

## **CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 23 January 2024 in the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), J. Bradshaw, Hutchinson, Logan, A. Lowe, A. McInerney, Thornton and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Philbin, Leck and N. Plumpton Walsh

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: None

Also in attendance: None

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

		<i>Action</i>
CS25	MINUTES  The Minutes from the meeting held on 7 November 2023 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.	
CS26	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME  The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.	
CS27	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.	
CS28	MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP NOTES  The Board considered the minutes of the Member Development Group meeting held on 26 July 2023.  Members commented that the group was progressing well.  RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.	
CS29	THE CORPORATE PLAN - THE BIG CONVERSATION	

## ANALYSIS AND THE WAY FORWARD

Following a report which the Board received at their November meeting, a presentation was delivered to share the analysis of “The Big Conversation” and outlined the next steps.

The Board were reminded that the “The Big Conversation” 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.

The presentation set out the five themes i.e.

- Improving health, promoting wellbeing and supporting greater independence;
- Building a strong, sustainable local economy;
- Supporting children, young people and families;
- Tackling inequality, helping those who are most in need; and
- Working towards a greener future.

In addition to these, stakeholders were asked to identify additional themes which they felt were significant and those were the environment, local economy and housing.

Members were advised that the consultation closed on 30 November 2023 and the total number of responses received was 1,076. A breakdown of these by source was outlined in the report.

The presentation also outlined the Corporate Plan timeline; During January 2024, key priorities would be identified and agreed with a summary to be shared with stakeholders via drop-in sessions. The Plan would then be finalized and approved at key forums before being launched in April 2024.

Members noted the information presented to them and the following comments were noted from discussions:

- The priorities identified were the same as the current ones;

- There was a concern that the outcome of this consultation would create further work for staff and add to existing workloads; and
- It was suggested that the Council should promote the success of the consultation and the number of people/stakeholders that was reached via social media. 1,076 people responded to the consultation, however, over 12,000 people were indirectly contacted e.g. via social media, partner's newsletters and flyers.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted; and
- 2) the Board continues to endorse the approach to facilitate the implementation of a new Corporate Plan.

### CS30 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS

The Board considered a report which provided a statistical analysis of the Corporate Complaints received during the 2022-23 financial year.

The report outlined the two stage procedure to deal with corporate complaints; a corporate complaints trend analysis from 2022-23; the nature of those complaints received; and outcomes. The data showed that the Council had received 112 corporate complaints which had been consistent with previous years. Given the challenges the Council had faced it was considered a fair outcome.

At present, the Council aimed to respond to complaints at stage 1 of the procedures within 10 working days and those at stage 2 within 28 working days. There had been a delay in some areas but work was ongoing to improve those response times.

In addition, the report also provided a summary on complaints and queries that had been received by the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) during 2022-23. It was noted that the Ombudsman had made 22 decisions during the year and upheld 4 complaints.

It was noted that the LGO were due to introduce a new Joint Complaint Handling Code which would apply to all Local Authorities in England, however, it would not replace the Children's and Adults statutory complaint processes. The Council would be undertaking an assessment of its current procedures against the Code in early 2024.

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and Democratic  
Services

Members queried the data presented in terms of the number of complaints due to the amount of emails they receive from constituents each month. They were reminded that the data demonstrated the number of complaints taken through the formal corporate procedures. Whilst Members may receive emails, these may be determined as queries or general service requests which could be dealt with quickly within service areas.

Some Members of the Board also queried what had happened to the Corporate Complaints Committee which used to review complaints before they were escalated to the LGO. Members were reminded that this Committee had been disbanded some time ago when the Council's procedures were reviewed and the two stage process was introduced, in line with LGO guidance. Officers agreed to confirm the timeline for these changes in due course.

RESOLVED: That the content of the report be noted.

#### CS31 CLIMATE CHANGE UPDATE

The Board received a report from the Assistant to the Chief Executive which provided an update on related activities aimed at reducing the Council's impact on the environment and CO2 emissions from Council activities.

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Planning and  
Transportation

Since it started to measure its carbon emissions in 2006/2007, overall emissions had reduced in the Council's operations from 26,338 tonnes of CO2 to 8,740 tonnes.

In 2017, the Government reset the baseline in the expectation that public bodies would reduce their carbon emissions by 50% by 2031. In 2017, the Council's baseline was 14,811 carbon tonnes and in 2022/23, it had managed to reduce its emissions to 8,740 tonnes; a reduction of 40.9%. Emissions were 9,327 tonnes of CO2; a further annual reduction of 6.29%

The report outlined a number key projects which had been completed or commenced during 2023 which included:

- Improvements to Council buildings, including solar power schemes and solar farms at different sites;
- Electric vehicle charging points at Lowerhouse Lane and Picow Farm depots;
- Increased climate change awareness across the Council e.g. e-learning training courses for Officers and Members and establishment of a Climate

Change Advisory Group;

- Launch of the Big Halton Forest Project which will work with individuals, communities, organisations, and businesses with the aim of adding a new tree for every citizen by 2030 across the Borough;
- Work undertaken to influence the supply chain to improve sustainability in the supply of goods and services within all published tenders to include social, environmental and economic considerations;
- The Council has engaged in a number of projects to help address climate change relating to private and social housing;
- Work commenced with the Liverpool City Region on the Hydrogen Strategy; and
- Halton received funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and to date, grants of circa £15,000 had been provided to local groups to improve green space, create wildflower spaces and develop food growing initiatives.

Members noted the report and raised the following questions:

- Was possible to include a provision within planning applications that developments should include electric chargers. Officers acknowledged that this was a good point and provided reassurance that this would be considered as part of the consultation on a new Supplementary Planning Document, detailed in section 5.10 of the report;
- What provision will be considered for homes without off-road parking i.e. terrace houses and flats?;
- If new developments included solar panels on new homes, would these belong to the homes or be a leasing arrangement?
- What are the fee tariffs for solar panels in Halton?

Officers agreed to report back to Members in due course.

The Chair acknowledged the questions raised and suggested that some might be more applicable for the consideration of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the report and the ongoing work be noted.

## PAYMENTS, UNIVERSAL CREDIT, AND THE LOCAL SCHEME FOR WAR PENSIONS

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Finance, which provided updates regarding the delivery of the Government's Household Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments, Universal Credit and the Housing Benefit Local Scheme for War Pensions.

Following the report presented to the Board in November 2023 which outlined spend up to 30 September 2023, this report provided an update on spend up the end of December 2023.

Since the last report there had been a significant increase in Household Support Fund expenditure on vulnerable pensioners, the Discretionary Support Scheme, Free School Meal Vouchers, Public Health and Halton's Citizen Advice Bureau. The full details of the spend was outlined in the appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the latest position regarding the Household Support Fund, Discretionary Housing Payments and Universal Credit as outlined in the report, be noted;
- 2) the revision to the Household Support Fund spending plan be noted; and
- 3) the Executive Board be recommended to approve the continuation of the local scheme, that all of a war disablement pension or war widows' pension be disregarded for the purposes of calculating household benefit.

*Meeting ended at 7.40 p.m.*