

## **CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 28 January 2020 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Howard, M. Lloyd Jones, C. Loftus, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Cook, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, W. Rourke and M. Baker

Also in attendance: N/A

### **ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

|      |   | <i>Action</i> |
|------|---|---------------|
| CS29 | MINUTES<br><br>The Minutes from the meeting held on 12 <sup>th</sup> November 2019 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.   |               |
| CS30 | PUBLIC QUESTION TIME<br><br>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.   |               |
| CS31 | EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES<br><br>The Board was presented with the Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board.<br><br><u>EXB57</u> – Members were advised that this item would be discussed at the Boundary Working Party once the new Ward Boundaries were confirmed.<br><br>RESOLVED: That the minutes and comments made be noted. |               |

CS32 COMMUNICATIONS, DESIGN AND MARKETING SERVICE UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources and received a presentation, which provided an overview of the work of the Communications, Design and Marketing Service. Work within the department had been prioritised against a number of criteria, these being:

- An income would be generated for the authority;
- There would be a reduction in cost/improved efficiency;
- The reputation of the authority would be significantly enhanced/or risk to reputation would be reduced; and
- There was a statutory duty.

It was noted that as the Team had reduced in capacity over the years its key priority was to support and market those Council owned venues which generated income namely The Brindley, Stadium, Widnes Market and since 2016 Halton's Leisure Centres. There had also been ongoing support for major projects and regeneration activity.

Members were also advised on the use of social media which had provided a fast, inexpensive and effective way to reach increased numbers of our community, paid for advertising opportunities across these platforms and the role of the central press office.

The Board discussed how Members were kept up to date by the Team on key issues and it was agreed that in light of their comments this would be reviewed.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CS33 2019 GOVERNMENT REPORT ON LEASEHOLD REFORM: THE FUTURE OF GROUND RENTS, SERVICE CHARGES AND SELLING PRACTICES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Community, Enterprise and Resources, which provided an update on the Government Report (2019) on Leasehold Reform and if any of the recommendations outlined in the report could be implemented in Halton.

It was noted that at a previous meeting of the Council held in October a motion was approved in respect of Leasehold Ownership. The background to the motion was that in 2017 the Government had commissioned an Inquiry

into unfair practices in the leasehold market and the Inquiry concluded in April 2019. Following the Inquiry, a report was produced which identified some areas of concern such as:

- Onerous ground rents;
- High and unclear service charges;
- Frequent one off bills;
- Alleged miss-selling of leasehold properties by developers;
- Unbalanced dispute resolution mechanisms;
- Unreasonable costs to enfranchise or extend leases; and
- Future leasehold tenure.

In the government's response to the report, it was suggested that developers would be required to establish voluntary compensation schemes to assist leaseholders with onerous ground rent terms but if it did not see the sector responding proactively then it would take further action. It also stated an intention to make it easier for leaseholders to buy the freehold on their property.

Members were advised that subsequent Private Members Bill had its first reading in the House of Commons on 25<sup>th</sup> June 2019 but the Bill failed to make its passage through Parliament. Therefore, the report was a series of recommendations which were not currently supported by legislation. Unfortunately, without legislation, it would not be possible to apply retrospective measures to support existing leaseholders in Halton. Similarly, the Council could not place a ban on leaseholders on non-Council land or land that had been sold to developers in the past.

The Council could consider mechanisms for either capping or removing the costs for leaseholders on land it proposed to sell for housing development in the future. This would need to be a condition of any future Development Agreement. Arising from the discussion, the Board agreed that any Council owned land sold to housing developers should contain a condition that it is for freehold development only. It was agreed that the suggestion should be submitted as a proposal to the Liverpool City Region Planning Committee for adoption across the Region.

**RESOLVED:** That any Council owned land sold to housing developers should contain a condition that it is for freehold development only. It was agreed that the suggestion should be submitted as a proposal to the Liverpool City Region Planning Committee for adoption across the Region.

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*Meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.*