

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 2 June 2009 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), A. Lowe (Vice-Chairman), Browne, E. Cargill, Dennett, Edge, D. Inch, Nolan, Norddahl and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor John Bradshaw

Officers present: M. Reaney, A. Jones, R. Mackenzie and S. Riley

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
CS1	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes from the meetings held on 10 February 2009 and 24 February 2009 were taken as read and signed as correct records.</p>	
CS2	<p>PUBLIC QUESTION TIME</p> <p>It was reported that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS3	<p>EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the Executive Board and the Executive Sub-Committee relating to the work of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board since its last meeting were submitted for information.</p> <p>The following minutes were highlighted and commented upon:-</p> <p>EXB 124 – POLICY FOR THE TRANSFER OF ASSETS TO THE THIRD SECTOR – One Member requested to know whether or not an agreement was made stipulating that assets are not sold for profit. In response it was confirmed that any relevant form of agreement would be forwarded to the Member for information.</p>	<p>Strategic Director - Corporate and Policy</p>

ES116 – MARKET RENTS - Members commented that the reduction in market rents was welcomed in the light of the current economic climate. Runcorn Street Market had also been well received by the public.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS4 SSP MINUTES

The Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Halton Strategic Partnership were attached for information.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS5 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board received their Annual Report for the period April 2008 to March 2009.

One Member commented that the Neighbourhood Management (NM) item should be scrutinised to establish its achievements to date. A paper was distributed to Members regarding a special meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board that was held to discuss NM on 10 February 2009. In summary, the question being asked was whether or not the objectives of the project were being met.

In response it was commented that the NM progress report would be included on the PPB agenda in September 2009 and it was agreed therefore that Members would wait for this presentation and raise questions then.

RESOLVED: That the report be approved.

CS6 WORK PROGRAMME 2009/10

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy asking them to agree a framework for carrying out the topic work for the next Municipal Year.

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- Corporate and
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Members were reminded that at the last meeting, a

presentation was given examining the carbon management issue, and the possibility of broadening work to include natural resources more generally. The presentation covered the CAA, questioning whether the Council was making effective use of its natural resources, and what the Audit Commission would be looking for in making its assessment of key line enquiry 3.1, and what sort of resources are included (energy, water, clean air, land and soil and materials). A case for broadening the initial carbon management topic proposal was explored to include natural resources more generally.

It was suggested that the Board receive a detailed report at its next meeting to assist it in establishing a baseline which would be used as a basis for selecting areas of priority for closer examination. It was recommended that it would be appropriate to set up smaller topic groups at that stage with lead officers to enable work to be carried out in greater detail according to the individual interest and expertise of Members.

Members confirmed their support for the work programme and all expressed an interest in participating in a topic work group in the coming year.

RESOLVED: That the Board receive a further report at its next meeting dealing with the baseline with how green Halton is at present and use this as an overview to select areas of priority for a closer examination by Members but in the meantime, a small group be convened to consider a draft topic brief and assist in the scoping of the work, at which any available members of the Board would be welcome.

(Cllr Nolan declared a personal interest in the next item as his wife works part time for the Council).

CS7 SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT

A report was presented to Members from the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy, relating to the number of working days lost in 2008/09 due to sickness absence. It also advised on absence management and interventions currently being introduced to assist managers in effectively managing employee absence.

It was noted that the number of days lost due to sickness per employee, for 2008/09 was 13.52. This was an increase from the third quarter Best Value Performance

Indicator which was 10.07 days. Many of those days lost were due to colds/flu over the winter period.

Sickness levels were a key indicator for any organisation, given their impact on both cost and productivity. However, of equal importance was for the Council to have a healthy workforce. Sickness levels could reflect current issues within the Authority. Undoubtedly, efficiency programmes and the current economic climate could have an impact on morale and wellbeing and these issues could also be found across workforces up and down the Country. Given the increase in sickness levels, it was agreed by Management Team (MT) that certain actions would be undertaken to better understand the reasons behind the figures, and increase the pro active management of sickness absence across the Authority. The actions and activities being undertaken include occupational health support, rehabilitation programmes and flexible working, support of the Managing Absence Policy, support from the Occupational Health Unit (OHU) through counselling, physiotherapy and home working, refresher training for managers on the 'Corporate Sickness Absence Policy', monthly Divisional Managers Team Meeting meetings for welfare and personnel officers and quarterly reporting to MT and Corporate Services PPB.

From the report the following was noted:

- With regards to statistics regarding trends occurring within departments, these figures would be included in the quarterly reports mentioned above;
- Back to work interviews were considered an important tool for gathering further information;
- A reward scheme referred to by a Member would be reported back to the Board; and
- Members requested further statistics on the 'Working Flexibly for You Strategy' (5.3).

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) quarterly progress reports be brought to the Board.

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- Corporate and
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CS8 JOB EVALUATION APPEALS UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy which provided a progress report on the hearing of the appeals received following the implementation of the National Job Evaluation Scheme.

The Council implemented the outcomes of the pay and grading review at the end of January 2008. All affected employees were given the right to appeal if they were unhappy with the grade outcome and a total of 446 appeals were received. These appeals covered 900 employees and members were previously provided with an analysis of appeals in terms of whether they were informal or formal appeals, if the post holder had gone up, down or stayed the same in February 2008. The panels commenced hearing appeals in early November 2008 and to date had heard 114 appeals covering the Health and Community Directorate and had commenced the appeals for the Environment Directorate. There were a few appeals outstanding from the Health and Community hearing which had to be re-arranged, following which employees would be written to with the outcome. There were approximately 331 appeals outstanding and it was anticipated that the process would be completed by March 2010.

Members requested information on whether any of the appeals would go to tribunal and how many equal pay cases there were. In response it was noted that case by case discussions were ongoing with Trade Unions and that this information was not yet available.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

CS9 LAA END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy advising on the progress towards meeting Local Area Agreement (LAA) targets at the end of the first year of the Agreement.

It was noted that the revised LAA was signed off by the Secretary of State in June 2008 and covers the period April 2008 to March 2011. The Agreement was 'refreshed' in March 2009. The indicators and targets were reviewed with Government Office. There were a number of gaps and estimates in the original agreement and the principle

changes were to fill these gaps using information that had become available between June 2008 and March 2009. It was not expected that there would be many further changes, except in one respect. The economic downturn would inevitably have an impact on the likelihood of achieving some targets relating to the economy and house building, and Government had identified a list of indicators for which targets would be reviewed before the end of March 2010, by which time the impact of the downturn would be clearer.

Appended to the report were the 'Changes to Halton's LAA Outcomes Framework – March 09' and 'LAA Outcome Measures – Progress as at March 2009' reports.

Members were asked to bear in mind that all the national indicators were built into the quarterly service plan monitoring reports. The intention of this report was to pick out the LAA indicators from the different service plans so that it was possible to see a clearer picture of progress overall. Also, certain indicators were only reported some time after year end, so in those cases no progress report was available yet. There were also some survey based indicators for which no further data would be available until the survey was repeated in 2010.

The LAA reflected the priorities in our community strategy for improving the quality of life in Halton. It was the main mechanism by which Government would perform and manage local areas. It was therefore important that we monitor progress, and that members were satisfied that adequate plans were in place to ensure that the improvement targets were achieved.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report is noted; and
- 2) the Board would consider plans to meet the target for NI 186 (Co2 emissions in Halton) as part of the scrutiny work on natural assets.

CS10 MID TERM REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy on the Mid-term Review of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) which provided the Board with an amended version of the SCS for comment.

The report advised that Local Authorities were

required to prepare and implement a SCS and were expected to work with partners through the Local Strategic Partnership to agree priorities and to engage and involve local communities. It was explained that the current SCS was adopted in 2006 with a long term vision and objectives with delivery targets for the period 2006-2011. Since it was prepared, a number of changes had taken place making it necessary to conduct a mid-term review of the SCS. This was an update, not a complete revision.

Recent perception surveys and the revised State of the Borough Report (2009) confirmed that the underlying vision and priorities from 2006 remained relevant. Widespread engagement had therefore not been undertaken for this mid-term review. However, in 2010/11 work would commence on a full review and roll forward of the strategy with wide engagement, linking up with work being done on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The report explained that the main objectives of the mid-term review were to explain what our vision statement means – what would Halton be like in 2025 if we were successful, to review the indicators and targets for each priority, to incorporate the Housing and Homelessness Strategy and to ensure that appropriate cross cutting targets were agreed, covering social inclusion, cohesion, equalities and closing the gap.

The draft review was drawn up in consultation with partners and was considered by the Halton Strategic Partnership Board on 20 May 2009. Following consultation with the Policy and Performance Boards, it was planned to take the final draft to Full Council meeting on 22 July 2009, with a recommendation from Executive Board for final adoption.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) that the Policy and Performance Board had no additional observations or comments to be reported to Executive Board.

CS11 AREA FORUM ANNUAL REPORT 2008/09

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy informing Members of the spending by the Area Forums in 2008/09.

Funding was allocated to the Area Forums to spend on small scale projects that had been identified by the community. In 2008/09, a total of £600,000 was allocated to the Area Forums, made up of £300,000 Working Neighbourhood Fund and £300,000 from Halton Borough Council Priorities Fund. It was allocated on a per capita basis across the seven Area Forums that cover the Borough.

The projects were divided into the following categories and the proportion spent on each category overall is indicated in brackets.

- 1) Landscape (24%)
- 2) Safety (7%)
- 3) Youth Facilities (20%)
- 4) Improved Parks (18%)
- 5) Pedestrian Access (4%)
- 6) Security (11%)
- 7) Other (16%)

The report was well received by Members who went on to suggest that they needed more publicity to raise awareness and to publish the good work and results that were being achieved.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CS12 FOURTH QUARTER MONITORING REPORTS

The Board received a report from the Chief Executive on the Performance Management Reports for Q4 Year end 2008/09.

Members were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification in respect of the 4th quarter performance management reports on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons, factors affecting the services etc, for the following services:

- Exchequer and Customer Services;
- Financial Services;
- ICT Services;
- Legal, Personnel and Organisational Development;
- Policy and Performance;
- Property Services; and

- Stadium and Hospitality Services.

The departmental service plans provided a clear statement on what the services were planning to achieve and to show how they contribute to the Council's strategic priorities. The service plans were central to the Council's performance management arrangements and the Policy and Performance Board had a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability. The quarterly reports were on the Information Bulletin to reduce the amount of paperwork sent out with the agendas and to allow Members access to the reports as soon as they become available. It also provided Members with an opportunity to give advance notice of any questions, points or requests for further information that would be raised to ensure the appropriate Officers were available at the PPB meeting.

From the reports the following was noted:-

Exchequer and Customer Services - One Member commented that there was an excessive use of envelopes being used for Members post and that this could easily be cut down by making more use of e-mails;

ICT Services – Some Members were unhappy with some of the restrictions that would be placed upon them in complying with the 'Code of Connection'. It was noted that a working party would be set up by the Executive Board member for ICT, Councillor Cargill, which would include a member of the Corporate Services PPB Councillor Wainwright, and Councillor Polhill. It was also noted by the majority that the considerable work undertaken with this project was for the protection of the authorities' data and compliance with the strict Government requirements.

Property Services – Members stated the need to encourage market traders to Runcorn as occupancy was quite low.

One Member requested to know how many contracts' final costs were within +/- 5% of the budget (PSY LI 2). This would be reported back to the Member.

Policy & Performance – Chairman offered the Board's congratulations to Spencer Webster, Head of Risk and Emergency Planning, on his secondment to the Cabinet Office Civil Contingencies Secretariat in January, which has now been extended by 6 months.

Stadium & Hospitality Services – Members recommended

that SH2 'Host a pitch based "Pop Concert" be removed as this was no longer achievable.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Performance Board:

- 1) receives the 4th quarter performance management reports;
- 2) consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and
- 3) highlight any areas of interest and/or concern where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Policy and Performance Board.

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Meeting ended at 8.20 p.m.