

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 20 November 2014 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Philbin

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, G. Cook, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, E. Dawson, E. O'Meara and S. McDonald

Also in attendance: Mike Thomas (External auditor, Grant Thornton UK LLP) and one member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB85 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2014 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB86 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2013/14

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which presented the Annual Audit Letter for 2013/14.

The Board was advised that the Annual Audit Letter (the Letter) summarised the findings from the 2013/14 audit completed by the Council's external auditors. The Letter included messages arising from the audit of the financial statements and the results of work that had been undertaken in assessing the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources.

Mike Thomas, the external auditor from Grant Thornton UK LLP, attended the meeting and reported that an unqualified opinion had been issued on the Council's financial statements. Of particular note however, was the

recognition that the Council had robust systems and processes in place to effectively manage financial risks and opportunities to secure a stable financial position. The Council was prioritising its resources within tighter budgets, by achieving cost reductions, improving efficiency and productivity.

The Board was advised that this was the final meeting which Mike Thomas, external auditor from Grant Thornton, would attend, as audit regulations required a rotation of external audit staff. The Board wished to place on record their thanks for his work and support given to the Council and its Staff and Members over the past seven years. The Board also wished to place on record their thanks to all Officers that had assisted in the preparation of the audit inspection.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Letter 2013/14 be approved.

EXB87 DETERMINATION OF THE 2015/16 COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the 'Tax Base' for its area and the tax base for each of the Parishes.

The Council was required to notify the figure for the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Environment Agency by 31 January 2015. In addition, the Council was required to calculate and advise the Parish Councils, if requested, 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 Police and Crime Commissioner), 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 96.5% collection rate, the calculation for 2015/16 gave a tax base figure of 32,100 for the Borough as a whole.

It was noted that from 2013/14 onwards, the tax base calculation included an element for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (the replacement for Council Tax Benefit).

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve

- 1) the Council Tax Base for 2015/16 be set at 32,100 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police & Crime Commissioner and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes as follows:

| Parish | Tax Base |
|---------------|----------|
| Hale | 649 |
| Halebank | 488 |
| Daresbury | 153 |
| Moore | 320 |
| Preston Brook | 324 |
| Sandymoor | 948 |

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB88 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2015-18 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2015/16 to 2017/18.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out a three-year projection of resources and spending based on information currently available.

The projections in the forecast clearly showed there was a need to make a significant level of savings over the next three years, as a result of the effect of the Government policy to reduce the national deficit through reductions in public sector funding. The strategy took into account the following:

- The 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review;
- The Autumn Statement 2013;
- The Budget 2014;
- The 2014/15 and 2015/16 Technical Consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement; and
- The 2015/16 Technical Consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The forecast provided initial guidance to the Council

on its financial position into the medium term. Revenue savings of approximately £19m, £13m and £10m would be required over the next three years. It was noted that as a result, £42m would need to be removed from the Council's budget which represented 23% of the gross expenditure budget.

The Board was reminded that the MTFFS had a number of objectives, as listed in the report. The Council would need to consider these objectives when balancing its budget over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;
- 3) the Budget Strategy and Capital Strategy be approved;
- 4) the Reserves and Balances Strategy be approved;
- 5) the award of Council Tax support for 2015/16 remains at the 2014/15 level of 21.55%; and
- 6) the Council's 2015/16 Council Tax Support Grant is not shared with the Parish Councils.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB89 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2ND QUARTER: JULY-SEPT 2014

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, 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 background, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing/investments, new long term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB90 INITIAL BUDGET PROPOSALS 2015/16

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on initial revenue budget proposals for 2015/16.

The Board was advised that budget savings proposals for 2015/16 were being developed by the Budget Working Group. However, a number of those proposals detailed at Appendix 1, could be implemented immediately in order to achieve a part-year saving in 2014/15. In addition, a number of the proposals would take time to implement and therefore by commencing the process as soon as possible, would assist in ensuring that they could be fully implemented by 1 April 2015. Further, the information in Appendix 1 also presented the impact in 2016/17 of certain savings proposals.

The Budget Working Group had proposed the use of £5.5m from the Council's reserves to provide a one-off saving which would delay the need to achieve these savings until 2016/17, thereby allowing additional time to assist the Council with identifying the necessary permanent savings and reshaping the business where necessary to achieve this.

It was noted that the Government would announce its Grant Settlement for Local Government in late December 2014, at which point the Council's actual funding gap would be identified. Further savings proposals that would enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget would be recommended to Council at its meeting on 4 March 2015.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the initial budget proposals for 2015/16 as set out in Appendix 1.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB91 2014/15 HALF YEAR SPENDING

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which reported on the 2014/15 Half Year Spending as at 30 September 2014.

A summary of spending against the revenue budget up to 30 September 2014 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. This provided individual statements for each department. The Board was advised that in overall terms, the revenue expenditure was below the budget profile, although this was only a guide to eventual spending.

The report contained details on a number of significant areas of the budget including:

- The employee budget and vacant posts;
- Expenditure on general supplies and services;
- Children's Out of Borough residential placements;
- Spending on in-house adoption;
- Budget pressures on some budgeted income targets;
- The collection rate for Council Tax and the retained element of Business Rates; and
- The Council's net overall spending.

The report also outlined details of a revision to the capital spending programme at Appendix 3 and monitoring of the Council's balance sheet. Schemes that had been revised within the programme were listed within the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to the absolutely essential;
- 2) Strategic Directors ensure overall spending at year-end is within their total operational budget; and
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital Programme as set out in Appendix 3.

Operational
Director - Finance

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB92 PUBLIC HEALTH ANNUAL REPORT 2013-14 - KEY DECISION (AND PRESENTATION)

The Board considered a report and presentation of the Director of Public Health, which provided an overview of the 2013/14 Public Health Annual Report – Drinking Less and Living Longer.

The Board was advised that the Annual Report was an important vehicle by which the Director of Public Health (DPH) could identify key issues, flag problems, report progress and serve their local populations. It remained a key means of accountability for the population served. This year's report focussed on the topic of alcohol-related harm and set out how the DPH was working in partnership to reduce alcohol harm for individuals, families and communities.

It was reported that the local public health team were working in partnership to develop a local alcohol harm reduction strategy. Halton had been awarded the status of being a Local Alcohol Action Area.

Each of the five chapters outlined the current levels of alcohol-related harm, described current local activity to reduce harm and outlined gaps in current activities, with recommendations for future actions.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Public Health Annual Report was a statutory document.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

No alternative options were considered.

Implementation Date

With immediate effect following approval by Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report and presentation be noted and the recommendations contained within the report be supported.

EXB93 HALTON ALCOHOL STRATEGY: REDUCING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM ACROSS THE LIFE COURSE, 2014-2019 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which presented the final draft of the Halton Alcohol Strategy – Reducing alcohol –related harm across the life course, 2014-19 (the Strategy).

The Board was advised that Halton experienced an unacceptable level of alcohol related harm with significant impact on local individuals, families and communities. The Strategy, attached at Appendix A, set out actions aimed at rebalancing the relationship Halton had with alcohol. The Strategy built upon the effective work undertaken by local partners, and it was noted that it had been written in collaboration with all partners agreeing the vision, outcomes, objectives and actions. In addition, the detailed action plan, attached at Appendix B, supported the actions, responsible leads, timescales and outcomes that would be achieved.

The Halton Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy had been developed by a multi-agency group – as detailed in the

report - with representation from both Adult and Children's Services at the Council, the Police, service providers, the voluntary and community sectors and other key partners. A formal public consultation, to enable local people to provide feedback and an insight into the final version would be undertaken. The Action Plan and the Strategy would be kept under regular review to ensure that both documents remained relevant and met the needs of local people.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Alcohol Harm Reduction Strategy was a statutory document

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

No alternative options were considered.

Implementation Date

With immediate effect following approval by Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board support the strategy outcomes, objectives and actions.

EXB94 THE PROCUREMENT OF A LEVEL 3 HEALTHY WEIGHT SERVICE FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN IN HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which sought approval to commence the procurement of a Level 3 Healthy Weight Service for Adults and Children in Halton.

The Board was advised that Halton was responsible for the commissioning of services to improve the health of the local population, to prevent the onset of disease and to reduce the subsequent burden on health treatment services.

Weight Management Services in Halton were split into four levels, as detailed in the report. It was reported that currently, the Level 3 Services were delivered under two separate contracts, both of which were due to end on 31 March 2015. Therefore, permission was also sought for an extension to the current arrangements during the tender process, to allow for continuity in service provision.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposal to tender for a Level 3 Healthy Weight Service for Halton be approved; and
- 2) the use of Procurement Standing Order 1.8.3 to waive Procurement Standing Order 4.1 in relation to a five month extension for the Specialist Weight Management Contract with Warrington and Halton Hospital and for Cognitive Behavioural Therapy contract with 5 Boroughs Partnership, be approved.

Director of Public Health

EXB95 SPECIALIST COMMUNITY SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which sought approval for the grant of a Direct Award for the delivery of Specialist Community Substance Misuse Services to March 2016.

The Board was advised that the Council had responsibility for commissioning services to support local people with substance (drugs and alcohol) misuse problems. The aim was to improve health and social care outcomes, reduce harm from addiction and reduce inequalities for local people.

The report set out the current position. Crime Reduction Initiatives (CRI) had held Halton's substance misuse contract since February 2011. It was reported that during this period, performance across all indicators had improved considerably. Members were advised that, in order to maintain stability of the specialist treatment and recovery service, it was proposed that a Direct Award of a contract be given to CRI for 12 months. This would allow time for a service review and relocation of the service to take place. In addition, it was noted that the procurement of a longer term contract would then be implemented from July 2015, as set out in Appendix A.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted;
- 2) to ensure the stability and continuity of the service, a Direct Award be granted to CRI for the delivery of Specialist Community Substance

Strategic Director - Communities

Misuse Services be granted from 1 March 2015 to 31 March 2016; and

- 3) the proposed timescale be agreed for the procurement of a substance misuse service, as outlined in Appendix A attached to the report.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB96 NORTON PRIORY MUSEUM - MONASTERY TO MUSEUM PROJECT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which advised of a tendering exercise to be undertaken for the Monastery to Museum 900 Project.

The Board was reminded that Heritage Lottery funding was approved in August 2014 for the Monastery to Museum project. It was reported that this was 82% of the estimated costs, with the remaining match funding to be raised by the Norton Priory Trust. It was anticipated that works were due to commence in March 2015 and completed by June 2016. Expressions of interest would be sought initially from suitably qualified contractors, following which an assessment would take place with a subsequent invitation to tender issued to contractors.

RESOLVED: That the Board note that a tendering exercise will be entered into via "The Chest" in order to appoint a main contractor for the Monastery to Museum 900 project which is a joint venture to rebuild Norton Priory Museum between Norton Priory Museum Trust and Halton Borough Council.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB97 HOMELESS SERVICES AT GRANGEWAY COURT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on a revised service delivery model for homeless services at Grangeway Court.

The Board was advised that the Council-owned scheme operating at Grangeway Court was used to house homeless families nominated exclusively by the Council's Housing Solutions team. Increasing vacancy levels had led to Your Housing Group (YHG) incurring significant financial losses. It was reported that in order to develop a sustainable solution, YHG and Council Officers had developed a revised

service model, with an agreement on a proposal which retained the 24/7 staffing cover, but at a reduced overall cost. The principal changes to current service delivery were detailed in the report.

It was further reported that it was proposed to retain/mothball four additional units as a contingency in the event that demand increased due to continuing uncertainty around the impact of the Government's welfare reform programme. On 16 October 2014, the Board had agreed to extend the present contract to 31 March 2015. YHG had indicated they would be agreeable to extending the contract to 31 March 2016, allowing time to demonstrate the sustainability of the model, prior to commencing a procurement exercise later in 2015/16.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the revised service model set out in the report be agreed;
- 2) acting in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.8.3, the Board agrees to the waiver of Procurement Standing Order 4.1, to enable an extension of the current contract and lease with Your Housing Group up to 31 March 2016; and
- 3) the implementation of the previously agreed plans to refurbish the retained accommodation units, and to undertake the layout conversions, be agreed.

Strategic Director
- Communities

COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

EXB98 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACROSS HOUSING TENURES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on the work undertaken by the Borough Council to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and to improve conditions in a range of housing tenures, and to advise Members on recently introduced powers.

The Board was advised that Halton had experienced high levels of growth in the private rented sector between 2001 and 2011. Appendix A provided comparison information for Halton and its neighbouring authorities. It was noted that the vast majority of private landlords in Halton were responsible, with a vested interest in maintaining properties, tackling ASB, and taking action against tenants that may breach the terms and conditions of

their tenancy agreement. However, it was reported that there were a small minority of landlords whose properties did not meet minimum standards or who had poor management practices. When issues did arise in the sector, they tended to relate to one or more of the following problems-:

- Private sector tenants living in poorly maintained properties;
- Poorly maintained empty properties;
- Tenants committing anti-social behaviour; and
- Poor and /or illegal management standards.

The report set out in detail the Authority's current and planned approach to these issues under the following sections-:

- Tenants committing anti-social behaviour;
- Anti-social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014: Reform of Anti-Social behaviour powers;
- Civil injunctions;
- Applicants;
- Closure Powers and Closure Notices;
- Community Trigger;
- Community Remedies; and
- Landlord Accreditation Scheme.

Members noted that Appendix B provided some case studies on tackling ASB. It was proposed that the Council and its partners utilised the new powers to target problematic tenants and to act as a deterrent mechanism.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the content of the report and paragraph 4.2 in particular, be noted; and
- 2) the Strategic Director, Communities, be delegated the right to exercise the Council's functions under

Strategic Director
- Communities

Part 4 Chapter 3 (closure of premises associated with nuisance or disorder etc), of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, other than those reserved to the Chief Executive or person nominated by the Chief Executive.

TRANSPORTATION PORTFOLIO

EXB99 OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS ON PART OF CRONTON LANE, WIDNES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the proposed Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) to introduce 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions on part of Cronton Lane, Widnes.

The Board was advised that the proposal, as set out in Appendix B of the report, had been considered by the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board at its meeting on 10 September 2014. It was noted that formal consultation on the proposed TRO had been undertaken and two objections had been received from residents of properties fronting the affected area. Details of both objections were attached at Appendix A.

It was reported that the proposal to introduce further waiting restrictions from the east end of Cronton Lane to Hill View were initially requested by a petition from 18 local residents. Members noted that Cheshire Police would be requested to carry out rigorous enforcement action in order to re-educate highway users not to park on the waiting restriction lines.

RESOLVED: That the Board agree to make a Traffic Regulation Order to implement 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions on Cronton Lane, Widnes as listed in Appendix B attached to the report, and the objectors be informed accordingly.

Strategic Director
- Policy &
Resources

EXB100 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- (1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely

that, in view of the nature of the business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and

- (2) whether the disclosure of information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

(N.B. Councillor Jones declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as he was a Governor of Fairfield School).

EXB101 PEELHOUSE LANE - NEW WIDNES CEMETERY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which updated Members on the proposed timetable for the construction of the new Widnes Cemetery at Peelhouse Lane.

The report also sought approval for the invitation of tenders to construct the new cemetery and for the addition of the project to the Council's Capital Programme.

Reason(s) for Decision

A decision was required to enable the project to be added to the Council's Capital Programme and in order for the procurement process to commence in accordance with the overall project timeline.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None identified.

Implementation Date

The tender process would commence in January 2015. Works on site would commence once construction of the access road and roundabout was completed in July 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the progress made to date and approve the timeline for the tender and construction process detailed in Appendix A;
- 2) approve the proposal to tender works for the construction of a new cemetery;
- 3) recommend that Council approve the addition of the £2.8m project to the Council's Capital Programme; and
- 4) approve the new name of the cemetery as Peel House Cemetery.

Strategic Director
- Communities

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB102 HBC FIELD - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive, on the progress in relation to HBC Field and to make recommendations for its development as part of the 3MG Masterplan. The report set out details for Members' consideration.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Council to enter into a Development Agreement with the preferred developer for the development of the HBC Field. The Council to enter into an Easement Agreement with Network Rail for the delivery of the 3MG Rail connection.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The various mechanisms had been reviewed to bring forward the development of HBC Field and the Development Agreement was the option recommended as it protected the Council interests far more than a straightforward disposal.

The Council had considered alternative ways of progressing HBC Field. The Easement Agreement with Network Rail was unavoidable. The Council had taken legal advice to fix the position.

Implementation Date

Both agreements would be implemented as soon as practicable and before August 2015.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council enters into a Development Agreement with IDI Gazeley for the development of HBC Field;
- 2) the Council enters into lease agreements for the disposal of HBC Field to IDI Gazeley;
- 3) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio holder for Physical Environment, be authorised to take such action as he judges necessary to give effect to the above; and
- 4) the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services, be authorised to enter into such agreements and take such other actions concerned with legal and administrative processes as may be necessary to give effect to the above.

Chief Executive

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB103 WARRINGTON ROAD TRAVELLER SITE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which provided an update on the delivery of the new permanent Traveller site at Warrington Road.

The Board was advised that the site was needed to meet imposed national targets for the provision of Traveller pitches. It was reported that the site was critical to the future active management of Traveller accommodation and the control of unauthorised development.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the revised scheme costings, set out in Section 5 of the report be agreed, subject to formally agreeing the required additional funding contributions from the Homes and Communities Agency, and a developer's planning obligation (S106) contribution;
- 2) Council be recommended to increase the estimated amount of the new permanent Warrington Road site within the Council's Capital Programme, in line with the final estimated cost identified following the value engineering process; and
- 3) the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, be granted delegated authority, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Physical Environment, to consider how any residual gap in funding might be met.

Strategic Director
- Policy &
Resources

MINUTES ISSUED: 25 November 2014

CALL-IN: 2 December 2014

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 2 December 2014

Meeting ended at 2.54 p.m.