

ACTION NOTES FROM STAR CHAMBER HELD ON 9 JANUARY 2008

PRESENT: Councillors R Mace (Chair), E Archer, J Ashworth, E Blamire, A Bryning, J Gilbert, T Johnson, D Kerr, M Whitelegg
M Cullinan, R Muckle, N Muschamp, J Barlow (notes)

1 APOLOGIES

Councillor J Barry and Peter Loker.

2 ACTION NOTES OF LAST MEETING

White Lund Depot Car Park – report back on costing to be timetabled.

Concessionary Travel – there was strong indication from LCFOs that the national scheme would be adopted by Lancashire authorities. Local community transport and contracted services would have to be agreed once the new scheme was fully agreed.

All other actions had been timetabled for reports back to Star Chamber or Cabinet.

3 CAPITAL

There was a funding shortfall of £814K for the current 5-year Capital Programme. Before the February Budget Council all proposals needed to be reviewed by Star Chamber and recommendations to Council prepared. Although there is only a legal requirement to approve a balanced programme for 2008/09. It was best practice to present a balanced 5-year Capital Programme and therefore removal or reduction of schemes was necessary. It was noted that the current Capital Programme included figures for anticipated capital receipts. A full schedule of potential capital receipts would be included in the Property Review report to Star Chamber on 16 January.

A list of uncommitted Capital proposals was requested for the next meeting. Specifically a list of all proposals that were reliant on capital receipts and prudential borrowing.

A separate list of assets no longer required by the Council was also requested for the following week.

It was noted that any form of borrowing would have implications on the revenue budget for future years.

4 REVENUE

A summary of General Fund budget proposals for 2008/09 as at 9 January showed a savings requirement of £354K if all growth bids were supported in order to meet the 4.5% Council Tax increase.

Information about the Council's marketing strategy for City Lab, St Leonard's House and Dalton Square was requested.

Clarification of the projected costs for Waste and Cleansing Enforcement was requested.

Brief reports to clarify cost implications were requested for 16 January on

- Shellfish Beds
- Headstone Programme
- Empty Property Officer
- Roger's Report

A short narrative to be produced for all savings and growth items included on the list for the next Star Chamber meeting.

JEB/10 January 2008

ACTION NOTES FROM STAR CHAMBER HELD ON 16 JANUARY 2008

PRESENT: Councillors R Mace (Chair), E Archer, J Ashworth, J Barry, E Blamire, A Bryning, J Gilbert, T Johnson, D Kerr, M Whitelegg
M Cullinan, R Muckle, P Loker, N Muschamp, J Barlow (notes)

1 APOLOGIES

All present.

2 ACTION NOTES OF LAST MEETING

All actions from 9 January meeting had been completed.

3 CAPITAL

List of Uncommitted Projects

Members to consider the list and bring proposals to the 23 January meeting.

It was noted that Member Notebooks was being reviewed by Council Business Committee.

A second request was made for the Business Case for The Dome/The Platform.

4 REVENUE

Members went through a Savings and Growth schedule which was circulated at the meeting, and which contained officer recommendations.

Items the subject of a Cabinet report were noted.

Items awaiting further reports were noted.

Savings Proposals

Members supported the exclusion from the list of the £1K saving proposal for parish by-election charging.

There was a strong view not to accept the Salt Ayre Bank Holiday closing saving (£5K).

There was mixed support for the Business Development Grants saving (£21.8).

The Invest to Save energy reduction scheme was supported (£3K).

Concessionary Travel – members supported the withdrawal of peak time concessions (£20K). It was noted there would be a report back on Community Transport Contracted Services.

Postages savings (£19K) were supported.

Growth Proposals

There was general consensus for removing from the growth proposals –

Legal and HR – Upgrade of Licensing System

Financial Services – Staff Training (£2K)

Revenue Services – Staff Training (£2K)

Health and Strat. Housing – Cemeteries Grounds Maintenance, New Team Set Up (£36K)

Empty Property Officer (£35K)

[This view was subsequently confirmed by the Leader.]

All other growth proposals would be further considered at Cabinet on 22 January.

5 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

23 January 2008

JEB/16 January 2008

ACTION NOTES FROM STAR CHAMBER HELD ON 30 JANUARY 2008

PRESENT: Councillors R Mace (Chair), E Archer, J Ashworth, J Barry, E Blamire, A Bryning, J Gilbert, T Johnson
M Cullinan, R Muckle, P Loker, N Muschamp, J Barlow (notes)

1 APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Cllrs D Kerr and M Whitelegg. Cllr Gilbert sent apologies for his late arrival because of an earlier meeting commitment.

2 ACTION NOTES OF LAST MEETING

Wording should be changed in action note 3 from Business Plan to Business Case with reference to the capital bids submitted for the Dome and Platform.

Concessionary Travel – members reported an operational discrepancy. N Muschamp to check with Property Services and to enquire if a refund was due.

3 CAPITAL

Members were reminded of the funding gap in the Capital Programme of £916K.

(a) Uncommitted Projects

Members considered the list of uncommitted projects at length, and after discussion and requests for further information and reports back to the next meeting, provisionally agreed to withdraw the following from the 2008/09 budget recommendations to Council:

White Lund Car Park (pending further info)	£150,000
The Platform Upgrade	£130,000
Works to Dome Site	£81,000
Salt Ayre: Climbing Wall (£35k cost neutral)	
Salt Ayre: Pool Seating (£70k cost neutral)	
Salt Ayre: Reflexions Changing Room	£40,000
Morecambe Battery Toilet Provision (see below)	<u>£110,000</u>
	511,000

This left an amount of £405K still to find.

A report back was requested for the next meeting to clarify the funding for the Toilet Improvement Programme, and in particular, for the Regent Road/Battery Toilets and if there was any connection to the café development scheme. The option to put back the £110K into the Programme was left open depending on the report findings.

A report back to the next meeting was requested on IT Infrastructure, Renewals & Upgrades, Desktop Equipment, and Members' Notebooks to see if savings could be made.

A report back to the next meeting was requested on alternative options for the White Lund Car Park and information on how removing it from the Programme would impact on operations.

The Head of Finance explained how savings needed to be made instead of relying on borrowing or leaving the Capital Programme unbalanced because it would come under greater pressure in the near future because of the implications of the Access To Services Review and the cost of moving all staff to the two Town Halls. A report back to the next meeting was requested in respect of the options available to finance schemes included in the Capital Programme from existing reserves and provisions

(b) Property Review

Members had many questions and requested the report be presented by the Head of Property Services at the next Star Chamber meeting. In particular the timescale for sales was questioned and whether the backlog of municipal building repairs could be speeded up and recommendations made for additional sales. Implications of additional sales on rental income

were queried and a summary would be produced if time permitted. The Chairman requested suggestions for including additional sales within the budget to reduce the deficit. It was noted that whatever was decided adherence was needed to the principles contained in the Corporate Property Strategy and the Corporate Investment Strategy.

Members were requested to forward their questions to the Head of Property Services before the meeting on 13 February to enable him to be fully prepared.

The Chairman requested a Capital Programme update item for the next meeting and that the 2012/13 figure for Municipal Buildings backlog of repairs could be considered for reduction after all the other adjustments had been made and following receipt of reports and briefing notes.

(b) Lancaster TIC Refurbishment

The report was noted and the recommendation supported. This would see the bid for £60k supported but with a target set to reduce the total by £5k to £55k.

2 REVENUE

(a) Playground Improvements

Members discussed the list of prioritised play areas for improvement. It was agreed that any decisions to close play areas should be an Individual Cabinet Member Decision (of the Portfolio Holder) after consulting with Ward members.

(b) Nursery Operation

The report was noted. There were no options for savings.

(c) Festivals and Events

A briefing note was requested for the next meeting on the distinction between festivals and events run solely by the City Council and those where funding had been supplied via the Festivals Innovation Fund. In particular, clarification of the different levels of support for each type of festival or event.

3 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be Wednesday 13 February.

It was noted that this would be the last meeting of Star Chamber under the current arrangements because the meeting scheduled for 20 February had been cancelled.

JEB/30 January 2008