

EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE

At a meeting of the Executive Board Sub Committee on Thursday, 6 November 2008 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Wharton (Chairman) and Harris

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Nelson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, P. Barron, R. Dart, S. O'Sullibhan, B. Dodd and C. Halpin

Also in attendance: A. Jones

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

Action

ES45 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16th October 2008 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

ES46 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Sub Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which asked Members to consider 3 applications for discretionary non-domestic rate relief, under the provisions of the Local Government Finance Act 1988.

It was noted that under the provisions of Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Authority was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations that were either a charity or a non-profit making organisation. Relief could also be awarded to Community Amateur Sports Club. A summary of the applications and a list of the associated figures were attached as an appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisations at the percentage indicated, for the period from 1st April 2008 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later, to 31st March 2009:

Halton Access to Media	100%
Halton Haven Hospice	20%
Tenants and Residents Organisations of England	20%

- (2) In respect of the following organisations, it is also recommended that they should be granted discretionary rate relief for the backdated element of the charge:

Tenants and Residents Organisations of England	20%
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ES47 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2008/09 2ND QUARTER:
JULY-SEPT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services which updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market as required by the Treasury Management Policy. It was noted that all the activities, including prudential indicators, complied with the policy guidelines.

Following various reports from the credit rating agencies, the authority had been particularly careful in placing money into investments, especially for those deals of longer duration. To date there had been no problems with repayments, although it was becoming increasingly worrying that very large organisations, often household names were deemed to be at risk of failure. Quite often credit ratings were giving no indication as to the current situation an organisation may be in and what off balance sheet problems they may be facing. It was noted all the Council investments were in UK banks and building societies.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ES48 2008/09 HALF YEAR SPENDING

The Sub Committee received a report of the Operational Director, Financial Services which gave details of the Council's overall revenue and capital spending

position as at 30th September 2008.

Members were advised of the spending against revenue budget for each department, up to 30th September 2008 and it was noted that in overall terms, revenue expenditure was below the budget profile. Areas of concern were outlined in detail in the report.

Members were advised of the capital spending to 30th September 2008, which totalled £17.8m, and which was 77% of the planned spending of £23.2m at this stage. However, this represented only 36% the total capital programme of £49.5m.

It was noted that although historically capital expenditure was significantly higher in the latter part of the financial year, it was important that project managers maintain pressure to keep projects and spending on schedule and in particular to ensure that all external funding is maximised.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO

ES49 NORTON PRIORY CATERING CONTRACT

The Sub Committee received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community which sought approval of the transfer of three staff to the Council's establishment to facilitate the development of the Norton Priory catering project.

It was noted that the Council, like many other Council's across the UK, had found it difficult to meet the Commission for Social Care Inspectorate objectives of finding people known to social care, particularly those with learning disabilities, suitable employment opportunities.

Following recent negotiations an offer from Norton Priory to the Learning Disability Day Services for the contract (SLA) to provide all the catering at Norton Priory had been put forward. This would include special, local and corporate events as well as the café.

The commercial aspects of this contract would provide the department with the opportunity to set up a 'social enterprise' scheme with the capacity to provide jobs for people with disabilities in the short to mid term.

It was noted that Day Services had existing experience at providing community based catering projects in the Murdishaw Café and Country Gardens Kitchens and have planned to subsume the contract into its current operations without any increase to establishment.

The contract and its supporting services were outlined in the report and it was anticipated that the proposals would increase capacity by at least one third to 238 'spaces' for service users to learn and gain meaningful experience and potentially employment.

The Sub Committee requested that a business plan for continuity of the service be submitted to a future meeting of the Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Strategic Director, Health & Community in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder (Health & Social Care) be authorised to enter into contractual arrangements with Norton Priory Trust to provide catering and related services at Norton Priory;
- (2) the addition of up to three members of staff to the Council's establishment as a result of duties under the Transfer of Undertaking Protection of Employment Regulations 2006 (TUPE) be approved in relation to the current catering services provider to the Trust, FGF;
- (3) the Strategic Director, Health & Community be authorised to take such other actions as may be necessary to give effect to the above recommendations; and
- (4) a business plan for continuity of the service be submitted to a future meeting of the Board

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL

ES50 HIGH HEDGE COMPLAINTS

The Board received a report of Strategic Director, Environment which recommended increasing the fee for making formal High Hedge complaints to the Council.

It was noted that the High Hedge Act (part of the Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003) came into effect on 1 June 2005.

This Act was to enable neighbours to make a formal complaint to the Council if they were unable to resolve the matter themselves.

Furthermore to meet the required criteria set out in the Act, a valid complaint must relate to a hedge that was at least two metres high and contain at least two or more evergreen trees. Fees were charged to the complainant who must provide detailed evidence that they have tried to resolve the matter with the owner.

The fee provided a service, which was likely to benefit an individual (the complainant) rather than the community in general.

In addition it was noted that a review of the charges made by other local authorities had been undertaken. This data was not readily available so particular consideration was given to other Councils (namely Bexley, Lincoln & Shepway) that set the fee in line with the cost of householder applications in 2005. They have since increased their fee in line with the cost of planning applications to £150.

Neighbouring Councils Warrington, St Helens and Liverpool charge a considerably higher fee. Since the High Hedge Act came into effect there have been over 150 enquiries leading to over 30 complaints.

It was recommended that the fee should be maintained at the same rate as householder planning applications. It was also recommended that the Strategic Director - Environment continue to have the authority to waiver the charge in part or whole when appropriate in individual cases of severe hardship.

RESOLVED: That the fee be increased from £135 to £150 in line with the minimum householder planning application fee.

Meeting ended at 10.55 a.m.

MINUTES ISSUED: 13 November 2008

CALL IN: 20 November 2008

Any matter decided by the Executive Board Sub Committee may be called in no later than 20th November 2008