

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE CABINET

GENERAL REPORT OF MEETING ON 12 FEBRUARY 2009

1. The Executive Cabinet have met twice on 12 February and 26 March 2009 since the last ordinary Council meeting in January. This report summarises briefly the principal items debated and decisions reached at the February meeting. A separate report will be prepared in respect of the March Executive Cabinet meeting.

Performance Monitoring Report – Third Quarter of 2008/09

2. The Executive Cabinet received and noted a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) which set out and reviewed the Authority's performance during the third quarter of 2008/09 ending on 31 December 2008 both in respect of the 36 key projects included in the refreshed 2008/09 Corporate Strategy and against the new National Indicators for which the Council is responsible.
3. The report reveals an overall commendable performance on the delivery of the Corporate Strategy key projects, with 26 schemes progressing on, or ahead of plan. 9 schemes are in their planning and initiation stage, but are expected to be delivered within budget. The reason for the project aimed at improving the green corridor of Chorley being forecast to overrun is that adverse weather conditions has affected completion of the Duxbury Park Golf Course element of the project.
4. The report also reveals a good performance in respect of the national indicators that can be measured, with 8 out of 12 being on target and an improved performance recorded in relation to 7 indicators. Action plans have been compiled and adopted in respect of the three indicators where performance has been lower than anticipated.

Chorley Partnership's Performance Report for Third Quarter of 2008/09

5. We received an update report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance) 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 third quarter of 2008/09.
6. We noted that delivery of the LSP's projects remain on track and that good progress is being achieved in relation to the delivery of the LAA targets.
7. While both the overall level of crime and the serious acquisitive crime rate in Chorley has increased over the past quarter period, the statistics compare favourably with those for neighbouring authorities.
8. An appendix to the submitted report outlined the range of measures and advice available from Chorley Council and other agencies presently being offered to companies and individuals affected by the current economic downturn. The Members emphasised the importance of the measures being widely promoted if the persons and organisations mostly in need were to be aware of the facility.

Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point Proposal

9. The Executive Cabinet was presented with a report by the Corporate Director (Business) seeking our instructions on the Authority's commitment or otherwise to the Central Lancashire and Blackpool Growth Point initiative. Following the Council's support of the

submission of the Programme of Development, the Government had offered to allocate £5.27m to the initiative over the next two years, split between capital and revenue.

10. We have in the past appreciated the benefits to be derived from the accelerated developments likely to accrue from the Growth Point initiative, but have always qualified our support as being dependent on the amount of new housing development specified in the Regional Spatial Strategy (approximately 417 units per year) not been exceeded and no Green Belt land being developed.
11. Whilst maintaining this stance, the Executive Cabinet has accepted the benefits to be derived from participating in the Growth Point initiative in terms of the provision of more affordable housing units, provided satisfactory safeguards are put in place. We have, consequently confirmed the Authority's commitment to the Growth Point initiative, subject to a satisfactory negotiation on the memorandum of understanding, including confirmation that:
 - sufficient revenue funds will be available to help accelerate the development of the LDF Core Strategy;
 - any housing development in Chorley will not exceed the amount set out in the Regional Spatial Strategy (approximately 417 per annum);
 - the Green Belt will be safeguarded;
 - sufficient capital funds will be available to assist the funding of the programme of development as set out in the submitted report
12. We have, of course, reserved the right to withdraw from the initiative if our conditional requirements are not met.

Higher Density Housing – Achieving High Quality

13. The Executive Cabinet approved for consultation purposes a Guidance Note entitled 'Higher Density Housing – Achieving High Quality Design' with a view to its ultimate use as a development control tool when judging the merits of planning applications for higher density housing developments, including back garden developments.
14. The Guidance Note, which has been advocated by the Government, sets out guidelines and advice on issues such as design standards, density, landscaping and car parking, together with other criteria against which development proposals will be assessed. The guidance aims to address relevant concerns and design issues connected with each potential development site to ensure that higher density housing schemes respect the characteristics of the surrounding areas.

St George's Street Conservation Area – Appraisal and Management Proposals

15. A detailed analysis of the St George's Street Conservation Area, whilst revealing the special, key characteristics of the area, has also identified a number of negative aspects and causes of concern. The analysis has led to the compilation of a number of management proposals which highlight the opportunities for associated projects and actions aimed at enhancing the appearance of the Conservation Area. These proposals include:
 - an updating of the Council's 'Shopfront Design Guide' and the introduction of an 'Area of Special Advertisement Control';
 - exploring the potential for grant aid to assist with improvements to shopfronts, the reversal of inappropriate alterations to buildings; and repairs and appropriate improvements, including the reinstatement of original features for buildings within the Conservation Area;
 - the introduction of an Article 4(1) Direction to protect buildings not otherwise protected from inappropriate alteration;
 - changes to the Conservation Area boundary to enhance and further protect its setting.

16. The Executive Cabinet has endorsed the St George's Street Conservation Area Appraisal and has approved for adoption the Management Proposals document, subject to the availability of sufficient funding. We have also supported the introduction of a Direction under Article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 to increase control over additions and alterations in the Conservation Area; and approved the instigation of the necessary statutory procedures to both introduce an Area of Special Advertisement Control and implement suggested boundary changes to the Conservation Area.
17. The planned programme of actions evolving from the review is expected to improve both the appearance of the Conservation Area and the vitality of businesses within the area.

Revenue Budget 2008/09 – Monitoring Report

18. The Executive Cabinet considered a report of the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) monitoring the Council's financial performance during the third quarter of 2008/09 in comparison with the budgetary and efficiency savings targets for the current financial year.
19. We were informed that the Council is on course to achieve its overall savings target of £320,000 by the end of the financial year with the projected budget deficit at the year end having been reduced over the past quarter period to £63,000. However, close monitoring of a number of budget areas (ie major income streams; concessionary travel costs; benefits costs) will be necessary throughout the final quarter period.
20. We accepted the report and have requested the identification of non-committed revenue expenditure and the implementation of savings, where possible, in order to reduce the impact of potential overspending on concessionary travel costs and to bring the budget to a more balanced position.

Recommendation

21. The Council is recommended to note this report.

COUNCILLOR PETER GOLDSWORTHY
Executive Leader

There are no background papers to this report.

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