

Date: 29 November 2007

TO: All Members of the Executive
FOR ATTENDANCE

TO: All Other Members of the Council
FOR INFORMATION

Dear Sir/Madam

Your attendance is requested at a meeting of the **EXECUTIVE** to be held in the **GUILDHALL, ABINGDON** on **FRIDAY, 7TH DECEMBER, 2007** at **2.30 pm**.

Yours faithfully

Terry Stock
Chief Executive

Members are reminded of the provisions contained in the Code of Conduct adopted on 30 September 2007 and Standing Order 34 regarding the declaration of Personal and Prejudicial Interests.

A G E N D A

Open to the Public including the Press

A large print version of this agenda is available. Any background papers referred to may be inspected by prior arrangement. Contact Steve Culliford, Democratic Services Officer on telephone number (01235) 540307; e-mail: steve.culliford@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Please note that this meeting will be held in a wheelchair accessible venue. If you would like to attend and have any special access requirements, please let the Democratic Officer know beforehand and he will do his very best to meet your requirements.

Map and Vision

(Page 15)

A map showing the location of the venue for this meeting, together with a copy the Council Vision is attached.

STANDING ITEMS

1. **Apologies for Absence**

To receive apologies for absence.

2. **Minutes**

To adopt and sign as a correct record the public minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 October 2007, (previously circulated).

3. **Declarations of Interest**

To receive any declarations of Personal or Personal and Prejudicial Interests in respect of items on the agenda for this meeting.

Any Member with a personal interest or a personal and prejudicial interest in accordance with the provisions of the Code of Conduct, in any matter to be considered at a meeting, must declare the existence and nature of that interest as soon as the interest becomes apparent in accordance with the provisions of the Code.

When a Member declares a personal and prejudicial interest he shall also state if he has a dispensation from the Standards Committee entitling him/her to speak, or speak and vote on the matter concerned.

Where any Member has declared a personal and prejudicial interest he shall withdraw from the room while the matter is under consideration unless

- (a) his/her disability to speak, or speak and vote on the matter has been removed by a dispensation granted by the Standards Committee, or
- (b) members of the public are allowed to make representations, give evidence or answer questions about the matter by statutory right or otherwise. If that is the case, the Member can also attend the meeting for that purpose. However, the Member must immediately leave the room once he/she has finished; or when the meeting decides he/she has finished whichever is the earlier and in any event the Member must leave the room for the duration of the debate on the item in which he/she has a personal and prejudicial interest.

4. **Urgent Business and Chair's Announcements**

To receive notification of any matters which the Chair determines should be considered as urgent business and the special circumstances which have made the matters urgent, and to receive any announcements from the Chair.

5. **Statements and Petitions from the Public Under Standing Order 32**

Any statements and/or petitions from the public under Standing Order 32 will be made or presented at the meeting.

6. **Questions from the Public Under Standing Order 32**

Any questions from members of the public under Standing Order 32 will be asked at the meeting.

7. **Referral under the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules or the Budget and Policy Framework Procedure Rules**

8. **Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees**

Personnel, Regulatory and Appeals Committee - 22 November 2007

At its meeting on 22 November 2007, the Personnel, Regulatory and Appeals Committee approved an increase in the establishment of the Building Control Service within Commercial Services by the creation of a Trainee Building Control Surveyor post and an Access Officer post, both of which were permanent posts. The cost to the Council would be in the region of £2,000 to £3,000 which would be found within existing budgets in the current year. However, Members asked that the issue of future funding would need to be flagged up to the Executive as part of the budget deliberations.

Recommendation

that the Executive be advised of the need for future funding to be taken into account as part of the budget deliberations.

9. **Financial Monitoring**

(Pages 16 - 20)

Members are requested to consider any significant budget variances and any requests for virement or permanent budget adjustment.

KEY DECISIONS

10. **Forward Plan**

(Pages 21 - 23)

To receive the Forward Plan containing Executive decisions to be taken from December 2007 to March 2008.

Recommendation

that the Forward Plan be received.

11. **Old Gaol, Abingdon**

(Pages 24 - 31)

To receive and consider report 110/07 of the Chief Executive.

Introduction and Report Summary

At its meeting on 13th July 2007 the Executive short listed a number of companies to proceed to stage 2 of the selection process for a development partner for the Old Gaol. The deadline for submissions was 22nd October 2007 and this report sets out the context for the Executive to select a preferred development partner and to determine its position in respect of the other submissions.

The contact officer for this report is Terry Stock, Chief Executive, telephone (01235 540303.

Email address: terry.stock@whitehorsedc.co.uk.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended:

- (a) To select a preferred development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (b) To formulate any guidance it wishes to give to the Chief Executive on any particular aspects it would wish to see explored in the discussions on the Development Agreement. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (c) To select a reserve development partner and state the reasons for that selection. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (d) To determine its position on the remaining schemes, together with its reasons. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (e) To determine its position in respect of Harcourt Way. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (f) To consider the financial consequences of its decision on a preferred developer. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (g) To determine what, if anything, further to put into the public domain. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (h) To determine what, if any, consultation it wishes to take with Abingdon Town Council, Community in the Old Gaol, other groups and individuals. The Officers advise that this decision should be taken in confidential session;*
- (i) To delegate to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council and Leader of the Opposition, the authority to negotiate and conclude any agreements needed to proceed to contract with the preferred developer.*

OTHER MATTERS

12. Corporate Governance Report - Second Quarter 2007/08

(Pages 32 - 43)

To receive and consider report 111/07 of the Senior Management Team.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Corporate Governance Report looks at the key areas of:

- Corporate Priorities
- Best Value Performance Indicators
- Progress against Service Prioritisation Plans
- Key staffing data (sickness levels and turnover)
- Financial commentary

At its meeting on 19th November the Senior Management Team (SMT) considered the second quarter 2007/08 Business Performance Report. This is an exception report which covers all of the aspects of corporate governance contained within this report. SMT agreed the exceptions (where performance / actions are not on target) to be reported to the Executive and agreed the comments / actions which have been included in this report. The full versions of the individual reports will be still available on the Council's website. They can be accessed through the performance section of the Council and Democracy area of the website.

The contact officer for this report is Tim Sadler, Strategic Director, telephone (01235 540360).

Email address: tim.sadler@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendation

That the Senior Management Team's Corporate Governance exception report and proposals be noted.

13. Climate Change

(Pages 44 - 84)

To receive and consider report 112/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Executive will be aware that the production of a Climate Change Strategy and associated action plan was a Service priority for the Council this year.

This report introduces the Climate Change Strategy for the Council and discusses two important decision points, these being:

- The scope of the Council's approach to climate change
- The methodology that the Council could use to deliver the Strategy

The Strategy is attached at appendix A of this report.

The contact officers for this report are Paul Staines, Deputy Director (Housing and Community Safety), telephone 01235 547621.

E-mail address paul.staines@whitehorsedc.co.uk and Mark Saunders, Principal Energy Officer, telephone 01235 547603, e-mail address mark.saunders@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendations

- (j) The Executive approve the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan attached as an appendix to this report;*
- (k) The Executive approve the adoption of a Council-wide approach to addressing the issue of climate change; and*
- (l) The Executive agree, as part of its budget considerations for 2008-9, to consider the resource implications of the Action Plan.*

14. Payments Strategy

(Pages 85 - 99)

To receive and consider report 113/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

This report proposes the adoption of a Payments Strategy for the Vale.

The 2007/08 agreed budget proposals (service prioritisation plan number 52X) requests the provision of better payment alternatives for cash payment facilities. The attached Payments Strategy shows there are opportunities for the Vale to use alternative payment solutions that have the potential to increase customer access and in some cases bring immediate cost benefits. The strategy compliments the Council's Access to Services Strategy and is based on extensive research and examination of the options.

A number of milestones are set out that can move the Vale to this position, and it is recommended that each be implemented on its merits only where the business case for each milestone can prove that customer access will increase and costs be reduced.

It is your officers' view that the opportunity for immediate cost reduction is limited, and that encouraging customers to use electronic payment methods will likely have to be implemented in parallel before users migrate in sufficient numbers to enable reduced transaction costs to be secured.

The Contact Officer for this report is Helen Bishop, Deputy Director Organisational Development & Support, 01235 540372.

Recommendations

- (m) that the Executive approve in principle that the draft strategy to implement the payments policy be recommended to Council;*
- (n) that the following policy which underpins the payments strategy is recommended for adoption by Council:*

“The Council will adopt and implement a Payments Strategy which will deliver the following policy:

- Cost effective channels will be developed and marketed to encourage as many customers as possible to self-serve or use our call centre services*
- Customer service will be, as far as is practicable, coordinated and process managed to ensure a quality consistent service*
- Opportunities will be taken through process and workflow re-design to create cashable and non-cashable efficiencies*
- The Council will continue to develop access channels which reflect the changing preferences of our customers”*

15. Approval of Procurement Strategy

(Pages 100 - 131)

To receive and consider report 114/07 of the Strategic Director and Chief Finance Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Council needs a clear and concise Procurement Strategy to provide guidance to staff involved in the procurement process as to how to buy effectively on behalf of the Council and to demonstrate to tax payers and other stakeholders that the Council is compliant with the law and best practice in carrying out its procurement activities, as well as delivering value for money. It has been developed from a procurement framework that was submitted to Strategic Review Committee for review in January 2007. The Strategy takes full account of Government recommendations (including the National Procurement Strategy 2003) and takes account of current priorities such as environmental, economic and social sustainability and equalities and diversity. Acknowledgment is made to staff in South Oxfordshire District Council who provided the Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement) with assistance in drafting the Strategy .

It is accompanied by a Plan which details 15 key activities which need to be carried out in order to develop procurement excellence in the Vale.

The contact officer for this report is Mike Mackay, Deputy Director (Contracts and Procurement), Tel: 01235 540337.

Email: michael.mackay@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendation

That the Executive approves the Procurement Strategy.

16. Consultation Strategy

(Pages 132- 150)

To receive and consider report 115/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

This report proposes the adoption of the consultation strategy for the Vale as part of the Corporate Priority “Improving internal and external communications”. The strategy needs to be adopted to move the priority forward.

The strategy is based on information from the Strategic Management Team and their service areas, the staff and Member survey and the public general satisfaction survey completed last financial year by polling company Ipsos MORI as part of the Best Value Performance Indicator requirement.

The strategy is built from the position of where we are now and what we aim to achieve over the next two years.

The contact officer for this report is Nikki Malin, Head of Communications, telephone (01235 540376). Email address nikki.malin@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendations

that the Executive agrees the strategy.

17. Cumnor Hill Conservation Area – Proposal by Cumnor Parish Council

(Pages 151 - 162)

(Wards Affected: Appleton and Cumnor)

To receive and consider report 116/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

Cumnor Parish Council have requested the District Council to consider designating part of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise, Cumnor a conservation area.

The contact officer for this report is Grant Audley Miller, Section Head (Environmental Planning & Conservation), telephone (01235 540343). Email address: grant.audley-miller@whitehorsedc.co.uk

Recommendations

- (a) *That a conservation area be not designated on the lower slopes of Cumnor Hill and Third Acre Rise for the reasons set out in paragraphs 5.5-5.7.*
- (b) *That instead, efforts be concentrated on the proposed design guide supplementary planning document as the appropriate means of protecting areas of low density housing in the Vale such as Cumnor Hill.*
- (c) *That the Executive be asked to look into the possibility of the production of some earlier document to provide guidance across the whole of the District for similar areas prior to the production of the Local Development Framework.*

18. **Service Area Half Year Reports 2007/08**

Copies of Service Area Half Year Reports, covering the period 1st April 2007 to 30th September 2007, have already been circulated to members of the Executive and all members of Scrutiny Committee. Members of the Executive are asked to report back to this meeting (a template has been provided) on any significant issues for the service areas for which they are responsible.

All Members of the Executive are asked to bring their copies of the reports to the meeting.

19. **Efficiency Reviews – Streamlining Current Processes**

(Pages 163 - 166)

To receive and consider report 117/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

There are currently a number of different processes for carrying out reviews of our services. Best Value Reviews have been carried out since 2000 when the statutory requirement to deliver 'Best Value' was introduced by the Government. A Best Value Review programme has previously been agreed by the Executive and the current position with these reviews is included in section 6.0. The statutory requirement to carry out Best Value Reviews was removed by the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act October 2007. However, there is a continuing need for services areas to prove that they are delivering efficient, effective, customer orientated services which ensure overall value for money. This report recommends that Best Value Reviews should be superseded by an over-arching Organisational Development approach. This emphasises continual and sustainable improvement and uses a variety of methods to ensure service areas focus on providing value for money. The Organisational Development framework has previously been agreed by the Executive and is being delivered as part of the Access to Services priority.

The contact officer for this report is Jeremy Beach, Organisational Change Manager, telephone (01235 540449); Email: jeremy.beach@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Recommendations

- (o) *that the current position with the Housing Services, White Horse Leisure & Tennis Centre and Partnership Effectiveness reviews be noted and that these Best Value Reviews be formally closed down;*
- (p) *that the following Best Value Reviews do not take place: Human Resources, Environmental Health and Building Control; and*
- (q) *that the Best Value Review approach is replaced with a continuing programme of service reviews under the over-arching Organisational Development framework, and that these should use appropriate methods to determine value for money and implement action plans for improvement and development.*

20. **Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11**

(Pages 167 - 235)

To receive and consider report 118/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The Council is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and aims to deliver accessible services and employment opportunities which meet the needs of all residents and employees.

To help it achieve this, it has just put together a list of key things that it will do over the next three years to make its services more accessible for residents and its employees.

These areas for action are set out in the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11. In accordance with legislation, the Scheme pays particular attention to the needs of disabled people, people from ethnic minorities¹ and women as they may find it more difficult to access local services.

The areas for action have been identified via internal and external consultation and the analysis of Council performance data. They also take into account our relevant statutory duties.

This report summarises the purpose, structure, development and future management of the Equality and Diversity Scheme. It also makes a recommendation for its adoption by the Council's Executive.

The contact officers for this report are Katharine Doherty (Equalities Officer, 01235 520202) and Tim Sadler (Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer, 01235 520202).

Recommendations

That the Executive adopts the Equality and Diversity Scheme 2008/09 – 2010/11.

21. **Treasury Management - Report of meeting with Fund Manager**

At its meeting on 13 July the Executive received a report (32/07) on Treasury Management performance in 2006/07. The bulk of the Council's cash reserves are invested by an external fund manager, Investec Asset Management. The Council's Accountancy section also invests day-to-day cash holdings, such as council tax and business rates receipts, for cash flow purposes. During 2006/07 Investec held in the region of £16 million and the in-house team an average of £11.8 million. Investec had had a difficult year and achieved a return of only 4.15% while the in-house team had returned 4.89%. The 7 day LIBID (London interbank bid rate – the rate at which banks borrow from each other), which is used as a benchmark, averaged 4.97%.

The Executive were disappointed with Investec's performance and asked that a meeting be held with Investec and Butlers, the Council's independent investment advisers, to seek an explanation and assurances about future performance.

A meeting was held at 2pm on Thursday 1 November 2007 in the Abbey Room, Guildhall, Abingdon with Members. Paul Cammies from Investec explained their approach and how this had fallen short in 2006/07. He felt that they had given too much weighting to UK economic indicators and not enough to global ones. As a result, when gilt-edged stock (gilts) prices had fallen in the final quarter, Investec had been too slow to sell their holdings and had incurred losses. He acknowledged that Investec had under-performed and as a result offered to refund the Council the management fee that had been paid for the last quarter of 2006/07.

Investec had now revised its strategy by altering the weight it gave to various factors and had also introduced an automatic process so that when gilts were purchased a level would be set so that if the price fell below a trigger point then selling would be considered. This level would adjust in the event of price rises in order to “lock in” any gains. He went on to outline how he saw the economy developing and the prospects for interest rates and gilt yields. He was confident that Investec were well placed for better returns as rates peaked, with the current yield on the portfolio being 5.99%.

Mr Cammies had answered questions throughout his presentation. He took some final questions and then left the meeting.

Chris Anthony of Butlers then addressed the meeting. He outlined the constraints which limited the opportunities for local authority investment with official guidance acknowledging that yield was important but must be subordinate to security and liquidity. These same constraints applied to funds managed by outside agents. He briefly covered the relative performance of the Council’s Fund Manager, both recently and since commencement. He then went on to outline the advantages of using a Fund Manager in that they had access to a wider range of instruments and also better quality borrowers. It was unfortunate that recent performance had been poor but Investec’s unusual offer to refund a quarter’s management fee was recognition of exceptional poor performance which should not be repeated.

Recommendation

that the Council accept Investec’s offer to refund the management fee for the 4th quarter of 2006/07 and closely monitor ongoing performance for the remainder of the Treasury Management contract.

22. Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund

(Pages 236 - 239)

(Wards Affected: Abingdon Abbey and Barton; Abingdon Northcourt; Abingdon Peachcroft;)

To receive and consider report 119/07 of the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer.

Introduction and Report Summary

The purpose of this report is to update members of the Executive on the project to refurbish and extend the facilities at the North East Abingdon Community Association (NEACA); to draw the attention of Members to the criteria of the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund and to seek confirmation that a portion of the funding awarded in

2004 from this Fund can still be made available to NEACA for the revised project.

The contact officer for this report is Lorna Edwards, Community Strategy Officer (Tel: 01235 547626).

Relationship with the Council's Vision, Strategies and Policies

This report supports the Council's Vision and Priorities. It also supports the Vale Community Strategy. It does not conflict with any Council strategy or any Council policy.

Recommendations

- (a) *that Members note NEACA's revised project resulting from its unsuccessful lottery bid;*
- (b) *that Members agree that NEACA should receive funding from the Lottery and Other Grants Support Fund to obtain WREN funding for the revised project, the precise amount being dependent on the amount of grant awarded by WREN; and*
- (c) *that the Council's Community Funding Advice Service, provided by Oxfordshire Community and Voluntary Action (OCVA), be requested to work with NEACA to identify funding that may be needed to make up any shortfall for the project.*

23. Health and Safety Training

At a recent meeting of the Health and Safety Review Board, training for Members on health and safety matters was discussed. It was considered that as Executive Members had a health and safety responsibility for the Council, then they should receive appropriate training in their roles and responsibilities. Similarly, the Scrutiny Committee had a responsibility to scrutinise the Executive and therefore its Members should also be trained. It was considered that this training should be open to all Members of the Council but it should be mandatory for Executive and Scrutiny Committee Members to be accredited to the IOSH (Institute of Occupational Safety and Health) 'Safety for Senior Executives' training standard. This training has already been given to Directors and Deputy Directors. The Executive is requested to support this view and make a recommendation to the Council.

The Health and Safety Review Board considers that an evening session would best suit Members.

Recommendation

that the Council be recommended to make it a mandatory requirement for all Members of the Executive and the Scrutiny Committee to be accredited to the Institute of Occupational Safety and Health 'Safety for Senior Executives' training standard and request the Strategic Director and Monitoring Officer to arrange an evening training session to which other Members of the Council are to be invited also.

24. Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group

(Pages 240 - 249)

To receive the minutes of the meetings of the Flood Recovery Grant Advisory Group held on 4 October 2007 (attached) and 7 November 2007 (to be circulated separately).

25. Exclusion of the Public, including the Press

The Chair to move that in accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the remainder of the meeting to prevent the disclosure to them of exempt information, as defined in Section 100(I) and Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, to the Act when the following items are considered:

Item 26 Minutes

(Category 1 - Information relating to any individual.)

(Category 2 - Information which is likely to reveal the identity of any individual.)

(Category 3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information.)

Item 27 Old Gaol, Abingdon

(Category 3)

Item 28 Re-tendering the Bank Contract

(Category 3)

Item 29 Property Matters

(Category 3)

Item 30 Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees

(Category 1)

(Category 2)

(Category 3)

EXEMPT INFORMATION UNDER SECTION 100A(4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

STANDING ITEMS

26. Minutes

To adopt and sign as a correct record the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 5 October 2007, (previously circulated).

KEY DECISIONS

27. **Old Gaol, Abingdon**

(Wards Affected: Abingdon Abbey and Barton)

To receive and consider report 120/07 of the Chief Executive.

THIS REPORT WILL BE CIRCULATED SEPARATELY.

OTHER MATTERS

28. **Re-tendering the Bank Contract**

(Pages 250 - 255)

To receive and consider report 121/07 of the Strategic Director and Chief Finance Officer.

29. **Property Matters**

To consider any property matters.

30. **Referrals from the Overview and Scrutiny Committees and Other Committees**

(Page 256)

To consider the attached note.