



Leader's Report

16 September 2009

Report of the Leader of the Council

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Leader's report to Council.

This report is public.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To receive the report of the Leader of Council.

REPORT

1.0 Cabinet

Information on Cabinet matters is provided in the minutes from the Cabinet meetings held on 28 July 2009 and 1 September 2009, later in this agenda.

2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently

As required by Access to Information Procedure Rule 17.03 and Part 3 Schedule 2 of the Constitution, set out below are decisions which were taken under Urgent Business Procedures. In respect of the decisions in 2.2 and 2.3 below, call-in was waived in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17.

At its meeting on 3rd September 2009 Cabinet endorsed urgent business decisions in respect of the following matters:-

2.1 Civil Parking Enforcement

- (1) That the County Council be selected for the provision of off-street parking enforcement and back office services including Cash in Transit from September 2009 subject to County wide consultation and there being no significant changes in agreeing the final level of charges.
- (2) That the Corporate Director (Regeneration) in consultation with the Head of Legal and Human Resources, Head of Property Services and Head of Financial Services be authorised to enter into the necessary contracts to ensure the delivery of the above services from September 2009.

- (3) That the County Council provides appropriate levels of enforcement in residents parking zones and liaises with the City Council's parking team over this requirement.

The background to the urgent business report was provided to Members of Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny Committee in a Cabinet Briefing Note on the arrangements for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE), due to change in September. The note outlined the current position with the procurement options for the provision of various off-street parking services.

A decision needed to be made on which option was to be chosen for the provision of off-street car park enforcement, back office notice processing services and cash in transit (CIT) arrangements to coincide with the current contractual arrangements terminating in September. This is when the County Council assumes responsibility for the on-street element of parking enforcement in the Lancaster district.

An urgent business decision was required to enable the contractor and service providers to introduce their arrangements by September. Any delays in implementing the urgent business decision would have made it extremely difficult to guarantee that the necessary arrangements would in place by the required deadline.

Additionally the Chief Executive (in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) was asked to waive call-in in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 17(a). The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was not in agreement with the decision to waive call-in and the Chief Executive decided that the decision was subject to call-in in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17(a).

2.2 Morecambe Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) 2: A View for Eric

- (1) That the Corporate Director (Regeneration) is authorised to contract with the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Townscape Heritage Initiative.
- (2) Subsequent to this that subject to the required amount of match funding being secured the Head of Planning Services is authorised to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Permission to Start.
- (3) That the Head of Financial Services make the necessary revisions to the Council's Capital and General Revenue Fund to accommodate for delivery of the Townscape Heritage Initiative.

A Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) is part of the Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) grant giving programme to help communities regenerate conservation areas displaying particular social and economic need throughout the United Kingdom. The Council delivered a highly successful first THI for Morecambe in the period 2003 to 2008. Through this the Council grant aided the restoration of some seventy properties within the Morecambe Conservation Area, drove up repair standards and most notably helped achieve the restoration of the grade II listed Midland Hotel.

The HLF offered the Council a contract for a second in Morecambe – "A View for Eric". The HLF contract offer was for £923,000 in funding over five years from contract commencement. The offer was conditional, including that the

Council must evidence 50% match funding before the HLF would authorise a start.

The urgency for this decision was the timescale. The HLF required that the Contract be signed by 17 July 2009. This meant that a decision on whether the Council should contract must be made before the scheduled cabinet meeting in July and hence the need to use the Urgent Business Procedure.

2.3 Artificial Ice Rink

- (1) That Cultural Services, in partnership with Morecambe Town Council, take on the responsibility for organising an artificial Ice Rink in the Dome, as set out in the report.
- (2) If approved, that the legal documentation be completed in advance of the event.
- (3) That the Overview & Scrutiny Chairman be consulted with a view to waiving call in, in accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17, to enable the Chief Executive's decision to be implemented immediately.

Over the past two years, around the Christmas period, the former Poulton Neighbourhood Management has organised an Artificial Ice Rink in the general area of the West End of Morecambe, Cultural Services had been approached by the promoter, "Get Ya Skates On" (GYSO), who provided the facility over the last two years with a view to similar arrangement in 2009, but specifically using the Dome as an indoor venue. The proposals presented to Cultural Services were over two periods, namely 30th July to 26th August (inclusive), and the 14th to the 24th December 2009 (inclusive).

The proposal was that Lancaster City Council hire the rink for a rental charge of £16k with Lancaster City Council keeping 100% of the admissions income. This was the chosen option because it minimised any projected shortfall and provided an activity in the Dome over the Summer and Christmas periods.

The newly established Morecambe Town Council (MTC) was also aware of the approach made to Lancaster City Council, and following its meeting held on Thursday 16th July 2009, wrote to Lancaster City Council offering a "Guarantee Against Loss" of up to £8k. The Morecambe Town Council stated that it would be keen to work in partnership with Lancaster City Council in the organisation and promotion of events.

On the basis of the above intervention and involvement of Morecambe Town Council, Cultural Services proposed that the event go ahead in the Dome. However, as the event was not included in the original Dome programme of events, Cabinet was requested to support its inclusion. However, in light of timescales, and Cabinet's ultimate decision in respect of the request, Cultural Services would negotiate a variation with GYSO over the proposed summer dates. For the same reason, subject to approval of the proposals, it is requested that call-in be waived.

The item was considered as a matter of urgency in order to make the necessary arrangements to enable the opening of the Artificial Ice Rink for the summer period as soon as possible.

The relevant Cabinet member for this matter having declared an interest, the Chief Executive took this decision in consultation with the Leader of Cabinet.

Additionally the Chief Executive (in consultation with the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee) was asked to waive call-in in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Committee Procedure Rule 17(a). The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee was in agreement with the Chief Executive's decision to waive call-in.

3.0 Leader's Comments

This is traditionally a time when Councillors take a break and there are less meetings. However, this authority has remained busy throughout the Summer break.

Budget Process

Work has continued on the budget process for this year. Cabinet members have been using the 2008/9 outturn figures to look for potential ongoing revenue savings. Meetings with Cabinet members have taken place to discuss potential future growth areas and opportunities for savings. These have initially led to further investigation of suggestions made during last year's Cabinet – for example public toilet provision and swimming pool charges. No decisions have been taken on these areas – but the aim is to provide Cabinet with as much information as possible so that they can make strategic proposals.

Cabinet have also been looking at our spend against our agreed priority areas. It is clear that there is a significant amount of money being spent on areas which are not the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan, although some of these are statutory roles which the council must deliver – so we will not be able to just stop doing them. – but we may wish to question how much we are spending on them. This work has also revealed that some priority areas do not appear to have much being spent on them. This too is being questioned. However what is clear from this piece of work is that if this district is to do what it says it wants to our budget must follow what we have said are our agreed priorities. (Please see appendix to this report for details).

Meetings have taken place with neighbouring authorities to look at opportunities for shared working and efficiency savings. It is hoped that firm proposals will come forward from these meetings on how we can work more closely together in some service areas.

The aim of all of this is to produce a range of efficiency/savings options by December. It is hoped that, in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy that we shall have a better idea of how the council will look in three years time and know how we want to get there. Cabinet have also decided, for the first time ever, to hold a series of consultation events in the district in order to inform our budget setting process.

Mid-Lancashire Multi Area Agreement.

I brought this to the attention of members in my last report. The MAA will involve authorities along the M6 corridor in Lancashire and consist of Lancashire County Council, West Lancashire, Chorley, South Ribble, Preston and Lancaster City. It represents an opportunity for the authorities to work closely together in a range of areas where we have common interests, primarily, but not exclusively, in the economy. The group are looking to submit its bid during the first week of

September. Lancaster City Council is committed to the principle of working as part of this MAA as long as this does not prevent us from also working with Councils in South Cumbria and Cabinet members informally discussed the importance of it at a briefing in August.

4.0 Other Matters

The Cabinet minutes are attached at the end of this agenda.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meeting on 28 July 2009 and 1 September 2009.