

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 16 November 2006 at the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors McDermott (Chairman), D. Cargill, Gerrard, Harris, Massey, McInerney, Polhill, Nelson, Wright and Wharton

Apologies for Absence: Councillors (none)

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor (none)

Officers present: L. Cairns, G. Cook, D. Parr, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, K. O'Dwyer, J. Tradewell and D Tregea

Also in attendance: Councillors M Ratcliffe and Redhead, 1 Member of the Public and 1 Member of the Press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EXB54 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 2 nd November 2006 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO	
EXB55 IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILDREN IN NEED (CIN) STRATEGY, POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People seeking agreement to the implementation of the multi-agency Children in Need (CIN) Strategy, Policy and Procedures across the Borough. It was noted that the implementation of the Strategy, policy and procedures would be overseen by the development of a Children in Need (CIN) Mini-Trust and Halton's Local Safeguarding Children's Board.	
The aim of the Strategy was that, through the timely provision of co-ordinated multi-agency support services to children and families, the need of children and families would be met at an early stage, reducing the risk to children	

and the need for them to be removed from home. This would allow services to refocus towards an increased range of high quality support services provided to families at their point of need, which promoted the welfare of children and the achievement of high level outcomes for children.

The Board noted that the associated policies and procedures were based on Halton Children's Planning Model, which focused on the early identification of need and provision of services. The model was outlined within the report for Members' information.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Children in Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures be implemented by all agencies, including those that relate to the CIN Trust;
- (2) the Children in Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures form the basis of the service delivery model for the Children in Need Mini-Trust;
- (3) the Children in Need Mini-Trust Action Plan focus on commissioning, aligned budgets, co-location of staff and multi-agency assessments, and be at the forefront of the development of Children and Young People Area Networks;
- (4) the Children in Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures be overseen by the local Safeguarding Children's Board;
- (5) the Children in Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures establish a continuum of Children in Need, thinking preventative, promotional and safeguarding Children in Need services together; and
- (6) the Children in Need Strategy, Policy and Procedures be formally launched to all agencies.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Young People

EXB56 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT (CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE'S DIRECTORATE)

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People outlining the outcome of the Children and Young People Directorate's Annual Performance Assessment (APA) 2005/06 undertaken by Ofsted, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), Government Office North West (GONW) and the Department for Education and Skills (DfES).

It was noted that the APA of services for children focused mainly on the operational responsibilities of the Children and Young People's Directorate and how it achieved the five outcomes for children set out in Every Child Matters. Partnership working with other Council Directorates, and with all agencies working with children in Halton, was taken into account with a grade determined for each of the five outcomes. In addition, the APA made three judgements in relation to:

- the Council's Children's Social Care Services;
- the Council's Services for Children and the specific contributions they made to improving outcomes for children and young people; and
- the Council's management of its services for children and young people and its capacity to further improve those services.

The Board was advised that 2006 was the final year for a separate children's Social Care Judgement and the Children's Social Care Services had been assessed as outstanding. This would result in the award of an additional star taking Halton's Social Care Services to a top performing Three Star Status in this year's star ratings announcement.

The Authority's Children's Services had been assessed overall as good, with this judgement forming a two star rating for Children's Services overall. This would feed into Halton's CPA rating.

The judgement made in respect of the Council's management of its services for Children and Young People, including its capacity to improve them further, was good, which was a maintained position from 2004/05. The areas identified for improvement, which would be a focus for inspectors in the forthcoming Joint Area Review, were outlined for the Board's consideration.

Ms. K. Tempest, and Ms. D. Westhead, of CSCI attended the meeting to outline the Commission's views on the achievement of the Authority. It was noted that the progress made reflected the considerable commitment of the Councillors and Officers involved, all of whom were commended by Ms Tempest, the Leader and by the Strategic Director – Children and Young People via the Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People. Ms Tempest stated that there was obvious engagement with young people and on-going integration between Education and Social Services. In particular, Ms. Tempest passed on

her best wishes to the Strategic Director – Children and Young People.

Ms. K. O'Dwyer, Operational Director – Children and Young People's Services, attended the meeting to give a presentation regarding APA, outlining the areas for judgements, grades awarded and key quotes made at the conclusion of the process.

RESOLVED: That the report be received and the contents noted.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

(NB Councillors Nelson and M. Ratcliffe declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item of business, due to being Board Members of Halton Housing Trust, and left the room for the duration of its consideration.)

EXB57 HALTON HOUSING TRUST UPDATE

The Board considered a Progress Assessment and Position Statement report from Halton Housing Trust, which had been produced in accordance with the Monitoring Framework agreed prior to the transfer of the Council's housing stock. The report identified progress made in the establishment of the Trust and the delivery of its key service areas.

It was noted that there was a need to finalise how reports were to be presented to the Board: the Chief Executive confirmed that Mr. Atkin had stated that he was keen to maintain dialogue with the Council.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Leader, relevant Portfolio Holder and the Deputy Leader meet with the Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust to review the contents of the report; and
- (3) the Portfolio Holder and Strategic Director - Health and Community meet with Halton Housing Trust monthly to monitor the progress of the activities of Halton Housing Trust.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

CORPORATE PORTFOLIO

(NB Councillor M. Ratcliffe declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item of business due to being a magistrate.)

EXB58 PROPOSED CHANGES TO MAGISTRATES' COURT ARRANGEMENTS IN HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding the proposed changes to the Court arrangements in Halton. The Council had been formally told of these changes in a letter received from the Area Manager, Her Majesty's Courts Service, on 31st October 2006.

The principal changes were outlined within the report for the Board's information. Although the Council had effectively been told that these new arrangements were being put in place, the Chief Executive had written to make representations about the detrimental effect they would have on the administration of justice within Halton, essentially relating to accessibility, cost, attracting new magistrates and the long-term future of the Courts in Halton.

The Chief Executive reported that, as a representative of the Cheshire Local Authority Chief Executives on the Criminal Justice Board, he had raised these concerns at a recent meeting and had been supported by representatives of Cheshire Magistrates, in particular with regard to the decision-making process and the lack of consultation. As a result of this meeting, Judge Elgin Edwards, the Court Service, the Crown Prosecution Service and the Police had agreed to come to a meeting to explain the rationale for the decision made and provide an opportunity for questions. This meeting was scheduled for 6th December 2006.

Invitations had been sent to the Chairs of each of the Benches of Cheshire Magistrates, the Cheshire Chief Executives and Cheshire Authority Leaders for this meeting, which was to be held at Halton Stadium. However, in the interim, it had been assured that

- (1) the changes would not result in the closure of courts in Halton; and
- (2) the arrangements would be kept under review so that if the difficulties that had led to the decision were not resolved an alternative would be sought.

Members of the Board expressed their discontent at the lack of consultation and the impact that this would have

on the residents of Halton.

In addition, it was advised that the Authority had been notified that the Courts were to change the way private prosecutions were administered. This would mean that Court time availability for the Council would be reduced from a weekly to a fortnightly slot.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council expresses its concern and disappointment that Her Majesty's Courts Service (HMCS) has asked for the Council's views after its decision appears to have been made and seeks further clarification in relation to the points raised within the report;
- (2) the action of the Chief Executive in expressing the Council's concerns be endorsed;
- (3) HMCS be asked to reconsider its decision in the light of the concerns of the Council and other stakeholders;
- (4) HMCS be asked to work with the local bench and other stakeholders to thoroughly examine other options to improving the performance of the Court Service in Halton, including looking at the alternate use of Courts in Halton and Warrington; and
- (5) HMCS be requested to consider Halton as the location for the hearing of road traffic cases given the road and public transport infrastructure in and around the Borough.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

EXB59 DEFAULT RETIREMENT AGE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding implications of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations in respect of a default retirement age.

It was noted that dismissal on the grounds of a person's age was likely to be unfair. However, the Regulations contained an exception in the case of persons who were at, or over, the age of 65 and where the reason for dismissal was retirement. As a result, employers had the option of continuing to have a retirement age of 65 or over but, if they did, they must have procedures in place to consider and determine requests to work beyond retirement

age. The alternative was not to have a default retirement age and simply allow employees to continue to work until they wished to retire.

A number of options were outlined for the Board's information. It was advised that these had been discussed with the Trade Unions, and the view of both senior management and the Trade Unions was that the best option would be for the Council not to have a default retirement age. This decision should not result in any significant financial implications for the Council and would not affect employees' pensions.

RESOLVED: That a no default retirement age policy be adopted with immediate effect.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB60 CARERS STRATEGY 2006 -2008

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community together with the draft Carers Strategy 2006/2008.

It was noted that all local authorities were required to provide a Carers Strategy, which identified the aims for delivering services to Carers. The Council would receive an annual ring-fenced grant 2006/07 and 2007/08 to support the Carers Services. In 2006/07 the grant was £490,000 and this was set to increase to £503,000 for 2007/08. The annual increase in carers grant reflected a growing importance placed by the Department of Health in supporting carers and it was expected that 15% of the overall scoring in assessing the performance of Adult Social Care within the Council would be against services for carers.

A stronger corporate approach to carers was required to meet national requirements as well as providing a Council-wide response to the needs of 13,528 carers in Halton. The Carers Strategy 2006/08 reflected the outcome of consultations undertaken and sought to build on, and develop, those aspects of services most valued by carers. An action plan had been drawn up to implement the Carers Strategy and this would be subject to a review in March 2007.

The Board considered hard-to-reach groups and the methods for identifying and helping them. It was noted that, for many, family GPs would be a mechanism to identify carers and sign post them to the services available.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Carers Strategy be noted; and
- (2) the Strategy be approved.

MINUTES ISSUED: 23rd November 2006

CALL IN: 30th November 2006

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 30th November 2006.

Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.