

**CHOOSING TO CHANGE – UPDATE REPORT**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr Elaine Woodburn  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Chief Executive  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Brian Dinsdale

**Summary:** Full Council has agreed a Communication and Engagement Plan in relation to the Choosing to Change Programme and a key action arising from this plan is to provide Council with a regular update on progress. This report provides an update on the Choosing to Change Programme since the last report on 19 January 2010.

<p><b>Recommendation:</b> Council is asked to note this report and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Confirm its agreement to accept the extension of support from the IDEA to 30 June 2010</li><li>b) Agree to adopt the outline corporate planning framework in paragraph 2.3 of this report, and request a detailed action plan to be prepared</li><li>c) Agree that the C2C programme should be prioritised in accordance with paragraph 2.3 of this report</li><li>d) Request the Constitutional Working Group to consider and make recommendations on the terms of reference of all Member Bodies involved in the improvement process, including the Corporate Improvement Board</li><li>e) Agree the priorities of the Constitutional Working Group in paragraph 2.6 of this report</li><li>f) Agree to the provision of Blackberries for all members</li><li>g) Agree that all communications will be electronically provided, except papers for the committees members sit on.</li></ul>
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**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Council on 8 December agreed to a number of recommendations in relation to the Choosing to Change (C2C) Programme, including the Terms of Reference for the Choosing to Change Board, Roles and Responsibilities, Critical Success Factors, the Communication and Engagement Plan and the overarching Objectives for the programme. It also delegated responsibility to the Choosing to Change Board to make funding applications to the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NWIEP) and others in order to support the objectives of the programme. Full Council on 19 January received the first routine report on the work of the Board and this report provides the latest update, following a Board meeting on 16 February.

**2. CHOOSING TO CHANGE BOARD MEETING – 16 FEBRUARY 2010**

- 2.1 At its meeting on 16 February 2010 the Board received reports on a number of issues as follows
- 2.2 **External support**

Following an initial offer from the IDEA of 2 days per week support to the end of March 2010, the interim Chief Executive has requested that this support be extended to the end June 2010 to provide additional capacity in C2C programming, to assist in the ongoing review of governance arrangements and to provide any other assistance that may be required. A representative of IDEA attended the meeting and provided the Board with written agreement to the extension requested. The estimated total cost of IDEA input now amounts to £51.98K, all of which will be met from external resources. During the period of support the IDEA will therefore assist in the development of the corporate and financial planning framework and will also offer peer-support to members during its involvement in the constitutional review.

Formal agreement has now been received from the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership to an interim award of £50K to support the overall programme, subject to the submission of a detailed delivery plan by 31 March 2010.

### 2.3 Programme Planning

The Board received a report from the Interim Chief Executive which considered the relationship between the C2C programme and the Council's wider Corporate Planning Arrangements. The Board acknowledged the demanding financial situation the council faces over the next few years as a result of likely reductions in government grants, and the need for the council to make early progress in its medium term financial and service planning for 2011/12 to 2013/14.

The Board accepted that the C2C programme, as currently defined, is only one element of a wider corporate planning process that is required by the council to react to the challenges ahead. With a few exceptions the C2C programme is concerned with '**How**' things should be done, rather than '**What**' should be done or the '**Affordability/Capacity**' constraints of carrying out council activities. It was agreed that these latter aspects are being considered outwith the C2C Board, but are nevertheless crucial to the council's ability to meet its overall vision of 'leading the transformation of West Cumbria to a prosperous future', and as a result the various strands of the improvement process needed to be more closely aligned.

The Board discussed the need for the council to refresh its outline corporate and medium term financial plans for 2011/14 as soon as possible, to be ready for consultation in the autumn, and therefore to prioritise its C2C plans to assist in this process. The Board considered that it would be helpful for it to propose an outline corporate planning framework to the council, setting out key dates, which would enable it to prioritise its own activities accordingly. The suggested framework was as follows:

- *A medium term projected financial position for the council for 2011/12 to 2013/14 by end **April 2010**, updating the provisional forecasts built into the draft budget papers for 2010/11. This should:*
  - *Evaluate a number of potential reductions in government grant*
  - *Establish an agreed longer term reserves strategy*
  - *Calculate future commitments*
  - *Establish provisional budget gaps for each year as an aid to forward planning*
- *Refreshed strategic objectives, long term outcomes and broad 'promises and actions' for each year of the plan by end **September 2010**, based on the projected resources available that will ensure the council:*
  - *Is an effective democratic organisation that represents the interests of the Copeland community and provides value for money*
  - *Continues to improve the way services are provided to allow residents to live, work, learn and relax in a clean, safe and attractive environment*
  - *Continues the development of a strong, diverse local economy*

- *A revised and affordable organisational structure and workforce plan by end **September 2010**, designed to deliver agreed long term outcomes and match projected resources*
- *Effective public consultation on the council's plans by end **November 2010***
- *Preparation of annual service plans, corporate implementation plan and annual budgets for 2011/12, by end **March 2011***

Board members were committed to ensuring the full involvement of Council Staff in this process, to take advantage of their knowledge and experience of Council services.

The Board then considered its own C2C programme to determine how it could be prioritised to assist in meeting the corporate and financial planning requirements of the council. It determined the following priorities:

- *Governance and Leadership*
  - *The role of members (in this process)*
  - *The revision of protocols and standards to regulate activity (i.e. constitutional reform)*
  - *Improving the quality of information to members*
- *Sustainable Council Services*
  - *The cost and value of council activity*
  - *Better use of assets*
  - *Shaping external resources*
  - *Generation of additional income*
- *Partnership service delivery*
  - *Future shared services programme*
  - *Performance and VFM of current partnerships (including the LSP)*
- *Communications and Engagement*
  - *Communication and engagement with the community*

It was agreed that the above priority actions should be completed by September 2010 to conform to the suggested corporate framework, and that an action plan containing the remainder of the C2C programme be prepared as soon as possible to form a funding bid for external resources

## 2.4 **C2C Reference Group**

The Board agreed the terms of reference for the Group, which will be composed of representatives from support agencies, with the aim of channelling external support, challenge and advice to the Council Management Team and the C2C Board. The notes of the Group will be a standard item on C2C Board agendas and will be chaired by the Interim Chief Executive

## 2.5 **Corporate Improvement Board**

Following a request by the Corporate Improvement Board (CIB), the C2C Board discussed the relationships between the various Member bodies involved in the improvement process. It was accepted that activities of the CIB had evolved to meet the changing agenda, but more clarity was required as the Council began to develop its longer term plans. It was agreed to refer this matter to the Constitutional Working Group for consideration.

## 2.6 **Constitution Update**

The Board considered a report from the constitutional working group, and agreed the five priority areas for consideration, namely:

- *Meetings of the Full Council – the rules of debate,*
- *Omissions from current constitution*
- *Scheme of delegation – portfolio decision making, enhanced scrutiny arrangements*
- *Budget engagement with members and the public*
- *Officer/Member relationships*

The Board recognised the time constraints in reporting conclusions to the Full Council in April 2010 and requested that priority be given to engagement and relationship issues, and those relating to the remits of Member Bodies engaged in the improvement process, over those requiring detailed changes to the small print in the constitution. It requested to be consulted on the ongoing review of overview and scrutiny arrangements, and expected the constitutional working party to consult all councillors as part of its development work

## 2.7 **Communications**

It has been previously discussed that for Councillors to be able to carry out their duties both effectively and efficiently and to be kept informed of day to day issues without having to read about them in the local media, improved methods of communication need to be introduced. One solution to this is the recommended provision of Blackberries for all members. The cost of this will be neutral as the provision of Blackberries will be offset against the return of unused laptops, the ceasing of broadband connection for these users, with the main saving coming from stopping the present necessity of printing and sending out paper hard copies, except for the papers for the committees Members sit on. The additional benefits are that Members will be able to ring other members/officers as well as some selected internal numbers, mainly in the member services department at nil cost. The benefit of being able to contact officers/members via e-mails instantly is immeasurable.

Training on using the Blackberries will be provided and the roll out if agreed will be staged and provided externally, starting from April/May.

## 3. **FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 A budget of £100K of council resources is available to meet the C2C programme, and a further sum of £50K has now been approved by the NW IEP. In kind support amounting to £51.98K has also been secured from the IDEA. Expenditure to date (11 February 2010) amounts to £16.1K, but further sums relating to the constitutional review amounting to £25.9K are committed during this financial year. It is expected that the C2C programme will require further external resource to complete, and bids will be prepared as the programme detail is developed. It is expected that an interim request will be made to the NW IEP at a forthcoming Reference Group to support the council's financial and corporate planning activities over the coming months.

**List of Consultees:**

Choosing to Change Board, Corporate Team

**Background Papers:**

Choosing to Change Board Agenda and Papers 16.2.10