

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 29 January 2009 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: Councillor

Officers present: L. Cairns, G. Cook, B. Dodd, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, A. McIntyre, G. Meehan, D. Parr, M. Reaney and D. Tregear

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB95 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2009 were taken as read and signed as correct record.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

(NB The Councillors below declared personal interests in the following item of business for the reasons shown:

Councillor Gerrard – governor of Simms Cross Primary and Ditton Nursery Schools

Councillor Nelson – governor of the Grange School

Councillor Swain – governor of Pewithall and IEB at Simms Cross

Councillor Wharton – son attends Fairfield High School)

EXB96 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2009/2010 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People providing a summary of the capital programme for 2009/10 for the Children and Young People Directorate.

The total capital funding of £6,138,001, and how it

Action

was made up, was outlined within the report for Members' information, together with details of the works to be funded and any requirements, or opportunities to submit bids, in relation to this. In addition, it was noted that all local authorities had been provided with the opportunity to bid for capital projects up to £5m that created world class facilities for diploma lines of learning. Consideration was to be given to the projects that represented the best use of limited funding. The Council had made a bid, details of which were within the report, and it was noted that the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) would be advising on which projects would receive funding at the end of March 2009.

All local authorities had also been provided with additional funds to invest in youth facilities with a further 50 local authorities receiving funding to target work and resources "to increase young people's participation in activities, provide facilities and bring young people and the community together" (Youth Taskforce Action Plan 2008). Additionally, Halton had submitted a My Place bid proposing the refurbishment of the Kingsway Health Centre. Approval had been granted by DCSF to carry forward the Youth Capital Fund plus Grant (£452k) to contribute towards the refurbishment costs of the centre if the bid was successful. If the bid was unsuccessful the grant would fund improvements at Upton Community Centre to enhance the facilities of young people there.

Reason for Decision

To deliver and implement the capital programmes.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Implementation Date

Capital Programmes to be implemented with effect from 1 April 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the capital funding available for 2009/10 be noted; and
- (2) Full Council be recommended to approve the Schools Capital Programme 2009/10.

Strategic Director-
Children & Young
People

(NB Councillor Gerrard declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a governor at Simms Cross Primary and Ditton Nursery Schools)

EXB97 PRIMARY ORGANISATION - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People providing a summary of the current primary school organisation, the number of primary places, and the current and projected primary school numbers in Halton. In addition, the report updated Members on the Primary Capital Strategy including the drivers for prioritising future investment and process for revising and resubmitting the Strategy to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

It was noted that the Audit Commission and DCSF guidance recommended that there should be no more than 10% surplus provision across an authority and that schools should not have more than 25% surplus places. In Halton the level of surplus capacity in primary schools had varied over the last few years. Following revisions to the net capacity of a number of primary schools, there were 1400 surplus places across the Borough, representing a 12.6% surplus, and 8 schools had surplus capacity in excess of 25%.

Predicting the likely level of future primary provision using PCT live birth data and applying the previous rate of school admission to births, the future primary numbers were estimated to be on average 1462 per year, equating to 8% surplus capacity. Although this figure was below the recommended 10%, it was predicted that there would still be schools within the Borough with over 25% surplus capacity. In addition, although there were surplus places in some areas, in others there was a shortage of provision and so increases in school places to meet needs required exploration.

The Board was advised that the DCSF had set a target for Halton that 15% of primary schools in the worst condition should be rebuilt or taken out of use and that a further 35% should be remodelled to bring them up to 21st century standards. A range of key drivers, to be included in an investment matrix, had therefore been identified to support the delivery of the national targets and allow Halton to meet its local priorities, details of which were provided within the report.

In addition, the Authority would consider the suitability of its primary provision in relation to special educational needs and disabilities, unmet extended and community services need, health through improved dining and play provision, and access to ICT. Priority would also be given to removing temporary accommodation, increasing specialist accommodation and providing more flexible learning spaces.

The Board was advised that the outcome of the assessment of the Primary Capital Programme (PCP), undertaken by Capita on behalf of the DCSF, had identified that further work was needed on the Strategy before any funding could be confirmed, and details of work to be undertaken to strengthen the Strategy was outlined within the report. However, it was noted that the vision and context of the Strategy had been assessed as sound.

Members were advised that the revisions to the Primary Capital Strategy must be submitted to the DCSF by the end of January 2009 along with the matrix for prioritisation and the priorities for the first four years of investment. Following further analysis of pupil places and projected numbers a detailed report was to be presented to the Board on the opportunities and options for future primary re-organisation.

Reason(s) for Decision

Following further evaluation of Halton's PCP it had been suggested that revisions be made to the original submission to strengthen this document prior to funding being approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

This was a DCSF requirement.

Implementation Date

The Primary Capital Strategy must be submitted to the DCSF by 31st January 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the current and proposed level of primary surplus places across the Authority be noted and a further more detailed report on the current and predicted capacity of each school be provided;
- (2) the key drivers for an investment priorities matrix as

Strategic Director-
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outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report be agreed; and

- (3) the Strategic Director – Children and Young People be authorised, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Children and Young People, to make the revision to the Primary Capital Strategy required by the DCSF and resubmit the revised Strategy to the DCSF by the deadline of 31st January 2009.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB98 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2009/10

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining the proposed Calendar of meetings for the 2009-2010 Municipal Year.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2009-2010 Municipal Year outlined in Appendix 1 to the report.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB99 CARE STANDARDS COMMISSION PERFORMANCE RATING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community advising of the further improvements in the performance rating of the Health and Community Directorate, and of the impending changes in the way the performance of Social Care services would be assessed commencing 2008/09.

It was noted that the Directorate had its performance rated annually by the Care Standards Commission (CSCI). The performance rating was linked to how well the Directorate provided social care services to all adults and the rating received fed into the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rating for Halton Borough Council.

In September 2006 CSCI announced that, as well as looking at quantitative data, they would also be judging performance based on the outcomes that were delivered for people. Seven new outcomes and two new domains were announced against which performance would be judged: details were outlined within the report for Members' information.

Performance for 2007/08, announced on 27th

November 2008, had been rated by CSCI as being three star. The actual performance judgement based on the new performance ratings was:

- Delivering Outcomes – excellent; and
- Capacity for Improvement – excellent.

A copy of the performance judgement letter and summary report received from CSCI were attached at Appendix 1 to the report. The Council's key strengths that had been identified were outlined in the report for Members' information, together with details of how the Directorate had previously been rated.

The Board was advised that this was the last year that the Star Ratings and Performance Judgements would be used as a new system was to be implemented next year. The Council had finished at the highest level within the existing performance assessment framework, one of only 25 Local Authorities in England in this position, and all staff and Members involved were congratulated on this achievement.

At this stage it was not clear how the new performance system would operate as CSCI was being reformed with other Commissions into a new Care Standards Commission. However, the indicators were that any performance judgement for 2008/09 would continue to focus on the results that people who used the services advised had been delivered.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the improved performance of the Directorate be noted; and
- (2) it be noted that the performance assessment framework is undergoing a period of continuous change and that the framework will change again in 2008/09.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB100 REGIONAL FUNDING ALLOCATIONS (2)

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment providing a brief summary of the Regional Funding Allocations (RFA) Advice document and setting out a number of initial comments in response to the consultation.

It was noted that the Government had invited the North West and other English Regions to submit its advice on regional investment priorities by the end of February 2009. The advice covered regional funding allocations for transport, housing and regeneration, and economic development for the period up to 2011. The advice would also present planning assumptions for these funding streams up to 2018.

A draft North West Advice had been produced by the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and 4 North West (4NW) and responses to the document were required by 30th January 2009. Although the Merseyside Police Unit and The Merseyside Partnership were co-ordinating a sub-regional response, colleagues across the Council had raised a number of important points and it was therefore proposed that a separate response be submitted on behalf of Halton Borough Council.

The Board was advised that, in summary, the Advice document used the NWDA's Corporate Plan, the ERDF Programme, and Regional Housing Strategy HCA investment plan as a reference point. It recognised that the Single Regional Strategy (SRS) was in development and, as a result, it did not propose any significant changes to future priorities at this point as an in-depth review through the SRS process in 2009 was anticipated.

The Advice recognised that testing economic conditions would require actions in the short-term to support businesses and individuals to manage the impact of the global slow-down, but there were major long-term challenges facing the region in regard to structural weaknesses in the housing market, high levels of transport congestion, and poor transport infrastructure. The draft Advice therefore set out four priority areas, which were outlined within the report for Members' information.

Priority areas were further broken down into "Economic Development and Skills", "Housing and Regeneration", and "Transport" action points. Further details, together with views from respective Council departments, were provided within the report.

It was noted that officers were broadly comfortable with the document, although the level of detail provided varied across the respective themes. In particular, it was considered that there should be greater cross-referencing to the Regional Spatial Strategy, especially in regard to the designation of priority areas, in order to avoid unnecessary

confusion and a dilution of any messages the region would wish to present to Government. It was also noted that focus on such designations was not helpful to Halton. It was intended that further representation be made in this respect pointing out that, were the towns of Widnes and Runcorn not separated by the Mersey, they would be included in the designation.

RESOLVED: That the development of a Halton response to the regional consultation on Regional Funding Allocations be agreed.

MINUTES ISSUED: 6th February 2009

CALL IN: 13th February 2009

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 13th February 2009

Meeting ended at 2.15 p.m.