

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 9 January 2008 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Leadbetter (Chairman), Lloyd Jones, Findon, Jones, A. Lowe, Norddahl, Philbin, Sly and Worrall

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Cross and Osborne

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: I. Leivesley and C. Halpin

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB24 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2007 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

BEB25 CPA - USE OF RESOURCES ASSESSMENT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy on the process the Audit Commission would use annually to assess how well the Council uses its resources. In addition the Board was updated on the informal feedback received from the Audit Commission.

It was noted that 'use of resources' was an Audit Commission assessment of how well Council's manage their financial resources. It looked at how financial management was integrated with strategy and corporate management, supported Council priorities and delivers value for money.

Furthermore the use of resources work was carried out yearly by the Council's appointed external auditors. A judgement was then produced for each of the five themes, which were outlined in detail within the report.

The Board was advised that publication of this year's

assessment for the Council was due soon and informal feedback had been received from the Audit Commission, however the Council's formal score would be embargoed until national publication took place.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) an Action Plan be developed by the Audit Commission, be reported to the next meeting, and be monitored by the Board.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

BEB26 ENGAGEMENT OF EFFICIENCY PARTNER

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which informed the Board of the decision of the Executive Board to engage some external support to work alongside the Council in identifying further efficiency savings. In addition the report sought to outline the steps the efficiency partner would take in developing a long-term efficiency programme.

It was noted that at the last meeting of the Board it was reported that as part of the announcement on the local government financial settlement for 2008/9 – 2010/11 the Government had published a document entitled "Delivering Value for Money in Local Government: Meeting the Challenge of CSR07".

Furthermore the paper outlined the Government's expectations that local authorities should make 3% cashable efficiency savings each year for the next three years. The Government expects local government collectively to save some £4.9 billion over the next three years.

In addition the Council's Executive Board considered the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) on 15th November 2007. The MTFS showed that the spending required to maintain existing policies and programmes was expected to increase at a faster rate than the resources available to support it. To balance the budget, the forecast showed there was a requirement to make significant efficiency and cash savings. Given the financial challenge the Council was likely to face over the coming years, it was considered prudent to review the way in which it did its business. The Executive Board agreed that external support be engaged to work alongside the Authority to assist in that process.

A number of potential partners were asked to present options as to how such a piece of work could be undertaken. As a result of that process, KPMG had been appointed to work with the Council to deliver a longer term efficiency programme.

It was further noted that KPMG work would be undertaken in three stages, which were outlined in detail within the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) further reports be brought to the Board on the progress of the work.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

BEB27 TOPIC GROUPS - UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy on the work of the Topic Groups established by the Board.

It was noted that the Board had established two topic groups to examine procurement and workforce planning and structures. Both topic groups had had an initial meeting and would meet again shortly.

The Procurement Group had received a presentation on how the Council currently carries out its procurement function and would be looking at how other Authorities carry out that activity. It would also be examining the spend analysis that had recently been undertaken to look at how the Council gains the best value from its procurement processes.

The Workforce Planning and Structures Group had asked to look at the current management structures of the Council and how they have evolved and developed over recent years. The Group would be looking at structures in light of the recently published "Local Government Workforce Strategy" produced jointly by the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Delivery Agency and the Local Government Employers Association.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.18 p.m.