

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 18 December 2008 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

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

Also Present: Councillor Hodgkinson

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB83 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2008 were taken as read and signed as correct record.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB84 HALTON YOUTH SERVICE - FUTURE COMMISSIONING ARRANGEMENTS - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People outlining proposals to secure improved outcomes for young people through the future commissioning arrangements of Halton Youth Service.

It was noted that, in June 2002, the Executive Board had agreed that:

- the principle of the Youth Service transferring to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership; and
- that a first stage transfer would take place from September 2002 with staff seconded to the Connexions service. The second stage for transfer was to take place from April 2003.

In March 2003, the Board further approved the Partnership Agreement for the management of the Youth Service by Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership. This had proven to be successful with the Youth Service now demonstrating improved performance against National Performance Indicators. However, the contracted period for the commissioning of the Youth Service ended on 31st March 2009.

In 2006, the Government launched “Youth Matters”, a key policy directive which promoted a vision of integrated support structures and services for teenagers which promoted and sought to secure access to positive activities and high quality information, advice and guidance. This would be delivered within a framework of integrated and targeted youth support with local flexibility for service re-design.

As a consequence of youth matters, local authorities were responsible and accountable for Youth Policy in their area and were taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This would, over time, enable universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for young people and to improve outcomes for them.

In addition, Youth Matters also made it clear that the support and guidance services provided by Connexions should now “go local” so that they could be more fully included and integrated with a whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. It was intended that the “localisation” of Connexions services would be achieved through the development of an integrated Youth Support strategy at the local level, which would enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents/carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services were procured and delivered locally.

The guidance contained in Youth Matters had subsequently been confirmed in legislation through the Education and Inspections Act 2007 and would be further embedded in the forthcoming Education and Skills Act.

More recently, the publication of PSA Delivery agreements and, in particular, PSA 14 focused upon the objective to “increase the number of children and young people on the path to success”. Mechanisms for securing progress against the objectives contained in PSA14 included

delivery of high quality opportunities and activities for young people to secure their engagement in positive activities and to include diversionary activities to prevent them engaging in “at risk” or anti-social behaviours in the community. Traditionally, this had been delivered through youth clubs but additionally was increasingly now being secured through more creative routes.

In April 2008, Ofsted had undertaken a joint area review of services to children and young people in the Borough. This inspection included further investigations in the areas of Health and Integrated Youth Support, particularly focused upon the impact of this provision on young peoples’ involvement in planning and delivery of local services, their engagement in youth work and in addressing the level of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). The major strengths highlighted by the inspection were outlined within the report for Members’ information together with important weaknesses. Whilst focussing upon many positive developments, the report emphasised the need to locally progress to “determining a single management structure” and also to “review job tasks and identify a model best practice in order that skills and experiences of both personal advisers and youth workers operating in a broader range of settings could be more effectively utilised”.

Consideration needed to be given to the future commissioning of Halton Youth Service within the context of Youth Matters, PSA14 and the future commissioning arrangements for Connexions services. Steps were being taken to commission Connexions services across the City Region in partnership with five other Merseyside Local Authorities. At this stage, Halton Borough Council was the only local authority to have taken steps previously to commission external providers to deliver its Youth Service. As a consequence, it was not appropriate to include the commissioning of Halton’s Youth Service within the specification drawn up for the Connexions service. However, it was evidence that within the developing integrated Youth Support arrangements currently being drawn up that there would need to be a closer alignment if not integration of the Youth Service and Connexions workforce to secure maximum benefit of service support to young people. As a consequence, it was proposed that the commissioning of Halton Youth Service was aligned with the process of commissioning of Connexions service and was secured within the framework of a single City Region commission with an additional local dimension specific to Halton. This would ensure the delivery of Connexions services and

Halton Youth Service by a single provider.

Reason For Decision

Arrangements for the future delivery of service to young people would affect all young people aged 13 – 19 in the Borough. It would also include the targeting of specialist services to vulnerable young people to enable them to access their universal entitlement.

Alternative Options Considered And Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

It was intended that the new contractual arrangements would take effect from 1st October 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) steps be taken to secure future commissioning of Halton Youth Service;
- (2) existing arrangements for commissioning Halton Youth Service from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited be extended to 30th September 2009;
- (3) commissioning of Halton Youth Service be separate but aligned with the commissioning of Connexions Service; and
- (4) the timescale for the contract should align with that of the Connexions Services and should cover the period 30th September 2009 to 31st March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to three years, with the contract accommodating an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced financial capacity to commission this service to level previously agreed.

Strategic Director
– Children &
Young People

EXB85 CONNEXIONS TRANSITION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People providing information on the arrangements for the future commissioning of “Connexions Services”

It was advised that, "Youth Matters" required by April 2008 responsibility for commissioning Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and the funding that went with it be devolved to local authorities working through children's trusts, schools and colleges. Local authorities were expected to lead a genuinely collaborative approach and develop new arrangements for delivering IAG that clearly met the needs of young people in the area. These arrangements would be planned and implemented in a way that not only supported the delivery of the 14 – 19 learning entitlement but were integrated into a wider set of Youth Support Services for teenagers and their parents.

Local Authorities were responsible and accountable for Youth Policy in their area and were taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This would enable, over time, universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for young people and to improve outcomes for them.

"Youth Matters" also made it clear that the support and guidance provided by Connexions should now "go local" so that they could be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. It was intended that the "localisation" of Connexions services would be achieved through the development of an integration Youth Support Strategy at a local level, which would enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents/ carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services were procured and delivered locally. More recently, the publication of PSA delivery agreements, and in particular PSA 14, focused upon the objective to "increase the number of children and young people on the path to success".

On 25th March 2008 the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families wrote to local authorities notifying them of interim arrangements for the delivery of Connexions services and assessments for young people with learning difficulties from 1st April 2008. The Education and Skills Bill, currently before Parliament, proposed that legal responsibilities be brought into line by effecting transfer to local authorities of the statutory responsibility of Connexions services. Further details were outlined within the report for Members' consideration together with a number of arrangements that had previously agreed by the Board in November 2007 in preparation for implementation. Progress towards these arrangements had been overseen by a

Transition Steering Group comprising of the Chief Executives of Halton, Liverpool and St. Helens; the Directors of Children's Services at Knowsley, Sefton and the Wirral; and the Chairman being the Chief Executive of Halton Borough Council.

In 2008 legal advice received by the participating local authorities indicated that the commissioning of Greater Mersey Connexions Partnership could only occur for 2008/09 and that EU Procurement Regulations would need to be followed from 2009 onwards. As a consequence, work had been underway to secure the commissioning of Connexions services from 2009 – 2011. To assist in this work support had been secured from the Merseyside Efficiency Improvement Partnership (MEIP) which was funding consultants to advise on the details of the specification and procurement process. That work was nearing completion and the next stage would lead into procurement through a process of open competitive dialogue. Additional resources were being sought from the MEIP to fund the project management costs associated with this work.

For the period 1st April 2008 until 31st March 2009, arrangements had been in place for Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to be the contract holding authority with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited on behalf of the six Merseyside Local Authorities. From the period of the new contract it was proposed that Halton Borough Council becomes the contract holding authority on behalf of the six Merseyside Local Authorities. Contracts would be held with the respective five local authorities to ensure prompt payment on a monthly basis to Halton BC for their share of the contractual commitments with the provider of Connexions Services. A model for this arrangement was already in place with Wirral MBC.

Halton's role in becoming the contract holding authority on behalf of the six participating local authorities would be undertaken on a cost neutral basis. Any costs incurred would be recharged to the participating six local authorities.

The currently contract was worth approximately £17.5m and was funded from the Local Area Agreement (LAA) single pot allocations of which had been confirmed until 30th March 2011.

Consideration had been given to the length of any new proposed contract and whether it should be limited by the period of the current funding round and it was proposed that,

due to the scale of the contract, and the extensive preparations undertaken across the six local authorities, letting the new contract for the remaining period of ABG would represent poor value for money. It was therefore proposed that the new contract to be let should run from the period 30th September 2009 until 31st March 2012 with a further proposed option of extension from for up to three years. Contractually, an appropriate break clause would be included in the contract enabling it to be reduced or ceased subject to appropriate consideration of factors relating to performance or financial sustainability.

No changes in status would occur to the pension arrangements for staff as a result of Halton BC becoming the contracting authority with the provider. Wirral MBC would remain as the administering body for the Merseyside Pension Fund to which current employees of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited contributed.

Reasons For Decision

Arrangements for the future delivery of services to young people would affect all young people aged 13 – 19 in the Borough. It would also include the targeting of specialist services to all vulnerable young people to enable them access their universal entitlement.

Alternative Options Considered And Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

It was intended that the new contractual arrangements would take effect from 1st October 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the existing contract with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership be amended to cover the period to 30th September 2009, pending the completion of procurement processes;
- (2) the new contract for Connexions Services should cover the period 30th September 2009 to 31st March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to three years, but for the contract to accommodate an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced

Strategic Director
– Children &
Young People

financial capacity to commission the service to the level previously agreed;

- (3) Halton Borough Council be the lead authority for procurement of the new arrangements on behalf of the six participating local authorities; and
- (4) Halton Borough Council become the contract holding authority on behalf of the six participating local authorities from the City Region for the new contract when awarded with the appropriate cross authority commitments.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB86 HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-2011

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community seeking approval of the draft Housing Strategy 2008/11.

It was noted that the statutory guidance “Creating Strong and Prosperous Communities”, published by Government in July 2008, encouraged local authorities to take full and proper account of housing as part of the strategic vision for the area and put greater emphasis on housing’s contribution to creating sustainable communities through a local authorities Sustainable Community Strategy.

The guidance gave local authorities greater discretion about how, when and in what format they documented their Housing Strategy representing a move away from the more prescriptive “fit for purpose” criteria against which strategies were previously assessed. Whatever format was chosen, strategies were expected to:

- Fully reflect the wider vision of the Authority and its partners;
- Reflect a clear and evidenced approach; and
- Provide a strong focus on how partners would deliver their commitments.

The draft Housing Strategy attached at Appendix A to the report had been the subject of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, which were outlined within the report for Members’ information. Of particular importance was the

feedback received from Government Office North West (GONW), which gave advanced warning of emerging guidance specifically the need to demonstrate how the Housing Strategy would deliver on the priorities contained within the Sustainable Communities Strategy. The priorities within the revised Housing Strategy had consequently been reorganised to mirror those of the Community Strategy to clearly illustrate the strategic alignment between the two documents.

A list of the objectives relating to the Council's priorities were outlined within the report for Members' consideration. These had been developed to meet housing needs as evidenced by the Halton Housing Needs Survey 2006 to meet specific Government targets such as the Decent Homes Standard and the introduction of choice based lettings and to reflect emerging Government priorities such as the Housing / Worklessness agenda, reducing overcrowding and increasing knowledge and understanding of local housing markets. Although it was intended that the Strategy remained valid through to 2011, the pace of change in the housing market and the economy at present was such that it may prove necessary to review the document earlier.

RESOLVED: That the Housing Strategy 2008 to 2011 be approved.

Strategic Director
– Health and
Community

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB87 INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding issues surrounding the Independent Living Services.

It was noted that Halton had high levels of disability and a population profile that was aging relatively more than the UK as a whole. One of the key areas of work that was essential to support people remained living either in their own homes or a more suitable house was the ability to make improvements or adaptations to the properties. The report described the improvement in the amount of work being delivered by the Halton Home Improvement and Independent Living Service and the current expenditure.

The tenure of people also affected the sorts of services they could access. Registered Social Landlords had a considerable waiting list for adaptation work and the type of tenure should not determine whether people got the adaptations they needed. The Council had provided

additional funding to improve this. There were many factors that indicated the level and type of work required. Some of the changes made in the service over the last year as well as economic factors meant the Council needed to respond differently. These factors and solutions were outlined within the report covering issues surrounding service transformation; contingency plans; anticipated total expenditure in 2008/09; and further developments in services.

It was noted that the Disabled Facilities grants was a mandatory grant for adaptations to the homes of disabled people. For a number of reasons, as outlined in the report, it appeared that demand for major adaptations in the private housing sector may be levelling out at the present time. However, it was likely that this would create sufficient demand to fully spend the Disabled Facilities grants allocation funded by the Government together with some Council match funding. It was unlikely however that all of the growth funding provided this year would be used for Disabled Facilities grants but some contingencies linked to the major adaptations process had been identified. This factor had previously been reported to the Executive on 10th April 2008 and it was acknowledged that this funding would probably need to be phased over a two-year period.

Investment in the provision of adaptations enable people to continue to live at home, reduce the level of personal care support required and avoided emission to residential care. National research had also demonstrated the value of the provision of adaptations in reducing risk of falls and consequent hospital admissions and in supporting prompt hospital discharge. It was noted that Halton remained one of only two Councils in England not to have reported any delayed discharges since the guidelines had been introduced.

It was noted that the recommendations within the report were part of comprehensive plans to modernise the adaptations service. They represented innovative and efficient ways of using resources and would ultimately improve provision for service users in Halton. Failure to implement at least some of these contingencies could result in budget underspend and lead to delays in service provision.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contingency plans outlined in the report be approved; and

Strategic Director
– Health and
Community

- (2) the planned carry forward into the 2009/10 budget, as described in 3.8.1 within the report, be approved.

LEADERS PORTFOLIO

EXB88 ECONOMIC DOWNTURN

The Board considered the report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy regarding implications of the economic downturn for Halton and for the Borough Council.

It was noted that the economic downturn started as a credit crunch in the banking sector which rapidly affected housing markets and was now beginning to affect the wider economy. Details of the impact on the sub-region were outlined within the report for Members' information. It was noted that the downturn had had direct consequences for residents within increased unemployment and re-possession of houses. Anecdotal evidence suggested that the newly unemployed were widely distributed across the Borough which had not always been the case in the past. It had been speculated that this may be the result of residents who commuted out of the Borough to the regional financial centres losing their jobs.

According to Oxford Economics Vulnerability Index (July 2008) Halton was one of the least vulnerable areas in the North West whereas Chester and Macclesfield featured in the top ten most vulnerable districts in England. This was largely because of the impact on financial services and the position could change as the recession bit in other sectors. It was too early for the impact to have been fully felt in Halton, and there was a time lag before data was published for the relevant period. However, there was an emerging picture and details were outlined in detail within the report together with specific implications for Council services and other public services.

A pre-budget report had set the context for a number of initiatives across the region. In terms of Halton, responses included:

- Help for the unemployed/potentially redundant;
- Help to businesses;
- Help to stimulate the economy;

- Help with housing;
- Helping with debts and maximising income; and
- Help with keeping warm.

It was noted that a strategic overview of the Council's response was required and it may become necessary to consider deploying resources differently to support the Authority's response. It was therefore recommended that a Task Group of senior Members and Officers be set up to consider the options, some of which were outlined within the report, with a view to reporting back to the Executive Board early in the new year. This Group may wish to consult with partner agencies as part of its deliberations.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) a Task Group of Members and Officers be established to co-ordinate a response.

Strategic Director
– Corporate &
Policy

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

EXB89 COUNCIL RESPONSE TO THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE MERSEYSIDE JOINT WASTE DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT SPATIAL STRATEGY AND SITES (SSS) REPORT - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment which advised Members that the Council was involved in producing a Joint Waste Development Plan (DPD) for the Merseyside sub-region. Production had now reached the stage where the sites and strategy underpinning the policies contained in the Waste DPD would be subject to public scrutiny. The Spatial Strategy and government policy (PPS10) required that waste must be dealt with in a sustainable way.

The Board was advised that during the period of 17 November 2008 to 9 January 2009, now extended to 16 January 2009, the Spatial Strategy and Sites (SSS) Report had been placed on public consultation. As a consultee, the Council had prepared a formal response to the consultation.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report as the formal response of Halton Borough Council to the public consultation on the Halton Council, Liverpool City Council,

Strategic Director
- Environment

Knowsley Council, Sefton Council. St Helens Council and Wirral Council Joint Waste Development Plan Document Spatial Strategy and Sites Report be approved.

MINUTES ISSUED: 29 December 2008

CALL IN: 5 January 2009

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5 January 2009

Meeting ended at 12.40 p.m.