



CORPORATE PPB ANNUAL REPORT

“This has been a difficult year for the Council which continues to cope with a difficult financial situation with significant cuts in government grants and facing the prospect a further £20 million pounds worth of savings in the year 2015-2016. I greatly appreciate the efforts of all the Council’s employees for their work in delivering services at a high level of efficiency under difficult circumstances. Corporate Services is greatly assisted in its work by the hard work and endeavours of its lead officer and members services also other officers who contribute to the working of the topic groups.

I would like to thank my Vice Chair Joe Roberts for the support he has given me and for his work on Enquiries Compliments and Complaints Topic Group and Cllr Wainwright for his commitment to the Borough’s markets through his lead on that topic group. And all of the Members of the Board for the contributions which they have made to the topic groups- particularly the discretionary social fund topic group- during the past year”

– Councillor Bob Gilligan, Chair of Corporate Policy & Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2013/2014, the Board comprised of eleven councillors – R. Gilligan (Chairman) J Roberts (Vice Chair) E Cargill, M Dennett, S Hill, C Loftus, A Lowe, A McInerney, N Plumpton Walsh, G Stockton and K Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, HR and Training, ICT, Property, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments which during the last year Legal and Democratic Services including Communications and Marketing, Human Resources, Financial Services, ICT and Support Services, and the Policy and Performance Divisions.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives upon which it has worked during that time.

PEOPLE PLAN 2012/2015

At the September meeting, the Board received a Report and Presentation on the progress made on the delivery of the Council’s

People Plan which was adopted by the Executive Board at its meeting on 29th March 2012 following a recommendation from Corporate Policy and Performance Board.

The aim of the Plan was to place the workforce at the heart of the organisation as it was recognised that this was our most valuable asset. The Plan was therefore built around four key strategic aims

- to attract, develop and retain excellent people
- to provide excellence in Leadership and Management development
- being an excellent employer
- promoting organisational excellence.

The Plan was monitored by the Organisational Development Group, chaired by the Strategic Director Policy and Resources with membership across all three directorates including the Trade Unions. The Plan had successfully implemented the following projects

- maintained and updated the organisation's workforce profile
- ensured continued investment in the workforce
- devised and implemented a talent strategy
- devised and introduced an Employee Recognition and Award scheme
- implemented a Healthy Workforce initiative
- met legislative requirements.

Over the next twelve months, challenges would include

- devising and implementing a talent pool
- devising and implementing an organisational succession plan
- developing a learning and development plan and managers guide
- developing more effective leaders.

Further progress would be provided to the Board in twelve months' time.

DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT SCHEME

The September meeting also received a report providing an update on the implementation of the Discretionary Support Scheme after the first three months of its operation. Members were reminded that the Scheme was introduced in Halton in April 2013 to replace the one previously administered by the Department of Work and Pensions. It had been introduced in a very tight timescale. Payments had been made against a set of criteria previously agreed with a working party whose membership was drawn from the Board. The Board was advised that the working party had requested the core element of the DWP scheme be retained where possible, namely to provide assistance with living expenses due to

emergencies or crisis and to provide assistance for vulnerable people to help them return to or remain in the community or to ease exceptional pressure on families. The working party had agreed that no cash payments would be made, no payments for fuel would be made, and that the application process be either by phone or internet.

Members noted that at the time of the report in September, a total of £20,000 had been paid out by the end of quarter one. The decision not to pay cash had seen a dramatic reduction in payments made from the fund, which was the case with most other authorities. Many people have been more than satisfied with the service though feedback from external organisations had asked for consideration to be given to making payments for fuel and approving the standard of furniture and food provided.

Members of the PPB asked for a further report to be submitted to the working party by the end of October on the options of fuel payment for further consideration.

THE LIVING WAGE

A report was presented to the Board in September recommending the establishment of a Topic Group to examine the implications for the Council of introducing the Living Wage, and for the Topic Group to make recommendations back to the Board.

The Board was advised that the Living Wage was defined by the Living Wage Foundation as the hourly rate of pay deemed adequate for a worker to provide his or her family with the essentials of life. In London the current rate was £8.55 per hour. Outside of London the current rate was £7.65 per hour. Whilst the Council clearly adhered to the National Minimum Wage, it did have employees paid below the living wage. The living wage had no statutory basis but it had been adopted voluntarily by a range of public and private sector organisations.

The Topic Group met on three occasions prior to reporting to the full PPB in March 2014. The Topic Group considered the questions of:

- affordability
- equal pay implications
- impact on differentials
- views of the Trade Unions
- application of the Living Wage.

The recommendations of the Living Wage Topic Group were that the Council introduce a supplement to any pay grade that currently sits below the living wage rate of £7.65 per hour and the living wage be paid to those with permanent contracts and to those casual workers who undertake the same roles and duties as permanent staff. When considering the recommendation, the full Board supported the recommendations but referred them to the Budget Working Group for consideration before they could be progressed further.

SECURITY – CORPORATE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

At Members' request, a report was presented by the Strategic Director Policy and Resources at the October meeting which gave members an update of IT security within the Council's activities and highlighted the importance of security in the management and delivery of Council services. Members were advised that the Council managed a huge range of personal information across a number of differing categories and that inappropriate access could result in severely adverse effects to individuals or organisations. The Council had a statutory as well as common law duty of care to ensure that all reasonable steps were taken to safeguard and secure the information it managed and processed. ICT services had delivered an approach towards security to ensure that the Council operated within its legal obligations whilst also enabling front line staff to deliver services in the most efficient and appropriate ways. Security assurance activities have been delivered to ensure that the Council was discharging its duties. The Council had been working on the transition from Capital Government Connect Secure Extranet to the new Public Services Network, full details of which were provided in the Report.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

At its last meeting in March, the Board were given an update on progress on the Council's Carbon Management Plan and the wider activity to reduce CO2 emissions across the Borough. This was set into the context of National and Local Frameworks, and members were informed that the Carbon Management Plan set a local target to reduce emissions from the Council's estate between five and ten per cent by 2013 from a 2006/07 base line. The Liverpool City Region had set a target to reduce emission by twenty per cent by 2020 against a 1990 base line. The data for 2012/13 showed that overall, emissions were down approximately seven per cent from 2006/07.

Members were provided with a copy of the Action Plan which indicated the projects completed to date included:

- voltage optimisation in fourteen council buildings – reduction in electricity consumption of between eight and fourteen per cent
- energy efficiency measures in Runcorn Town Hall which had reduced consumption by an estimated fifteen per cent
- energy efficiency measures at Halton Stadium which had reduced electricity consumption by twenty four per cent, saving in excess of £30,000
- boilers replaced at Picow Farm, Glendale and Inglefield
- staff awareness programme introduced
- removal of stand-alone printers and switch to MFD's had delivered savings in excess of £200,000
- solar panels have been installed at three sites (Select Security Stadium, Rutland House, and Brookvale Leisure Centre) total energy to date produced from the systems is 205,000 KWH as of January 2014. This equated to an energy saving of £20,000. In addition the panels attract a feed-in tariff income which to date amounts to £75,000. There are a number of other initiatives which were brought to the attention of members.

The report also drew attention to the Carbon Reduction Commitment, a new mandatory scheme which began in 2010. Each year the Council had to report its annual emissions from gas and electricity usage from buildings and schools and purchase and surrender allowances based on those emissions. There would be an annual on-going saving of approximately £70,000. The Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan set out the region's ambitions to transform itself into a low carbon economy. It contained a co-ordinated programme for the delivery to ensure the city region is at the forefront of the transition. It has identified opportunities for the Council, which had secured funding to carry out a detailed feasibility study for the East Runcorn area.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the course of the year the Board considered in detail the performance of the reporting departments. Issues which were overseen by the Board during the year included:-

Accidents

Statistics

Sickness Absences

School catering and the operation of the Select Stadium

WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Board had received reports during the year on all the topics which it identified for examination, namely the Council's Discretionary Social Fund, and the Living Wage.

For the year 2014/15, it was expected that the Complaints Topic Group would make a final report to the June meeting. Members were giving consideration to further items to be scrutinised during the year.