

**CHOOSING TO CHANGE – UPDATE**

**EXECUTIVE MEMBER:** Cllr Elaine Woodburn  
**LEAD OFFICER:** Chief Executive – Paul Walker  
**REPORT AUTHOR:** Hilary Mitchell and Ian Curwen

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the Choosing to Change Programme for Full Council since the last report on 17 August 2010.

<b>Recommendations:</b> Council is asked to note this report
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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Background

We launched our Choosing to Change programme last year, after recognising that the council needed to move forward to improve the services it provides to the public.

As the programme has moved forward it has adapted to meet the challenges the authority is facing, and the programme now has a strong financial flavour. With budget cuts of upwards of 25% expected in the next few months, it's clear that we need to reshape our services.

### Progress to date – the constitutional review

The first piece of work in the Choosing to Change programme was for us to make sure that we had the right rules and regulations in place to make sure we conduct our business in the most effective manner. The first part of this 'constitutional review', has now taken place, and some key changes have been made.

These include:

- A refreshed and revitalised constitution
- New Council rules to ensure meetings run smoothly with the professionalism you'd expect
- A new and unique extension for the right of the public to ask questions at our meetings
- The implementation of a new member/employee protocol
- A new focus and drive for our overview and scrutiny structure, with two new committees – one internal and one external.

These changes are far reaching and will have a major impact on the way we do business. In fact, it is rare for an authority to carry out the type of review we have undertaken. We recognised that it was a crucial part of enabling cross-party working, which will help deliver our change programme.

Council meetings now have a new look and feel, and as a result operate more efficiently. To ensure that this was the case, we even held a mock council which enabled everyone to be clear of how the meetings should operate in the future. The details of this have been

passed to the local government media, who found the story of interest as a pioneering example of local government improvement.

The change to public questions at meetings now means that a member of the public can contact us up to a few minutes before a full council meeting starts to request to ask a question. If approved, it can be asked at that very meeting. We have a dedicated slot at the start of our full council meetings for any questions of this nature. A similar process exists for our executive committee meetings.

The main part of the constitutional review has now taken place, but the group will continue to meet and recently endorsed and presented to Full Council the changes to Contract Standing orders. The amended Financial Regulations will be presented to the December Full Council.

### **Councillor recruitment**

As we approach the 2011 council elections, we are working to try and promote councillor recruitment more widely. The Choosing to Change Board recognises that we need to increase the pool of candidates who might stand for election, to ensure that we have the highest possible standard of councillors. This is especially important as a number of councillors are planning to stand down at these elections and all 51 seats will be filled.

Work planned includes features in the local press, a recruitment leaflet, articles in Copeland Matters and much more.

### **Moving forward**

#### **Outline of the Council budget position**

It has been well documented that we will be facing a budget shortfall next year. Like all other local authorities and public sector bodies, we are also gearing up for major cuts in funding anticipated to be upwards of 25%. Indeed, we have already seen some of these, with cuts to funding for the Future Jobs Fund, Playbuilder scheme, and free swimming amongst others. For this reason, the number one aim of the Choosing to Change programme is to balance the budget. This means that we must identify significant savings from our operating costs – not just this year but into the future as well. We will need to reduce our budget by around £1.4m next year.

#### **Service reviews**

To help us meet the budget gap, and to ensure that any cuts to our budgets are fully thought through, we are undergoing a process of service reviews for each of our services. The service review process is our way of responding to the expected cuts, and our way of making sure making sure our services are fit for purpose.

All of our services are currently being examined as part of our service review programme. These reviews will ensure that we understand how each service helps deliver the authority's aims, and that we understand the cost of this.

As part of the process we have asked managers to come up with their proposals for making savings. This means that all services will be assessed so that we can take account of the full picture when we consider any cuts.

Whilst it is too early yet to say what the outcome of the service reviews will be, we do know that we need concentrate on providing our core services and the ones that have been identified as important, and we also know that we must make savings whilst doing this.

The reviews will be comprehensive and every area will look at whether there are other ways we can provide the service by working differently, working with partners or by making efficiencies.

These service reviews have started to take place. Initially we are focussing on our internal 'support' services, and then we will focus on our customer facing services.

Once we have an idea of how we plan to make the savings, we will consult on these with the public. It's important that the public are able to have their say on any changes, which could be significant if we are to meet the saving challenges ahead.

We anticipate that most service reviews will be complete by the end of this year.

### **Our partnership with Chorley Council**

We are working with Chorley Council on the service review process in what is a unique and innovative partnership. As part of the work, both councils are working closely together, and we're learning from the experience that has made them one of the best district councils in the country.

The process is a partnership though, and Chorley are also learning from our experiences of shared services and the influence the nuclear industry has on the area.

Chorley have helped support us in some specific aspects of the service review process and with some of the early reviews – for example of HR policies and communications.

### **Corporate Plan development**

One of the most important documents that any organisation has is its business plan. For ourselves, this is our Corporate Plan, and is the document that outlines what we plan to do. We're currently working on a new version of this, which is being developed in conjunction with the service review process. Obviously in recent months much has changed for local government, and our budgetary position has changed. It's important that the plan is an accurate and clear reflection of what we plan to do.

As such it will clearly set out what we'll be doing. It will cover the transformational projects we aim to deliver over three years as well as having a clear delivery plan, including targets, for the next twelve months.

Once complete, we'll share this plan so that everyone is completely clear about what we will be doing and what we won't.

### **A new local strategic partnership for Copeland**

Earlier this year, along with Allerdale and Cumbria County Council, we took the decision to disband the West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership.

It was agreed by all parties that it would be more effective to have more local partnerships. As a result, we have held extensive discussions with partners including Localities, and plans for a proposed new partnership are elsewhere on the Council agenda..

The aim of the new partnership will be to ensure that people in Copeland are able to be involved in service delivery to help ensure improvements are made and local priorities are met.

### **Improving health is everyone's business**

Another area of the Choosing to Change programme is focussed on reducing health inequalities in the borough and improving the health of the borough's residents generally.

This is an important area of work, and one that has for too long been the focus solely of the NHS. We will be working to ensure that health improvements are much more a part of our work and our decision making, as it's clear that many of the services we provide or can influence can have a major impact on the health of our residents and our employees.

### **Changes to communications**

One of the first areas that we have looked at as part of the service review process is the way we communicate – with our employees, councillors and members of the public.

As highlighted above, it's important that we're clear about what we're planning to do as an authority and how we will deliver this.

To assist with this we are sharpening up our communications, so that we're doing the best job we can of keeping everyone informed on what we're doing.

We've already made some changes to our internal communications with employees, including introducing a new employee newsletter and a new staff forum. We'll now be turning our attention to our external communications with the public, our partners and the press.

### **Review of senior management**

We have a new corporate leadership structure for the organisation. Our corporate leadership team (CLT) is made up of Paul Walker (chief executive) and our two new directors – Pat Graham and Joanne Wagstaffe, and will meet fortnightly

In addition to this, a senior leadership team (SLT) will also meet regularly to discuss the key issues facing the authority, starting with the Choosing to Change programme. This group is largely made up of heads of service and the CLT.

Stage two of this review process will look at service managers and heads of service, and will be completed following the service review process, and as part of the aim of reducing costs.

### **Choosing to Change Board 14 September**

In addition to those identified within the report, the Board noted the need to change planned Resource Planning Working Group meetings in order to facilitate a more rigorous service review process, and noted the offer of additional help in kind from Local Government Improvement and Development (formerly IDeA). This comprises of work with both our Corporate Leadership Team and help for members to support financial decision-making, which would ideally take place in January 2011 involving member peers.

Members of the Board reviewed the Choosing to Change Risk Register. As a result of a discussion relating to awareness of Government policy changes, it was agreed that regular policy briefings for members should be prepared.

### **In conclusion**

We hope you have found the information in this report a useful update on where we are in our change programme. As you can see, we are making significant progress, and we still have a lot more to do, but our Direction of Travel is definitely going in the right direction.

#### **List of Consultees:**

Cllr E Woodburn, Chief Executive, Choosing to Change Board, Communications Manager

#### **Background Papers:**

Choosing to Change agenda papers – 14 September

2010