

CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE POLICY DEVELOPMENT GROUP

MEETING, 13TH NOVEMBER, 2007

Present – Councillors Adia, Hayes, Hussain (as deputy for Councillor P. Brierley), Rushton, Sherrington, Mrs Thomas, J. Walsh and D. Wilkinson.

Also in attendance

Mr. S. Harriss	-	Chief Executive
Ms S. Curran	-	Deputy Director, Corporate Resources
Mr A. Gardner	-	Chief Accountant, Corporate Resources
Miss K. Treadwell	-	Democratic Services Officer

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors P. Brierley, Chadwick and Morris

Councillor Adia in the Chair

5. MINUTES

The minutes of the proceedings of the meeting of the Policy Development Group held on 19th October, 2007 were submitted and signed as a correct record.

6. CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which contained the updated Capital Investment Strategy.

By way of background information, the report advised that the Capital Investment Strategy reflected the work the Council was doing with its partners through the Local Strategic Partnership to develop a common vision for the Borough. The Strategy also incorporated the Council's wider strategic aims, which had been subject to a major consultation exercise and were contained in the Council's Corporate Plan.

The Capital Investment Strategy had been most recently updated in October, 2006. The major area of review in the current year was the Neighbourhood Renewal. The Council had identified key priority areas within the Borough where levels of deprivation, economic decline, unemployment and the need for investment in infrastructure were highest. Resources were directed, wherever possible, to deprived areas and to areas of the borough with strategic economic development potential.

During the course of members' discussions, various comments, questions and observations were made, as follows:-

- the speed with which maintenance backlogs were being cleared;
- the progress in realising the assets of Park House; and
- prioritising essential and non-essential work.

It was agreed that the report be noted.

7. NEW GOVERNANCE PRINCIPALS IN GREATER MANCHESTER

The Chief Executive submitted a report which updated the Policy Development Group as to the principles underpinning proposed new governance arrangements in Greater Manchester as agreed by the AGMA Executive at its meetings on 28th September ,2007 and 26th October ,2007.

Members were reminded that the AGMA Executive had agreed to set up a number of sub groups which could look at certain aspects of city region working in Greater Manchester in more detail, particularly the governance arrangements which would meet the aspirations and priorities of AGMA as submitted to the Government .

The sub group on Governance had recommended a number of principles, expressed on the basis of 'Heads of Terms' ,which would inform the drawing up of a more detailed constitution which would underpin this new way of working.

AGMA had previously agreed a model which included an Executive Board, 7 Commissions and a Business Leadership Council; the structure was attached at Annex 1 to the report.

The report detailed the overall aims and objectives of the proposals ,together with the responsibilities and functions of the Executive Board and proposed membership of the Executive Board and Business Leadership Council .

Details were also provided with respect to the principles of the proposed relationship between the Executive Board and the Commissions and with respect to accountability the following had been agreed:

- an obligation on each local authority to report back to its own Executive /Council on the decisions taken by the City Region Executive Board. The actions of any Leader on the Executive Board and his/her decisions would then be potentially subject to that own authority's scrutiny arrangements;

- the opportunity for any local authority to refer any decision taken by one of the Commissions to the Executive Board where it considered that the Commission had acted outside the delegated authority given to it by the Executive Board; and
- a system of a short written electronic digest of the Executive Board's actions and decisions would be sent after each meeting to all Councillors within Greater Manchester.

AGMA's meeting on 26th October ,2007 had also agreed proposals regarding a system for the call in of decisions of the Executive Board or Commissions .

AGMA had agreed that the principles within the report would be developed into a new constitution which would underpin the future of City Region governance in Greater Manchester.

It was proposed that the new constitution would be in place by 1 April ,2008, with the new Executive Board, Economic Development Commission and Health Commission to be operational by that time and with other Commissions to follow at a speed and time reflecting their own requirements in terms of priorities and need for organisational change.

It was noted that parts of the new structure would operate in shadow form before 1st April ,2008 where necessary and that the Chief Executive's group had been charged with reviewing and putting in place the necessary arrangements to ensure that the new proposals were confirmed by individual authorities before 1st April ,2008.

During the course of members' discussions, various comments, questions and observations were made, as follows:-

- ensuring that powers were not taken away from Local Authorities to the Commission;
- concerns over democratic deficit;
- concern over the possibility that other areas interests might take precedence over those areas such Bolton; and
- the public's perceptions of these new arrangements.

It was agreed that the principles agreed by AGMA relating to the new governance arrangements for city region working be noted, together with the implications for Bolton.

(The meeting started ay 2.30pm and finished at 3.15pm)