

Executive Cabinet

Minutes of meeting held on Thursday, 11 December 2008

Present: Councillor Peter Goldsworthy (Executive Leader in the Chair), Councillor Pat Case (Deputy Leader of the Council) and Councillors Eric Bell, 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 Julia Berry, Terry Brown, Henry Counce, Dennis Edgerley, Anthony Gee, Marie Gray, Hasina Khan, Laura Lennox, Debra Platt, Geoffrey Russell, Ralph Snape and Peter Wilson

08.EC.107 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

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

08.EC.108 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Executive Cabinet held on 13 November 2008 were confirmed as a correct record for signature by the Executive Leader.

08.EC.109 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.110 DECEMBER FORWARD PLAN

The Executive Cabinet received the Council's December Forward Plan which set out the detail of the potential key decisions to be made by the Executive Cabinet or individual Executive Members during the four months period commencing 1 December 2008.

Decision made:

That the December Forward Plan, as now presented, be noted.

08.EC.111 SUSTAINABLE RESOURCES - APPROVAL OF DRAFT SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT FOR CONSULTATION PURPOSES

The Corporate Director (Business) presented a report seeking approval of the revised draft Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document for consultation purposes.

The purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was to implement the policies of the Sustainable Resources Development Plan Document adopted in September 2008 by providing practical advice and guidance to developers on how to incorporate the sustainable use of resources into new developments. The SPD set out advice, sources of good practice and detailed information on the implementation of the Development Plan Document policies.

The Supplementary Planning Document, originally produced in March 2006 had amended and updated to take account of the changes that had been made to the Development Plan Document on the advice of the Government Inspector having conducted the Examination in Public into the Development Plan Document in May 2008.

It was intended that the consultation period on the amended draft SPD would commence in December 2008, with a view to its ultimate adoption in March 2009.

Decision made:

That the draft Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document, as now presented, be approved for consultation purposes.

Reason for decision:

Adoption of the Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document will ensure that the Council fulfils both its commitment set out in the Local Development Scheme and the recommendations of the Planning Inspectors at the Public Examination into the soundness of the Sustainable Resources Development Plan Document.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.112 ELLERBECK AND DUXBURY COLLIERIES SITE - POTENTIAL EXTENSION OF GREEN CORRIDOR

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (People) recommending acceptance of the offer of the Lancashire County Council for monies from the REMADE (Reclamation and Management of Derelict Land) fund to be made available to finance a site appraisal and investigation of the former Duxbury Collieries land known as Ellerbeck.

The derelict 28.45 hectares of land was currently allocated within the Local Plan for informal recreational use and nature conservation and had the scope for reclamation and linkage to the remainder of the Yarrow Valley Country Park and the West Pennine Moors.

Whilst it was intended that the Ellerbeck site would be identified as part of the Yarrow Valley Country Park, the land would retain a distinct and separate identity through its end use being tailored to partly self managing and financing outdoor pursuits. The initial survey and appraisal, to be project managed by Chorley Council, would inform the ultimate use of the site.

Assurances had been obtained from REMADE that acceptance of the offer of funding for the feasibility study would not commit the Council to any future work, and would not be liable to reimbursement if the Council decided not to proceed.

Decision made:

That approval be given to arrangements for the commencement of the site survey and investigation work, and subsequent appraisal of the former Duxbury Collieries site known as Ellerbeck.

Reasons for decision:

As the Ellerbeck site is owned by Chorley Council, the authority has a public liability to keep the site safe and it is, therefore, in the Council's interest to ascertain any site problems which could affect detrimentally the environment or safety of local residents. REMADE's offer to fund the whole of the site appraisal, investigation and survey work will constitute a substantial cost saving for the Council.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

The only feasible option would be to reject the offer of funding for the site survey.

08.EC.113 CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL - POOLING ARRANGEMENTS ACROSS LANCASHIRE

The Executive Leader updated the Members on the current situation and outcome of discussions between the Lancashire Leaders on the need to address the expected overall shortfall in the region of £2.7m in meeting the cost of concessionary travel in Lancashire.

The Lancashire Districts had expressed their extreme concern at the financial impact of the scheme to the Government Minister, who had promised to consider the District's arguments.

In the interim, the Executive Leader advised the Members of the general principles of the pooling arrangements for concessionary travel that had been approved unanimously by the Lancashire Leaders, subject to a number of caveats. Whilst the finite details of the arrangement had yet to be finalised, it was envisaged that the projected pooling adjustment would reduce Chorley Council's expected budget shortfall on concessionary travel costs of £205,000 in 2008/09 by £64,000. Clarification of the cost of contracted services was still required.

The Lancashire Leaders had also set up a Working Group to oversee the implementation of the pooling arrangements and to negotiate changes to the allocation system with the Government.

Decision made:

That the Executive Leader's verbal report be noted and that a further update report be presented to the next Executive Cabinet meeting.

Reason for decision:

In order to ensure that the Members are fully briefed on the financial implications of the costs of operating the concessionary travel scheme.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.114 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 1972.

08.EC.115 STRATEGIC HOUSING ISSUES

The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) on a number of proposals intended to enhance the Strategic Housing Service. In particular, the report recommended acceptance of the following proposals:

- The termination of the agreement with the Citizens' Advice Bureau for the provision of a Homelessness and Housing Advice Service and the re-investment of the Homelessness Grant into the funding of full-time Specialist Housing Advisor post within the Council's Homelessness and Housing Advice Team. This would enable an extension of the hours of availability of the service and provide additional capacity for the Team to meet increasing demands for its services.
- The adoption of a policy to regulate the processes for applications for and the allocation of the budget provision (£5,000 in 2009/09) for the purpose of preventing homelessness.
- The variation of the Council's Energy Grants Scheme to effect the extension of the grants scheme in order to encompass a wider category of eligible groups. The extension of the scheme would assist the promotion of the Council's Corporate Strategy targets in energy efficiency and provide extra support and aid to householders in need.
- The approval of a draft Allocations Policy for consultation purposes. The revised policy aimed to simplify and make the allocations policy more transparent and add clarity to the introduction of a new needs based Banding system.

The Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Councillor D Edgerley) confirmed that the Committee had requested the Chorley Community Housing Task Group to undertake a review of the new draft Allocations Policy, particularly in order to assess the impact of the proposed choice based lettings scheme.

Decisions made:

1. **That the current agreement with the Citizens' Advice Bureau for the provision of a Homelessness and Housing Advice Service be terminated and that the annual Homelessness Grant from the Government be used to fund a full-time Specialist Housing Advisor to be employed by Chorley Council and based at the Union Street Offices.**
2. **That the draft Homelessness Prevention Fund Policy, as now presented, be approved and adopted.**
3. **That the proposals to vary the Council's Energy Grants Scheme, as outlined in the submitted report, to reflect the priority afforded to the widening of energy efficiency schemes to include other groups, be approved and adopted for a trial period of 12 months, at the conclusion of which outputs and customer satisfaction will be reviewed.**
4. **That the draft Allocations Policy, as now presented, be approved for consultation with the Council's partners (including Housing Associations).**

Reasons for decisions:

1. The adjustment to the means of providing specialist housing advice will achieve better value for money by reducing the amount of on costs and maximising the front line service delivered to customers.

2. The Homelessness Prevention Pot policy will set clear guidelines for the allocation of the available monies.
3. The variation of the Energy Grant Scheme will enable a wider range of vulnerable households to be targeted and an ability to pay scheme to be introduced.
4. The revised Allocations Policy will simplify and clarify the housing allocations system.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

08.EC.116 PERFORMANCE OF KEY PARTNERSHIPS - 2008/09 MID-TERM PROGRESS REPORT

The Executive Cabinet received and considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) reviewing the performance of the Council's key partnership arrangements up to September 2008 against the criteria laid down in the adopted Framework for Partnership Working.

The report in particular:

- reviewed the financial standing and performance of the Council's key partnerships against the respective targets and objectives for the financial year;
- updated the Partnerships Framework to include the requirement to consider the requirements of the child and young person protection policy in all key partnership arrangements;
- recommended the addition of 'Anchor Staying Put – South Lancashire' as a new key partnership, following a recent review of the Housing and Improvements Grants Service.

The report also drew attention to a small number of instances where partnership performance or risk issues had been identified and would require future diligent monitoring. In this context, the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) answered Members' queries on the delivery and future expectations of three contracted out services. The Members were also informed of the current progress of the 'Families First' project since the appointment of a Project Co-ordinator.

Decisions made:

1. **That the report be noted.**
2. **That the proposals to update the Framework for Partnership Working, as outlined in the submitted report, in order to include the requirement to consider the requirements of the child and young person protection policy in all key partnership arrangements, be approved.**
3. **That the Corporate Director (People) continues to monitor closely and manage the risks arising from the current trading position of Community Leisure Services.**
4. **That the Financial Services section of the Business Transformation Directorate monitors and reassesses the financial strength of key partners as and when updated accounts are published and reports its findings in the year end report.**

Reason for decisions:

The periodic reports keeps Members informed of the performance of the Council's key partnerships and ensures effective management of its partnership arrangements.

Alternative option(s) considered and rejected:

None.

(Councillor Hasina Khan and Ralph Snape left the meeting at 5.30pm during the debate on the above item).

Executive Leader