

EXECUTIVE REPORT

FULL 12 04 05

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO**COUNCILLOR ELAINE WOODBURN - PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

1 Key Issues – Progress Report

1.1 **Local Public Service Agreements (LPSA's)**

A Local Public Service Agreement is a voluntary agreement negotiated between an individual local authority and the Government. The overall aim of the LPSA's is to improve performance in the delivery of local public services by focussing on targeted outcomes with support from Government. We are now starting the negotiations about the second round of LPSA's. These will cover the period from 2006 – 2009 and will consist of 12 stretching targets which focus on shared local priorities for improvement. Cumbria County Council will negotiate the agreement on behalf of all Cumbrian partners, including LA's, Voluntary, LSP's, Public and Private sector. There are 21 potential target areas that fall under the themes of Economy/Jobs/Regeneration, Environment, Transport, Health and Well-being, Housing, Older People, Learning and Skills and Community Involvement.

There is a potential £12 Million in performance reward grant, this sum being pro rata to the amount of stretch achieved, further discussions are being held to seek clarification and agree criteria for allocation.

These will become important targets for Copeland, and I will keep members updated.

1.2 **PFI Grant**

The ODPM has undertaken a Local Authority Grant Reform consultation exercise that will change the way in which grant is paid for new PFI schemes. Local Authorities with schemes already receiving grant have been given the option of either retaining their existing grant structure or changing to the new one. The current grant structure for our scheme is on a declining balance basis, but we have now agreed to pay the grant on a 'Annuity' basis, which means the payments will be equal every year over the 25 year period, this reduces our grant approximately by 100K per year. Over the 25 year period this means we will pay just over £7 million a reduction of £6million. This is an excellent deal for the Council and one which both the OSC P & R Chair and myself readily put our signatures to.

1.3 **Cleator Moor Co-op**

The plans to develop the former Co-op building in Cleator Moor as managed office workspace will shortly be moving forward due to funding having been finally secured from a number of different sources. A contract for the conversion/redevelopment works at the site is soon to be let. The project has seen partnership working from a number of different agencies, and 50% of funding has been secured from the North West Development Agency (NWDA), Heritage Lottery Fund/Townscape Heritage Initiative, Single Regeneration Budget/ Cleator Moor Development Ltd, and Copeland Borough Council. The

remaining 50% of the £1.5million is to be met from the EU/European Regional Development Fund. This is excellent news for Cleator Moor and Copeland and I am sure the facility will become a major asset.

1.4 West Cumbria Strategic Task Forum

Not that I know any different from anybody else but I have wrote to all local members asking if they have any objection to the next forum meeting been held in London, with the following one here in West Cumbria. In the likelihood of a general election there might be new ministers, new MP's therefore it would ensure a good attendance by all. The work of the forum is progressing we have already had a visit from Patricia Hewitt MP and last month this was followed by a visit by senior civil servants where we were given the opportunity to show them around Copeland followed by a presentation again highlighting what challenges and opportunities lie ahead.

1.5 Revenues & Benefits

The new RBS Academy system went live on 10 March and we immediately started the year end process in order to issue the annual bills by the deadline of 17 March. We are now working hard to clear the backlog that accrued due to the down time during the data conversion and annual billing processes. There will be teething troubles as with any new system but we are hoping these are kept to a minimum and would ask that if Members are made aware of any that they bring them to the attention of a member of RBS management. Now that we have gone live all the additional members of contract staff and Project team have left. It will take some time for all staff to become fully conversant with the new system and adapt to new ways of working but we are confident that this will result in improvements to our performance.

2 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

Subject: **Report of Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Performance and Resources – Council Tax Discounts for Beach Bungalows.**

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0157

Context: To consider a recommendation from Overview and Scrutiny – Performance and Resources to reinstate the 50% discount for second homes for beach bungalows and chalets without running water and electricity.

Decision

That

a) Council be recommended to approve that a locally defined exemption to the discounts be applied to Council Tax for second homes, exempting those beach bungalows and chalets with neither running water nor electricity from the 10% discount, reinstating a 50% discount subject to the owners voluntarily entering into a signed formal agreement with the Council that those utilities are not present in their bungalow and that there is no intention to install those utilities "; and

b) that owners be notified of the option of applying to the Valuation Office for re-valuation for the purposes of Council Tax banding".

Subject: Approval of Revenue Budget Capital Programme and Council Tax 2005/06

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0163

Context: To approve and recommend to Council the 2005/06 Final Revenue Budget and to approve the Council Tax to be levied for the financial year 2005/06

Decision

That Council be recommended to:

- a) approve the budget pages issued under separate cover;
- b) approved the revised base budget of £9,495,293 including recurring and non-recurring revenue bids. (£9,485,951 previous report);
- c) agree the decrease in estimated fees & charges in respect of pest control detailed in paragraph 4.4;
- d) recommend the formal resolution as per Appendix C;
- e) the Budget Working Party continues to meet to consider the process for 2006/07 budget in light of the further savings and efficiencies to be found;
- f) note the recommendations already approved by Council referred to in paragraph 3.1;
- g) note the revised medium term financial plan attached at Appendix B;
- h) release £520,000 back to Major projects Fund, detailed in paragraph 8.5;
- i) note the confirmation of the robustness of the budget and adequacy of reserves detailed in paragraphs.

Subject: Housing and Council Tax Overpayments Policy

Date of Decision: 10 March 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0185

Context: To consider the newly drafted, Overpayments Policy which requires endorsement by the Council's Executive and Full Council

Decision

That Council be recommended to approve the draft Overpayments Policy.

3 EXECUTIVE DECISIONS REPORTED FOR INFORMATION ONLY

Subject: Monitoring Of Revenue Expenditure For The 9 Month Period to 31 December 2004

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0161

Context: This report informs Members in detail of the variations in actual and expected revenue based expenditure and income over £10,000, or more than 10% of budget, for the 9 month period 1st April to 31st December 2004

Decision

That

- a) the report be noted; and
- b) the Executive agrees the setting up of the Gershon Working Party to look at efficiencies of the Council, both financial and non financial, and to report back to the Executive with recommendations, consisting of The Chair and Deputy Chair of the Budget Working Party; The Portfolio Holder – Resources and Local Democracy; Chair and Deputy Chair – Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Performance and Resources; One Independent

Member & One other Member who is not a Member of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Performance and Resources.

Subject: Capital Programme Amendments 2004/05

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0162

Context: This is a progress report that advises Members of changes to date in the Capital Programme for 2004/2005 and the level of expenditure to between 1st April 2004 and 31st December 2004

Decision

That

- a) the amendments to the Capital Programme as detailed in paragraphs 2.1.1 to 2.1.4 and Appendix A be approved.**
- b) the spend to date and project managers comments as at Appendix B be noted: and**
- c) the approved programme as at Appendix C be noted.**

Subject: Urgent Actions

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0169

Context: To note actions taken under Executive Procedure Rules

Decision

Subject: Discretionary Rate Relief

Date of Decision: 22 February 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0174

Context: To consider the applications for Discretionary Rate Relief, and approve or refuse as recommended.

Decision

That

- a) Relief be refused to the applicant shown in 3.1**
- b) Relief be granted to the applicant shown in 3.2**
- c) Relief be granted to the applicant shown in 4.1**
- d) Relief be refused to the applicant shown in 5.1**
- e) Relief be refused to the applicant shown in 6.1**

Subject: Benefits Fraud Inspectorate (BFI) Report – Action Plan For Recommendations

Date of Decision: 10 March 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0186

Context: The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate Report, issued in December 2004, concluded with several recommendations for improving the service; the expectation being that the Council will implement them. Consequently, these recommendations have been formulated into an Action Plan

Decision

That

- a) the Action Plan be verified and endorsed; and**
- b) monitoring reports be submitted to the Executive six monthly.**

Subject: Council Tax Write Offs Over £1000

Date of Decision: 10 March 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0190

Context: The Executive approve the writing off of various Council Tax debts over £1000.

Decision

The Executive approve the writing off of various Council Tax debts over £1000

Subject: Non Domestic Rate Write Offs Over £1000

Date of Decision: 10 March 2005 **Decision Reference:** EXE/04/0191

Context: The Executive approve the writing off of various Non Domestic Rate debts over £1000

Decision

That the writing off of debts be approved.