

APPENDIX 1

Extract of Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee Minutes Relevant to the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 15 October 2009

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB47 PROPERTY SERVICES – REVIEW AND WAY FORWARD

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, on the Property Services Review and The Way Forward.

As part of the Council's Efficiency Review, KPMG had identified potential savings to the Council by changing the way it delivered its Property Services. Specialist input from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Property (CIPFA) was commissioned. Their recommendation was to outsource the operational elements of Property Services, but retain an in-house strategic function along with a client/contract role.

The report identified the need for an adequately resourced in-house team to carry out the retained functions and to effectively manage the outsourced elements, with a suitably qualified Client Contract Manager appointed to ensure delivery of a value for money service. In addition, a number of procurement options were outlined together with the implications for staff in the Property Department in each option.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the following actions:-

- (1) a 'soft' market test exercise of the whole Service be undertaken, as outlined in the report;
- (2) expert advice be engaged to ensure any future delivery model provided the best value to the Council; and
- (3) work to commence on identifying and developing an in-house strategic/client management function to manage both the transition and any new contract arrangements.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB50 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF WIDNES MAGISTRATES' COURT

The Board received an urgent item of business regarding a consultation document from the Ministry of Justice on their proposed closure of the Widnes Magistrates' Court. The Board noted that the formal consultation period would end on 5 January 2010.

The Chief Executive informed the Board that, although the consultation document had been received on 14 October 2009, there had not been sufficient time for Members to be briefed prior to it being reported in the press.

The document circulated at the meeting contained an Executive Summary of the proposals of the Ministry of Justice. It stated that in order to achieve a more efficient service delivery to the public, it was proposed to permanently close the under-used court and continue with the arrangements to list cases at Runcorn Law Courts. The principal reasons for the proposal were given as:

- The court was under- utilised and dealt with a limited workload; and
- The building was no longer suitable for the provision of court services

The document went on to explain that the court facilities in Widnes were no longer cost effective and that significant savings and better value for money could be achieved by transferring all services to Runcorn.

Mark Reaney, Operational Director was nominated as the co-ordinator for the Borough Council's response to the Ministry of Justice.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the consultation document be sent to all Council Members and relevant External Partners inviting comments or views on the proposal by 30 November 2009;
- (2) the Chief Executive be asked to present a report to Executive Board in December 2009 with a summary

Chief Executive

of comments and a recommendation for the Council's response to the Ministry of Justice; and

- (3) the Chief Executive be asked to meet with the Court Service to discuss the proposal and the possible future use of the building.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2009

EXB54 HALTON BOROUGH COUNCIL - VOLUNTEER STRATEGY

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community on the Council Volunteer Strategy.

The Strategy would promote volunteering within Halton Borough Council as an activity quite distinct from paid employment, and in certain situations, volunteers would work alongside other volunteers towards carefully defined goals. In other cases, they may work alongside paid staff providing an additional value to the work of Council employees. Volunteers would represent an additional resource that could bring a fresh perspective, focus and stamina to a department, office or group. In addition volunteers may provide a means of accessibility for service users who otherwise would feel or remain excluded from local or Council activity.

Members were reminded that, as part of the development of the Strategy, a 'Building Common Ground' workshop was held that involved staff across the Council and both statutory and voluntary sectors. The workshop looked at the vision for volunteering that they felt Halton should adopt and the way in which an effective volunteering service could be created and ways to improve current activities.

Halton Voluntary Action (HVA) had been commissioned to undertake a six month project to identify ways to increase volunteering activity within the Adult Social Care Service. It was noted that the cost of the project had been funded from within existing Health and Community Directorate Resources.

RESOLVED: That the Board approve the Halton Borough Council Volunteer Strategy as attached to the report.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2009

EXB57 GAMBLING ACT 2005 POLICY STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Board received a report which set out the Gambling Act 2005 Statement of Gambling Policy.

The Board were advised that, under Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005, the Council were required to adopt a three-year licensing policy. At its meeting on 9 September 2009, the Board approved a draft Statement of Gambling Policy for consultation. A public consultation exercise was undertaken and one response received from the British Beer and Pub Association. Details of the response were attached to the report at Appendix 1.

It was noted that no changes were made to the draft statement as a result of the consultation exercise, and that once adopted, the Statement of Gambling Policy would be used by applicants and the Regulatory Committee in accordance with the Gambling Act 2005.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the Statement of Gambling Policy as attached to the report.

Chief Executive

EXB58 HALTON 2000 SURVEY ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, on the results of the recent Halton 2000 Survey.

In October 2009, members of Halton's Citizen's Panel were sent a questionnaire asking them for their opinions on a range of Council services. The response rate was 53.5% and a summary of the results were attached to the report.

The survey was aimed at gauging public opinion of the Council's spending on services. The first part of the survey asked about the top five priorities in relation to Council spending and preferences of spending and saving money in relation to those priorities identified within the Community Strategy. The top five priority spending areas selected by respondents were:

- Health Services
- The level of crime
- Education provision
- Job prospects
- Affordable decent housing

The second part of the survey invited opinions on Council Tax payments in relation to service standards and introducing/increasing charges for certain Council provided services. The Board noted that nearly 63% of respondents had shown support for the Council to increase its charges which included such services as pest control and the removal of bulky waste.

The survey also asked a question on the preferred methods of consultation on future Council budgets, the format of information available and the method of receiving information on the budget. The three preferred methods identified by respondents on how the Council spent its money were:

- Via the Council Tax leaflet
- Via 'Inside Halton'
- Via the local press

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Executive Board note the results of the survey; and
- (2) the results be taken into account when considering the 2010/11 Budget proposals.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

EXB59 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services, on the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2010/11 to 2012/13.

The Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) set out a three year projection of resources and represented the "finance guidelines" which formed part of the medium term corporate planning process. The guidelines identified the financial constraints the Council would face in delivering its key objectives and were an important influence on the development of the Corporate Plan and Service Plans and

Strategies.

Members were advised that, due to uncertainty about the level of public sector spending, the projections should be treated with a considerable degree of caution, although they did provide initial guidance to the Council on its financial position in the medium term.

The objectives of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy were outlined in the report. In setting the revenue and capital budgets, the Council had regard to its priority areas as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and in Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy. The MTFF showed that within the budget strategy, the spending required to maintain existing policies and programmes was expected to increase at a faster rate than available resources. As a result, additional spending on new or improved services would have to be kept to an absolute minimum, and in order to balance the budget, the Forecast showed that significant cost savings of at least £6m would be needed in each of the next three years.

The MTFF showed that there were sufficient resources to cover the cost of the current Capital Programme although it was unlikely that the Council would receive significant levels of capital receipts; as such the opportunity for additional capital spending would be severely limited and new spending would be limited to schemes with funding attached.

The Board were reminded of the outcome of the Halton 2000 Citizens Panel Survey on the Council's Budget (minute EXB58 refers), the results of which would be taken into account in the preparation of the 2010/11 Budget proposals.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Medium Term Financial Forecast be noted;
- (2) the base Budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Forecast;
- (3) the Budget Strategy and Capital Strategy be approved;
- (4) the Reserves and Balances Strategy be

Operational
Director -
Financial Services

approved; and

- (5) further reports on the Budget be considered by the Executive Board.

Councillor S Nelson declared a personal interest in the following item of business as he was the Chair of Governors at Grange Junior School.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2009

EXB62 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy on the Annual Audit Letter 2008/09.

The Board was advised that the Annual Audit Letter summarised the findings from the 2008/09 audit completed by the Council's External auditors. The Letter included messages arising from the audit of the financial statements and the results of the work that had been undertaken in assessing the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources.

Mr M Thomas, District Auditor attended the meeting and reported that the Council had achieved a very good report in challenging times. In respect of the use of resources which determined how well the Council managed and used their financial resources it had been concluded that the KLOE (key lines of enquiry) scores reflected a Council that was performing consistently above the minimum standards specified by the Audit Commission, a Level 3 performance.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Letter be approved.

Strategic Director
– Corporate &
Policy

EXB63 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy regarding the "Tax Base" for the area and the tax base for each of the Parishes. It was noted that the Council was required to notify the figure to the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority and

the Environment Agency by 31st January 2010. In addition, the Council was required to calculate and advise, if requested, the Parish Councils of their relevant tax bases.

The Board was advised that the Tax Base was the measure used for calculating the council tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (the Cheshire Fire Authority and the Cheshire Police Authority) in the calculation of their council tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula representing the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent of Band "D" dwellings. Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a 99% collection rate, the calculation for 2010/11 gave a tax base figure of 38,200 for the Borough as a whole.

The Board noted that the collection rate of 99% was what was currently achieved and was amongst the best in the region.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended that

- (1) the 2010/11 Council Tax Base be set at 38,200 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority, and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- (2) the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes be set as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	729
Halebank	594
Daresbury	142
Moore	343
Preston Brook	352
Sandymoor	938

EXB64 PROPOSED CLOSURE OF WIDNES MAGISTRATES COURT - RESULTS OF CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive

Strategic Director
– Corporate &
Policy

which contained a summary of responses received following the consultation exercise on the proposed closure of Widnes Magistrates Court.

The Board noted that the Ministry of Justice had consulted the Borough Council on their proposals to close Widnes Magistrates Court. The period of formal consultation would end on 5 January 2010. At its meeting on 15 October 2009, Executive Board resolved the following:

- The Consultation Document be sent to all Council Members and relevant external partners inviting comments or views on the proposal by 30 November 2009;
- The Chief Executive be asked to present a Report to the Executive Board in December 2009 with a summary of comments and a recommendation for the Council's response to the Ministry of Justice; and
- The Chief Executive be requested to meet with the Court Service to discuss the proposal and the possible future use of the building.

The Board was advised that the Leader and Chief Executive had met with the Court Service Staff on 10 November 2009; they expressed the view that, should the proposal to close take effect, they would wish to see the site utilised for the benefit of the Community.

The report had been prepared prior to the end of the consultation deadline and contained the comments that had been received from Members. It was noted that no additional comments had been received since the draft response had been prepared.

RESOLVED: That the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Services be authorised to finalise and despatch the Council's response to the consultation.

Chief Executive

(NB: Councillor Wharton declared a Personal Interest in the following item due to being a Member of the Halton Transport Board and remained in the meeting during consideration of the item.)

EXB65 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, on proposed changes to the constitution in respect of the exercise of powers in relation to Halton Transport.

Under the Council's constitution all matters relating to Halton Transport were reserved to the Council, and the exercise of voting rights as a major shareholder was delegated to the Chief Executive.

The Board was advised that Halton Transport wanted to make a fuel hedging arrangement for which the bank required a guarantee from the Council. Under the Constitution, this decision would be reserved to Council, and given the calendar of meetings, any delay in such a decision could result in a financial loss to Halton Transport.

The proposed change in wording was as follows:

"To exercise voting rights on behalf of the Council where the Council is the shareholder of a company and to take action up to £250,000 which may be considered appropriate from time to time."

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to amend the Constitution, as set out above.

Strategic Director
– Corporate &
Policy

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2009

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES31 ICT CAPITAL SPEND PROFILE 6 MONTH REVIEW

The Sub-Committee considered a report which outlined the spending profile for the current ICT infrastructure requirements for 2009/2010. The April to September 2009 spend profile required a clear focus upon the completion of the technical aspect related to the Code of Connection requirement for the Authority. The vast majority of this work had now been undertaken.

Phase 2 of the 2009/10 ICT Infrastructure capital programme would be aimed at the removal of Citrix 3, the Authority's aging desktop devices, and the upgrade of the new Citrix Remote Access Solution 4. Complementing this

project it was proposed the Authority brought the Children and Young People's Licensing arrangements for all Desktop Microsoft Software applications in line with the Corporate Microsoft Enterprise Agreement allowing greater flexibility during the upgrade process and delivering further savings upon the already heavily discounted licensing within this environment.

Additional infrastructure projects included the replacement of the back up Libraries device and replacement of the main Watch Guard Firewall. Replacement of the air conditioning devices would also be included.

RESOLVED: That the Sub-Committee approve the spend profile.

ES32 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2009/10 2ND QUARTER

The Sub-Committee received a report from the Operational Director – Financial Services on the Treasury Management 2009/10 2nd Quarter (July to September) which updated the Sub-Committee on activities undertaken on the Money Market as required by the Treasury Management Policy (TMP). The Operational Director reported on the current economic background based upon information supplied by the Council's treasury management advisors, Sector.

The report provided supporting information on the short-term rates, longer-term rates, temporary borrowing/investments, longer-term borrowing/investments and policy guidelines. It was noted that all the policy guidelines in the TMP had been complied with.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2009

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES41 DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy requesting members to consider two applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The report advised that under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Authority was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations that were either a charity or a non-profit making organisation.

RESOLVED: That

(1) under the provisions of Section 47, the Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisation at the percentage indicated, for the period from 1st April 2009 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later, to 31st March 2013:

Halton Access to Media	100%
Halton YMCA Limited	20%

Strategic Director
Corporate and
Policy

ES42 2009-10 HALF YEAR SPENDING

The Sub-Committee considered a report which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 30th September 2009.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure was below the budget profile. However, this was only a guide to eventual spending. It was noted that spending on employees was also below the budget profile which was primarily due to the delay in settling the 2009 Pay Award. The Budget included 2.5% for the pay award, which had now been settled at just over 1% in total and the new rates were paid in October along with the arrears of pay. As a result, budgets would be revised to reflect the actual pay award. However, this would be partly offset by the additional 0.3% awarded in respect of the 2008 Pay Award following arbitration, which was 0.25% higher than budget.

Following the Pay and Grading Review appeals for the Health and Community Directorate have been completed resulting in a total additional cost in the year £280,000. This comprised £141,000 relating to one off back pay costs which had been met from reserves and £139,000 for on-going additional annual costs which would need to be contained within existing Directorate budgets. In addition, it was noted that electricity costs were expected to be below budget following the commencement of a new contract in October 2009.

With regard to income, this was currently below budget profile in a number of areas, some of which may be reflected by the economic downturn and, at this stage, appeared likely to be below budget by year end. It was expected that the shortfalls would continue into next year. At this stage, it did not appear that the shortfalls in income were having an adverse effect upon the Council's overall net budget. However, this would be due to delays in spending and would need to be kept under close scrutiny by Directorates during the second half of the year.

In respect of capital spending, it was noted that spending to 30th September 2009 totalled £10.7m which was 69% of the planned spending of £15.4m at this stage. However, this only represented 29% of the total capital programme of £37.5m (which assumes a 20% slippage between years). The main areas of programme slippage to date were in respect of Mersey Gateway advance land acquisition and Bridge maintenance.

Although historically capital expenditure was significantly higher in the latter part of the financial year, it was important that project managers maintained pressure to keep projects and spending on schedule and, in particular, to ensure that all external funding was maximised.

It was also noted that the Council's balance sheet was monitored regularly in accordance with the Reserves and Balances Strategy which formed part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The key reserves and balances had been reviewed and were considered prudent and appropriate at this stage in the financial year.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be noted;

(2) budget managers continue to closely monitor and control spending and income levels, to ensure that overall spending remained in line with budget by year end.