

**ANNUAL REPORT  
CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY  
AND PERFORMANCE BOARD  
APRIL 2009 – MARCH 2010**

“I would like to thank Members of the Board for their hard work and the contribution they have made to its activities over the past year. This year, key areas have included detailed consideration of locality working, continued work on customer services, the consideration and adoption of a People Strategy for Halton, and ongoing scrutiny of Widnes and Runcorn markets, and disabled access. The topic work on use of natural resources will continue into the next municipal year”. Councillor Bob Gilligan, Chairman of Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board.

**MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

During 2009/10 the Board comprised of eleven Councillors – Gilligan (Chairman), A. Lowe (Vice Chair), J. Bradshaw, Browne, E. Cargill, Dennett, Edge, D. Inch, Nolan, Norddahl, and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulation policy in relation to Resources, Personnel and Training, ICT and E Government, Property, Committee and Member Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments which during the last year were Policy and Performance, Legal and Member Services and HR, Finance, Exchequer and Customer Services, Property Services and ICT.

**REVIEW OF THE YEAR**

The full Board met four times during the year and in addition held a special joint meeting with the Business Efficiency Board to consider locality working. This followed a number of meetings of the Locality Working Group comprising members of the Board and of the Business Efficiency Board, which was chaired by Councillor Ged Philbin.

Set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

**LOCALITY WORKING**

The Board received a report at its September meeting outlining three options for sustaining the development of locality working beyond March 2010. Each option contained an outline of pro's and con's, and the Board resolved that option one be favoured, namely a complete closedown of Neighbourhood Management with the setting up a working party in tandem with the Business Efficiency Board to consider the future of locality working in Halton.

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A further report was submitted to the February meeting of the Board, advising that meetings of the Working Group had taken place on 26<sup>th</sup> November and 15<sup>th</sup> December. The Group had considered the scope of the review, the lessons from the neighbourhood management pilot, and some of the options for taking forward locality working. It also considered whether and how any future arrangements might be supported from within existing resources. Key partner agencies would be invited to the next meeting to enable them to contribute their views to the review. It was agreed that a special joint meeting of the Board and Business Efficiency Board take place to consider the findings of the Working Group and to propose a recommendation to Executive Board. That Meeting was informed that the Working Group had met on five occasions and consulted partners, residents and voluntary sector representatives who had served on the Neighbourhood Management Board. The Group recommended that locality working should be rolled out across the Borough based on the current area forum geography but with greater links to partners. The meeting recommended to Executive Board that the proposals for locality working in Halton be set out as follows:-

1. Councillors for each area forum area consider the suggestions in the report for refreshing the way in which public meetings are conducted in order to increase attendance and engagement.
2. Area Forums are renamed to emphasise the new approach.
3. Each locality area forum establish a Locality Partnership Board to meet at least three times a year comprising of local councillors and partners.
4. Each locality area forum conducts an annual review in consultation with partner agencies to identify priority actions for the area.
5. A locality working coordinating group be established for the whole Borough with at least one Councillor from each forum, and representatives of key partners to review the operation of these arrangements twice yearly.
6. A sum of £45,000.00 is top sliced from the combined budget of the area forums annually to supplement the funding for Community Development support to the forums.
7. A marketing strategy is developed for locality area forums.

These recommendations were subsequently endorsed by Executive Board and full Council.

## **ACCESS TO PUBLIC BUILDINGS**

In September, the Board received a report updating members on the current position with regard to access by persons with disabilities and Disability Discrimination Act compliance with regard to public buildings. The Board was informed that BVPI 156 – Buildings accessible to people with a disability – was introduced in 2000/01 to monitor the improvement of access to local authority buildings for persons with disabilities. The indicator was formally withdrawn following the 2007/08 submission; however Property Services had a local indicator PUSLI 12 which replaced it together with a Service Objective PS07 which measured DDA compliance with regard to public buildings.

The percentage of public buildings which now complied with BVPI 156 under local indicator PUSLI 12 had risen from 25% in 2003/04 to 72% in 2008/09. The target for 2009/2010 was 75%.

All priority 1 work had been completed where necessary together with over 60% of the necessary priority 2 works.

## **MARKETS**

A report was taken to the Board dealing with the current position with regard to Halton's markets and the work being undertaken by the Markets Topic Group chaired by Councillor Wainwright.

Halton's markets had for a number of years had been in an increasingly competitive environment. Whilst Widnes Market was well occupied many traders were under pressure. The Authority had assisted with regard to rent which had helped the situation and numbers leaving had stopped and some new traders were appearing.

The position of Runcorn Market had stabilised at a lower level but there were still problems with regard to occupancy. The working party was set up to look at ways to improve the situation, and had supported the introduction of a Street Market in Runcorn to increase the social and financial vitality of the area. This had proven a great success in the first few weeks and was then establishing itself with small lettings. Whilst this has only had a partial positive impact on the indoor market, the Town Centre has seen a large increase in visitors on a Tuesday with many of the local traders benefiting. The working party was continuing to examine further aspects of the operation of both markets and further reports would be brought forward in due course.

## **PEOPLE STRATEGY**

In February, the Board recommended that Executive Board adopt and implement the People Strategy for Halton Borough Council, which had been developed by a cross directorate working group which also included a representative from the Trade Unions. The Strategy was founded on the principle that developing people best developed organisations. If people were well trained, well motivated and felt that they were treated well, then good organisational performance would follow.

The Strategy provided an overarching plan for how people would be deployed managed and developed within the organisation and how they would be expected to behave. Through the development of the Strategy, the organisation will be able to address leadership, skills development, recruitment and retention and pay issues in a structured and coordinated way.

The Strategy would also help plan for the future by providing a framework to assess current workforce and people management activity and identify any gaps that needed to be filled.

## **CORPORATE CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS**

The Strategic Director Corporate and Policy submitted a report to the Board in February outlining a Corporate Customer Service Standards Document for the Council.

The Standards had been approved by Members at a meeting of the Customer Service Excellence Members Scrutiny Topic Group on 26<sup>th</sup> January. Councillor Alan Lowe chaired the Group.

It was noted that the Council already had a good level of customer service but the Corporate Standards would help to build on the current position. It was proposed that the Corporate Government Customer Services Standards and Staff Guide be submitted to the Executive Board for approval and to progress with the development of related communication, training and monitoring.

## **USE OF RESOURCES TOPIC THEME PROGRESS REPORT**

The Board learnt at its February meeting that the Topic Group had met on two occasions. Its main focus was to look at the Council's approach to Energy Management in buildings. The Group had:-

received evidence from the Carbon Trust in terms of a Good Practice Model for developing a strategic approach to energy management;

examined the Council's approach and received details of the current policy and examined how it compared to the good practice model and to all extent the Policy was fully implemented;

received details of the schemes implemented by the Council to reduce energy consumption;

looked at the implications arising from the Carbon Reduction Commitment;

examined the approach to Energy Management in Liverpool and Knowsley Councils;

examined the Council's approach to collecting base line data and how effective the Council was at using data to monitor and reduce consumption;

received evidence of the approach to Energy Management at the Stobart Stadium Halton which had resulted in a 24% reduction in consumption;

examined the Council's approach to raising staff awareness of energy management.

The Group still needed to look at how IT impacts on the levels of energy consumption, the potential for investing in renewal technologies, the Council's approach to financing Energy Management and the opportunity for securing external funding.

## **PERFORMANCE ISSUES**

During the year the Board has focused a significant amount of time and effort monitoring the performance of its Reporting Departments. Among the performance issues overseen by the Board during the year have been

- School Catering and the operation of the Stobart Stadium Halton
- The process of hearing Job Evaluation Appeals and dealing with Equal Pay Litigation
- Sickness Absence – it was noted that the increased scrutiny had contributed to bringing about a reduction in

	sickness absence levels.
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## **WORK PROGRAMME 2010/11**

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2010/11) it would carry out detailed work on the following topics:-

- Markets
- Procurement
- Carbon Reduction

**Members of the public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work, please contact Committee Services. In the first instance, telephone 0151 471 7395 or e.mail [gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk](mailto:gill.ferguson@halton.gov.uk)**