

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 9 February 2012 in The Board Room  
- Municipal Building, Widnes*

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chairman), D. Cargill, Harris, Jones, T. McInerney, Nelson, Stockton, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Swain

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, G. Cook, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, B. Dodd and E. Dawson

Also in attendance: one member of the press

### ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

#### EXB96 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2012 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### EXB97 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 URGENT BUSINESS

The Board was advised that a matter had arisen which required immediate attention by the Board (Minute EXB 104 refers). Therefore, pursuant to Section 100 B (4) and 100 E, and due to immediate action being required, the Chairman ruled that the item be considered as a matter of urgency.

### CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES PORTOLIO

#### EXB98 FREE SCHOOL SITE PROPOSAL - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise on the two proposals for the location of the Sandymoor Free School.

*Action*

The Board was advised that the Sandymoor Free School Proposers (SFS) had contacted the Homes and Communities Association (HCA), as the principal land owner of the undeveloped portions of the Sandymoor housing development scheme, to determine if land in their ownership could be developed for their Free School provision.

The Board was further advised that two options were under consideration, as detailed below:-

- Option A- the primary, secondary and 6<sup>th</sup> form buildings would occupy the existing reserved primary site with all sporting provision provided on the site currently reserved for community use; and
- Option B- the primary, secondary and 6<sup>th</sup> form buildings would occupy the new site that was closer to the site reserved for community use. The community site would be used for school and community sporting provision and the currently reserved school site would revert back to HCA for residential development.

An appraisal of the two options was contained in the report for Members' consideration.

#### Reason(s) for decision

This report sought to gain the views of the Executive Board to the proposal that the current designated Primary School site be shared with the Sandymoor Free School so that a response could be made to Partnership for Schools.

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

All options considered by the Free School and Partnership for Schools had been considered. It was therefore recommended that the current primary site be retained as for an additional primary school only when this was required.

#### Implementation Date

February 2012.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the current ownership and provision related to the reserved primary school site be noted; and

- 2) the current school site be reserved for future primary provision.

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

## **TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB99 LOCAL SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT FUND**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Council's applications for funding from the Local Sustainable Transport Fund (LSTF).

The Board was advised that in January 2011, the Department for Transport (DfT) launched its White Paper 'Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon – Making Sustainable Transport Happen', (the Paper), which focused on the Government's transport priorities of economic growth and carbon reduction. The Paper concentrated on shorter distance trips where action at a local level was emphasised. Published alongside the Paper was bidding guidance for the LSTF. A fund of £560m for local authorities (outside London) was provided to fund packages of transport interventions which support economic growth and reduce carbon emissions, which delivered cleaner environments and improved air quality, enhanced safety and reduced congestion.

In March 2011, the Halton and Merseyside Chief Executives determined that two separate bids from the Liverpool City Region (LCR) would be preferable; one bid would cover the five Merseyside Authorities and the Integrated Transport Authority and one bid for Halton, the latter covering the financial years 2012/13 to 2014/15. It was noted that the main element of the bid would focus on sustainable travel to employment areas, so as to address the Government's transport priorities of economic growth and carbon reduction. The bid, named 'Routes to prosperity', would complement the Merseyside bid, aiming to be a programme of coordinated actions and interventions aimed at removing transport obstacles to employment for local residents.

It was noted that Halton's bid was in the order of £4.3m, plus local contributions, and the Merseyside bid was in the order of £3.2m plus local contributions. Both bids would need to be submitted by 24 February 2012, with decisions announced in May 2012. Copies of the bids were attached at appendices to the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Halton LSTF application be approved;
- 2) the joint 'Mid Mersey' LSTF application be approved; and
- 3) further editorial and technical amendments that do not materially affect the applications, be agreed by the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Transportation, as necessary, before the document is published.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

## RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

### EXB100 DRAFT BUDGET 2012/13

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 2012/13.

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 terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public and Members' own experiences through their Ward work was an important part of that process. In addition, in October 2011, a resident's survey was undertaken on the Council's budget which sought views on a wide variety of issues. The key conclusions were detailed in the report. Budget presentations had also been made at the seven Locality Area Forums.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 17 November 2011, had identified a funding gap of around £15m in 2012/13, £13m in 2013/14 and £11m in 2014/15. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's 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 5 January 2012. On 14 December 2011, the Council approved savings of £5.621m, and the new proposed savings were shown at Appendix B. 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 £106.305m.

The Board were advised that the budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Provisional Settlement, and included £509,000 for the New Homes Bonus Grant, payable to local authorities based on the net increase in the number of homes in their area. The grant was payable at this amount for six years.

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

Members wished to place on record their thanks to all members of the Budget Working Group, Policy and Performance Board Chairs and staff for their hard work in producing this year's budget.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £106.305m, the Council Tax requirement of £43.468m (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,137.91.

Operational  
Director - Finance

## EXB101 DIRECTORATE PLANS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources on the adoption of Directorate Plans for the period 2012-15.

The Board was advised that each Directorate was required to develop a medium term business plan or Directorate Plan, in parallel with the budget. These would be subject to annual review. Draft Service Objectives and performance Indicators and targets had been developed and these would form the basis of the quarterly performance monitoring presented to the Board during the forthcoming year.

It was noted that Elected Members had engaged in the process primarily through the Policy and Performance Boards. Once the budget proposals had been approved by Council in March 2012, budgetary statements would be inserted into the Plans.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Council be recommended to approve the Draft Directorate Plans; and
- 2) the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader, to make any final amendments and adjustments that may be required.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

#### EXB102 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2012/13

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement for 2012/13.

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 (2012/13).

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 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, statements and prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Operational  
Director - Finance

## **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB103 WIDNES MARKET REVIEW**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, that informed Members of the outcome of the recent review of Widnes Market.

The Board was advised that the indoor and outdoor markets were key assets in Halton's town centres, and that the vitality of the town centres and the future sustainability of the markets were inextricably linked. In addition, it had been proposed to align the management of the town centres and markets more closely within a clearly defined economic regeneration brief, to enable a more holistic and joined up approach to developing and marketing the town centres.

It was noted that in August 2011, the National Association of British Market Authorities (NABMA), Consultancy Services (NCS) were appointed to carry out a review of Widnes Market. The review focused on two aspects :

- Acting as a critical friend, NABMA/NCS offered advice and support to how the Council could improve its Market operation; and
- NABMA/NCS considered and made recommendations to improve the viability and vitality of the Market.

Details of the recommendations were attached at Appendix 1 whilst the report provided a summary of the recommendations as they related to Systems and Procedures and a Vision/Strategy for the Retail offer in Widnes.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The recommendations set out In Appendix 1,

- attached to the report be approved; and
- 2) The Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to organise a Markets Forum to present the recommendations to Traders.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

EXB104 HALTON DIGITAL ECONOMY AND INCLUSION STRATEGY- KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Halton Digital Economy and Inclusion Strategy (DEIS).

The Board was informed that consultation on the DEIS had taken place with stakeholders, and comments incorporated, and had been approved by the Employment, Learning Skills and Community Policy and Performance Board in June 2011. Element 1 covered the upgrading of Halton's communications infrastructure to deliver superfast broadband, with a view to stimulating economic growth and enabling digital inclusion.

The report considered a number of opportunities to be pursued to achieve upgraded communications infrastructure. The Halton DEIS consisted of four elements:

1. Obtain Superfast Broadband (SFB) for the Borough by driving demand for this utility;
2. Provide businesses with the knowledge and skills to take advantage of SFB and related technology;
3. Provide residents with the knowledge, skills and infrastructure for inclusion in the online world; and
4. Deliver more Council Services primarily online with backup via other channels.

In addition, the report also considered the benefits of joining the Connecting Cheshire bid, to deliver SFB to 90% of homes and businesses and provide 100% coverage of two megabits per second (mbps) Internet access. Funding of £570k for Halton had been made available as part of a combined County of Cheshire allocation, which must be match funded and spent on infrastructure in order to access it.



### Reason(s) for Decision

To take advantage of the Department of Culture Media and Sport funding via Broadband Delivery UK and deliver superfast broadband to the Borough faster than the general market would roll out SFB.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Options were considered fully in the report, under the following headings:

Do nothing at all;  
Influence the Market;  
Halton Only Option;  
Join a Future Merseyside Project; and  
Council Sponsored Network.

### Implementation Date

The DEI Strategy would begin implementation of the action plan with immediate effect.

The SFB project would be dependent upon access to appropriate match funding to deliver the infrastructure required. A successful project would deliver SFB to Halton in 2015.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Strategy be adopted and the Action Plan be approved for implementation; and
- 2) the Council formally joins the Connecting Cheshire project to stimulate economic growth across the Borough, but particularly in Runcorn.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB105 CONSULTATION DOCUMENT ON THE PROPOSED MERGER OF THE HALTON AND WARRINGTON BENCHES**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the publication by HM Courts and Tribunals Service, of a consultation document in respect of the proposed merger of the Halton and Warrington Benches.

The Board was advised that the proposal was to merge the Halton and Warrington Magistrates Courts, to become a new Local Justice Area and would be known as the North Cheshire Local Justice Area. Both Court buildings would remain in use and the merger would enable Magistrates to continue to undertake a variety of cases by permitting free movement between the two Court houses, so as to ensure their competence in all disciplines.

It was noted that all Members of the Borough Council and of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board had been consulted. Two comments had been received, from Nick Atkin, Halton Housing Trust and from Councillor Osborne, as Chair of the Safer Policy and Performance Board, both supporting the proposals.

The consultation document was attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the proposed merger of the Halton and Warrington Benches be supported.

Strategic Director  
- Policy &  
Resources

**MINUTES ISSUED: 13 February 2012**

**CALL-IN: 20 February 2012**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 20 February 2012.**

*Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.*