

BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL

Star Chamber

27th January 2009

Report of Corporate Director (Finance and Performance)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To receive an update on the Star Chamber meetings held since the last report to Cabinet of 11 November 2008.				
Key Decision		Non-Key Decision		Referral from Cabinet Member
				X
Date Included in Forward Plan	N/A			
This report is public.				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF COUNCILLOR ROGER MACE

(1) That the report be noted.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Star Chamber is an informal meeting of Cabinet Members supported by senior officers. Its purpose is to provide a continuing process that considers options brought forward from cabinet portfolio holders with the aim of ensuring value for money by identifying potential efficiencies, and opportunities, where appropriate, for diverting resources away from non-priorities and into Council priorities. These options may well consider alternative methods of service delivery and how increased collaboration within Team Lancashire could provide efficiencies. Options will focus on financial, physical, and human resource matters.
- 1.2 Star Chamber also provides the framework and focus for achieving the financial savings targets included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy and Corporate Plan, and also to assist Cabinet in bringing forward its annual budget proposals.
- 1.3 The group meets regularly to consider proposals brought forward by Cabinet portfolio holders and reports for information are made on a regular basis into Cabinet and also into the Budget and Performance Panel.
- 1.4 Star Chamber works to revised Terms of Reference as agreed at the Cabinet meeting held on 2 September 2008.
- 1.5 Since the last report to Cabinet, Star Chamber met on 12 , 19 and 26 November. Action notes are attached as an **Appendix**. The action note for 26 November is to follow.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The work of the Star Chamber is critical to providing a challenge and review to both the way that our services are provided or their appropriateness to the targets set out in the Corporate Plan & Policy Framework. In particular this can be seen in:

- Corporate Plan Core Values – Sound Financial Management
- Corporate Plan Priority No 1 “To deliver value for money customer focused services”
- Revenue Budget & Capital Programme Monitoring
- Medium Term Financial Strategy target

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)

None arising directly as a result of this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None arising directly as a result of this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

None arising directly as a result of this report.

MONITORING OFFICER’S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no comments to add.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Corporate Plan 2008/09
Revenue Budget and Capital Programme
Medium Term Financial Strategy 2008

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ACTION NOTES FROM STAR CHAMBER HELD ON 12 NOVEMBER 2008

PRESENT: Councillors R Mace (Chair), E Archer, J Barry, E Blamire, A Bryning, S Burns, S Charles, J Fletcher, J Gilbert, D Kerr
M Cullinan, P Loker, H McManus, R Muckle, N Muschamp, J Barlow (notes)

1 APOLOGIES

All present, no apologies.

2 LAST MEETING NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING

It was noted that Cabinet yesterday had requested an officer contribution towards the Corporate Plan priorities from statutory officers.

The list of statutory/non-statutory functions were now attached.

3 MTFS UPDATE

The latest position was noted.

4 SERVICE EFFICIENCIES / IMPROVEMENTS

In light of the information considered in 3 above, the following suggestions were discussed as potential options for efficiencies.

(a) Lancaster Market

CD(REG) to report to December Cabinet on all options, to include legal entitlements, and tenancy information. It was acknowledged however that the Council was tied in to a long lease.

(b) Shared Services

Opportunities for generating efficiencies through partnership working (Team Lancashire in particular) were discussed. It was agreed that a list of services that could be shared or outsourced would be provided, along with information on shared services already taking place within the county and how successful it was and lessons learned – both reports to be completed by 26 November.

(c) Salt Ayre Trust

This option to be kept as provisional for the time being. The previous report that considered this to be circulated.

(d) LSP

Information on the cost of the LSP to be provided.

(e) Museums Partnership

It was noted that a review was being undertaken on this partnership and a report back to Star Chamber was requested when it was completed.

(f) Grant Assistance

A brief report identifying all grants currently made by the Council to be brought to Star Chamber to decide if further work was required on working up options.

(g) Cultural Services

It was noted that a report reviewing options for efficiencies in Cultural Services was currently being prepared and would be circulated as soon as possible. This report would cover all activities of the Service, including the Dukes, Dome, Platform, Festivals and Events, Community Sport and Leisure Development.

(h) Marketing and Communications

It was noted that work on improving the effectiveness through a corporate approach to marketing and communications was ongoing and would be reported to the group as soon as possible.

(i) Plastic Waste Collection

A review of the collection rounds to be undertaken to include plastics and other recyclables and how soon options could be implemented.

(j) Internal Post and Subscriptions

Clarification of internal post and subscription provisions that appeared in the budget book was requested.

(k) Youth Games

Report back to December Cabinet on the options available to the Council.

In addition to the above, officers were requested to prepare options for savings required to meet the budget targets for 2009/10 and beyond.

In order for officers to make proposals, members would need to be clearer about their priorities and all members were asked to let the CD(F&P) have their comments and responses on the Leader's draft priorities by the end of next week, i.e. 21 November. All comments to be copied to the Leader.

4 OPTIONS FOR SERVICE EFFICIENCIES AND IMPROVEMENT

Star Chamber considered the savings and growth proposals prepared to date one by one and agreed as follows:

Council Housing – Procurement of Materials

Agreed not to take further at this stage but further information would be prepared on the implications for General Fund services.

Fleet Management – share with other Councils

This would not impact on next year's budget but should be pursued.

VMU Reduction in Establishment

It was agreed to include this proposal on the provisional list.

Review of Waste Collection Rounds

– see (i) above.

CCDS Budget Process

- see (i) above.

Increase charge for bulky matters

Agreed to include on provisional list. Request for information on what other authorities charge and to review charge annually.

[The agreed meeting time of a maximum 2 hours had elapsed and the meeting had to close, but it was agreed to reconvene the following week.]

It was noted that Savings and Growth proposals had not as yet been considered by the Cabinet member with responsibility for Efficiency. It was agreed that the Leader would prepare and distribute for the next meeting a list of those proposals that should go forward for further work, and include his comments and requests.

5 ACCESS TO SERVICES UPDATE

A report previously requested by Star Chamber was circulated for information.

6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

10.00 am Wednesday 19 November 2008

Committee B, Lancaster Town Hall

RCM/JEB/12 November 2008

ACTION NOTES FROM STAR CHAMBER HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2008

PRESENT: Councillors R Mace (Chair), E Archer, J Barry, E Blamire, A Bryning, S Burns, S Charles, J Fletcher, J Gilbert, D Kerr
M Cullinan, P Loker, H McManus, N Muschamp, J Barlow (notes)

1 APOLOGIES

Roger Muckle.

2 LAST MEETING NOTES AND MATTERS ARISING

The actions notes from 12 November were not considered and would be brought forward to 26 November meeting.

3 MTFS UPDATE

The Head of Finance reported verbally there was no change so far. The first draft budget would be finalised and this would include any update re Concessionary Travel,

4 SERVICE EFFICIENCIES / IMPROVEMENTS

Star Chamber considered savings and growth proposals outstanding from 12 November meeting.

SAVINGS PROPOSALS

(a) *CCDS – Increase coverage of bulky matters*

Agreed to take forward and include on provisional list.

(b) *CCDS – Closure of West End Toilets*

Further information requested to include list of all toilets, potential savings, and in which parish council area.

(c) *CCDS – Cease Funding of 4 Environmental PCSOs*

Cabinet Liaison Group to be arranged for first week in December to look at Neighbourhood Management report including implications for PCSOs.

An evaluation of PCSOs was requested for the next meeting.

Information on Home Office plans for contribution to funding of PCSOs for the future to be sought and reported back to Star Chamber.

(d) *H&SH – Private Water Supplies*

It was agreed to include this efficiency saving on the provisional list.

(e) *I&CS – Replace Desktop Printers with Multi-Function Devices*

Agreed to include on the provisional list.

A report on progress being made using laptops at meetings was requested.

(f) *Corporate – Implement Findings of Marketing Review*

It was agreed to take this forward. The report on the Review was almost finalised.

(g) *Revenues – Minor Staffing Restructure*

It was agreed to include this on the provisional list.

(h) *Revenues – Renegotiation of Bailiff Fees*

It was agreed to include this on the provisional list.

GROWTH PROPOSALS

(i) *Property Services – Energy Manager / Energy Performance Certificates*

The CD(REG) was looking at both of these and would report back on options including partnership working.

(j) *Property Services – CCTV Staff Contract Renewal*

A briefing note would be prepared on an exit strategy including issues such as town centre management, community safety, value for money, traffic management, etc.

- (k) *Legal & HR – Increased Provision of OH Advice*
It was agreed to add this to the provisional list.
- (l) *Legal & HR – Voluntary Registration with the Land Registry of Council's Unregistered Land Holdings*
This was a "spend to save" item and it was agreed to add this to the provisional list.
- (m) *Corporate Strategy – Service Satisfaction Survey*
It was agreed to defer this item.
- (n) *Corporate Strategy – Community Cohesion*
It had been agreed at Cabinet on 11 November not to take this forward.
- (o) *Corporate Strategy – Secure Resources for Project/Performance and Programme Management Arrangements*
A decision would be made after consideration of a report from the CD(REG) to Cabinet in December.
- (p) *H&SH – Increase the Homeless Priority Need Budget to meet DCLG Targets*
Report back requested to include broader issues.
- (q) *H&SH – Additional Staffing for Statutory Housing Standards Work*
It was agreed to include this on the provisional list.
- (r) *H&SH – Additional Staffing in Homelessness Team*
It was agreed to defer a decision until the Cabinet Liaison Group had reported back on the future of Neighbourhood Management.
- (s) *H&SH – Memorial Safety Team*
It was agreed to defer a decision pending a report to Cabinet on risks and legal implications.
- (t) *CCDS – Augment Cleansing Schedules in Morecambe*
This was not accepted for inclusion on the provisional list.
- (u) *CCDS – Improved Recycling Facilities in Council Buildings*
It was agreed to defer this until next year.
- (v) *CCDS – Enforcement Publicity Campaign*
This was not accepted for inclusion on the provisional list.
- (w) *CCDS – Arson Reduction Team*
It was agreed to include this on the provisional list and to include in the Neighbourhood Management discussions re mainstreaming of budgets.
- (x) *CCDS – Schools Recycling*
It was agreed to include this on the provisional list.

The agreed meeting time of a maximum 2 hours had elapsed and it was agreed to leave consideration of Council Housing growth proposals from 12 November agenda until the next meeting.

A special Cabinet briefing to be prepared on rent increases.

5 Date of Next Meeting

10.00 am Wednesday 26 November, Committee B, Lancaster Town Hall.

NM/JEB/19 November 2008