

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 20 January 2010 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Murray, Norddahl and Philbin

Absence declared on Council business: None

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

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB19 COUNCILLOR SUE BLACKMORE

The Chairman reported on the sad passing of Councillor Mrs Sue Blackmore. As a mark of respect, all present stood for one minutes silence.

BEB20 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 November 2009 having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

BEB21 INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL REPORTING STANDARDS

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services which provided the Board with an overview of the requirements and implications for the Council arising from the implementation of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS), including a summary implementation plan.

The Board was advised that the Council would be required to prepare its statutory Statement of Accounts (The Abstract) for the year ending the 31st March 2011, on the basis of IFRS in compliance with the IFRS Accounting Code

of Practice (IFRS Code).

The Board was further advised that in order to prepare the 2010/11 year end accounts on this basis, it would be necessary to restate the 2009/10 accounts in order to provide comparative figures and also to restate the 2008/9 balance sheet to provide the opening balances.

It was noted that, in addition, it would be necessary to review a number of the Council's systems to ensure they were able to provide adequate financial and non-financial information to meet the requirements of IFRS.

It was further noted that the implications of compliance with IFRS were wide-ranging, both financial and non-financial, and would affect all areas of the Council, not just Finance. In order to assess the implications for the Council, an IFRS specialist had been commissioned to undertake a Baseline Review of the Council's current practices and to compare these with the requirements of IFRS. They had provided a Summary Implementation Plan to assist the Council in bringing about the necessary changes to ensure compliance with the Code.

The Board was provided with the Summary Implementation Plan and it was noted that a Detailed Implementation Plan was currently being developed which would provide the detailed tasks, responsibilities and timescales required in order to achieve each of the Key Actions set out in the Summary Plan.

It was noted that a Cross-Directorate IFRS Working Group had been established chaired by the Chief Accountant, in order to oversee the transition to IFRS and to take forward the key actions set out in the Implementation Plan. The Group had an important role to play in addressing the actions required in respect of leases, employee benefits, information disclosures, property, plant and equipment.

The Board was further advised that the implementation project would be monitored by the IFRS Working Group using key milestones and targets included within the Detailed Implementation Plan. Progress reports would be presented to the Board at appropriate times throughout the implementation period.

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

- that where there may be changes to the bottom line

finances of the Council, these were expected to be mitigated by the introduction of new regulations by the Government, although it was unclear how effective this would be in practice at present; and

- that in relation to employee benefits that would need to be calculated in the future, it was noted that changing the start date of leave to a different system than the current one would cause more difficulties in calculating and allocating costs to untaken and flexi leave.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) progress reports be presented at appropriate times throughout the IFRS implementation period.

BEB22 EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which informed Members of progress made to date with the Efficiency Programme.

The Board was advised that the Efficiency Programme was designed to improve the effectiveness of services across the Authority and reduce costs associated with service delivery.

The Board was given a general overview of the Efficiency Programme including workstreams currently underway as part of Wave 1 of the programme for:

- Management Structures
- Transactional Support Services
- Non-Transactional Support Services
- Service Delivery Option (Pilot – Open Spaces)
- Customer and ICT improvement
- Property

The Board was further advised of the progress made to date on the Wave 2 workstreams.

Arising from Members comments and questions the following was noted:

- that there were concerns about the loss of expertise across the Council due to Officers retiring early through the Programme. In response it was noted that a detailed individual assessment of impacts was

undertaken and that every effort would be made to disseminate knowledge before staff left; and

- that there was a number of outstanding equal pay claims, some of which were expected to be settled in the near future and job evaluation appeals were on target to be completed by the end of March. After which an update report would be submitted to future meeting of the Board

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

BEB23 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.

BEB24 INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN - QUARTER 3

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services which provided a summary of Internal Audit work for the period October to December 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.

Arising from Members comments regarding pre-employment checks, it was noted that a future audit report would provide an update on progress made in this respect and that a report would be submitted to the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board addressing the safeguarding issues raised.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Internal Audit work completed in the quarter be noted; and
- (2) a report would be submitted to the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board on pre-employment checks.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

Meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.