

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT

1. The Executive Cabinet has met twice on 11 December 2008 and 8 January 2009 since the last Council meeting and this report summarises briefly the principal items debated and decisions reached at those meetings.

Meeting held on 11 December 2008

Sustainable Resources – Approval of Draft Supplementary Planning Document for Consultation Purposes

2. The Executive Cabinet approved for consultation purposes the revised draft Sustainable Resources Supplementary Planning Document.
3. The purpose of the supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is 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 sets out advice, sources of good practice and detailed information on the implementation of the Development Plan Document policies.
4. The Supplementary Planning Document, originally produced in March 2006 has been amended and updated to take account of the changes that were 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.
5. The consultation period on the amended draft SPD commenced in December 2008, with a view to its ultimate adoption in March 2009.

Ellerbeck and Duxbury Collieries Site – Potential Extension of Green Corridor

6. Following consideration of a report of the Corporate Director (People), the Executive Cabinet accepted the offer of the Lancashire County Council to make available monies from the REMADE (Reclamation and Management of Derelict Land) fund to finance a site appraisal and investigation of the former Duxbury Collieries land known as Ellerbeck.
7. The derelict 28.45 hectares of land is currently allocated within the Local Plan for informal recreational use and nature conservation and has the scope for reclamation and linkage to the remainder of the Yarrow Valley Country Park and the West Pennine Moors.
8. Whilst it is intended that the Ellerbeck site will be identified as part of the Yarrow Valley Country Park, the land will 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, will inform the ultimate use of the site.

9. REMADE has assured us that acceptance of the offer of funding for the feasibility study does not commit the Council to any future work, and will not be liable to reimbursement if the Council decides not to proceed.

Strategic Housing Issues

10. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Business) on a number of proposals intended to enhance the Strategic Housing Service and consequently approved 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 a full-time Specialist Housing Advisor post within the Council's Homelessness and Housing Advice Team. This will 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 approval and adoption of a Homelessness Prevention Fund Policy.
 - 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 will 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 aims to simplify and make the allocations policy more transparent and add clarity to the introduction of a new needs based Banding system.
11. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee has 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.

Performance of Key Partnerships

12. The Executive Cabinet received and considered a confidential 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.
13. We accepted the report and agreed the following 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;

- the Corporate Director (People) to continue to monitor closely and manage the risks arising from the current trading position of Community Leisure Services;
- the Financial Services Section of the Business Transformation Directorate to monitor and reassess the financial strength of key partners as and when updated accounts are published and reports its findings in the year end report.

Meeting held on 8 January 2009

Short Stay Car Parks

14. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) on the findings and recommendations of the Car Park Strategy Group, comprising Executive and other Members, officers and representatives from the Chamber of Trade and local retailers, which was set up to examine the issues raised in both the petition and subsequent Notice of Motion presented to the Council on 15 July and 23 September 2008 respectively.
15. The petition had objected to the 3 hours maximum limit allowed for parking on short stay car parks and the Notice of Motion suggested the introduction of an ability to park up to 4 hours at a premium rate, together with the redesignation of the Hollinshead Street staff car park to a long stay public car park.
16. We accepted the Group's conclusion that there is no evidence to support the practical viability of either changing the current tariff policy for short stay car parking provision in the Borough or re-designating the Hollinshead Street car park. The Executive Cabinet, therefore, rejected both the proposals to extend parking to 4 hours on short stay car parks at a premium rate and to re-designate the Hollinshead Street car park (currently used for staff parking) to a long stay car park. We did, however, agree to the re-designation of the Portland Street car park from a short stay park to a mixed stay tariff.
17. We also agreed to continue the facility for free car parking for up to 3 hours for Blue Badge holders, but have requested the issue of free parking provision be referred to the Lancashire County Council for discussion at the District Parking Forum.

Overview and Scrutiny Inquiry reports

18. The Executive Cabinet were presented with the findings and recommendations of two Overview and Scrutiny Task Groups that had been set up to examine issues around Chorley Community Housing and the Council's streetscene service.
19. We thanked the two Task Groups for their respective reports, which we accepted for consideration, with a view to our decisions on the reports' recommendations being reported to a future meeting.

Application for Beacon Status in 2009

20. We received a report from the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) and the Chief Executive gave a short presentation on the

progress of the Council's application for Beacon Status around the theme of 'Better outcomes for People and Places' in the 2009 final Beacon round. The overarching theme is recognised as the 'gold standard to which all Councils should aspire'.

21. The Council has been short listed for the award along with four other authorities from 16 national applicants. An Assessment Team visited Chorley in November 2008 to examine how the Council has improved outcomes in Chorley, as a result of which the Council was awarded an overall 'excellent plus' 5.5 out of 6 rating.
22. The final announcement on the prestigious Beacon award will be made at a ceremony in March 2009, which, if granted, will be in addition to the authority's existing Beacon status for 'Transforming Services: Citizen Engagement and Empowerment', and will result in the generation of £80,000 for the Council to spend on the dissemination of good practice and the development of new initiatives to improve services.

Chorley Heritage and Conservation Strategy, 2009-2013

23. The Executive Cabinet approved and adopted a Heritage and Conservation Strategy, with an associated Action Plan, as a structure and programme for the Council's conservation and heritage work up to 2013.
24. The aim of the Strategy is to detail the precise procedures and action plan through which the Council will continue to preserve and enhance the Council's listed and other historic buildings, conservation areas and other elements of its historic environment, including ancient monuments and registered parks and gardens.

Information Security Framework

25. The Executive Cabinet approved and adopted a new Information Security Framework to replace the existing IT Security Policy.
26. The Council's increasing dependence on its information systems to deliver services requires policies and procedures to be put in place to protect those systems from unauthorised access, use, disclosure, disruption, modification or destruction. The new framework will ensure that security policies are put in place to address the three primary principles of information security (i.e. confidentiality, integrity and availability).
27. The new framework has been compiled to reflect recent changes in working practices (e.g. mobile and home working) and to mitigate resultant risks.

Draft Budget Proposals for 2009/10

28. The Executive Cabinet approved, for consultation purposes, the draft Capital Programme for the 3 year period 2009/10 to 2011/12, together with the draft General Fund revenue budget proposals for 2009/10. A separate report seeks the Council's approval to a revised Capital Programme for 2008/09.
29. The draft revenue budget has been compiled in the context of the difficult national financial situation, restricted levels of additional Government grant

and the need to make significant savings in order to maintain the current level of front line services.

30. The budget proposals envisage to transfer of £264,000 from working balances in 2009/10 to meet the anticipated budget deficit, on the assumption of a 3.5% Council Tax increase; a revision of the Council Tax base; significant expenditure savings; and additional income generation. The report also points to the likelihood of further savings in the region of £500,00 being required in both 2010/11 and 2011/12 in order to achieve a balanced budget over the medium term.
31. We have also approved for consultation purposes, as part of the Council's budget setting process for the next financial year, a draft Treasury Management Strategy for 2009/10. The draft strategy sets out financial management options for the Council to consider in terms of balancing investments against the likely rewards on the use of the Council's cash assets before final determination of the Strategy.

Concessionary Travel – Pooling Arrangements across Lancashire

32. I submitted a report to update the Executive Cabinet on the outcome of the Lancashire Leaders' discussion on the best means of mitigating the financial risks faced by the Lancashire Districts in relation to the costs of introducing concessionary travel across Lancashire.
33. The Lancashire Leaders agreed unanimously a pooling arrangement put forward by Pendle Council which is anticipated to reduce Chorley Council's expected budget shortfall by £81,000 over the two year period 2008/09 and 2009/10 on the assumption of an eventual outturn of costs for Chorley of £1.355m and £1.388m in 2008/09 and 2009/10 respectively.
34. Counsel's opinion on the legality of the pooling arrangement is being sought and a Task Group has been set up to oversee the implementation of the pooling arrangements. In addition the Lancashire Leaders are pursuing negotiations with the Government. to effect changes to the allocation system.
35. The Executive Cabinet endorsed the pooling arrangement approval by the Lancashire Leaders, subject to the identified caveats.

Cotswold House Transfer

36. The Corporate Director (Business) submitted a report updating the Executive Cabinet on the arrangements to effect the transfer back to the Council of the management of Cotswold House, which provides temporary accommodation for homeless persons.
37. A draft heads of terms agreement has been negotiated with Chorley Community Housing, in anticipation of the transition of the management of the premises to the Business Directorate. In order to affect the transfer on 1 April, 2009, we approved the budget for 2009/10 and the staffing structure for Cotswold House, together with rented and service tariffs to be charged for accommodation at Cotswold House.

Disposal of Surplus Land and Assets

38. The Executive Cabinet considered a joint confidential report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) and the Corporate Director (Business) on the outcome of a review of the Council's non-operational land and building assets.
39. The first phase of the review has been undertaken with the aim of identifying:
 - (a) non-operational assets which are surplus to requirements or are not achieving an acceptable rate of return; and
 - (b) land assets that will be suitable for the development of affordable housing units.
40. The appendix to the report identifies several sites, including a number of garages colonies, having the potential for disposal for development by affordable housing units, provided the capital receipt generated from the sale equates to at least the current low cost valuation of the sites.
41. The report also identifies a number of other Council owned sites recommended for disposal at market value, currently estimated at £3.4m, the capital receipt from which will be used towards the funding of the 3 year Capital Programme.
42. The Executive Member for Resources also suggested the inclusion of the site of 16 garages at Queensway, Brinscall in the list of proposal sites for disposal. While the garage site was not suitable for redevelopment by affordable housing, other alternative uses could be examined.
- 4.3 The Executive Cabinet approved the disposal of the surplus land and building assets identified in the submitted report, including the garage site at Queensway, Brinscall. We have also appointed Adactus as the Council's main development partner to develop housing scheme proposals for the potential housing sites.

Recommendation

44. The Council is recommended to note this report.

Councillor P Goldsworthy
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report

AU