

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 6 September 2006 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn.

Present: Councillors Cole (Chairman), Lloyd-Jones (Vice-Chairman), Dennett, Findon, Hignett, C Inch, Lowe and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Bradshaw, Osborne and Philbin

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: I. Leivesley, R. Mackenzie, A. West, M. Murphy and C. Halpin

Also in attendance: (none)

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
BEB10 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meetings held on 7 June 2006, having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
BEB11 BEST VALUE REVIEW OF TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS - KEY REVIEW OUTCOMES	
The Board received a presentation on the key review outcomes of the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access, from the Operational Director - Highways and Transportation. The final report set out a range of recommendations, which were grouped around a number of key themes, aimed at improving services for both current patrons and future passengers.	
An improvement plan had been drawn up, which set out the timetable for delivering the recommendations, as had been detailed in the final report. The key themes were set out in detail in the report, covering the following:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ improving the quality and accessibility of public transport services within Halton, by the introduction of a single integrated booking system;	

- developing the local bus network within the Borough;
- improving the quality of passenger information, including further development of real time passenger information;
- improving further the provision of good quality and accessible transport for post sixteen learners;
- reducing the environmental impact of passenger transport within Halton; and
- internal service improvements.

Arising from the discussion reference was made to:

- the general reduction in usage of public transport services and whether the review sought to find ways to improve this;
- the implications of fuel cost increases and how this may affect subsidised services;
- how the introduction of free bus passes for the elderly may impact usage figures;
- where and for which department(s) out of borough transport services were needed;
- difficulties for the public in understanding bus timetables, which it was noted was being addressed and a new style of timetable may be introduced in the near future, similar to that of the London Underground; and
- if and where it may be possible to find efficiency savings within the transportation department.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) follow up performance assessments of the progress towards implementing the improvement plan be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

BEB12 IDEA EFFICIENCY REVIEW

The Board received an update on the progress of the IDeA Efficiency Peer Review. Unfortunately the review document had not been finalised in time for the meeting, therefore, the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy gave an oral summary of its findings. In particular it was noted that a number of positive comments had been made in relation to the Council overall, specifically that it had:

- strong leadership;

- a 'get it done' approach;
- a service orientated attitude

The review had also identified a number of areas of good practice, which needed further work to be undertaken and outlined a number of recommendations, including:

- promoting and ensuring an organisational culture of efficiency;
- bringing together current efforts into an efficiency strategy, including a clear definition of efficiency;
- making greater use of process mapping;
- examining new ways of sustaining improvements;
- improving procurement planning and exploring the use of consortia arrangements for purchasing;
- improving project management techniques; and
- providing more training on efficiency for both Councillors and Officers.

At present the Council's Efficiency Strategy Group of officers was working towards producing an Efficiency Strategy from these recommendations, which would be used as the basis for the Boards work streams for the year.

Arising from the discussion clarification was sought as to whether capital projects were considered as part of the review as they also contribute to efficiency savings and whether full revenue costs were being built into capital projects. It was confirmed that the review report covered such matters.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress be noted;
- (2) the final review document be circulated to the Board; and
- (3) the results of the review be used to inform the development of an Efficiency Strategy.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

BEB13 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 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 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 outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting 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 is likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100(1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

BEB14 2006/07 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN – QUARTER 1
PROGRESS REPORT

The Board received a progress report against the 2006/7 Internal Audit Plan which gave details of the significant aspects of audit work completed in the first quarter, which included:

- Learning & Skills Council (LSC) 6th Form Assurance Checks;
- Main Financial Systems – key controls review;
- Local Public Service Agreement;
- Statement of Internal Control;
- School Audits; and
- National Fraud Initiative 2006.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit Progress Report be accepted.

Meeting ended at 7.36 p.m.