

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 12 August 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: E. Dawson, L. Derbyshire, B. Dodd and I. Leivesley

Also in attendance:

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB7 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 June 2009 having been printed and circulated were agreed as a correct record.

BEB8 ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2008/09

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which outlined the approach taken to produce the Council's 2008/09 Annual Governance Statement and presented the Council's Annual Governance Statement to review and approve.

The Board was advised that the approach taken for the production of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) had been co-ordinated through a Corporate Governance Group led by the Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy. The group had been responsible for evaluating the sources of assurance and identifying any areas where the Council's governance arrangements could be strengthened.

The Board was further advised that the AGS intended to identify any areas where the Council's governance arrangements were not in line with best practice or were not

working effectively, together with action plans for improvement.

The 2008/9 review of the Council's governance framework had concluded that there were no significant weaknesses in the Council's governance arrangements. However, areas had been identified where action was proposed to further strengthen the overall arrangements.

In addition, the Council is legally required to 'conduct a review at least once in a year of the effectiveness of its system of internal control' and include a statement on internal control in its statement of accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit (Amendments) Regulations 2006. The annual governance review process aimed to ensure that an accurate statement could be produced in line with these requirements. Part of the review process also included consultation with the Business Efficiency Board, which has responsibility for ensuring that the Council's governance arrangements comply with best practice.

RESOLVED: That the Council's Annual Governance Statement be approved.

Strategic Director
Corporate &
Policy

BEB9 ABSTRACT OF ACCOUNTS

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services, which sought approval for the Council's 2008/09 Draft Abstract of Accounts.

The Board was advised that the Abstract of Accounts (The Abstract) set out the Council's financial performance for the year in terms of revenue and capital spending and presented the year-end financial position as reflected in the balance sheet.

It was reported that the Regulations had required further changes to the content and layout of the Abstract this year. These changes brought Local Authority accounts more into line with International Financial Reporting Standards (IRFS), for which full compliance was required from 2010/11. The changes were outlined within the section titled 'Changes in Accounting Policies' in the report.

In addition, the Board noted the reasons for the delay in the Abstract accounts being presented due to having awaited receipt of the capitalisation direction from Government.

The Board was also advised that further work would be necessary to prior year figures as a result of the capitalisation direction. This work would be undertaken shortly and the necessary alterations made to the draft Abstract, prior to the Abstract being re-submitted to the Board on 30 September 2009.

The Board was advised that in overall terms the Council had underspent its 2008/09 revenue budget by £281,000 and that General Fund Balances now stood at £6,921,000 which was a sound financial position.

The key elements of the Abstract were outlined in the report for Members consideration as follows:-

- Capital expenditure;
- School balances;
- Income and expenditure account;
- Statement of movement on the general fund;
- The Council's balance sheet;
- Cashflow statement;
- Collection fund account;
- Group accounts; and
- The Statement of Responsibilities.

The Board considered these areas and then went through the draft Abstract of Accounts in details, robustly scrutinising its contents. In particular, the following points were discussed:-

- Earmarked resources in respect of Neighbourhood Management, Invest to Save, Supporting People and Equal Pay;
- The funding of Neighbourhood Management;
- Debt collection;
- Staff emoluments;
- Section 137 expenditure; and
- Section 5 publicity expenditure.

It was highlighted that the Council had a balanced budget year on year, with a reasonable level of resources and balances and although the future was challenging the Authority had established a strong base position.

The Abstract would now be subject to external audit and once completed the Audit Commission would report their findings to the Board on 30 September 2009 and the Abstract would then be published.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 2008/09 Draft Abstract of Accounts be approved for submission to the Audit Commission; and
- (2) the Operational Director, Financial Services be authorised, in consultation with the Chairman of the Business Efficiency Board, to make such changes as are necessary prior to the Abstract of Accounts being re-submitted to the next meeting of the Board.

Operational
Director –
Financial Services

Meeting ended at 8.05 p.m.