

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 10 June 2014 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), A. Lowe (Vice-Chairman), Roberts, E. Cargill, Dennett, S. Hill, C. Loftus, A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, A. Jones, I. Leivesley, E. Dawson, T. Dean, M. Foy, W Rourke and J. Yates

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

CS1 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 18 March 2014 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CS2 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

CS3 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.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS4 SSP MINUTES

The Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Halton Strategic Partnership were presented to the Board for information.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

CS5 MEMBER DEVELOPMENT GROUP MINUTES

The Board was presented with the most recent minutes of the Member Development Group, held on 10 December 2013.

One Member wished to note that he agreed with the comment on minute MDG 18 – that there was limited car parking available for Members most of the time.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the minutes.

CS6 ANNUAL REPORT

The Chairman presented the Annual Report of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board for 2013/14.

Members noted, agreed with the content and approved the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be approved.

CS7 CORPORATE COMPLAINTS TOPIC GROUP

The Board was presented with the findings of a review of the Council's existing Corporate Complaints Handling Procedures, which was undertaken as part of the 2013-14 Corporate PPB work programme.

Members were advised that in light of the current operating environment, and the ongoing fiscal constraints the Council faced, it was considered appropriate to undertake a review of existing arrangements for handling Corporate Complaints in order to ensure the system remained fit for purpose; was consistent with recognised good practice; and reflected best value principles in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

A thorough review had been undertaken by the Corporate Complaints Topic Group which included a review of existing good practice literature, a benchmarking exercise with a number of authorities and a small number of other organisations, and in-depth discussions between Elected Members and Officers.

The Board was advised that as a result of this work it was concluded that existing arrangements had a number of strengths in that the procedure, which largely followed good

practice guidance, was well documented and publicised, was accessible through a range of channels, and provided information which was shared periodically with Elected Members and Senior Offices. Despite these strengths, it was considered that there was some scope to further improve arrangements.

Members were advised that the recommendations within the attached document *Review of Corporate Complaints Handling Procedure* were intended to ensure that the collection of information was more consistent and complete; that the procedure was simplified to reduce potential/actual operating costs and avoid matters becoming protracted from a complainant's perspective; and that staff dealing with complaints were provided with sufficient support, resources and skills to allow them to deal with complaints effectively.

Members discussed the recommendations and noted that if these were endorsed by them and the Executive Board then the Council's existing Corporate Complaints Procedure would be revised.

Members supported the recommendations and agreed that the Topic Group report be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration. They also requested that if the revised Policy is implemented, that it be reviewed after the first 6 months of operation.

RESOLVED: That the Corporate Policy and Performance Board

1. supports the recommendations contained within the report; and
2. recommends that it be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration.

CS8 DISCRETIONARY SUPPORT SCHEME

The Board was presented with a report on the delivery of the Council's Discretionary Support Scheme (DSS) following its first 12 months of operation and was requested to consider the findings of the Topic Group who had maintained an oversight of the scheme over the past 12 months.

Members were reminded that the DSS was previously administered by the Department for Work and Pensions until it was abolished by the Welfare Reform Act 2012. On 1

April 2013 Crisis Loans for living expenses and Community Care Grants were replaced by a new grants scheme administered by the Council. The Corporate Policy and Performance Board played a key role in developing the scheme and were asked by the Executive Board to keep the scheme under review. This role had been performed by the Board's Topic Group which had met twice during last year.

It was noted that the Council was keen to develop a scheme that was affordable and sustainable given the significant budget reductions that had and would continue to take place in its core Government Grant. Also the Council was keen to establish a scheme that supported individuals in crisis situations and those who required support in establishing a place to live.

Members considered the findings and recommendations of the Topic Group and agreed that the scheme should continue for the reasons stated in the report's summary. They also agreed the recommendations made in relation to the unspent funds for the 2013-14 financial year and supported the introduction of the 'Money Advice' posts as part of the scheme. One member requested that some future consideration be given to the scheme supporting food banks in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the conclusions and findings of the Topic Group.

CS9 MARKETS UPDATE

Members received a report updating them on the management and operation of the Borough's markets and also set out future priorities and actions.

In January Members considered a report which outlined the changes and improvements that had been made at the markets during 2013. A summary of progress since then was provided on the following areas:

- Refurbishment work to the Public Toilets – This was completed in March and had received positive feedback from customers and traders.
- Wifi Access – This work was completed in April 2014.
- Traders Committee – had met twice in 2014 and meetings included the Portfolio Holder for Physical Environment. Meetings reported to be positive with traders requesting increased frequency. It was noted

that an amendment to the arrangements to allow traders to express an opinion on potential applications had been made.

- Marketing and Promotions – details of the *Love Your Local Market (LYLM)* Promotional Event that took place in May, and the *Widnes on Sea* Promotional Event that will take place between 23 July and 26 July, were provided.
- Power Supply – A review of the power supply consumption in both the indoor and outdoor market had been undertaken.
- Future Priorities and Actions – A cost benefit analysis was being undertaken which had so far focussed on: Occupancy/vacancy rates; Rental Income; Rental Arrears; Expenditure; and Return on Investment.

It was reported that a review of market hall rents had also taken place which focussed on a payment system that more accurately reflected an equitable distribution of expenditure/cost across the market, and satisfactorily distinguished between popular or, conversely, difficult to let stalls.

Members welcomed the information and debated issues raised in the presentation by officers. The following points were noted:

- 83% of market stalls in Widnes Market were presently rented with 94% of traders paying on time;
- There were a total of 12 regular traders in Runcorn;
- In 12 months the amount of arrears had reduced by 25%;
- One third of the arrears were over 24 months old and historical, in some cases the debtors were no longer in the market;
- The stalls were measured recently to establish the m² and the Council would be looking at pitch locations with a view to charging more for the prime spots;
- The future priorities for the market were discussed and officers suggested that:
 - a) a 3 year business plan was needed to tie in with the regeneration of the Town Centres;

- b) rent arrears should be pursued;
 - c) the market protocols should be updated and revised; and
 - d) a charging policy should be developed.
- Members commented regarding the competition created for markets in recent times with online shopping, in that many items were cheaper than markets and people were choosing to shop this way which in turn affected market traders.
 - Mr Bernard Crompton, the caretaker at Widnes Market, had recently passed away. Members wished to convey their condolences to his family and friends.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

1. note the contents of the report; and
2. agree that the future priorities listed above be focused upon.

CS10 CORPORATE ACCIDENT / INCIDENT REPORT

The Board received details of corporate accident statistics and associated trends from 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. The annual report on performance of health and safety management for this period was appended to the report.

Officers advised the Board that there had been an increase in the number of occupational risk assessments and near misses, whilst there had been a decrease in the number of stress risk assessments and officers using the Lone Working Monitoring system.

They also highlighted a decrease in RIDDOR (Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations) reportable accidents and violent incidents; however, there had been an increase in the number of significant accidents. It was noted that the improvement in proactive action taken to create a safer working environment had led to the reduction in the number of incidents leading to injuries, resulting in a significant decrease in the number of days lost.

Following Members queries officers confirmed that schools catering staff had received training on manual handling and that agencies employed in the care sector on behalf of the Authority were monitored to ensure that the

level of service offered was fit for purpose.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

CS11 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY Q4 - YEAR END
PROGRESS REPORT 2013-14

The Board received information on the progress in achieving targets contained within the 2011-2016 Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.

Officers would contact members with regards to queries relating to the question marks on the 'target' column in some areas.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report.

CS12 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS QUARTER 4
OF 2013-14

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which presented the performance Management reports for quarter 4 of 2013-14. They were requested to consider and raise any questions or points of clarification, in respect of these.

The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board and were in relation to the Council's priority of Corporate Effectiveness and Business Efficiency:

- Financial Services;
- Human Resources & Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Policy and Performance;
- Property Services; and
- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services.

It was noted that the reports detailed progress against service objectives, milestones and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That the fourth quarter performance management reports be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 8.12 p.m.