

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 3 September 2024 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Davidson, V. Hill, Hutchinson, Leck, A. Lowe, McDonough, N. Plumpton Walsh and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Logan

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, L. Coombes, E. Dawson, M. Reaney and S. Wilson

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
CS9	MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes from the meeting held on 4 June 2024 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.</p> <p>Members requested an update on whether the Council's Direct Link now had access to contact emergency services.</p>	Corporate Director - Chief Executive's Delivery Unit
CS10	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	<p>The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.</p>	
CS11	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	<p>The Board was presented with the Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of this Board.</p> <p>One Member questioned why there was no electric vehicle charging point at Runcorn Town Hall. Officers agreed to confirm an answer in due course.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.</p>	Executive Director Environment & Regeneration

CS12 PROGRAMMES OFFICE UPDATE

The Board received a report on the work of the Programmes Office in securing external funding resources into Halton. This included an update on the key activities and priorities, as well as emerging issues in external funding and funding statistics for 2023-24.

The report outlined the following key priorities for 2023-24 had been:

- embedding the new Programme's Office function, including strategic work to develop a pipeline of regeneration projects and a system to support its delivery;
- supporting the delivery of the Government's levelling up agenda, including Towns Fund and UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF);
- the development of a funding plan to support the delivery of the Council's Climate Change Action Plan;
- delivering a "Destination Marketing Programme" which was part of a Liverpool City Region funded scheme to promote Halton's visitor economy and cultural assets; and
- support the development of the Council's Cultural Strategy and Heritage Open Days programme.

The report also described a number of key projects that the Programme's Office were being delivered/monitored:

- Destination Halton Marketing Programme;
- UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme; and
- Reconnecting Runcorn – Towns Fund Programme.

It was noted that Halton was the highest achieving Local Authority in the Programme and had received positive feedback from the LCR Programme Leads.

A Member of the Board raised a number of questions relating to external funding and it was agreed that these would be answered in due course.

Another Member asked if there was any available external funding that could be used to help bring back Halton's Vintage Car Rally and officers agreed to explore opportunities.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

Councillor Thornton declared a disclosable pecuniary interest for the following item due to her employment at CHI Community Café.

Councillor Hutchinson declared an other registrable interest for the following item as he is a Trustee of Unlock Runcorn.

CS13 WIDNES MARKET UPDATE REPORT

The Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on Widnes Market, following the implementation of the Business Plan, which had been endorsed by the Board in November 2022. The report also informed the Board of a change in the management structure at the market, with effect from June 2024.

Members were reminded that the Business Plan identified the priorities and actions to be undertaken by the Market Management Team to ensure the market remained a successful trading environment for the future. It included five main themes and the report provided an update on how these had progressed.

Members also noted that with effect from June 2024, the management and responsibilities of Widnes Market had transferred to the Communities and Greenspace Department. It had previously sat within the Economy, Enterprise and Property Department.

The following information was provided following discussions and arising questions from Members:

- The market had seen a slight decline in footfall following the introduction of car parking charges;
- Although opportunities had been explored to hold an Artisan market, there had been little interest from companies; and
- Officers agreed to explore WiFi opportunities for public spaces.

RESOLVED: that the Board note:

- 1) the progress on Widnes Market; and
- 2) the change in the management structure at Widnes Market.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CS14 SCHOOL MEALS SERVICE – SERVICE CLOSURE

The Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration which provided an update on the current status on the cessation of the schools meals service provided by the Council.

In February 2023, the Council agreed to remove the provision of the schools meals service. Schools were allowed up to two financial years to either procure an alternative provider or opt to offer an in-house provision.

The report outlined the support that had been offered to schools. An open day was held in April 2024, which allowed providers who had expressed an interest, an opportunity to showcase their services. Schools were invited to attend DfE training sessions to assist them with a catering procurement package. To date, several schools had engaged with the DfE.

The Board was advised that to date, the Council's School Meals Service was still providing catering for 27 of the 47 schools. 14 schools had given notice to terminate their contract before 1 January 2025. 13 schools were still to confirm their new catering arrangements by 31 March 2025. Members of the Board to be provided with a list of these schools, for information.

Of those schools that had progressed alternative arrangements, 15 school had chosen Orian Solutions, 5 had chosen Edsentials Catering Services and 2 had chosen Mellors Catering Solutions.

Members were reassured that the School Meals Management Team would work with the 13 outstanding schools and contact them again early in the Autumn Term to establish their intentions. Any school that did not provide a transfer date by 1 October 2024 would be issued with a termination letter with effect from 31 March 2025.

Following discussions and arising questions from Board Members, it was confirmed that:

- Any school that did not make any necessary arrangements by the deadline, would have to employ in-house catering staff; and
- Schools and their Governing Bodies were responsible for ensuring that school meals were provided for their pupils.

RESOLVED: The Board noted:

- 1) the current position regarding the withdrawal from the provision of school meals; and
- 2) the actions required to achieve the deadline of 31 March 2025.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

CS15 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2024/25

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 1 of 2024/25. The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

- Finance;
- Operational HR Division, Chief Executive's Delivery Unit;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services; and
- Property Services.

Members of the Board reported that they had received a rising number of enquiries/complaints in relation to housing matters but they found it difficult to contact Registered Social Landlords (RSL). It was the view that Councillors felt a disconnect as many RSL's now have "Arms Length Companies" operating on their behalf. It was noted that housing association regulators had advised that Local Authority nominated representatives were no longer required as Board Members. Therefore, there were concerns that the Council would lose their seats on the Halton Housing Trust Board and therefore, no longer be involved in any decision making. However, a Halton Housing Seminar was scheduled to take place on 4 October 2024 and Members had been invited to attend.

Following discussions, it was noted that:

- Two members of staff had recently been appointed in the Debtors Team to help with recovery of arrears;
- Members requested a breakdown of reasons why people are ringing the Contact Centre;
- A Member of the Board requested that any reports regarding the approval to vacate the Municipal

- Building, be brought to Full Council;
- £0.240m had been generated in additional business rates income; and
 - Members requested some additional information on how the recruitment of agency staff had led to an increase in commercial rental income.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 1 Performance Management report be noted.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

Meeting ended at 7.50 p.m.