

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE

*At a meeting of the Executive Board Sub Committee on Thursday, 24 September 2009
in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building*

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chairman) and Nelson

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Harris

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, C. Halpin, A. McNamara, P. McWade and
S. O'Sullibhan

Also in attendance: T. Hayes, Cheshire Police and Councillor Redhead

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE SUB-COMMITTEE

Action

ES23 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 9th September 2009 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

ES24 NORTON PRIORY BUSINESS CASE

The Sub-Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which informed Members on the progress of the Catering Contract at Norton Priory which had been provided by Adults with learning Disabilities Day Services since 25th October 2008 and which sought approval for the Business Plan.

The Council, like many other Councils across the UK had found it difficult to meet the Care Quality Commission's objectives of finding people known to Social Care, particularly those with Learning Difficulties, suitable employment opportunities.

In July 2008 negotiations with Norton Priory led to the

offer from Norton Priory to Adults with Learning Disability Day Services of a contract (SLA) to provide all the catering at Norton Priory. This included special, local and corporate events as well as the café.

Members were advised that Day Services had existing experience at providing community based catering projects at Murdishaw Café and Country Garden Buffet and had included the Norton Priory contract into its current operations without any increase to the establishment. The report set out the businesses run by Adults with Learning Disability Day Services.

The catalyst that enabled these services to become more recognisable as businesses was the award of the contract to provide the catering at Norton Priory, which began officially on 5th December 2008. This had been a genuinely commercial opportunity. The refectory at the museum was staffed Monday to Sunday with at least one member of staff and between 2 and 6 service users per day. Between the Norton Priory site, Murdishaw Café and Vine Street there were currently five service users receiving permitted earnings.

The feedback at Norton Priory continued to be positive and warm with customers commencing favourably on the quality, cost, variety and the friendliness of the service. The standards were closely monitored and the repeat customer base was steadily increasing.

It was noted that monthly meetings were being held with Norton Priory Trust's management team. The relationship remained strong and mutually beneficial. The success of the service and the healthy relationship had provided further opportunities to cater for fetes and large corporate events.

It was noted that since December 08 CGS's takings from Norton Priory, the buffets and the two days per week at Murdishaw Café amounted to £29,500. Two thirds of this was made up from the trade at Norton Priory.

Based on this trading history, the figures demonstrated that it was a profitable business. Margins were around 33% although this must be emphasised that the real costs of labour i.e. the costs associated with the staff who supported the service users to provide the services, were already paid for and effectively subsidised the business. This was not to say that in future the projects could not be outsourced or act as stand-alone enterprises. It

was noted that with this had come opportunities to diversify into other areas. The report set out a number of projects and businesses that Day Services and colleagues from the Children and Young People Directorate had worked on in the belief that they are both achievable and sustainable.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Strategic Director, Health and Community, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, Health and Social Care be authorised to continue and, where appropriate, extend the contractual arrangements with Norton Priory Trust to provide catering and related services at Norton Priory;
- (2) a further financial report be submitted to the Sub-Committee in 12 months time; and
- (3) further update reports be submitted to the relevant Policy and Performance Board.

ES25 REVIEW OF WARRINGTON ROAD TRANSIT SITE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which provided details of operational information and costs incurred during the six months following the opening of the site on the 10th February 2009.

The Board was advised that when setting the £11 per day charge in October 2009 the Board, conscious that many elements of the forecast operational budget were estimates, decided to review the charge after six months of operational experience. Appendix 1 to the report set out the original budget forecast, actual costs incurred during the first six months of operations and a revised budget forecast.

It was noted that Appendix 2 detailed actual occupancy levels achieved for the first half year, and the revised budget forecast in the final column of Appendix 1 was based upon achieving an occupancy level of 60%, which was more in keeping with experience to date. Some of the costs were still estimated in the absence of bills having been received for certain services and assumptions had been made about the charges over the full year for electricity as winter consumption was likely to be higher than the first half of the year. Nevertheless this budget forecast represented the best estimate that could be made at this stage.

Given the stated assumptions, the site was forecast

to produce a deficit of just £1,723 over a full year, but this should be set in the context of the wider savings achieved in not having to deal with the usual level of unlawful encampments.

Financial provision for dealing with unlawful encampments had never appeared as an explicit item in directorate budgets but in May 2007 an exercise was undertaken to try to quantify the cost for the period 2005/6 and 2006/7. The combined results from the relevant sections in each Directorate were set out in the report. This also excluded the substantial Police costs involved as well.

In this respect the Sub Committee received an update from PC Hayes, Cheshire Police which gave details of the number of illegal encampments in Halton compared to surrounding areas and the action taken within Halton on illegal encampments.

The Board was advised that the site had clearly been a success in terms of meeting its original aim of reducing the costly and time consuming problem of unauthorised encampments in Halton. Halton's new approach to managing Traveller issues had been applauded by Traveller associations, the Police and neighbouring Councils and the reduction in encampments had also been welcomed by local businesses. This meant that Halton had already met its targets for the provision of transit site accommodation proposed in the recent draft figures set out under the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.

A report was presented to the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on 17th June 2009 outlining how the site had been operating since it opened on the 10th February 2009 including similar (but not as up to date) information to that included in this report. The recommendations were noted by the Executive Board Sub-Committee on 10th September 2009.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board reviews the current charging arrangements in respect of the transit site;
- (2) a feasibility study to extend the site be undertaken;
- (3) a further financial report be submitted to the Sub-Committee when the winter data was available; and
- (4) a further update reports be submitted to the relevant

Policy and Performance Board.

MINUTES ISSUED: 5th October 2009

CALL IN: 12th October 2009

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 12th October 2009.

Meeting ended at 10.35 a.m.