

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Thursday, 25 September 2008 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Leadbetter (Chairman), Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), Jones, A. Lowe, Norddahl, Osborne, Philbin and Swift

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Higginson and Worrall

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Murray

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

Also in attendance: C. Williams and M.Thomas (Audit Commission)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB6 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 4th and 26th June 2008 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

BEB7 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE REPORT 2007/08

The Board received a presentation from Colette Williams and Michael Thumas, from the Audit Commission (AC) on the role of external auditors and the new CAA process.

The presentation set out:

- the role and responsibilities of the Audit Commission;
- how the AC carried these out locally;
- the areas that the AC assesses including Financial Statements, Value for Money and Use of Resources;
- the AC's other auditing responsibilities;
- how audits were reported;
- the changes and key differences from CPA to Corporate Area Assessments (CAA); and
- How the CAA would be assessed.

Arising from the discussion Members noted some concerns that the other organisations, which would be

assessed along with the Council, for the Area Assessment did not have directly elected representatives who were accountable to the electorate.

The Board also felt that the CAA could be a more subjective judgement and as such it could be open to more interpretation than the CPA.

The Board then went on to note the contents of the Annual Governance report. In particular the Board noted that since the Board had agreed the Statement of Accounts at its meeting on 26th June 2008, the AC had undertaken their audit of the Council's financial statements.

The district auditor confirmed that he intended to issue an 'unqualified' audit opinion for the 2007/8 financial statements and a 'except for' conclusion on the Council's Value for Money assessment, further details of which were outlined within the report.

The Board further noted a number of adjustments to the financial statements, although it was noted that these did not affect the overall baseline figures and were outlined in detail within the report.

When the AC completes an audit there was a requirement for it to obtain any written representations from Councillors and Management. This letter of representation was presented to the Board for approval. The Board approved the letter and it was signed by the Chairman in the presence of all in attendance.

The Board expressed its thanks to the District Auditor for his work on the audit.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Audit Commission's Annual Governance Report 2007/8 be received;
- (2) the Audit Commission's role and responsibilities be noted; and
- (3) the Council's Summary Accounts for 2007/8 be noted.

PART II

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 item 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.

BEB9 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - QUARTER 1

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services which provided a summary of Internal Audit work for the period April to June 2008. The report set out the internal audit reports finalised since the last progress report, key issues and recommendations arising from the audit reports issued and the results of the work undertaken following up the implementation of previous Internal Audit recommendations.

It was noted that there were a number of vacancies within the Internal Audit Team and that this had impacted upon the programme completion of the Audit Plan for the

year.

The Board requested assurance that the recommendations made by Internal Audit would, when implemented, address the control weaknesses identified in the report. In response the Board was informed the actions agreed were considered satisfactory and that follow up work would be undertaken in due course to ensure that the recommendations were actually implemented.

The Board expressed its thanks for the work undertaken by the Internal Audit Team.

RESOLVED: That the key issues arising from the Internal Audit report for Quarter 1 of 2008/09 be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.