
MEETING	Executive
DATE	11 July 2006
PRESENT	Councillors Orrell, Sue Galloway, Jamieson-Ball, Macdonald, Steve Galloway (Chair), Reid, Runciman, Sunderland and Waller
IN ATTENDANCE	Councillor Fraser (for agenda item 6 – Minute 36 refers)

31. Declarations of Interest

The Chair invited Members to declare at this point any personal or prejudicial interests they might have in the business on the agenda. No interests were declared.

32. Exclusion of Press and Public

RESOLVED: That the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of Annex 2 to agenda item 10 (York Central Area Action Plan), on the grounds that it contains information relating to the financial and business affairs of particular persons, which is classed as exempt under paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, as revised by the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

33. Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Executive meeting held on 27 June 2006 be approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

34. Public Participation

It was reported that a member of the public (Mr Richardson) had expressed a wish to speak under the Council's Public Participation Scheme on agenda item 7 (Finance Strategy) but was unable to attend the meeting. His written comments had been referred to the Head of Finance and would be dealt with in correspondence.

35. Executive Forward Plan

Members received and noted an updated list of items currently scheduled on the Executive Forward Plan.

36. Report by the Commission for Social Care Inspection

Members received a report which introduced a presentation by the Sue Disley, Local Lead Inspector from the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), on the findings of the Inspection of Services for People with Learning Disabilities, carried out in York on March 2006.

The presentation explained the purpose of the inspection, how it had been conducted and the resulting findings and recommendations against the key themes of the government's "Valuing People" White Paper. Copies of the inspection report were circulated to Members at the meeting. The Shadow Executive Member for Adults' Social Services attended the meeting to hear the presentation and ask questions on behalf of the Shadow Executive.

It was noted that the inspection had highlighted the need to adopt a council-wide approach to services, have measurable targets for strategies, build upon joint work with partners and focus on outcomes for customers. York had been judged as serving most of its customers well and having promising prospects for improvement. Members thanked Sue Disley for the presentation and congratulated management and staff on a good inspection result. The Chair indicated that the report would be examined in detail by the relevant Executive Member and Director, who would take further action on the recommendations.

RESOLVED: That the presentation and the inspection report be noted.

REASON: In accordance with the CSCI's policy to table the inspection report at a meeting that is open to the public.

37. Finance Strategy 2007/08 to 2009/10

Members considered a report which presented a draft Financial Strategy for the period 2007/08 to 2009/10. The report reflected the Secretary of State's decision to nominate the Council in relation to its Council Tax levels for 2006/07-2007/08 and explored options to move to a more strategic approach to meeting future budget pressures and delivering efficiency improvements. The draft Strategy was attached as an annex to the report.

The Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) included in the draft Strategy indicated that unavoidable growth pressures would continue to outstrip funding, resulting in a budget gap of between £3.5m and £4.1m across each of the three years. Chapter 3 of the Strategy identified a number of ways in which the Council could meet these financial pressures, including the development of a programme of strategic efficiency reviews. The enhanced role envisaged for such a programme was one of the main differences between the first and second finance strategies. Further details were set out in the report.

Members emphasised that in the current circumstances requests for growth could not be progressed and Directorates must continue to work within existing budgets. The Council's long-term strategy was aimed at reducing its standing costs, including reducing building costs via the new City Hall project. Unless there was a significant change to the funding of

local authorities, the Council must continue to maintain provision of good quality public services at the lowest cost per head of population of any council in the country.

RESOLVED: (i) That the Financial Strategy be adopted.

REASON: To assist in the development of the Council's medium-term service and financial planning.

(ii) That the Council's projected financial position for 2007/08 to 2009/10, as outlined in the report (Table 1, paragraph 5) and detailed in the Financial Strategy, be noted.

REASON: So that Members are fully aware of the financial pressures which the Council currently faces.

(iii) That the Director of Resources, in conjunction with the Corporate Management Team, be requested to develop, review and prioritise all currently identified growth and reprioritisation areas against relevant criteria, including statutory pressures, local priorities and comparative performance.

REASON: To assist Members in targeting resources at those areas which have the greatest need in terms of meeting external requirements, local needs and service improvements.

(iv) That the Director of Resources, in conjunction with the Corporate Management Team, be requested to develop a three to five year programme of efficiency reviews.

REASON: To assist in the development of a more strategic approach to budget setting, especially in terms of identifying areas for service improvement and financial savings.

38. Directorate of City Strategy - Organisational Review

Members considered a report which presented proposals for the organisational structure of the new Directorate of City Strategy.

The new Directorate had come into being on 1 April 2006, following a review of the Environment and Development Services Directorate (DEDS) in May 2004 and a wider review of Council services approved by the Executive in July 2005. The proposed management structure, set out in Annex 2 to the report, included four service 'blocks', each headed by an Assistant Director (AD). These were based upon the service areas inherited from DEDS, with the addition of the new responsibilities transferring to City Strategy. It was noted that the Directorate faced a number of challenges in the near future which meant that the make-up of the AD blocks might need to be revisited. Revised job descriptions would include a requirement for flexibility, in line with a corporate approach to service delivery.

RESOLVED: (i) That the structure for the Directorate of City Strategy set out in Annex 2 to the report be approved.

REASON: To enable the Directorate to respond to the new responsibilities placed upon it.

(ii) That the Chief Executive be invited to bring forward proposals in September aimed at providing a single integrated process, including budget and quality control, for dealing with highways repairs.

REASON: These are vital on-street services which need to be dealt with via an integrated process and managed under one directorship.

39. Highways Services

Members considered a report which advised on progress to date with highway services procurement and sought approval for a proposed reporting and management structure for this procurement.

The report set out progress made on the short and medium term actions reported to the Executive on 2 May 2006, together with key points on the long term options B and C, which were being progressed concurrently. With regard to Option B (PFI), Deloitte's had been identified as the preferred financial advisor. Their report on the feasibility of the PFI route would enable a decision to be taken on whether to submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) to the Department for Transport. Work undertaken to scope the PFI project would also be used to help determine the best scope for Option C (re-tendering an extended scope package). Both Deloitte and Halcrow would assist in the determination of the most appropriate alternative type of contract should Option B not be pursued.

The proposed management structure, explained in paragraphs 26 to 29 of the report, was intended to overcome some of the difficulties encountered in the earlier procurement work by providing a more rigorous framework. It included a Steering Group comprising the Council Leader and the Executive and Shadow Executive Members for City Strategy, a Project Board to provide directional lead and monitor progress and a Project Team to deliver and manage the project. Proposals for reporting and decision making via the Departmental Management Team, Corporate Management Team and Executive were shown diagrammatically in paragraph 26.

RESOLVED: (i) That the proposed reporting and management structures be approved.

REASON: To ensure that the project is properly managed, whilst enabling speedy progress to be made.

(ii) That the appointments to the Steering Group be approved.

REASON: To meet the need for Member input to the project.

(iii) That a report be taken to the Urgency Committee seeking approval to submit an Expression Of Interest, should this be considered appropriate.

REASON: In view of the fact that there is insufficient time to bring a report to the Executive on this.

40. York Central Area Action Plan

Members considered a report which informed them of the revised timetable for the preparation of a York Central Area Action Plan (AAP) and sought approval to appoint consultants to prepare an Issues and Options document.

Following a review of the current AAP programme, it was considered that, subject to the availability of funding from Yorkshire Forward (YF), the timescale could be reduced by a maximum of 8 months. However, this was dependent upon carrying out the first stage, the Issues and Options document, by Christmas. YF had agreed to fund a planning consultant to undertake this work, which would need to start immediately in order to meet the key milestones in the revised project plan, attached as Annex 1 to the report. Tenders for this work had been invited and the four submissions received had been evaluated on price and against the tender specification. Although none of the tenders fully met all requirements, two were considered capable of achieving the desired outcome within the available time. Of these, Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners was preferred, as offering a better response to public consultation issues and better value for money overall.

Members welcomed the additional funding from Yorkshire Forward and the emphasis on consultation indicated by the recommended consultants. It was noted that public consultation was now likely to take place in the autumn and a developer appointed in March of next year. The fact that the development would bring 6,000 new jobs to York was particularly welcome in view of the potential job losses at British Sugar.

RESOLVED: (i) That the revised timetable for the preparation of the York Central Area Action Plan be noted.

(ii) That the appointment of Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners to produce the Issues and Options document, and carry out public consultation related to this, be approved.

REASON: The appointment of a planning consultant to carry out this work is needed to deliver the shortened AAP programme.

(iii) That the preparation of Interim Planning Guidance (IPG) be discontinued.

REASON: The need for IPG has been superseded by the production of the Issues and Options document.

S F Galloway, Chair

[The meeting started at 2.00 pm and finished at 3.10 pm].