

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 10 FEBRUARY 2011

94	DRAFT BUDGET 2011-12
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2011/12.

It was noted that, at the time of writing the report, the Government had not announced the final Local Government Settlement, nor had Cheshire Police and Fire Authorities set their budgets and Council Tax precepts. However final figures would be reported to Council when the information was available.

In June 2010, the Chief Executive had asked all staff for their suggestions to save money. In addition, in September 2010, a survey was undertaken on the Council's budget with the Halton 2000 Citizen's Panel and the Area Forums on their suggestions for savings; the results had been considered in developing the budget.

The Comprehensive Spending Review on 20 October 2010 announced that public spending would be cut back significantly, with local government spending reduced by 28% over four years, with the largest cuts taking place in 2011/12. It was also announced that ring fencing of grants would be limited in future and that the number of grants would reduce from about 100 to 10. A number of grants would be rolled up into Formula Grant, further increasing the grant loss to deprived areas such as Halton. Working Neighbourhoods Fund would be abolished.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 20th November 2010, had identified a funding gap of around £20m in 2011/12, £16m in 2012/12 and £12m in 2013/14. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Direct spending towards the five priority areas;
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises;
- Achieve significant cashable efficiency savings; and
- Protect front line services as far as possible.

The Board had considered the level of growth and savings at its Away Day on 6th January 2011, including the impact on the Council's priorities and service users. Appendix B contained a list of the proposed savings. Details of the outcome of consultation with the Area Forums were circulated at the meeting.

The Departmental analysis of the budget was shown in Appendix C and the major reasons for change from the current budget were outlined for Members' information in Appendix D. It was noted that the proposed budget total was £110,501m.

The Board were advised that the budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Provisional Settlement, and included £1.086m in relation to the Council Tax Freeze Grant, which would be payable for four years. In addition, it included £300,000 for a new grant, the New Homes Bonus Grant, payable to local authorities based on the net increase in new homes in the area.

Further information was provided in respect of the Local Government Finance Settlement, Halton's Council Tax, Parish Precepts, the Capital Programme, the Prudential Code and school budgets.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £110.501m and the Band D Council Tax for Halton (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) of £1,137.91.

95	TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2011-12
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2011/12.

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) was attached to the report and detailed the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2011/12).

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to "have regard to" the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council's capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Act therefore required the Council to set out its Treasury Strategy for borrowing as well as an Annual Investment Strategy, which set out the Council's policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. However, Government guidance now

stated that Authorities could combine the statement and the strategy into one report, and the Council had adopted this approach.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statement, approved list of counterparties, counterparty limits and indicators outlined in the report.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 3 MARCH 2011

99	INTRODUCTION OF A VEXATIOUS COMPANY POLICY
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Resources on the introduction of a Vexatious Complaints Policy as a revision to the Council's three complaints procedures.

The Board was reminded that the Council had three separate complaints procedures in place - Corporate complaints, Children and Young People complaints, and Adult Social Care complaints. Whilst only the latter two procedures were statutory, the Corporate complaints procedure was introduced to conform to the principles of the Citizens' Charter, which sought to enable the public to seek redress when public services failed to provide a satisfactory standard of service.

Adoption of a Council wide policy would ensure that all Council complaints procedures remained fit for purpose and conformed to best practice. The draft Policy, attached at Appendix 1, had previously been considered by the Corporate Policy and Performance Board at its meeting on 2 November 2010 with a recommendation that it be considered and approved by Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That the draft Vexatious Complaints Policy be approved as a revision to the Council's complaints procedures.

100	CORPORATE CHARGING POLICY FRAMEWORK
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Resources on the Corporate Charging Policy Framework (the Framework).

The Board was advised that the Framework set out the principles for charging, recovering costs and generating income

across the Council. It set out the powers available to the Council with regard to charging for discretionary services, along with the application of subsidies, concessions and exemptions. It also provided the statutory background relating to trading powers. The Framework provided guidance on establishing and recovering the full costs of service delivery.

The Framework, as a policy for the future, contained the basis for the Efficiency Programme Review of Income & Charging workstream to progress, and would provide a structured approach for the Council to implement such options as generating income and charging for services it currently did not charge for.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Charging Policy Framework be approved.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 31 MARCH 2011

118	CALENDAR OF MEETINGS
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Resources which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2011/12 Municipal Year appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2011/2012 Municipal Year as appended to the report.

119	REVIEW OF COUNCIL CONSTITUTION 2011-12
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Resources which sought the approval of the Council to a number of changes to the Constitution.

Members had received a revised version of the Constitution, and were advised that this amended version picked up the changes to the Council's working arrangements that had taken place during the year, as well as other changes which were intended to assist the Council to operate more effectively.

The proposals for change had been considered by the Chief Executive and the Executive Board Member for Resources in accordance with Article 16.02. It was reported that apart from the purely technical changes, the proposed amendments that were considered to be of particular significance were listed as an appendix

to the report. The review also took account of the recent changes to the Council's Management Structure.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the changes to the Constitution as set out in the amended version attached to the report.

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2011

66	TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2010-11 – 3RD QUARTER
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The Sub-Committee considered a report which updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic forecast, short term rates, longer term rates, temporary borrowing/investments, and investment income forecast. It was noted all the policy guidelines in the Treasury Management Policy had been complied with.

Members were advised that indicative figures initially showed activity had strengthened, suggesting that the recovery still had a reasonable amount of momentum. However these activity indicators had since been revised and actual data shows a 0.5% contraction in the third quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

67	ACCEPTANCE OF TENDER FOR MUNICIPAL BUILDING
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The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which advised that the Operational Director, Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development had accepted the costs relating to the refurbishment of the Ground Floor of the Municipal Building (Phase 1b) and that these had been added to the contract entered into with the successful contractor.

The tendered costs relating to the refurbishment of the first floor were well within budget as such it was decided to obtain costs relating to the refurbishment of the ground floor of the Municipal Building to determine if it were possible to proceed with those works (Phase 1b) in addition to the first floor refurbishment.

It was report that the revised contract sum of £2,614,841, together with fees and charges brought the overall cost of the refurbishment project of both the ground and first floor to £3.25m. Additional funding of £250k had been secured to enable the ground floor works to proceed. Thus the Council had been able to secure the refurbishment and first floor of the Municipal Building for a small agreed increase to the original budget.

It was noted that the cost for Phase 1b work was based upon the competitive prices from the 1a Tender which were originally invited from six contractors in a two stage tendering process, designed to ensure that the contractor offering “best value” was appointed.

RESOLVED: That

1. Members note that the Phase 1b costs in the sum of £788,959.00 submitted by Globe Management Services Limited following the successful Phase 1a tender had been accepted by the Operational Director Employment, Economic Regeneration and Business Development and the work added to the Phase 1a contract of £1,825,882.00 previously approved making a combined total contract sum of £2,614,841.00; and
2. Internal Audit be requested to submit a report to Business Efficiency Board on the tender process relating to the refurbishment of the ground and first floor of the Municipal Building.

68	SPENDING AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2010
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The Sub-Committee considered a report which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31st December 2010.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure was below the budget profile, by £2.7m. Management Team had previously agreed for Directorates to take steps to limit spending this year by £500,000 each. As a result, £2m would become available to provide a Transformation Fund to meet any forthcoming redundancy costs etc. To date the underspend indicated that the target of £2m should be achieved by year end.

It was noted that spending on employees was also below the budget profile. This was primarily due to delays in filling vacancies following the organisational restructuring from 1st April 2010, in anticipation of certain Efficiency Programme workstreams, and in preparation for further structural changes. In addition, the employers

proposal to freeze pay for 2010, would generate a budget saving of approximately £600,000 as a contribution towards the Transformation Fund.

With regard to capital spending, it was reported that spending to 31st December 2010 totalled £24.9m, which was 90% of the planned spending of £27.5m at this stage. However, this only represented 54% of the total revised capital programme of £45.7m (which assumed a 20% slippage between years).

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.

The report also outlined the impact of a significant number of equal pay claims which had been lodged with the Council as part of the national single status agreement. A reserve had been established over recent year, although it was not certain whether this would be sufficient to meet the future cost of such claims.

RESOLVED: That

1. the report be noted;
2. Directorates continue to closely monitor and control spending and income levels, to ensure that the overall £2m target underspend was achieved by year-end; and
3. the Operational Director – Finance take appropriate action at year-end to ensure the overall Reserves and Balances Strategy was achieved.

69	LOCAL LAND CHARGES – FEES FROM 2011
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The Sub-Committee considered a report which sought approval for a new set of charges for Local Land Searches – both LLC1 and CON29 forms, effective from 1st April 2011. The last change to Local Land Charges was made with effect from 1st April 2007, although no increases had been made before that date for some years. Fees had been held steady since 2000/2001. Opportunity was also taken for approval for a new maximum charge. This arose in cases where single search covered multiple plots and provided a cap on the total charge to be levied.

RESOLVED: That, effective from 1st April 2011, the fees for local land searches be set as follows: LLC1: £30.00 (currently £26);

CON29: £80.00 (currently £118.00); Part II Optional Enquiries: £12.00 (no change); Additional Enquiries £26.00 (no change) and equivalent increases. New maximum charge of £3,000 (£2,500 since 2007) and that the Operational Director (Legal and Democratic Services) be authorised to review and amend these charges from time to time in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder.

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 MARCH 2011

83	DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF
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The Sub-Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which sought Members' consideration of an application for discretionary rate relief, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

The Sub-Committee was 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. This relief may also be awarded to Community Amateur Sports Clubs. A summary of the applications was outlined within the report and a list of the associated figures was included.

RESOLVED: That under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisation at the percentage indicated, for the period from 1st April 2010 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later to the 31st March 2013:

Norton Priory Museum Trust Ltd	20%
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EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 APRIL 2011

92	ONLINE LEGAL LIBRARY SERVICES – REQUEST TO WAIVE PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS
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The Sub-Committee considered a request to waive standing orders in order to enter into a contract for the provision of online legal library services from LexisNexis for an initial three year period (2011/12 subscription) and that subject to budgetary provision the Operational Director (Legal and Democratic Services) be authorised in consultation with the Chair of Executive Board Sub-Committee to

renew such subscription from time to time or enter into agreements with alternative suppliers as he judges necessary.

It was noted that the cost of the LexisNexis annual subscription was £30,995 for 2011/12, £32,547 for 2012/13 and £34,176 for 2013/14. This could be sustained through the Council-approved legal budget for each year. The equivalent hard copy cost was £41,206 for 2011/12.

RESOLVED: That

1. in light of the exceptional circumstances set out in the report, for the purpose of Procurement Standing Order 1.8.2, Standing Orders 4.1 to 4.3 be waived on this occasion in order to permit the Operational Director Legal and Democratic Services to enter into arrangements as indicated in the report in light of the service advantages for the Council associated with such services and on the basis that the features, range and mix of reference sources available from LexisNexis in this format were not available from any other supplier; and
2. the Operational Director (Legal and Democratic Services) be authorised to enter into a contract for the provision of online legal library services from LexisNexis for an initial three year period (2011/12 subscription) and that subject to budgetary provision he be authorised in consultation with the relevant portfolio holder to renew such subscription from time to time or enter into agreements with alternative suppliers as he judges necessary.

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ACCOMMODATION – CASTLE VIEW HOUSE

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Resources which sought approval for the Council to enter into a lease for office space at Castle View House, Halton Lea, Runcorn in accordance with the Council's Accommodation Strategy. It was noted that Castle View House provided a modern workspace, was close to existing ICT infrastructure, maintained the spending power of staff in the Halton Lea shopping area and offered significant revenue savings.

RESOLVED: That the Strategic Director, Resources, in consultation with the Corporate Services portfolio holder, be authorised to enter into a lease within the terms outlined in this report.