



Chairman
Councillor
Gilligan

ANNUAL REPORT CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD APRIL 2008 – MARCH 2009

“I would like to thank Members of the Board for their hard work and the contribution they have made to its activities over the past year. This year, key areas have included scrutiny of the Widnes and Runcorn Markets, involving the setting up of a Working Party, a review of compliments and complaints which has fed in to topic work on customer care, and ongoing scrutiny of Carbon Management and Neighbourhood Management”. Councillor Bob Gilligan Chairman of Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board”

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2008/09 the Board comprised of eleven Councillors – Gilligan (Chairman), Lowe (Vice Chair), J. Bradshaw, Browne, E. Cargill, Dennett, Edge, D. Inch, Nolan, Nordall, and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, Personnel and Training, ICT and E Government, Property, Committee and Member Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Equalities (employment aspects), Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments, namely Policy and Performance, Legal and Member Services and HR, Finance, Exchequer and Customer Services (Revenues), Property Services and ICT

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year, and in addition held a special meeting to consider Neighbourhood Management. Set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during that time.

DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION ACT

The Board received a report setting out the progress made

by the Council towards compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, in particular on major refurbishment or repair works, findings of site visits and interviews, building modifications, emergency evacuation procedures and disabled toilet facilities along with secondary use of Council owned buildings. A number of recommendations were endorsed by the Board, in which it considered the need for emergency evacuation procedures to be updated as top priority.

CORPORATE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS

The Strategic Director Corporate and Policy presented the findings of a review of the Council's Corporate Performance Management Arrangements and set out recommendations and conclusions of the topic group which were split into six areas; the role of Members, the Performance Management Framework and Service Planning, Risk Assessment, Monitoring and Reporting arrangements/use of information, the New National Indicator set and Local Area Agreements. The recommendations were approved and subsequently endorsed by the Executive Board.

COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REVIEW

The Board received the findings of the Scrutiny Review undertaking in relation to Compliments and Complaints. The Board noted that Members received a number of complaints during surgeries and these were reported through the Councillors Complaints procedures. ICT were looking at implementing a system for Councillors which would link into the complaints process. A number of recommendations were approved and the findings were fed into a new topic brief for the review of customer care. In that regard, two strands to the topic were outlined;

- to explore how best to implement the new Customer Excellence Standard, to help drive improvement and consistency throughout the organisation
- to develop an overarching Customer Care strategy that would set out key areas upon which the Council needed to focus to secure improved outcomes.

It was noted that a pilot assessment of customer services at Halton Direct Link and Revenues would be carried out.

MARKETS

The Strategic Director Corporate and Policy set out the most up to date position with regard to the current performance of the Council's two markets based in Widnes and Runcorn. The presentation contained an outline of facilities, occupancy rates, financial performance and current issues of both markets. A number of initiatives were considered and Members agreed to set up a market working party to examine ways of possible improvements at both markets.

TRANSFER OF ASSETS

A Topic Group had been formed to develop a policy for recommendation to the Executive Board as to how the Council might approach the issue of transferring assets to the third sector. The draft strategy and policy statement was intended to provide both guidance and a process to follow if such transfers were deemed to be appropriate. The Board endorsed the Policy which was subsequently approved and adopted by the Executive Board.

NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT

The Board received an update at its September meeting, in which Members were informed that work was currently being focused in three pilot neighbourhoods, central Widnes, Hallwood Park and Palacefields, and Castlefields and Windmill Hill. It was reported that all three neighbourhood management boards would continue to develop and all had evolving neighbourhood action plans and growing programmes of events and interventions. The Halton Neighbourhood Away Day had been well attended and proved to be productive. It had set the following areas of work for the partnership over the coming months:-

- a re-statement of the partnerships neighbourhood management provision
- to track the closing of the gap with regard to key indicators between the Neighbourhood Management areas and Halton as a whole
- to investigate the value for money / business case for sustaining of neighbourhood management beyond 2010
- to reach a consensus about if and when to roll out neighbourhood management after 2010 beyond the current pilot areas.

A special meeting was held in February at which the

Board received a presentation from Councillor John Swain, executive member for Quality and Performance, and Mr. N. Mannion, the Neighbourhood Director. This detailed:-

- a brief overview of the Government's expectations and key objectives
- how and why the three pilot neighbourhoods were chosen
- how the Halton Neighbourhood Management Partnership was structured and operated
- Halton's approach to developing neighbourhood management including how the government funding has been used
- the key tools and techniques being utilised
- the future challenges and opportunities for neighbourhood management
- Members were also advised of the funding profile over the four years of the project and of Government guidance on the use of funding
- Members were advised that the next steps of the initiative would be to complete an evaluation of the impact of larger interventions, negotiate the inclusion of local targets in Halton's Local Area Agreement, explore options as part of a business case to sustain neighbourhood management beyond 2010, and continue to increase residents' involvement.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the year the Board has focused a significant amount of effort on monitoring the performance of its reporting departments. Among the performance issues overseen by the Board during the year are:-

- School catering and the operation of the Stobart Stadium, Halton
- The process of hearing Job Evaluation Appeals and dealing with the Equal Pay litigation
- Sickness Absence in respect of which members asked for a report to be presented to its Meeting in June 2009
- Ongoing scrutiny of Treasury Management.

WORK PROGRAMME 2009/2010

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2009/10) it would carry out detailed work on the use of natural resources. In the first instance the Board would

	<p>establish a baseline of how green the Borough is at present and then use this overview as a basis for selecting areas of priority for closer examination by Members, dividing the task into manageable pieces which would provide Members with choices so that they contribute according to individual interest and expertise.</p>
--	---

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 471 7394 or email caroline.halpin@halton.gov.uk