

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

*At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 11 November 2009
at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Leadbetter (Chairman), Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman),
D. Inch, Jones, A. Lowe, Osborne, Philbin, Swift and Worrall

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Murray and Norddahl

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Murphy, C. Halpin and B. Dodd

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

BEB14 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 30th September 2009 having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

BEB15 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY 2009-2012

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which sought approval of the revised Procurement Strategy.

The Board was advised that the procurement of goods and services by Local Government had undergone major changes in recent years and Halton had responded well to the changing environment. The Council last adopted a three-year procurement strategy in 2006 and this updated strategy aimed to build on the successes of the last three years and develop excellent procurement practices that contributed to strategic priorities and achieved value for money and efficiency savings.

It was noted that it was a focused document, with clearly defined and measurable objectives with appropriate timescales. The Strategy was one that could be easily

Action

understood both internally and externally and the draft Strategy had been distributed both internally and to a number of external organisations (Halton and St. Helens PCT, Halton Chamber of Commerce, Halton Voluntary Action and Enterprising Halton) for comment.

Members were advised of two further developments in relation to the Strategy. Firstly that the Council had signed up to 'Due North' which was procurement website for the North West region. Secondly that Halton Chamber of Commerce had secured grant funding for a dedicated coordinator within the Chamber to ensure that Members were aware of upcoming tenders.

Arising from Members comments and concerns the following was noted:

- that an exercise had been undertaken to assess the percentage of local companies undertaking work on behalf of the Council and it was requested that this information be sent to Members of the Board;
- that although within Halton there was a high percentage of local companies undertaking work on behalf of the Council, statutory legal obligations meant that the majority of Council tenders had to be open to a wider area than Halton, with some being tendered for from across Europe;
- that Members be sent a copy of the standard Merseyside document detailed on page 22 of the report;
- that Halton had taken steps to pay invoices from small businesses within 10 working days rather than the normal 30 days, to help during the economic downturn.

RESOLVED: That the procurement strategy be approved.

BEB16 EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, which detailed progress made to date with the Efficiency Programme, and outlined the next steps to be taken.

The Board was advised that the Efficiency Programme was an overarching programme consisting of a

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number of workstreams. These workstreams were selected in Summer 2008, in partnership with KPMG and a Programme Business Case was approved.

Members were advised of the objectives of the Efficiency Programme, the scope of the Efficiency Programme, the staffing protocols in place, progress and the next steps on each workstream, as set out in the report.

Arising from Member's comments and concerns the following was noted:

- how performance would be measured between departments through service level agreements;
- what recruitment policies would be in place to ensure that new future recruitment was inline with the efficiency review objectives and it was noted that more detail in relation to this would be part of the next report to the Board;
- that there had been discussions regarding the possibility of amalgamating administration services into one across the Council and Members requested an update on this.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) further update reports be brought back to the Board; and
- (3) an update on amalgamating administration systems across the Council be requested.

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BEB17 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.

BEB18 INTERNAL AUDIT QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE UPDATE

The Board considered the report of the Strategic Director, Corporate & Policy which provided a summary of Internal Audit work for the period from July to September 2009.

The report set out the Internal Audit reports finalised since the last progress report, key issues and recommendations arising from the audits completed and the results of the work undertaken following up the implementation of previous Internal Audit recommendations.

The Board was advised that the Internal Audit Plan 2009/10 was approved by the Business Efficiency Board on 25th February 2009. The plan provided for 1,514 of audit work to be completed. At the mid-point in the year Internal Audit had delivered 759 audit days (50.1% of the total planned days for the year) and currently was on target to deliver the full planned number of days by year-end.

The Board requested additional information in relation to two of the audits completed since the last meeting and it was agreed that the information would be provided.

The Board was also advised that an interactive e-learning training package that was being rolled out to all Members and employees to raise awareness of the risk of

fraud and corruption. Completion of the course would help staff and Members to become aware of their individual responsibilities in terms of preventing and identifying fraud and reporting any concerns they might have. The course also provided links to the policies and procedures the Council had established to counter fraud and corruption.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Internal Audit work completed in quarter 2 be noted; and
- (2) additional information requested in relation to two of the audits be circulated to the Board.

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Meeting ended at 7.18 p.m.