

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 7 November 2023 in the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), Philbin (Vice-Chair), Hutchinson, Logan, A. Lowe and N. Plumpton Walsh

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: J. Bradshaw, Leck, A. McInerney, Thornton and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, E. Dawson, J. Gallagher, H. Hamlett, C. Hill, M. Reaney and R. Rout.

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
CS17	MINUTES	
	The Minutes from the meeting held on 5 September 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS18	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS19	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	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 the Board.	
CS20	CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT 1.4.23 TO 31.8.23	
	The Board was provided with a report from the Corporate Director – Chief Executive’s Delivery Unit, on the performance of health and safety management within the Authority from 1 April 2023 to 31 August 2023.	
	The report highlighted health and safety incidents that	

had taken place over the past 4 months and as a result of those incidents proposed actions for the future. The report included information around the number of actual near misses, accidents that had resulted in over 7 day absences, together with significant accidents.

In addition, the report contained information on the performance of health and safety management in relation to Key Performance Indicators for the current financial year.

Members were advised that with effect from 1 October 2023 there had been some changes to the fire regulations following the Grenfell fire in 2017 and the Protect Duty (Martyn's Law) was with Parliament for consultation. This would force legal duties on employers to have responsible persons in place in buildings with robust procedures for emergencies in the event of an incident.

Members of the Board referred to the welfare legislation contained within The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and after some discussion it was agreed that a report on welfare would be presented to the Board at a future meeting.

It was also agreed that lone working data would be reported to the Board, once it was available.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the contents of the report including the recommendations and actions for 2023/24.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

CS21 THE CORPORATE PLAN - THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.

The Board previously received a report about the 'The Big Conversation' at its meeting in June and were reminded that the initiative was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that up until 7 November, a

total of 933 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far, as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

Members of the Board discussed the report and they suggested the following agencies be approached:

- Halton Voluntary Action;
- the Youth Service;
- Priestley College (Warrington) and Sir John Deane College (Northwich); and
- Police Community Support Officers.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

CS22 RESOURCING THE COUNCIL - CHALLENGES

The Board received a report from the Head of Human Resources – Operations, which provided an overall view of the resourcing challenges the Council was currently facing.

Members were advised that the Council had continued to see a rise in job vacancies since 2021/22. In 2016/17 the number of vacancies advertised were 343, in 2021/22 there were 610 and in 2022/23 there were 678. A summary of these vacancies was listed in the appendix to the report.

The continued rise in vacancy numbers creates a substantial challenge to the Council's recruitment service, which does not have the sufficient resources to manage the workflow of such volumes. Some temporary resources had

been added to the team to mitigate any delays in service provision, which remained prevalent.

The report listed a number of key reasons for the continued increase in vacancies. It was noted that this situation was not unique to Halton and it was a national issue.

The Board was advised that that the recruitment team also provided a service to schools via a chargeable Service Level Agreement (SLA). For the year 2023/24, the team provided a service for 44 schools. In 2022/23, the service processed 362 school vacancies and whilst the costs of this were paid for by the schools, it created issues in workflow as school recruitments need to be completed between May and September in time for the new school year. Members were also informed that if schools decided to covert to academy status then the Council would no longer offer an SLA and any previous service would be withdrawn.

The report outlined that the HR Operations Division had revised their approach to attract candidates to come and work for the Council and it continued to be explored. A number of changes had also recently been implemented and these included:

- Re-designing the recruitment process and streamlined applications;
- Using social media platforms to advertise roles;
- Established career graded posts;
- Specific and focused recruitment campaigns for some roles, particularly in the Adults and Children's Directorates;
- Streamlined pre-employment checks; and
- Recruitment for senior roles brought back in-house to reduce spend.

Members noted the report and requested a list of current vacancies. They also requested that consideration be given to the chargeable cost of SLA's.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report and actions being taken to mitigate the challenges.

Corporate
Director - Chief
Executive's
Delivery Unit

CS23 HOUSEHOLD SUPPORT FUND 2023/24

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance which provided an update regarding the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund allocation of £2.6m from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) had issued guidance that included the requirement that part of the funding must be distributed via an application process, although the Council could still proactively target particular groups of households.

A spending plan had been prepared and was attached as Appendix A. It was noted that £365,00 had been allocated to the Discretionary Support Scheme within the Benefits Division to process applications.

Appendix B of the report contained detailed information relating to spending for the period 1 April 2023 to 30 September 2023. This included expenditure from partner organisations including Halton Citizens Advice Bureau, Runcorn Foodbank, Widnes Foodbank, Affordable Warmth, Holiday Activity Food Programme and Halton Voluntary Action.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) progress with delivery of the Household Support Fund, as outlined in the report, be noted; and
- 2) a further progress report be brought to the next meeting of the Board.

CS24 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Management Report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24. 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;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services; and
- Property Services.

It was noted that apprenticeship opportunities were being explored and thanks were expressed to the ongoing work of ICT services and the services provided at the Stadium.

RESOLVED: That the Quarter 2 Performance Management report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.