDATE ON PETITION SUBMITTED TO LAST COUNCIL MEETING

The Executive Cabinet received a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the action to be 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.

The Corporate Director had subsequently written to the residents explaining that the Council's limited resources would not permit the level of tree maintenance sought on the number of 'shelter belts' located throughout the Borough. The letter explained that the Council endeavoured to maintain lower growth in a reasonable and presentable condition and to prune overhanging branches whenever necessary, but that it had not been the authority's practice to reduce the size and spread of trees.

Decision made:

That the report, which confirmed that the matter had been dealt with in line with the content of the replies to the letters from residents' of Black Croft, Clayton-le-Woods, be noted.

08.EC.106 REVENUE BUDGET, 2008/09 - SECOND QUARTER MONITORING REPORT

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.

The report confirmed that the Council was 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.

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) was being closely monitored. The report also commented 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. In this context, the Executive Leader advised the Members of representations currently being made to the Government for the availability of additional funding to cover excessive concessionary travel expenditure and of the negotiations between the Lancashire authorities on pooling arrangements.

Decisions made:

(1) That the report be noted.

(2) That an additional sum of £10,800 be removed from working balances and allocated to a specific reserve to meet the final costs of equal pay claims.

(3) That contingency plans be developed to identify additional savings to mitigate the impact of a potential overspending on concessionary travel of up to £250,000 in 2008/09.

Reason for decisions:

To ensure that the Council's budgetary targets are achieved.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

Executive Leader