



## Leader's Report

4<sup>th</sup> February 2009

### Report of the Leader of the Council

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the Leader's report to Council.

This report is public.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) To receive the report of the Leader of Council.

#### REPORT

##### 1.0 General Matters of Interest

My report informs Council of some of the items considered at Cabinet on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008. Details are set out below for Members' information. I will inform Council about other matters as appropriate under later items on today's agenda.

##### Cabinet – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008:

##### 1.1 The Dome - Options

A report was submitted asking Cabinet to consider options for the future of the Dome. After consideration, Cabinet agreed:-

- (1) That the Council immediately cease taking further bookings for the Dome for any period beyond 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009
- (2) That Cabinet approves, in principle, closure of the Dome on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2009
- (3) That Cabinet requests a further report from officers on the best way to do this
- (4) That Officers investigate the business case and possible external funding for the £132K improvements to The Platform, bearing in mind that in present circumstances the City Council cannot commit to this capital expenditure.

## **1.2 Lancaster – Public Realm**

A report was submitted advising members that the NorthWest Development Agency has offered funding for the Council to prepare detailed design proposals to enhance streets and places in the city centre that are its priorities for improvement and to seek authority to proceed.

Cabinet resolved:-

- (1) That the Head of Financial Services is authorised to amend the Council's General Fund Revenue Budget for 2008/09 and that proposed for 2009/2010 to provide for expenditures in preparing design proposals for the city centre subject to these expenditures being fully funded by grant income from the NorthWest Development Agency (NWDA) up to a maximum of £90,000 in costs
- (2) That, to meet NWDA programming requirements, Cabinet delegates to the Corporate Director (Regeneration) authority to select and commission consultants for the required design work after a proper competitive process in accordance with Council procedures.
- (3) That the Head of Planning Services to report to Cabinet on the design options prepared and subsequent public consultation into these in order that Cabinet can then select its preferred options.
- (4) That Cabinet notes there are issues concerning the management of traffic on adopted highways within the pedestrian zone that may require resolution before any designs can be finalised and request a further report on this be submitted to Cabinet as early as possible in the New Year.

## **1.3 Lancaster Market**

A report was submitted asking Members to consider the current position with regard to Lancaster Market. The report requested Cabinet to consider the options set out in an exempt report and indicate its preferred option.

Cabinet decided that it:-

- (1) Notes the comments received from the Lancaster Market Tenants Association
- (2) Resolves that approval be given to Officers to negotiate directly with retailers to try and procure a single retailer for the Market Hall on the basis that the preferred option would be that the current deficit is reduced to zero or, as an alternative, to report back to Cabinet should a single retailer be prepared to take up occupation of the Market Hall on the basis of the Council contributing an amount that is less than the deficit currently being faced by the Council
- (3) Requests a further report on Lancaster Market as soon as possible as part of the budget process from 2009/10, (a) identifying the financial obligations under the lease from Allied, in particular the frequency, basis

and mechanism of rent reviews, and the mechanism of termination and (b) identifying the same information in respect of the leases to current sub tenants and (c) setting out options, including any firm proposal from Cooltrader, and in addition to any options resulting from resolution 2 above, and the possibility of using part of the space in the market for City Council Purposes, for mitigating the loss of £518,100 that is shown in the estimates for 2009/10 and exceeds the rent of £409,000 due to Allied.

#### **1.4 Employee Establishment – Vacancy Authorisation**

Cabinet received a report seeking its approval to the filling of established vacancies where recommended, and resolved:-

- (1) That all posts be filled except Post CL0358 to be held vacant until January 2009 and also Post RS0192 to be deferred for three months and the position reviewed then
- (2) Cabinet identify in January where priorities are in the establishment and where savings can be made

#### **1.5 Item of Urgent Business – Referral from the Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group**

Cabinet received a report seeking Cabinet's support for recommendations from the Chair of the Festivals and Events Cabinet Liaison Group.

- (1) That the 4 core events that cover Lancaster and Morecambe be approved (the Heritage Gala, Lancaster Jazz Festival, Bands in Happy Mount Park and Fireworks Spectacular)
- (2) That other Festivals Innovation Fund grant allocations for 2009/10 be referred to Star Chamber.

#### **1.6 Review of HR Policies**

A report was submitted advising Cabinet on the financial implications of reviewing the effectiveness of the Council's existing HR policies in particular the Early Termination of Employment Policy and the Redeployment Policy.

Cabinet agreed:-

- (1) That the North West Employers Organisation (NWEO) be requested to undertake a 'desk top' review of the City Council's "Early Termination of Employment Policy" and the related "Redeployment Policy" and to identify from published best practice, any immediate improvements that could be made.
- (2) That the NWEO be asked to identify how many days' work would be required to customise best practice in this area of activity to produce policies in line with Lancaster City Council's Policy Framework, and it be noted that such work would be funded by the Fairpay Reserve.

#### **1.7 Pay and Grading Structure**

A report was submitted providing further information to Cabinet on the financial and human resource implications of the four possible structures previously circulated, to enable Cabinet to express a preference for the Council's future pay and grading structure.

It was resolved:-

- (1) That Cabinet's preference for Pay and Grading Structure 9.5.4.5 be noted.

### **1.8 Budget and Policy Framework – update**

Cabinet considered a report informing members about progress made since the last Cabinet meeting in bringing forward options to refresh the 2009/10 Corporate Plan and to consider if any action is required, and also to note progress in respect of updating the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) and budget exercise and to determine any actions that might be required.

Cabinet agreed:-

- (1) That the latest progress made on refreshing the 2009/10 Corporate Plan be noted.
- (2) That progress made in respect of the MTFS and budget exercise be noted.

### **1.9 Corporate Performance Monitoring Second Quarter Corporate Report**

A report was submitted asking Cabinet to consider the information provided to the Corporate PRT meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2008. It was decided:-

- (1) That the information provided to the Corporate PRT meeting held on the 26 November 2008 and the associated action plan that was developed as a result of consideration of that information be noted.
- (2) That Cabinet endorses the actions taken as a result of the information contained within the PRT report and action plan.

### **1.10 Star Chamber**

Cabinet was advised of progress with Star Chamber meetings held since the last report to Cabinet of 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008. Cabinet resolved:-

- (1) That the report be noted.

### **1.11 International Youth Games 2009**

Cabinet received a report informing members of the options in respect of proposals for Lancaster to host the International Youth Games in the summer of 2009 and resolved:-

- (1) That the proposed Youth Games in the Lancaster District in 2009 be cancelled, saving the budget of £55,000.

### **1.12 Tourism Strategy Update Report**

Cabinet considered a report seeking formal approval for the Tourism Strategy Update 2008 document and its publication on the website and agreed:-

- (1) That the Tourism Strategy Update 2008 document and its publication on the website be approved.

## **2.0 Decisions required to be taken urgently**

As required by Access to Information Procedure Rule 17.03, set out below is a matter which required immediate implementation and in respect of which call-in was waived in accordance with Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17.

### **YPO Electricity Contract**

Cabinet endorsed an urgent business decision in respect of the purchase of electricity:

- (1) That approval be given to purchase electricity through the Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) for a twelve month period from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010 at a current fixed rate around £63 MWh.
- (2) That call in and the requirement to include the decision in the Forward Plan be waived, in accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17 and special urgency procedures, to enable immediate implementation.

The urgency for this decision was that the YPO were offering Councils the opportunity of purchasing electricity at £63 per MWh for a twelve month period from 1<sup>st</sup> November 2009 to 31<sup>st</sup> October 2010 and to benefit from this, the YPO requested that submissions be logged with them by Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> October 2008 at 11am. After this date the Council would not have had the opportunity to move to this option and would remain on a fixed option until 31<sup>st</sup> October 2009.

### **Filling of Vacant Posts in Financial Services**

- (1) That authorisation be given to fill the posts of Exchequer Officer and Exchequer Assistant within Financial Services.
- (2) That the call in be waived, in accordance with Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 17, to enable immediate implementation.

The urgency for this decision was that there were 6 applicants shortlisted, awaiting an interview date. This is a key post within the Service as its main task is to process all employees' pay, Members allowances and associated pension, tax and National Insurance payments.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Cabinet agenda and minutes of the meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2008.