

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2014

<b>9</b>	<b>DIRECTORATE PERFORMANCE OVERVIEW REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 YEAR END</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on progress against key objectives/milestones and performance targets for the fourth quarter year-end to 31 March 2014.

The Board was reminded that a review of the Council's existing performance management and monitoring arrangements was undertaken in 2011, based upon an agreed set of principles around better management of performance information. This change also reflected the transition away from local authorities being performance managed by central government and toward being held to account at a local level through the transparent provision of accessible performance data.

Information for each of the Council's Directorates were contained in Appendices 1-3. It was noted that Directorate Risk Registers had been reviewed and refreshed in conjunction with the development of Directorate Business Plans 2014-17. The monitoring of high risks would be undertaken and reported at Quarter 2 period, which would end on 30 September 2014.

RESOLVED: That the report, progress and performance information be noted.

<b>10</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, relating to an application for discretionary non-domestic rate relief.

The Board was advised that, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Authority was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer, when it was considered appropriate. This relief had only been available to be awarded to organisations that were a charity, a not-for-profit organisation or a Community Amateur Sports Club.

It was reported that since April 2013, there had been significant changes in the funding of non-domestic rate reliefs and exemptions following the introduction of the Retention of Business Rates Scheme, the details of which were set out in the report.

Appendix 1 provided details of the application request from the Islamic Academy of Manchester together with the associated financial costs to the Council for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the application by the Islamic Academy of Manchester for Discretionary Rate Relief, as set out in the report, be rejected for the following reasons:-

- 1) the property had already been awarded six months Empty Property Rate Relief;
- 2) the lack of any direct social or economic benefit for the Borough from a retrospective application; and
- 3) the cost to the Council at a time when it is facing significant financial challenges.

#### **EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2014**

<b>18</b>	<b>REVISED TREASURY MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2014-15</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on proposed revisions to the Council's Treasury Management Investment Strategy for 2014/15.

The Board was advised that the Treasury Management Strategy for 2014/15 was approved by Council on 5 March 2014. Within this, an Investment Strategy set out a specific list of investment counterparties and maximum limits the Council would invest with each.

It was reported that the Council's advisers, Capita Assets Services, had advised that the counterparty list was restrictive and that opportunities may be missed to utilise different counterparties whilst still maintaining the Council's prudent policy of prioritising security and liquidity over investment yield. The Board noted that advice was to maintain a counterparty list based upon specifying the type of institution to invest in rather than naming specific counterparties. This would be dependent upon the counterparty meeting a minimum credit rating. A revised counterparty list on this basis was attached at Appendix B.

It was further reported that such improved flexibility would be of particular importance for the Council as opportunities would be taken to borrow in preparation for the Council's contribution to the Mersey Gateway construction costs.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the revised Treasury Management Investment Strategy and Counterparty List, as shown in the appendices.

<b>19</b>	<b>2013-14 FINANCIAL OUTTURN</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the final revenue and capital spending position for 2013/14.

The Board was advised that the final accounts for 2013/14 were complete; the revenue spending position for each Department, which would be subject to external audit, was attached to the report at Appendix 1.

It was reported that budget savings for 2014/15 were implemented over two tranches, the first of which consisted of savings of £6.5m, and approved by Council in December 2013. As a result of some of these savings being implemented early, it provided part-year budget savings in 2013/14.

The report provided details on the key variances (which were in addition to the overall net underspend) in the following services:

- Children and Families;
- Learning and Achievement;
- Children's Organisation and Provision Department;
- Community and Environment;
- Prevention and Assessment;
- Commissioning and Complex Care;
- Finance;
- Policy, Planning and Transportation; and
- ICT and Support Services.

Members were advised that the Council's Reserves and Balances had been reviewed in accordance with the Reserves and Balances Strategy. The Council's General Balances stood at £8,645,662, which, given the financial climate, was considered to be at a reasonable and prudent level.

With regard to Capital Spending, details of spending against the 2013/14 Capital Programme, were attached at Appendix 2. It was noted that spending was £9.9m below the revised capital programme of £48.4m, which represented 80% delivery of the revised capital programme for which 20% slippage was anticipated, and so represented a positive outcome.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive which informed Members on the separate and unrelated disposals and purchase of various properties in Widnes and also set out the proposals for overseeing a review of the Council's property and sites.

The report set out details of properties which had been disposed of at Birchfield Road and Mersey View Road, Widnes. In addition, the former lawn mower repair facility at Moor Lane, Widnes had been acquired, which extended Council ownership of the road frontage. The Board was reminded that the Council were considering redevelopment options for this area.

It was noted that time constraints had required action to be taken by the Chief Executive on the respective disposal and acquisition of the properties detailed, so that the opportunities were not lost by undue delays.

The Board was advised that, given the scale of expenditure involved in the Council's property related budget, a review of the Council's Property Assets and Sites would be appropriate. The report recommended the establishment of a Member Assets Review Panel to oversee the work. The Panel would:

- Explore ways of minimising and reducing property/site related costs associated with the delivery of Council services;
- Evaluate whether property/site related assets were sufficient and in a condition to help meet corporate /service objectives;
- Consider alternative methods of property provision; and
- Investigate opportunities for sharing assets.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note and endorse the Chief Executive's decision to approve the sales of 117 Birchfield Road and the former Haydocks site at Mersey View Road, Widnes, and the purchase of the former lawn mower repair unit at Moor Lane, Widnes; and
- 2) agree to the establishment of a Member assets Review Panel.

## EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2014

<b>30</b>	<b>ICT &amp; SUPPORT SERVICES CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the ICT and Support Services Capital Programme.

The Board was advised that the continued and long-term investment made by the Council in its ICT infrastructure, had delivered greater efficiencies in service delivery and enabled the Council, amongst other things, to:-

- Reduce its estate;
- Introduce automated processes with easy access to information for the public;
- Facilitate greater use of agile working; and
- Receive income from service level agreements with third parties.

The report set out details of the key ICT programme areas for 2014/15. It was noted that this included renewal and upgrade of the current licensing model, improved server infrastructure to increase the Council's resilience and storage capacity, and a programme of device refresh and replacement. The proposed financial spend profile was also detailed. However, Members were advised that through smart procurement and changes to the way the authority accessed its desktop space, it was envisaged that all of the projects would be delivered within the current budgetary allowance.

RESOLVED: That the ICT and Support Services Capital Programme be noted and the financial spend profile for 2014/15 be supported.

<b>31</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY NON DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which detailed seven new applications for Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief.

The Board was advised that, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Authority was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to any business ratepayer, when it was considered appropriate. This relief had only been available to be awarded to organisations that were a charity, a not-for-profit organisation or a Community Amateur Sports Club.

It was reported that since April 2013, there had been significant changes in the funding of non-domestic rate reliefs and exemptions following the introduction of the Retention of Business Rates Scheme, the details of which were set out in the report. It was noted that the Council was now responsible for funding 49% of any award granted of mandatory or discretionary rate relief.

Appendix 1 provided details of the seven applications received, together with the associated financial costs to the Council for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Discretionary Rate Relief be granted to the following organisations at the percentage indicated, for the period 1 April 2012 (or the commencement of liability whichever is the later) to 31 March 2016:-

Halton Autistic Family Support Group	20%
St Johns Church T/A Widnes Foodbank	20%
The Mark Gorry Foundation	20%
Our Lady's Pre-school, Runcorn	20%

- 2) The following applications for Discretionary Rate Relief be refused, for the reasons set out in the report:-

Child Bereavement UK	20%
Chester & District Federation of the Blind	20%
Chester Diocesan Board of Finance	20%

<b>32</b>	<b>ICT &amp; SUPPORT SERVICES – CENTRALISED AGRESSO SERVICE DELIVERY CONTRACT BETWEEN SEFTON MBC AND HALTON BC</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought approval in principle to complete and enter into a contracted service to deliver, manage and host the Agresso Financial Services Software Package for Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council Sefton MBC).

The Board was advised that Finance Directors of Sefton MBC and Halton Borough Council had informally discussed the opportunities for a shared centralised financial services software package using Halton's technical platform known as Agresso. Having operated the system for over ten years, Halton staff had built up a considerable level of knowledge and technical expertise in the development of the system, comparable with most external third party suppliers.

It was reported that the initial proposal covered the provision of a fully managed network link between the two authorities which allowed for fast secure access. In addition, there was a requirement for dedicated resources to be made available to both authorities throughout the contractual period, with new roles in the Agresso Support team within ICT Services to be funded by Sefton MBC.

RESOLVED: That the proposal allowing the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio holder, to complete contractual, financial and service delivery arrangements, be approved.

<b>33</b>	<b>ICT &amp; SUPPORT SERVICES – WAIVE STANDING ORDERS, AGRESSO LICENCE UPGRADE</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought approval to waive Procurement Standing Orders to allow the purchase of an additional licensing agreement for the Agresso Financial Services Software Package.

The Board had considered a previous report on this agenda, for shared centralised financial services software package between Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council (Sefton MBC) and Halton Borough Council, using Halton's technical platform known as Agresso (minute EXB 32 referred).

It was reported that the Council had been licensed for the use of the Agresso system for approximately ten years under a financially beneficial licensing agreement known as Perpetual Licence. This licence allowed the authority to own the use rights which were linked to an annual maintenance charge for the use of the software packages. It was now proposed to extend this licensing model to allow for Sefton MBC to operate under the same license agreement as part of the centralised Financial Software delivery proposal, previously referred to.

The report provided details of the possible lead in time for project connectivity. Approval was therefore sought for the Operational Director, IT and Support Services, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio holder, to conclude a deal in the most advantageous terms for the authority, subject to all costs being borne by Sefton MBC.

RESOLVED: That the Board approves both requests which allow the Operational Director, ICT and Support Services, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio holder, to complete contractual, financial and service delivery arrangements in relation to the software licensing requirements and connectivity project.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Pensions Discretions Policy.

Then Board was advised that the Council was required to publish a written policy statement annually which confirmed its discretions allowed under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). It was reported that following the Hutton Review, the Government had decided that changes were required to public sector pension provision; the main recommendations were set out in the report.

It was reported that the new LGPS accommodated all of these requirements. Significant changes to the Scheme effective from 1 April 2014, required that the Discretions Statement was updated to reflect this. Appendix A outlined the Council's current and proposed position.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the recommendations to exercise the discretions as outlined in Appendix A attached to the report, be approved; and
- 2) those discretions be exercised by the appropriate Strategic Director, in consultation with the Portfolio holder for Resources and the Operational Director, Finance. (In the case of applications from Strategic Directors/Chief Executive, replace appropriate Strategic Director with Chief Executive/Strategic Director, Policy and Resources respectively).

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy for the 2013/14 fourth quarter.

The report provided supporting information on the economic background, interest rate forecast, short term rates, longer term rates, temporary borrowing/investments and new borrowing. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.



<b>36</b>	<b>2014-15 TO 2016-17 CAPITAL PROGRAMME</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the Council's Capital Programme for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

As part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy, Executive Board had approved the capital strategy on 21 November 2013. This covered the period 2014/15 to 2016/17. Council approved the overall capital programme for the same period at its meeting on 5 March 2014, which at that time were based on estimates of capital allocations.

The Council would continue to seek and secure further additional external resources to reduce on-going revenue implications and enhance the capital programme, through for example, Section 106 Agreements.

Estimates of capital receipts over the medium term were based on forecast land and building sales. Although it was reported that there was some optimism in the property market with an upturn in fortunes, a cautious approach needed to be followed and as such, there were no funds available for new capital starts unless external funding was generated to finance the cost.

RESOLVED: That the Council's Capital Programme for 2014-17, including forecast spend and funding, be noted.

<b>37</b>	<b>PROVISION OF MONITORING OFFICER SERVICES TO CHESHIRE WEST AND CHESTER COUNCIL (CWAC)</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought approval to enter into a shared service arrangement with Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) to provide Monitoring Officer services.

The Board was advised that the Chief Executive had been approached by CWAC regarding the provision of Monitoring Officer services to them during a period of maternity leave by the current CWAC postholder. It was reported that this would be for a period which covered July 2014 to May 2015. Halton's Monitoring Officer would be required to attend CWAC's offices one day a week, attend CWAC full Council meetings and pre-briefings and be available at other times for consultation by email or telephone.

The Board noted that this request for support was for a short term and that contractual arrangements would be concluded on a commercial basis.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council enter into an agreement with Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide Monitoring Officer services to CWAC, for a period until the end of May 2015; and
- 2) the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, be authorised to enter into all contractual arrangements to put this in place.

<b>39</b>	<b>DISPOSAL OF LAND AT PAGE LANE, WIDNES</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, on the disposal of development land at Page Lane, Widnes.

The Board was advised that the land had been marketed by external agents. Details of offers received and considered were contained in the report and attached appendix. It was noted that the purchase of the land was conditional on the proposed developer obtaining the relevant planning consent.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) subject to Planning Consent and subject to contract, the Board approves the disposal of the site to the company and at the price referred to in the report; and
- 2) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, legal and Democratic Services.

<b>40</b>	<b>DISPOSAL OF LAND FOR HOUSING AT LIVERPOOL ROAD, WIDNES</b>
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Children and Enterprise, on the proposed disposal of land at Liverpool Road, Widnes.

The Board was reminded that at its meeting on 5 September 2013, it had approved the disposal of the site so as to enable development to support the funding of the new adjoining sports facility. The site had been marketed by external agents and an analysis of offers received and of the marketing report were detailed in the report and appendices.

It was noted that the purchase of the land was conditional upon the proposed developer obtaining planning consent.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board approves the disposal of the site to the company and at the price referred to in the report, subject to Planning Permission and subject to contract; and
  - 2) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all documentation to be completed to the satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services.
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