

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 9 November 2011 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Leadbetter (Chairman), M Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), Balmer, Browne, Howard, A. Lowe, McDermott, Macmanus, Philbin, Roberts and Rowe

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: B. Dodd, I. Leivesley, M. Murphy and M. Simpson

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

BEB17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2011 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

BEB18 EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which set out progress made to date with the Efficiency Programme.

It was noted that proposals for Wave 4 of the Efficiency Programme were currently being drawn up. The review of operational fleet and client transport (Wave 2) was expected to be completed by the end of November. It was noted that £99,000 of the £400,000 savings target had been achieved to date.

The report detailed updates on various reviews of the Transactional / Non-Transactional workstream, the income and charging (Wave 3), the Contact Centre (Wave 3), business development and regeneration (Wave 3), development control / building control (Wave 3), adults' and children's social care commissioning (Wave 3), community

Action

services (Wave 3) and traded services (Wave 3).

Arising from the discussion the following points were noted:

- in relation to the review of income and charging some early successes had been made and increased income was evident; and
- with regards to planning and Section 106 Agreements it was suggested that developers fees be increased. In response it was noted that this would be looked at as part of the review of locality working;

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report be noted.

BEB19 UPDATE ON THE PROCUREMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDIT SERVICES

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update on the progress with the procurement process and set out further details of the timetable and the auditor appointments.

Members were advised that in March 2011, Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a consultation document on the 'Future of Local Public Audit' and the Council contributed to a joint consultation response by the Liverpool City Region, which was reported to Members at the Board's meeting in June 2011. The response was appended to the report for information and in essence the general opinion was that Halton should continue to carry out its own audit arrangements. It was reported that no response had been received to date.

It was noted that the procurement progress had started with publication on 7 September 2011 of the contract notice in the Official Journal of the European Union, which set out the objectives of the procurement and how it would be carried out. The key points from this were set out in the report for information.

Members were advised that the work had been packed into ten lots across four geographical regions, details of which were set out in the report for consideration.

It was further noted that the Audit Commission had published the timetable for the outsourcing process on its website. Key milestones were detailed in the report for information.

In relation to appointment of local auditors who were familiar with Halton, Members suggested the Council write a letter to the DCLG to request consideration be given to the use of local auditors. Members were advised that Officers were not aware of any influence the Council could exert on such matters but a letter would be written on behalf of the Board.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report and implications for the Council's external audit arrangements be noted; and
- 2) a letter be written to the Audit Commission seeking clarification on the influence that local authorities can exert in terms of the auditor appointment process.

Operational
Director - Finance

BEB20 SCHEDULE 12A OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

The Board considered:

- 1) whether Members of the press and public should be excluded from the meeting of the Board during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of business to be considered, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972; and
- 2) whether the disclosure of the information was in the public interest, whether any relevant exemptions were applicable and whether, when applying the public interest test and exemptions, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighed that in disclosing the information.

RESOLVED: That as, in all the circumstances of the case, the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business in accordance with Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A

of the Local Government Act 1972 because it is likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

BEB21 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT - QUARTER 2 (2011/12)

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance which provided a summary of internal audit work for the period July to September 2011.

The report set out key issues and recommendations arising from the audits, details of other work completed by Internal Audit in the Quarter and the results of the work undertaken following the implementation of previous Internal Audit recommendations. The Board considered progress made against the Audit Plan and executive summaries of reports issued during Quarter 2.

RESOLVED: That the Internal Audit work completed for Quarter 2 be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.22 p.m.