

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 7 December 2006 at the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building, Widnes.

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors McInerney

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: L. Cairns, B. Dodd, I. Leivesley, D. Parr, M. Platts, P. Watts and A. Williamson

Also in attendance: Councillor Redhead and 1 member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB61 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th November 2006 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB62 ALLEYGATES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding the scheme for installing alley gates across the Borough and the financial implications of maintaining them.

It was noted that the gating of rear entries had proved to be a very successful crime prevention measure, contributing to a reduction of burglaries, criminal damage, graffiti, vandalism, anti-social behaviour and fly tipping. A survey carried out by Mott MacDonald in 2003 had also demonstrated that the gates had had a positive effect on the perceptions of residents in relation to crime. Each householder affected by the gate had a key to it, and access for refuse collection and emergency services was guaranteed.

Action

The Board was advised that, from what started as a pilot scheme, alley gates had become a major project and there was therefore a need to review the managerial and financial arrangements for their installation and maintenance to ensure that they were sustainable. A number of operational processes were outlined for consideration.

The Board considered:

- the need for Area Forum involvement, despite the delay this sometimes caused;
- the need for the installation of gates to continue whilst the review was ongoing;
- timing of the review, which was expected to commence prior to Christmas with a further report submitted to the Board by March 2007;
- membership of the review panel – it was agreed that Councillors Wright and Nelson, the relevant Portfolio Holders, should be involved, as well as a representative from the Community Safety team.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the approach to the:
 - (a) management of alley gates as set out in paragraph 4.0 of the report; and
 - (b) financial management of alley gates as set out in paragraphs 5.3 and 5.4 of the reportbe endorsed; and
- (2) the process and procedures for considering, providing and maintaining alley gates be reviewed to ensure the process and procedures meet best practice, are timely and cost efficient.

EXB63 NORTH WEST HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding a Regional Homelessness Strategy that had been produced by the North West Regional Housing Board for consultation. The appendix to the report outlined the legislative and policy context. Statistical evidence was also presented to highlight the regional position in comparison to the position in England as a whole.

The North West Regional Housing Board advocated that prevention was better than a reactive response to homelessness. The Housing Board believed that a Regional Homelessness Strategy should focus on the main causes of homelessness in the North West where local authorities and the voluntary sector could make a difference by adopting changes in policies and practices. The Housing Board suggested that the issue of homelessness could be addressed partly by looking at the processes adopted to administer housing stock and partly by looking at the needs of groups who were vulnerable to homelessness.

Members considered:

- the difficulty of establishing an accurate number of people homeless in Halton;
- the many reasons for homelessness;
- the success of Blackpool in eradicating the need to house families in bed and breakfast accommodation as a result of the preventative work being undertaken;
- repeat homelessness, in particular with respect to young people;
- mediation work that could be carried out between young people and their parents to prevent long-term homelessness, subject to the home place being a safe environment;
- the offer from Halton Housing Trust (HHT) to work with the Council on this issue and the possibility of HHT contributing financially.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the response detailed in Appendix B be agreed.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB64 GAMBLING ACT 2005 STATEMENT OF GAMBLING POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Council Solicitor outlining a Statement of Gambling Policy, which had been produced as required by Section 349 of the Gambling Act 2005. The Statement had been out for public consultation and the responses received were outlined at Appendix 1 to the report. No changes to the draft Statement, previously agreed by the Board, were proposed as a result of the consultation exercise.

Members noted that, once adopted, the Statement of Gambling Policy would be used by applicants and the Regulatory Committee in accordance with the Gambling Act

2005.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to adopt the Statement of Gambling Policy attached to the report.

EXB65 CORPORATE EQUALITY PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy requesting approval of the revised Corporate Equality Plan which was to be submitted for public consultation.

It was noted that the Board had approved a Plan earlier in the year; however, since then, there had been significant new legislation in relation to both Disability Equality and Gender Equality. The new legislation required the Council to adopt a Disability Equality Scheme (December 2006) and a Gender Equality Scheme (April 2007) and it was proposed that a single equality scheme be adopted, to include the statutory requirements, within the Corporate Equality Scheme.

The changes within the Scheme were outlined for the Board's consideration, and the proposed process in terms of public consultation was also outlined. It was advised that, following this process, any representations and further amendments would be brought back to the Board for consideration.

RESOLVED: That the revised Corporate Equality Plan be approved and submitted for public consultation as outlined in the report.

EXB66 DETERMINATION OF COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Financial Services regarding the 'Tax base' for the area and the tax base for each of the Parishes. The Council was required to notify Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Policy Authority, the Cheshire Magistrates' Courts Committee, the Cheshire Probation Committee and the National Rivers Authority of this figure by 31st January 2007.

Members were advised that the 'Tax Base' 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, and was the measure used for calculating the council tax. Taking account of all the

relevant information, and applying a 99% collection rate, the calculation for 2007/2008 gave a tax base figure of 37,392 for the Borough as a whole.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council be recommended that the 2007/8 Council Tax Base be set at 37,392 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Cheshire Police Authority and the National Rivers Authority be so notified; and
- (2) the Council be recommended that the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes be set as follows:

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	722
Daresbury	140
Moore	352
Preston Brook	331

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB67 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION BUSINESS CASE

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive advising of the development of the Liverpool City Region Business Case (LCRBC) and providing a draft of the case for consideration.

It was noted that the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) was promoting the development of City Regions and City Region Governance, and Liverpool was required to present a LCRBC, which was supported by the six Merseyside Local Authorities, to the Secretary of State. Halton had played a significant role in the development of the LCRBC, which looked to integrate the Authority within the strategic planning framework as part of the delivery of strategic functions for the Liverpool City Region. This strategic arrangement was critical to the further development of Halton locally, sub-regionally, regionally and nationally, whilst at the same time complementing Halton's position as the local authority for Halton's communities and its role as a community and neighbourhood leader.

The Board was advised that a briefing session for all Members would be held prior to full Council on Wednesday, 13th December 2006. This would be followed by a fuller seminar in the new year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the current draft of the Liverpool City Region Business Case be supported; and
- (2) the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader, be delegated authority to agree the final version of the Liverpool City Region Business Case.

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB68 LOCAL AREA AGREEMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding Local Area Agreements. It was noted that a Local Area Agreement (LAA) was a three year protocol that set out the priorities for a local area. This had to be agreed between central government and the area itself, as represented by the lead local authority and other key partners through Local Strategic Partnership.

The Government had stipulated that Halton would be in Round 3 of the programme, which meant that an Agreement had to be negotiated by April 2007. A draft had been endorsed by the Board in September and had subsequently been submitted to Government Office North West (GONW) on 29 September. A number of developments had taken place since that time and these were outlined within the report for Members' consideration. This had resulted in the production of a revised LAA with the key changes being in the narrative and outcomes framework.

The Board noted that the final document had to be submitted to Government by 20 December 2006 and, as Halton Borough Council was to be the accountable body for the LAA, Members were requested to formally endorse the Agreement prior to its submission to GONW and subsequent sign off by the Minister.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the final agreement be endorsed and its submission to Government be agreed; and
- (2) the Leader and Chief Executive be given delegated powers to make any necessary minor drafting

amendments to the submission following Executive Board.

MINUTES ISSUED: 13th December 2006

CALL IN: 20th December 2006

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 20th December 2006.

Meeting ended at 2.47 p.m.