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EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 25 September 2008 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), D. Cargill, Gerrard, Harris, McInerney, Swain, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Nelson

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor McDermott

Officers present: L. Cairns, G. Cook, B. Dodd, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, M. Reaney, K. Sparks and D. Tregoe

Also in attendance: Councillor Redhead

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB47 CORPORATE SERVICE PPB COMPLIMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REVIEW

Action

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy detailing the recommendations of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board (PPB) for improving how the Council responded to compliments and complaints.

The Corporate Services PPB had undertaken a review of compliments and complaints that had involved customer surveys, interviews and comparison with good practice local authorities. The report outlined the review process and detailed the key findings and reasoning behind the proposed recommendations. The recommendations described how improvements in relation to compliments and complaints intended to be delivered and the report and action plan were attached as appendices to the main report for the Executive Board's consideration.

Members noted that, whilst there was a need for consistency across the Council, there would still be variances due to statutory requirements in some areas such as those relating to health.

In presenting the report, the Portfolio Holder commended this piece of scrutiny work.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board (PPB) set out in Appendix 1 to the report be noted;
- (2) the recommendations set out in Section 4 of the report, as set out in the Appendix to these Minutes, be approved; and
- (3) the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy report to the Corporate Services PPB on progress against the Action Plan set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

(NB Councillor Gerrard declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item of business due to her husband being Contracts Manager in the Landscape Division, and left the room during its consideration.)

EXB48 IMPROVEMENTS TO BOROUGH'S PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment seeking endorsement for the continuation of small scale improvements to the Borough's parks, playgrounds and open spaces by using existing funding and funding from external bodies such as WREN; seeking approval for the extension of the current standing list for landscape consultants; providing information about the numerous improvement projects that had been carried out, the improvements in quality and the awards secured since the creation of the Landscape Services Division in 2000; and outlining the strategy with regards to the retention and expansion of Green Flag Awards.

It was noted that, in total, over 180 environmental improvement schemes of various sizes had been carried out. These were outlined in Appendix 1 to the report. Ten Green Flag Awards had resulted from these investments and visitor satisfaction with parks was 94%. Major refurbishment work at Hale Park and Runcorn Town Hall was due to commence in the financial year 2008/09. However, even after the completion of these sites, there would still be a number of key areas of parks and open space that needed to be upgraded.

It was advised that funding had recently been made available for improvements to Runcorn Town Hall Park, and there was ongoing landscape work in connection with Castlefields Regeneration, 3MG and Widnes Waterfront. There were also a number of Section 106 funded schemes which needed completing and a major grant had recently been awarded from Heritage Lottery Fund for improvements to Hale Park. The estimated value of the workload over the next two years was £4m.

Information on how the work was to be managed was outlined for the Board's consideration. In particular, it was noted that officers were recommending that the services of two external consultants, TEP and 2020 Knowsley, be retained for a further three years as outlined within the Business Case attached to the report at Appendix 2.

Members noted the giant strides that had been made in this area and commended all those involved.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) those sites listed below represent the priorities for the next phase of major park refurbishment:-
 - a. Spike Island/St Helens Canal
 - b. Runcorn Town Hall Park
 - c. Runcorn Hill Park
 - d. Crow Wood Park

and existing budgets and monies from external funding bodies (subject to an annual review by this Board and agreement with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Leisure and Sport) be used to upgrade the above sites to improve the 'liveability' of local areas, contribute to the government's 'Cleaner, Greener' agenda and provide a wide range of facilities for local people and visitors that promote healthy lifestyles and wellbeing;

- (2) other small-scale landscape improvements continue to be undertaken, following discussion with the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Leisure and Sport, through the use of existing revenue and capital funding, through section 106 agreements and through funding from external bodies such as WREN;
- (3) a report be submitted once per year to the Executive Board Sub-Committee showing a list of small-scale improvements for information along with a list of

Strategic Director
- Environment

potential future projects, and demonstrating that monies are still available for continuation and new schemes;

- (4) the Operational Director - Environmental and Regulatory Services be authorised to extend the contracts for Term Landscape Consultancy to The Environment Partnership (TEP) and 2020 Knowsley for a further three years, and that in light of the exceptional circumstances, namely an unforeseen large volume of landscape design and implementation work and in accordance with Procurement SO 1.6, Standing Orders 3.1- 3.7 be waived on this occasion in view of 1.6 (b) 'where compliance with Standing Orders is not practicable for reasons of urgency which could not have reasonably been anticipated' in that a large portfolio of recently confirmed landscape schemes, including the Runcorn Town Hall Park works, need completing in a short space of time to meet funding deadlines and Members' and community expectations;
- (5) the Operational Director - Environmental and Regulatory Services be authorised to recruit a Temporary Assistant Landscape Architect for a two year period, with costs to be covered by the fee elements of the landscape schemes over the next two years;
- (6) it be noted that since the creation of the Landscape Services Division in 2000 there have been 187 separate improvement schemes completed, or currently with contractors on site (See Appendix 1 of the report); quality of management and maintenance has improved to such a degree that the Council now has 10 Green Flag Award Parks; since 2000 the Landscape Services Division also gained Beacon Status in 2002 for 'Improving Urban Green Spaces'; it was twice the winner of APSE Service Team of the Year Award in 2003 and 2004 and it was runner up for this award in 2005; the Division was a runner up for APSE Most Improved Council in 2006 and the winner of this award in 2007; and the Division has also won a Green Apple Award for its work at the Hale Duck Decoy in 2004, Best Environmental Planning Project for Wigg Island in 2004, a Green Heroes Award for working with volunteers in 2007 and a Best Partnership Award for the Phoenix Park Pavilion in 2007; and

- (7) the Board note and approve that Halton Borough Council currently ranks joint 5th (with Tameside MBC) nationally in the number of Green Flag Awards that it holds - as stated in the Environment and Regulatory Services Departments Service Plan the Landscape Services Division will seek to retain all of the present Green Flag Awards and, in addition, further bids for Green Flag Awards will be made over the next four years usually at the rate of one additional bid per year (the aim is to position Halton amongst the top three performing authorities regionally and nationally: additional parks that could be considered for Green Flag Awards include Birchfield Gardens, Crow Wood Park, Hale Park and Widnes and Runcorn Cemeteries).

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB49 HEALTH SUMMIT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community advising of the background to, and outcome of, the Health Summit held by Halton and St. Helens Primary Care Trust (PCT) on 3rd September 2008.

It was noted that, following the publication of “Ambition for Health”, the PCT had engaged with its partners and the public in prioritising health outcomes to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population. The PCT’s Clinical Executive Committee and Practice Based Consortia had led this process at the Health Summit organised with Halton Borough Council, St. Helens Council, the voluntary sector and a range of other partners on 3rd September 2008. This meeting had also been attended by the Portfolio Holder for Health and Social Care, and the Chair of the Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board.

The strategic priorities proposed by the PCT were:

- Alcohol;
- Obesity;
- Early Detection: Diabetes, respiratory, heart disease, cancer;
- Early Detection: Depression;
- Prevention: Tobacco Control; and
- Safety, Quality and Efficiency: Planned and Urgent Care.

These priorities had received widespread support at the

Summit.

Appendix 2 to the report contained examples of services within the Authority which undertook work/projects that supported these priorities, and specific details of how the Council could contribute to the health priorities agreed at the Health Summit were also outlined in detail within the report.

A summary of the day's discussions were to be issued by the PCT, which would lead to the development of specific workstreams that would be aligned, for example, to the work of the Health Partnership and Local Area Agreement. In order to ensure that the Council could track progress, meetings had taken place between Health and Community staff and the PCT to develop a shared process of data collection and reporting.

In receiving the report the Board noted the following the importance of the Council having an input into this process across all directorates. In addition, it was agreed that there was a need for further resource into the area of mental health, including depression. The Board was advised that a meeting had been held the previous week where it had been agreed that the early detection of depression and the early onset of dementia would be developed further.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the report be noted and further reports be submitted to the Board when appropriate; and
- (2) the priorities as set out in paragraph 3.2 of the report be endorsed.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB50 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION HOUSING STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community seeking endorsement of an Action Plan for delivery of the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy (LCRHS) and informing the Board of arrangements for implementing the Strategy.

The Strategy, developed by GVA Grimley, had been presented to the Board on 29th March 2007. Since then, it had been subject to a number of refinements following a period of consultation with local authorities, and the final

document had been signed off by the Chief Executives and Leaders Group of the Merseyside Partnership in 2007.

The Board was advised that the Strategy set out the broad framework for housing activity and investment priorities across the sub-region to support the economic growth ambitions of the Liverpool City Region Development Plan. It was informed by a series of strategic “Housing Market Assessments”, one for each functional Housing Market Area (HMA), with Halton included in the Eastern HMA with Warrington and St. Helens but with links to the Northern HMA centred on Liverpool. It set out a series of “strategic enablers” and associated policy recommendations developed to focus policy and investment on delivering sustainable growth, prioritising areas in need of regeneration, creating balanced housing markets and delivering a better choice of affordable housing and better quality neighbourhoods.

Investment decisions in the City Region would be guided by the Strategy, in particular the distribution of resources from the Regional Housing Pot. Indications from the 4NW (formerly North West Regional Assembly) were that, in preparation for the move to a single integrated strategy, the new Regional Housing Strategy would focus on how housing could support and drive economic development in the North West and, in this respect, it would align with the overriding purpose of the LCRHS.

Following development of the Strategy, consultants Arc4 had been commissioned by the Liverpool City Region Housing Strategy Steering Group to develop an Action Plan which built on the Strategy’s recommendations. The Action Plan, attached as Appendix A to the report, had been developed in consultation with local authorities, Registered Social Landlords and other partners and recommended the activities and governance, working and monitoring arrangements necessary to implement the Strategy’s recommendations.

The Board was advised that no spend would take place unless the Executive Board was satisfied that it would add value to the City Region and to Halton. In respect of concerns expressed that Liverpool would attract any resources available, it was noted that Halton had links across the City Region.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Action Plan attached as Appendix A to the report

be endorsed subject to the availability of resources as highlighted in 5.3 of the report; and

- (2) the arrangements for ongoing governance and monitoring of the strategy and its Action Plan be noted.

EXB51 LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007 - GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy reviewing the Council's existing governance arrangements (internal and elections) against the background of duties under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007, and setting out an assessment of options and a provisional timetable for change.

It was noted that, on 30th December 2007, Sections 31 to 37 of the Act had come into force. The effect of the new provisions was that the Council may choose to move to whole Council elections, with all 56 Members up for election once every four years. Such a change could only be made after reasonable steps had been taken by the Council to consult such persons as it thought appropriate on the proposed change.

The decision could only be taken within a permitted resolution period (PRP) which, for Halton, was any time up to 31st December 2010 or any period in 2014 or in any fourth year afterwards that started with the day after the Council's Annual Meeting, ending with 31st December. In terms of electoral arrangements, "no change" was legally an option.

Section 64 and Schedule 4 of the Act came into force on the 30th December 2007 inserting new provisions into the Local Government Act 2000. These compelled Councils to adopt one of two new governance models. In Halton's case, this decision must be taken by no later than 31st December 2010. The two new governance models were:-

- New-style Leader and Cabinet Executive; and
- Mayor and Cabinet Executive

and the key features of these new models were outlined for the Board's consideration.

Unlike the electoral arrangements, "no change" was not an option in terms of internal governance. In particular, it was noted that the Council had to take reasonable steps to

consult electors and other interested persons in its area, then draw up proposals including a timetable.

A proposed timetable in respect of both the election options and internal governance were contained within the report for Members' consideration. The Board was advised that no guidance had yet been published by the Secretary of State, which created a risk in terms of embarking on the consultation process in its absence. However, there was no guarantee that any guidance would eventually be issued.

RESOLVED: That

Chief Executive

- (1) the Council embarks on a public consultation process to review its governance arrangements (internal and elections) against the background of the provisions of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and the details of the consultation be determined by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader with 31st March 2009 being set as the deadline for receipt of representations; and
- (2) the Chief Executive report further at the conclusion of the consultation period.

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB52 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN INTERIM REVIEW REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment advising on the contents of the Local Transport Plan (LTP2) Interim Review Report and seeking approval to submit the report to Government Office North West (GONW) by the deadline of 30th September 2008.

It was noted that the Local Transport Plan was a statutory document setting out Halton's objectives, strategies and policies for transport. Halton's LTP2 covered the period from 2005/06 to 2010/11 and gave a summary of the initiatives that would be delivered along with projected expenditure, performance indicators and targets.

Under the reporting arrangements agreed for LTP2, the Council had to review progress in 2008 and submit a report to GONW. The indicators and targets reported on in the Interim Review were taken from the original LTP2 produced in 2005, 17 of which were mandatory indicators required by the Department for Transport (DfT) and the rest being local indicators agreed with DfT. Authorities had been

told that the DfT expected authorities to continue to collect and report on these indicators for the remainder of LTP2. However, the DfT had acknowledged that some local authorities may wish to stop or amend the monitoring of certain indicators based on the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs) which were not part of the new National Indicator set, or make amendments to local indicators where circumstances had changed. Any proposed changes must have a clear rationale set out in the Interim Review Report.

Unlike previous LTP reporting, the LTP2 2008 Interim Review Reports would not be formally classified by the DfT and LTP funding would not be allocated on the basis of the report.

The Interim Review Report had been structured around the 4-shared transport priorities agreed between Government and local authorities. Throughout the report, key links between the LTP and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) priorities had been identified and highlighted. Analysis of the indicators presented in the Interim Review Report showed that, over the two year period 2006/07 and 2007/08:

- 72% of LTP mandatory indicator targets had been met or were on target to be met; and
- 73% of LTP local indicator targets had been met or were on target to be met.

Further information in relation to spend, key highlights from the LTP period, and proposed changes to indicators were also outlined within the report for Members' consideration.

In producing the final version of the report, consultation had taken place internally with key contacts within the Council and with the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board at its meeting on 17th September 2008. Should the report be approved, copies would be distributed internally and sent to all individuals currently on the LTP external mailing list. The final document would also be made available to view/download on the Council website.

Following the submission of the final report and completion of the presentation of Senior Officers to GONW, GONW would make an assessment of the review. It had been indicated that the results of the assessment would be sent to the Authority by the end of December 2008.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the LTP2 Interim Review Report be noted; and
- (2) the LTP2 Interim Review Report and its submission to Government Office North West (GONW) be approved subject to any minor amendments being delegated to the Operational Director of Highways, Transportation and Logistics in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal.

Strategic Director
- Environment

EXB53 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - URGENT BUSINESS

The Board was advised that a matter had arisen which required immediate attention by the Board (Minute EXB55 refers) due to the timescales involved. Therefore, pursuant to Section 100 B(4) and 100 E, the Chairman ruled that the item be considered as a matter of urgency.

EXB54 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 item 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.

(NB Councillor Redhead remained in the meeting during consideration of the following item of business having demonstrated a "need to know".)

EXB55 ACQUISITION OF BAYER CROPSCIENCE SITE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment seeking authorisation to submit a formal bid for the acquisition of Bayer Cropscience site. It was noted that, as the matter required immediate action, it was excluded from the call-in process.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy be authorised to make a bid to acquire the Bayer Cropscience site at the terms referred to in the report, subject to a satisfactory form of contract and committed funding from the NWDA; and
- (3) the reasons why the acquisition requires immediate action which cannot await the next full Council Meeting be noted.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

MINUTES ISSUED: 8TH OCTOBER 2008

CALL-IN: 15TH OCTOBER 2008

**ANY MATTER DECIDED BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD
MAY BE CALLED IN NO LATER THAN 15TH OCTOBER
2008**

Meeting ended at 3.05 p.m.

APPENDIX

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Council should use the Customer Excellence Model to develop an overarching Customer Care Strategy to help drive improvement in consistency across the organisation and the findings of this scrutiny review will be fed into the process.
- 4.2 All staff involved in investigating and replying to complaints should be provided with relevant training in order to ensure a greater consistency with the quality of investigation and ensuing response to complainants.
As part of their role in dealing with complaints, investigating officers should contact complainants to see if they would like an opportunity to discuss their complaint. They should also ensure that all complainants are notified of their right of appeal so that they are aware of their options should they remain dissatisfied.
- 4.3 Each Directorate should ensure they have in place a system to monitor, analyse and evaluate instances of service failure, whether they occur through a formal complaint or other form of customer contact. These details should be reported to Directorate Senior Management Teams and the relevant Policy and Performance Board on a quarterly basis. Policy and Performance Boards may decide to set up a sub-group where they feel that lessons involving instances of service failure have not been fully absorbed.
- 4.4 Once the business process review of existing complaints procedures has been completed by ITC, the outcome should be reported to the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board.
- 4.5 The Council should publish information annually about the complaints that it receives so as to demonstrate performance against standards. The information should include the number and category of complaints received, performance against response target times and customer satisfaction with complaint handling. This would also provide an opportunity to publicise the improvements the Council has introduced as a direct result of listening to its customers.
- 4.6 A survey of complainants should be undertaken on an annual basis so as to ensure that the improvements which are put in place are helping to achieve the desired outcomes of improving customer satisfaction and reducing instances of service failure.