

## **CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 6 November 2007 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), Bradshaw, Dennett, Edge, C Inch, Loftus, Nolan, Norddahl and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors A. Lowe and Bryant

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Ferguson, M. Baker, I. Leivesley, R. Mackenzie, P. McCann, S. Riley and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: Councillor Wharton in accordance with Standing Order 33

### **ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

		<i>Action</i>
CS20	MINUTES	
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 <sup>th</sup> September 2007 having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.	
CS21	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was noted that no public questions were received.	
CS22	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The Minutes of the Executive Board and the Executive Board Sub Committee relating to the work of the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board since its last meeting were submitted for information.	
	RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.	
CS23	JOINT STRATEGIC NEEDS ASSESSMENT	
	The Board considered a report which provided an overview of the requirement to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) in line with Department of	

Health guidance. The process and subsequent JSNA documentation would be managed jointly by the Local Authority and the PCT and would describe the future health, care and well-being needs of local populations and the strategic direction of service delivery to meet those needs, over 3 – 5 years. A strong and effective JSNA would:-

- Show health status of the local community;
- Define what inequalities exist;
- Contain social and healthcare data that was well analysed and presented effectively;
- Define improvements and equality for the community;
- Send signals to current or potential providers, who could have other relevant information or proposals for meeting needs;
- Supporting better health and well-being outcomes; and
- Aid decision-making and stages of the commissioning cycle, esp. to use resources to maximise outcomes at minimum cost.

The process of producing and subsequently utilising the JSNA was a systematic one and was outlined in the report. A three phase process was proposed with Phase 1 – Information Gathering, Phase 2 – Secondary Analysis and JSNA Production; and Phase 3 – Outputs and Commissioning Improvement.

The guidance from the Department of Health stipulated that the Director of Adult Social Services, Director of Children and Young People Services, Director of Public Health and Director of Commissioning from the PCT had a responsibility for co-ordinating the production of the document. Discussions had already commenced with a range of key stakeholders and the timetable and process for completion was outlined in the report.

In addition, the Department of Health had stressed the importance of the direct links with Elected Members, Local Strategic Partnerships and key people including Local Authority Chief Executives, Environmental Health staff and staff involved in Research and Intelligence. Consequently, the Local Strategic Partnership had already received a similar report to own and understand the requirement to produce a JSNA. The Health Specialist Strategic Partnership would thereafter be the responsible and accountable group to ensure that the JSNA was produced. As the Health SSP already had key people on its membership, it was suggested that a small working group would be tasked with producing a draft JSNA in the

timescales identified.

Regular update reports to the Executive Board, Local Strategic Partnership, PCT Board and Healthy Halton Policy and Performance Board would be produced which appraised individuals and groups of progress. The Healthy Halton PPB would scrutinise the process and ensure that effective community consultation was undertaken. However, a similar report to every PPB would be presented to ensure they were aware of this matter and provided them with an opportunity to be engaged.

It was noted that some financial costs to cover public consultation may be required and these would be determined at a later date.

RESOLVED: That the process as outlined in the proposed co-ordination section be supported and a draft Joint Strategic Needs Assessment be received in 2008.

Strategic Director  
Health and  
Community

#### CS24 CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

Councillor Wharton, the portfolio holder for Corporate Services, attended the meeting to provide a brief update on current issues within his portfolio and answered questions from members on the following topics:

- budget 07/08;
- budget 08/09;
- governance;
- magistrate court, Widnes;
- post office closures;
- equal pay review;
- Halton Stadium/Brindley; and
- consolidating training sections.

Arising from the discussion Councillor Wharton suggested that the Board consider reviewing working policies as a work topic.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

#### CS25 LOCAL HOUSING ALLOWANCE

The Board received an update on the planned introduction of the Local Housing Association (LHA), which would be introduced for all new private tenant claims and private tenant change of address claims from 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The LHA was a new way of determining rent payments for tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit. It would not replace

## Housing Benefit.

It was reported that the LHA used a flat rate allowance based on the size of the tenant's household and the area in which they rent property to determine the amount of benefit payable. This amount was not directly related to the rent charged so the benefit the tenant received may be higher or lower than the contractual rent. Other circumstances, such as the money that the tenant has coming in or other people living in the household, would still affect the amount of benefit paid so the tenant may not always received the full rate of LHA. The new scheme enabled tenants to be able to chose between paying more to stay in a property that is larger or keeping the difference if they moved to a cheaper property (to a maximum of £15 per week).

The new scheme would apply to Housing Benefit claimants in the deregulated private sector and the mainstream private tenancies only and would apply to new tenancies.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) information contained in this report be circulated to all Members through the Information Bulletin.

Strategic Director  
Corporate and  
Policy

## CS26 RATING (EMPTY PROPERTIES) ACT 2007

The Board was advised on changes to Empty Property Relief from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 as introduced by the Rating (Empty Properties) Act 2007. In response to the recommendations of the Barker Review and the Lyons Inquiry, the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced in his Budget report of 21<sup>st</sup> March 2007 the Government's intention to modernise the existing system of relief from business rates for owners of unoccupied property.

The proposed reforms increased liability to business rates for unoccupied properties to the same basic level of liability as for occupied properties (although the Bill provided for liability for unoccupied properties to be reduced by order). Although liability of empty property that was held by a charity and appeared likely to be next used for charitable purposes or that was held by a community amateur sports club and appeared likely to be used for the purposes of the club qualified for an exemption from rates under the NNDR (Unoccupied Property) Regulations. This was still subject to discussion.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the information contained in the report be circulated to all Members through the Information Bulletin.

Strategic Director  
Corporate and  
Policy

CS27 REVIEW OF AREA FORUMS

The Board had previously made recommendations for improving the operation of Area Forums, these were considered by the Executive Board at its meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> September 2007. The Executive Board made various recommendations which included that the "Strategic Director Corporate and Policy prepare an action plan for the implementation of the Board's decision in the 2008/9 Municipal Year and regular progress reports be made to the Corporate Services PPB." In accordance with this resolution an Action Plan was submitted to the Board for approval.

The following recommendations required further work or investigation:-

- Communications Strategy;
- Transport to Meetings;
- Microphones/Amplification;
- Hot Topics from HDL; and
- Neighbourhood Charters.

In order to monitor progress of the Action Plan several factors may be used as a measure of success. For example -

- i. attendance at meetings
- ii. awareness of Area Forums;
- iii. proportion of people who feel they can influence decisions in their locality; and
- iv. satisfaction amongst those attending forums.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the action plan be endorsed;
- (2) a further on progress and impact be submitted towards the end of the 2008/09 year; and
- (3) the transport arrangements proposed be endorsed and reviewed after 12 months.

Strategic Director  
Corporate and  
Policy

CS28 AREA FORUMS' COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

One of the recommendations of the review of Area

Forums was to was to develop a Communications Strategy. A draft Strategy was circulated to the Board for consideration. It recommended developing a basic communications toolkit to enable each Forum to develop its own communications. The estimated cost of this was £2,000 which could be funded from existing corporate budgets. It would then be for each Forum to decide how it wanted to make use of this toolkit and whether it wished to fund some of the other options in the report.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Board considered the proposals for an Area Forum Communication Strategy;  
(2) Officers develop the toolkit outlined in the Strategy; and  
(3) each Area Forum be recommended to consider how best to use the toolkit and whether to adopt the other options outlined in the report.

Strategic Director  
Corporate and  
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#### CS29 QTR 2 PERFORMANCE

The Board considered a report which outlined the progress of performance management second quarter against the service plan objectives, performance targets, performance trends/comparisons, factors affecting the services etc. for:

- Exchequer and Customer Services;
- Financial Services;
- ICT Services;
- Legal and member Services;
- Personnel Services;
- Policy and Performance; and
- Halton Stadium.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter performance management reports be received.

***Councillor Wainwright declared a personal interest in the above item as a member of the stadium fitness suite. Councillor Edge declared a personal interest in the above item as a family member is employed at stadium fitness.***

*Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.*