

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 3 September 2013 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), Roberts (Vice-Chairman), E. Cargill, Dennett, S. Hill, C. Loftus, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh and G. Stockton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, A. Jones, I. Leivesley, J. Gallagher and B. Hilton

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

CS10 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 21 May 2013 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CS11 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

CS12 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Executive Board Minutes relating to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board were attached at Appendix 1 for Members information.

EXB 7 – Councillor Loftus wished to record his thanks to the Property Services Department for their assistance with an Area Forum Project on Beechwood.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

Action

CS13 SSP MINUTES

The Minutes of the Halton Strategic Partnership Board (HSPB) meeting held on 12 June 2013 were attached for Members information at Appendix 1.

It was reported that the HSPB working party would report back to the next meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

CS14 THE PEOPLE PLAN (2012-2015)

The Board received a report and presentation on the progress made on the delivery of the Council's People Plan, which was adopted by the Executive Board at its meeting on 29 March 2012, following a recommendation from this Board.

The aim of the People Plan was to place the workforce at the heart of the organisation as it recognised that this was our most valuable asset. The People Plan was built around 4 key strategic aims:

- To attract, develop and retain excellent people;
- To provide excellence in leadership and management development;
- Being an excellent employer; and
- Promoting organisational excellence.

Each strategic aim contained a number of objectives, actions, and success measures, with linked outcomes and timescales. It was noted that the Plan was monitored by the Organisational Development Group chaired by the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, with the membership across the three Directorates, and included the Trade Unions.

It was reported that the People Plan had successfully implemented the following projects:

- Maintained and updated the Organisation's Workforce Profile;
- Ensured continued investment in the workforce;
- Devised and implemented a Talent Strategy;
- Devised and introduced an Employee Recognition and Award Scheme;
- Implemented a Healthy Workforce initiative; and
- Met Legislative requirements.

The report went on to discuss these in detail together with the challenges expected over the next 12 months, specifically:

- Devising and implementing a 'Talent Pool';
- Devising and implementing an Organisational Succession Plan;
- Developing a learning and development plan, a Managers' Guide; and
- Developing more effective leaders.

It was reported that these developments would affect all employees within the organisation with development opportunities being made available to everyone regardless of position.

The following points were noted following Members queries:

- The Employee Development Review (EDR) was a yearly appraisal with a 6 month review;
- The revision of the EDR had included the reformatting of the form which had taken it from 14 pages to 4 to make it more user friendly;
- Halton did not currently have a Graduate Scheme but this was an integral part of the implementation of the Talent Strategy, together with the Apprenticeship Strategy and Volunteer Strategy;
- A Healthy Workforce Portal had been established for staff as part of the Health Workforce Initiative and was available at:

<http://intranet/HealthyWorkforcePortal/Pages/default.aspx>
- It was agreed that the progress of the People Plan should be shared with all Members so the update would be included on the next Members bulletin.

The Chairman gave thanks to the officers involved in the implementation of the People Plan and Members were thanked for their commitment to the Council's investment in training.

It was noted that a further progress report would be provided to the Board in 12 months' time.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

1. note the progress to date; and
2. supports the continued implementation of the Council's People Plan 2012-2015.

CS15 LAND AND PROPERTY UPDATE

The Board received a report that provided members with an update in respect of activities relating to the Council's land and property portfolio.

It was reported that in managing the Council's land and property portfolio, the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department had concentrated resources on the following areas:

- Accommodation and agile working;
- Maintenance of Council properties;
- Investment properties; and
- Disposal of surplus land and buildings.

Members were provided with a summary of activities in each of these areas.

It was noted that with regards to the Council's accommodation plan to reduce the number of office bases to three, this was progressing and a number of leases had not been renewed. This had effectively accelerated implementation of the Council's agile working policy. Members commented that the utilisation of space was good in that more work stations had been created despite the loss of accommodation, which had been helped by the agile working policy.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the progress being made in the management of the Council's land and property assets.

CS16 DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT SCHEME

An update on the implementation of the Discretionary Support Scheme after the first three months of its operation was provided to the Board.

Members were reminded that the Discretionary Support Scheme, previously administered by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), was abolished by the Welfare Reform Act from April 2013. Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants were replaced by a new service administered by the Council, which was in place and

introduced in Halton in April. The introduction of this was done to a very tight timescale and happened during a time of significant change for the Revenues and Benefits Team. Payments from the scheme had been made against a set of criteria previously agreed with a working party whose membership was drawn from this Board. Halton had been allocated funding over a three year period, details of which were set out in the report.

It was noted that this funding was not ringfenced; however, the DWP stated that although they did not expect local authorities to replicate the existing scheme, it was the intention of Government that the funding would be used by Councils to provide support to vulnerable people in their area.

The Board was advised that the Working Party had requested that the core element of the current DWP scheme be retained where possible, namely: to provide assistance with living expenses due to emergencies or crisis; and to provide assistance for vulnerable people to help them return to or remain in the community, or to ease exceptional pressure on families. In addition to this the Working Party agreed that no cash payments would be made; that no payments for fuel would be made; and that the application process be either by phone or intranet. These characteristics of the scheme were agreed, given the need for the Council to develop a scheme within the resources available. It was agreed that the scheme be reviewed after the first three months of its operation.

Members were referred to Appendices 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the report and advised that a total of £20,000 had been paid out of the Scheme by the end of Quarter 1. It was reported that the decision not to pay cash had seen a dramatic reduction in payments made from the fund, which was the case with most other authorities. Additionally, the decision not to pay fuel would also appear to have led to a reduction in applications. It was noted that many people had been more than satisfied with the service, although feedback from external organisations had asked for consideration to be given to making payments for fuel and improving the standard of furniture and food provided.

It was suggested that a further report be submitted to the Working Party by the end of October on the options for fuel payment for further consideration. Also the use of second hand furniture as an alternative to purchasing new furniture would be monitored and feedback given to the Working Party in October. Members also requested that

grant funding for the food banks be looked at by the Working Party.

RESOLVED: That

1. the report be noted; and
2. a further paper regarding the provision of fuel be submitted to the Corporate Policy and Performance Working Party before the end of October.

CS17 LIVING WAGE TOPIC GROUP

A report was presented to the Board which recommended the establishment of a Topic Group to examine the implications for the Council of introducing 'The Living Wage' and for that Topic Group to make recommendations to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board (CPPB).

The Board was advised that the 'Living Wage' was defined by the Living Wage Foundation as the hourly rate of pay deemed adequate for a worker to provide their family with the essentials of life. In London the current rate was £8.55 per hour. Outside of London the current rate was £7.45 per hour. Whilst the Council clearly adhered to the National Minimum Wage (NMW), it did have employees paid below the Living Wage.

It was noted that unlike the NMW, the Living Wage had no statutory basis but it had been adopted voluntarily by a range of public and private sector organisations, including a small number of local authorities. The campaign for the Living Wage offered accreditation to employers that paid the Living Wage, provided support and advice to employers and sought to influence employers to adopt this.

It was therefore suggested that the Corporate Policy and Performance Board establish a Topic Group to look at this issue in some detail and examine the implications for the Council if it was to introduce the Living Wage. They would then be required to make recommendations to the Executive Board.

The establishment of the Topic Group was agreed and the Chairman opened up the Membership to all Corporate PPB Members. Details of the Group's first meeting would be conveyed to Members when known.

RESOLVED: That a Topic Group be established by

the Corporate PPB to examine the implications for the Council of introducing the 'Living Wage'.

CS18 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS - QUARTER 1

The Board received the performance management reports for quarter 1 of 2013/14 and were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of performance management for the first quarter period to June 2013.

The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board:

- Financial Services;
- Human Resources & Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Policy and Performance;
- Property Services; and
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services.

It was noted that the reports detailed progress against service objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

In relation to the performance data Members requested a report on ICT security activities at the next meeting.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Performance Board note the performance management reports for quarter one of 2013/14.

CS19 SICKNESS ABSENCE - 1ST QUARTER 2013/2014

The Board received a report which presented the number of working days lost in the first quarter of 2013-14.

The information provided a breakdown for each directorate (Policy and Resources, Communities, Children and Enterprise) and also a breakdown for Primary Schools and Secondary Schools. It was reported that the cumulative number of working days lost due to sickness absence per employee, at the end of the 1st quarter of 2013/14, was 2.63. This had increased when compared to 2.22 days per employee for the same period 2012-13.

The data also presented information on the length of absences and the top seven reasons for sickness absence in this first quarter.

Members noted the observations made on the data and the comparisons with the same period last year.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report.

Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.