

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 7 November 2013 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chairman), D. Cargill, Harris, R. Hignett, Jones, Nelson, Philbin, J. Stockton, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, G. Cook, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, D. Parr S. Nyakatawa and E. Dawson

Also in attendance: Mike Thomas, (External Auditor from Grant Thornton UK LLP)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB101 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2013 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB102 ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER 2012/13

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which presented the Annual Audit Letter for 2012/13.

The Board was advised that the Annual Audit Letter (the Letter) summarised the findings from the 2012/13 audit completed by the Council's external auditors. The Letter included messages arising from the audit of the financial statements and the results of work that had been undertaken in assessing the Council's arrangements to secure value for money in the use of its resources.

Mike Thomas, the external auditor from Grant Thornton UK LLP, attended the meeting and reported that

an unqualified opinion had been issued on the Council's financial statements. Of particular note however, was the recognition that the most significant issue that the Council faced was the budget gap and being able to meet its mandatory responsibilities. In addition, the audit recognised that despite the financial challenges, the Council sought opportunities to progress the local economy and continued to have major successes through partnership on a number of significant developments most notably Mersey Gateway, Daresbury Science Park, 3MG Multi-Modal site and the Castlefields development.

The Board wished to place on record their thanks to all Officers that had assisted in the preparation of the audit inspection.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Audit Letter 2012/13 be approved.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

(N.B. Councillor Ron Hignett declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as he was a member of the Public sector Joint Venture Board)

EXB103 FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF SCI-TECH DARESBUURY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which updated Members on the proposed arrangements to fund the future development of Sci-Tech, Daresbury. The Chief Executive also delivered a presentation on the future development at the site.

It was reported that Sci-Tech Daresbury was a key strategic site as an international hub for world class science. Part of the site became an Enterprise Zone in August 2011. Members were advised that the Daresbury Joint Venture (JV) Partnership had secured £7.36m of Regional Growth Fund (RGF) grant aid. It was noted that the JV Board had agreed four projects, as detailed in the report, and which were:-

- Project Tech Space;
- Power (Phase 1);
- Connectivity/Environmental Improvements; and
- Transport Improvements.

In addition, two medium term priorities had been identified which would be the subject of further investigation; these were improving Broadband access to the site and creating a loop road within the Sci-Tech development.

Reason(s) For Decision

To provide the legal and financial arrangements to deliver at Sci-Tech Daresbury:-

- The four Projects mentioned in the report;
- £30 million investment;
- New business opportunities; and
- To create 827+ new jobs.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

As set out in the timetable in the Threshold Report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposals for the future development of Sci-Tech Daresbury be noted;
- 2) Council be asked to approve the inclusion of Project Tech Space in the Council's Capital Programme, to be funded as set out in the Threshold Report;
- 3) authority be given for the Council to enter into the legal and funding agreements with the Joint Venture Partners for the delivery of the projects; and
- 4) the Board agrees to the Council entering into the financial arrangements to deliver the projects.

Chief Executive

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO

(N.B. Councillor Jones declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as he was a Governor of Fairfield Infants School)

EXB104 FAIRFIELD JUNIOR AND FAIRFIELD INFANT SCHOOL - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided a summary of responses on the statutory consultation to re-organise Fairfield Infant and Junior Schools.

The Board was reminded that the proposal was to change the age range of Fairfield Junior School to age 4-11 years so that it could become an “all through” primary school from 1 January 2014. A copy of the full proposal was attached at Appendix A. A summary of the 54 responses which had been received was attached at Appendix B. Details of the issues raised by those that did not support the proposals were set out in the report and included:

- Governance;
- Leadership;
- Staffing;
- Closure (of Infant school);
- Resources; and
- Disruption.

It was noted that children from both schools were also consulted through the two School Councils, and both School Councils were supportive of the proposals.

Appendix E outlined the issues which the Board (as decision maker) needed to consider. It was noted that the reason for the decision must be given and should also include the factors and criteria for the decision.

Reason(s) For Decision

The Headteacher of the Junior School had acted as Executive Headteacher of the Infants and Junior Schools since September 2013. During this time, the Infant School had been graded as ‘Good’ by Ofsted. Combining both schools to an “all through” primary would allow a more coherent and consistent approach to provision at Fairfield Infants and Juniors and ensure that there was a smooth transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

No change to the current position was considered. However, this was rejected as it did not provide the same opportunities for curriculum continuity and development, flexibility for staffing and resources and allow seamless

transition across the Key Stages.

Implementation Date

1 January 2014.

RESOLVED: That, proposals having been published in pursuance of the powers set out in Sections 19 (1) and 15 (1) of the Education Inspections Act 2006, and having regard to the statutory guidance and to responses to consultation, the following related proposals be approved:-

- 1) the age of Fairfield Junior School be extended to 4 to 11 years with effect from 1 January 2014;
- 2) Fairfield Infant School be discontinued with effect from 31 December 2013;
- 3) the Published Admission Number for the "All Through Primary" School will be 80 per year group; and
- 4) all pupils in the Junior and Infant School would become part of the "All Through Primary" School on 1 January 2014.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB105 TACKLING SOCIAL ISOLATION PROJECT PILOT CONTRACT PROCUREMENT WAIVER

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which sought approval for the issuing of a pilot contract for the Tackling Social Isolation Project.

The Board was advised that the older population (65+) in Halton was projected to grow by 33% by 2021. It was reported that the Government had placed loneliness high on its agenda, with The Ageing Well Programme and the Campaign to End Loneliness initiatives which would drive this forward. Within Halton, a Tackling Social Isolation Project had been established, to develop an overarching strategy to clearly define and develop services to tackle social isolation in older people in the Borough. It was reported that this was a joint venture between Halton Borough Council and the NHS Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (HCCG).

Members were advised that one aspect of this strategy was the use of technological options to manage loneliness; one option under consideration was the use of a tablet solution designed to use digital media as a positive communication tool, which had been developed by a small company called Visbuzz. The report detailed the content of the proposed pilot scheme and the reasons for recommending the use of Visbuzz for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the use of Procurement Standing Orders 1.8.4 (f) be agreed to waive Procurement Standing Order 4.1. in respect of the Visbuzz pilot contract for one year (attached at Appendix 1).

Strategic Director
- Communities

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB106 CHANGE OF ALLOTMENT CHARGING METHOD

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which sought approval to change the allotment pricing structure.

The Board was reminded that the provision of allotments was a statutory function. In 2012, the pricing structure was amended which reflected a reasonably balanced budget for the provision of allotments. It was noted that allotments within Halton differed in size, and a half plot category was introduced based upon current allotment legislation.

It was reported that since January 2013, 36 new allotment tenancies had been issued; the amount of work incurred by Officers in terms of administration, billing, tenancy agreements and site viewings per tenancy was approximately two and a half hours. It was proposed that a one-off start-up charge be introduced at the start of a new tenancy to recover these costs. In addition, it was proposed that a review of water supplies at allotment sites be undertaken during 2014 so as to find more efficient ways of providing water.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) in the interest of fairness to all allotment holders, a new rate is introduced based upon a cost per square metre of 0.412p per annum so that the allotment holder pay only for the area of land they cultivate;
- 2) a one off 'start-up' charge of £40 is applied to new

Strategic Director
- Communities

tenants for administration purposes, which includes a refundable deposit of £20 for issued keys; and

- 3) water use conservation measures be taken at allotment sites in order to reduce costs.

MINUTES ISSUED: 12 November 2013

CALL-IN: 19 November 2013

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 19 November 2013

Meeting ended at 2.30pm