

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 09 September 2010

REPORTING OFFICER: Chief Executive

SUBJECT: Request for funding for a contribution from the Area Forum

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 For the Executive Board to consider the request for a funding contribution of £2,500 towards a study to examine health affects of industrial plants where incineration technology is used.

2.0 RECOMMENDED

That the request for funding is declined.

3.0 REQUEST FOR FUNDING

3.1 A request has been made for a contribution from Area Forum 4 towards a study examining the downwind health affects around industrial plants where incineration is used. The request from Mr Gorry on behalf of HAGATI is for a contribution of £2,500 towards the total cost of a study suggested as being in the region of £10,000.

3.2 The request for the funding to support an additional study follows on from the granting of planning approval by BERR for a Waste to Heat Plant at the Ineos Chlor complex in Runcorn.

3.3 Following discussions at the Area Forum, the lead officer agreed to take further advice on the request from officers and other relevant agencies.

3.4 Dr Alex Stewart at the HPA has indicated that in his view any study could not be applied in isolation to the proposed incinerator at Ineos but he could see some advantages in a broad Cheshire wide study, although he felt it would cost in excess of £10,000. To date no funding has been committed by the HPA.

3.5 Fiona Johnstone at the PCT has confirmed that Dr Stewart has concluded that there would be value in conducting some further studies which might be supported by the PCT. To date no funding has been committed by the PCT.

- 3.6 There are conflicting views as to the merits of the particular study proposed by Mr Gorry and whether committing the sum of £2500 at a time of tight budget constraints offers value for money.
- 3.7 The Council's constitution (page 275 paragraph iv) provides for the situation where an officer exercising delegated authority considers "after consulting the appropriate Strategic Director or Chief Executive, that reference should be made to Members the matter shall be referred to the appropriate panel, board or committee for consideration".
- 3.8 Given the conflicting views and sensitivity of this matter, the matter is now reported to this Board for determination.

4.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 In August 2003 the University of Lancaster's report "Understanding the Factors affecting Health in Halton" was published. This study concluded that health in Halton is affected by the same factors that have been shown to be significant in numerous studies elsewhere; namely multiple deprivation and unhealthy lifestyles.
- 4.1.2 When the application for the energy from waste facility was submitted in 2007, it was accompanied by an environmental impact assessment. During the processing of the application questions about the effect of the proposed development on health were raised. In determining the application, the Secretary of State concluded that concerns over the impact on health in the locality could be addressed in the Environmental Permitting process.
- 4.1.3 Subsequently, an application under the Environmental Protection Act has been submitted to the Environment Agency. This application is, as yet undetermined but as part of the permitting process a Health Impact Assessment was prepared with guidance on the scope of matters to be covered provided by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). The PCT and Health Protection Agency (HPA) are both involved as consultees in the permitting process.
- 4.1.4 The Environment Agency has a duty and a right to require any additional information they require to enable them to process applications made to them for environmental permits.
- 4.1.5 A presentation was submitted to Members of the Health Policy and Performance Board, by Mr Gorry, in June 2010, requesting support for the funding request.- See Appendix A .

- 4.1.6 The advice given by the Strategic Director Environment and Economy in response to the request is contained in Appendix B.
- 4.1.7 Members from Heath Ward have expressed a view that they would wish to support the request for funding.
- 4.1.8 Since the approach was made to the Area Forum, a detailed scoping statement has been prepared (copy attached, Appendix C) which was submitted in August with a covering letter from Alan Gorry (attached as Appendix D). It can be seen from the Scoping document that the research will focus on 7 existing incinerators in the UK. None of these incinerators are in Cheshire or Merseyside.
- 4.1.9 The Director of Public Health, Fiona Johnstone, has responded to the scoping document and a copy of her response is attached (Appendix E). The PCT has said that it is not intending to provide any funding towards this research.

It will be noted from the response that the Director of Public Health has asked that a reference within the scoping document to the PCT having participated in producing the scoping document should be removed. Additionally, Dr Alex Stewart at the Health Protection Agency has asked that the introduction to the scoping document should be re-written and has asked that the phrase “that the HPA has confirmed that the proposed study does not conflict with this statement” should be removed from the scoping document. A copy of Dr Stewart’s email is also attached (Appendix F).

5.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Whilst It is considered that the proposed study may have some merit as a piece of research, in its own right or, if properly commissioned, as part of a wider piece of research, it does not as currently proposed represent an effective use of the public’s limited resources. It is not thought appropriate to fund a study which would be commissioned by a non-independent organisation and in isolation from the PCT and HPA. If the PCT and HPA feel that it would be worthwhile to commission such a study, this should be taken forward by those agencies.

6.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 This request for funding cuts across all the Council’s priorities. In particular, it is relevant to the Health and Urban Renewal priorities. However, it is seen as more relevant to national rather than local

issues and does not, therefore, directly impact on the Council's priorities.

7.0 **FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 A contribution of £2,500 is requested from Area Forum funding (Heath Ward).

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 The proposed research would impact equally on all sectors of society.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

Correspondence and supporting documents attached as appendices.