

COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 22 July 2009 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Loftus, Austin, Balmer, M. Bradshaw, Browne, Shepherd, Hodgkinson, P. Blackmore, S. Blackmore, J. Bradshaw, Bryant, Dennett, Drakeley, Edge, Findon, Fraser, Gilligan, Harris, Higginson, Hignett, Horabin, Howard, D. Inch, Jones, Leadbetter, Lloyd Jones, A. Lowe, J. Lowe, McDermott, McInerney, Morley, Murray, Nelson, Nolan, Norddahl, Parker, Philbin, Polhill, E. Ratcliffe, M. Ratcliffe, Redhead, Rowan, Rowe, Stockton, Swift, Thompson, Wainwright, Worrall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors D. Cargill, E. Cargill, Gerrard, Osborne, Swain, Wallace and Wharton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, M. Simpson, D. Tregga and J. Whittaker

Also in attendance: Chief Constable Whatton, Chief Superintendent G Finchett, Inspector S. Blackwell & Neighbourhood Police Unit Inspector S Case from Cheshire Police

COU11 CHIEF CONSTABLE OF CHESHIRE CONSTABULARY

Action

The Board received a presentation from David Whatton which outlined the following:-

- The partnership arrangement in place with other public agencies and how this was improving services to the public;
- The creation and delivery of the Neighbourhood Policing Units had seen positive outcomes on the crime figures. It had been reported that there were 44% less burglaries in households and a 43% reduction of cars being broken into;
- Anti-social behaviour was still a challenge that had to be faced as there had been an 8% increase since April;

- Positive work had been carried out between the Council Officers and the Community Safety Team and thanks were noted to Councillor Wright, Councillor Osborne and Councillor Stockton in relation to the multi-agency working;
- Significant work had to be carried out in relation to alcohol related incidents with young people;
- Senior school-based Police Officers would be implemented in the near future which would entail one school-based Police Officer in Runcorn and Widnes; and
- Automatic registration recognition cameras that had been installed in Halton.

Arising from the presentation, Members raised the following issues.

- What systems were in place to maintain continuity in relation to inspectors and the areas that they covered?
- Where there any plans to deal with crimes that went unreported due to a lack of confidence by the victim?
- What reassurances would be given to the public when trying to get through the call handling centres?
- Were the Police informed straight away when prisoners were released early in terms of probation? and
- Were there any proposals to roll out the School Police Officers to other schools in the borough?

In response, the following points were noted.

- An Area Commander would stay within an area for a period of two years. This could not be for any longer due to the impact it would have on other movements within the Police Authority;
- Crimes going unreported was an issue. The reasons were varied and included criminals themselves going to hospital, individuals not wanting the Police involved, or women too scared to report domestic violence incidents. The Police would continue to highlight the positive outcomes from their work to

build up public confidence and encourage more reporting.

- Statistical figures proved that call centre handling figures were improving and 93% calls were answered within 15 seconds;
- The Police worked closely with the Prison Service and the Criminal Justice Board in respect of the release of offenders. At present the Police were notified of 80% of prison releases. Further work was being carried out on a national level to address this issue;
- POPO (Persistent and Prolific Offender) Teams were co-working with Day Services who picked up on early releases resulting in more integrated working practices; and
- Funding had not been secured for any additional officers to work within schools. However, should more funding be received the option of appointing more School Police Officers within schools could be explored.

The Mayor thanked David Whatton for an informative presentation.

COU12 MINUTES

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 15th May 2009, having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

COU13 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Mayor made the following announcements:-

- A plaque was presented on the 25th Anniversary of Runcorn Probus Club on June 2nd 2009; and
- A book by Thury-Harcourt was presented on Armed Forces Day on 24th July 2009.

COU14 LEADER'S REPORT

The Leader reported that:

- There was a Viral Distribution Centre for Swine Flu outbreak at the Stobart Stadium, which was available to members of the public. There were larger numbers of victims suffering from Swine Flu attending Halton Hospital and the Millennium Centre at St. Helens. The advice being given from government was changing on a regular basis and updates were being provided accordingly;
- The Public Inquiry for the Mersey Crossing was near completion and was scheduled to end on 30th July.
- The Inspector should complete a report before Christmas after which the Government would make its decision;
- The proposed changes to the Burns Unit at Whiston and the plans to regionalise it to Wythenshaw were discussed at the Executive Board and would be examined in more detail; and
- Runcorn Linnets Football Club would be returning to Runcorn.

COU15 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Council considered the Minutes of the Executive Board meetings held on 13th May, 4th June, 18th June and 16th July 2009.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

COU16 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE

The Council considered the Minutes of the Executive Board Sub-Committee meetings held on 4th June, 18th June and 16th July 2009.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

COU17 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order No. 8.

COU18 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD AND THE DIOCESES OF CHESTER AND LIVERPOOL (MINUTE NO. EXB3 REFERS)

The Executive Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People which outlined the relationship between the Children and Young People Policy and Performance Board and the Dioceses of Chester and Liverpool.

It was reported that under a Direction issued by the Secretary of State, authorities must appoint diocesan representatives to Scrutiny Committees under s499 Education Act 1996 and DfEE Circular 19/99 all as amended. It was noted that these representatives would have voting rights in relation to any decision relating to schools maintained by the LA, pupils who attend schools maintained by the LA or were educated by the LA in some way but not the other business of the Committee. It was reported that this was to enable denominations to have a direct input to policies on education provision for pupils of school age.

RESOLVED: That the appointment of two Dioceses representatives for Chester and Liverpool, as voting co-optees on the Policy and Performance Board for a period of four years, commencing from the date approval is given.

(NB: Councillor Hignett declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item and left the room during its consideration due to being employed by Community Integrated Care)

COU19 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PLAN - KEY DECISION (MINUTE NO. EXB4 REFERS)

The Executive Board had considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which provided a brief summary of the information and requirements as contained in the Children and Young People's Plan Guidance.

The Halton's Children and Young People Plan (CYPP) had been circulated to Members prior to Council for its consideration.

It was reported that the guidance had been published in February 2009 by DCSF to assist in areas in compiling the CYPP. The Plan must be a document of strategic intent which set the context of the children and young people living their lives within safe, prosperous communities where parents were enabled to work.

REASON FOR DECISION

It is a statutory requirement that Halton Borough Council produces and publishes a Children and Young People's Plan.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

June 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the information contained in the report be noted; and
- (2) the Children and Young People's Plan be approved.

COU20 PARISH ISSUES - HALEBANK AND SANDYMOOR PARISH COUNCILS (MINUTE NO. EXB7 REFERS)

The Executive Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which outlined requests from Halebank Parish Councils to increase the number of Councillors on Halebank Parish Council from 5 to 8 and to move the date of the next election from 2010 to 2012 and from Sandymoor to increase the number of Councillors on the Parish Council from 5 to 8.

It was reported that the Local Government and Rating Act 1997 empowered District Councils to vary the number of Members on Parish and Town Councils.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in accordance with the provisions of Section 53 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 the date of the next election for Halebank Parish Council be 3rd May 2012; and

(2) in accordance with the provisions of Section 17 (2) of the Local Government and Rating Act 1997, the number of Parish Councillors on Halebank and Sandymoor Parish Council be increased to 8 with effect from 3rd May 2012.

COU21 AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN (AHDC) - CAPITAL EXPENDITURE - (MINUTE NO. EXB10 REFERS)

The Executive Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People which presented the Capital Funding Plan to support the delivery of Halton's short break programme to meet the requirements of the Aiming High for Disabled Children Programme.

It was reported that the AHDC Programme was a national initiative to enable more disabled young people to engage in social activities within their local community. The Halton AHDC capital allocation for 2008/9 and 2009/10 was outlined in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the draft Spending Plan outlined in 3.7 of the Council's report be approved.

COU22 PLAY BUILDER PROJECT - KEY DECISION (MINUTE NO. EXB11 REFERS)

The Executive Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People which provided an update on progress with Play Builder Year 1 2008-2009 and sought agreement for proposals for Years 2 2009-2010 and outlined proposals for Year 3 2010-2011.

The report submitted to Executive Board on the 21st May 2008 informed Members of the success of the Authority in achieving Play Builder Status and confirmed the funding that had been awarded. It was reported that guidance received indicated that Halton must deliver a minimum of six new transformed playgrounds in 2008/09, with a further 16 in 2009/10 and 2010/11 which would make a total of 22 over the three years.

The Council was advised that the Executive Board received a further report on 25th September 2008 whereupon the Play Builder Project development process was approved along with the six Year 1 sites which was

outlined in the report for Members' consideration.

Reference was made to the results of the Green Flag Awards, and it was noted that in the North West had performed well. Twelve green flags had been awarded which was an increase of two from last year being Clinton Woods and Hale Park. It was also noted that there were only 13 authorities in England and Wales who actually obtained 10 Green Flags.

REASONS FOR DECISION

To agree 8 projects to be progressed in Playbuilder Project Year 2.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

A full consultation programme had taken place where all options were considered.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

Three – Year 3 Capital Programme with annual capital allowance. Implementation of year 2 projects to be completed by 31st March 2010.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Progress made with Playbuilder Project 2008/2009 be noted; and
- (2) the proposals for 2009/2010 Playbuilder Projects be approved.

(NB: Councillor Hignett declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item and left the room during its consideration due to being employed by Community Integrated Care)

COU23 MID TERM REVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY - KEY DECISION (MINUTE NO. EXB15 REFERS)

The Executive Board had considered a report of the Strategic Director Corporate and Policy which provided Members with an amended version of the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).

It was reported that Local Authorities were required to prepare and implement a SCS and the Council was expected to work with partners through the Local Strategic Partnership to agree priorities and to engage and involve local communities. It was further noted that the current SCS was adopted in 2006 and contained a long-term vision with clear objectives and targets for the period 2006 – 2011. Council was advised that since it was prepared a number of changes had taken place making it necessary to conduct a mid-term review of the SCS. Members were advised that this was an update and not a complete revision. It was also reported that recent perception surveys and the revised State of the Borough Report 2009 confirmed that the underlying vision and priorities from 2006 remained relevant.

In 2010/11 work would commence on a full review and roll forward of the strategy with wide engagement, linking up with work being done on the Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

The main objectives of the mid-term review were outlined in the report for Members' consideration.

REASONS FOR DECISION

The 2006 SCS needed updating to take into account changes to the National Performance Framework, including the Halton Local Area Agreement and recent statutory guidance.

ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

The following options were considered:-

- (1) to leave the Strategy unchanged. This would result in the need to monitor performance against two different sets of targets and would not be compliant with statutory targets.
- (2) to conduct a full review of the Strategy. This was rejected because the Strategy was only adopted in 2006 and a full review would be premature.

IMPLEMENTATION DATE

The Strategy would take effect following its adoption by full Council.

RESOLVED: That the Sustainable Community Strategy be adopted.

COU24 APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy regarding the appointment of Members to serve on various outside bodies. Included in the report was a document showing recommendations put forward for agreement.

RESOLVED: That representatives be appointed to outside bodies as outlined in the report.

COU25 ANNUAL REPORTS OF PPBS

The Council considered the report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy outlining the Annual Reports for each of the Policy and Performance Boards (PPBs) which had been submitted outlining their work, making recommendations for future work programmes and amended working methods if appropriate.

It was further reported that the Annual Reports had now been submitted the appropriate PPBs for consideration and had all been agreed.

RESOLVED: That the 2008 – 2009 Annual Reports submitted from the Policy and performance Board be received.

COU26 ANNUAL REPORT FROM STANDARDS COMMITTEE (MINUTE NO. STD5 REFERS)

The Council considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which summarised the work of the Standards Committee in the last Municipal Years.

RESOLVED: That the information in the report be noted.

COU27 MINUTES OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

The Council considered the reports on the work of the following Boards in the period since the meeting of Council

on the 22nd April 2009:

- Children and Young;
- Employment Learning and Skills;
- Healthy Halton;
- Safer Halton;
- Urban Renewal;
- Corporate Services; and
- Business Efficiency Board.

COU28 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered the report of the following Committees in the period since the meeting held on 22nd April 2009:

- Development Control;
- Standards Committee; and
- Regulatory Committee

Note: at the end of the meeting Councillor Morley took the opportunity to thank all Members who wished him well during his recent illness and recovery.

Meeting ended at 8.12 p.m.