

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 27 February 2008 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Osborne

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: I. Leivesley, C. Halpin and M. Murphy

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB28 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2008 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

BEB29 COMPREHENSIVE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2008 (CPA)

The Board was advised of the recently published Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) scores for Halton.

Each year the Audit Commission publishes, in February, its CPA scores for all upper tier authorities. This consists of an overall score (star rating) and a direction of travel assessment. In addition it also provides a series of scores for individual services and a "use of resources" score. It was noted that the Council's overall score was 4 star with a direction of travel assessment of 'improving well'.

The report detailed the commentary provided by the Audit Commission at the same time as the score and the various individual scores that made up the overall score.

In addition the Board discussed the implications of

the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA), particularly in relation to how the process was expected take place and whether the Council would be given any powers to ensure compliance with the process from its partners, as the Council would be the accountable body.

During this discussion it was noted that confirmation of how the CAA would work was still awaited, however, the Audit Commission would be undertaking a consultation exercise in the near future.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) a further report be brought to the Board when details of the Comprehensive Area Assessment are known.

BEB30 CORPORATE ASSESSMENT / JOINT AREA REVIEW - PREPARATIONS (CA/JAR)

The Board was advised of the arrangements of the Corporate Assessment (CA) and Joint Area Review (JAR) of Children's Services.

It was noted that activity had already commenced in relation to preparations for both the CA and the JAR and the timetable was detailed within the report.

Members were advised that whilst both teams would be on site during the analysis week, the intensive period of activity would be during the two fieldwork weeks. This would be when the majority of interviews would take place with Members, officers, partners and service users.

It was further noted that whilst the CA was essentially a review of how the Council operates to deliver its priorities, the JAR had a wider focus on all partner activities which support children and young people in the Borough.

The Board noted that the results of the CA and JAR would be fed into next year's Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) scores.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

BEB31 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN FOR 2008/9

The Board received a report which outlined the details of the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2008/9. The

Audit Plan outlined the likely programme of work to be completed by Internal Audit during the year.

It was noted that the Code of Practice for Internal Audit in Local Government required that the annual Audit Plan was considered and approved by the Council's Audit Committee.

It was further noted that the Audit Plan should be designed to provide sufficient coverage across the organisation to enable Internal Audit to deliver an overall opinion on the Council's risk management, control and governance arrangements. The work of Internal Audit therefore assists the Operational Director – Financial Services in discharging his statutory responsibilities as s151 officer in terms of ensuring the proper administration of the Council's financial affairs.

Members were advised that the work undertaken by Internal Audit provides one of the key assurances to the Chief Executive and Leader of the Council who were jointly required to sign the Annual Governance Statement (AGS). The purpose of the AGS was to declare the extent to which the Council complies with the principles of good governance.

The draft 2008/9 Internal Audit Plan was appended to the report for Members approval. The plan provided a summary of how internal Audit resources would be utilised during the year. It was noted that in Paragraph 4.2, the overall planned days for Operational Risks should read 790, not 795.

It was noted that the total number of days to be delivered in 2008/9 was broadly consistent with that planned in recent years along with the factors taken into account in compiling the programme of work for 2008/9.

Members were advised that the Council's External Audit had also been consulted as part of the planning process to minimise any potential for duplication and to maximise the benefit the Council receives from the total audit resource.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Plan for 2008/9 be approved.

SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- (1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- (2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100(1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

(NB: Councillor Lloyd-Jones declared a personnel interest in the following item due to being a Governor at St. Edwards Primary School).

BEB32 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER 3

The Board was provided with a summary of Internal Audit work for the period October to December 2007. The report contained a summary of the assurances and recommendations from Internal Audit reports, Quarter 3 Internal Audit reports – ‘High’ priority recommendations, the results from follow-up audits and 2007/8 Internal Audit Plan progress to month 9.

Arising from the progress report two issues were raised by Members in relation to re-affirming the need to

comply with the requirements of Procurement Standing Orders when awarding work and ensuring compliance with progress reporting on capital schemes, which was covered by Standing Orders relating to Finance.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the findings from the Internal Audit work completed in quarter 3 be noted;
- (2) the progress made against the 2007/8 Internal Audit Plan be noted;
- (3) there are currently no outstanding issues identified through the work of Internal Audit that have implications for the Council's annual governance statement be noted; and
- (4) action be taken to re-affirm to Council Officers the need to comply with the requirements of Procurement Standing Orders when awarding work and ensuring compliance with progress reporting on capital schemes, which was covered by Standing Orders relating to Finance.

Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.