

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 FEBRUARY 2014

155	2013-14 QUARTER 3 SPENDING
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the Council's overall revenue and capital spending position to 31 December 2013.

A summary of spending against the revenue budget up to 31 December 2013 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. This provided individual statements for each department. The Board was advised that in overall terms, the revenue expenditure was £0.9m below the budget profile, although this was only a guide to eventual spending.

It was reported that on 11 December 2013, the Council had approved the early implementation of budget savings for 2014/15 totalling £6.5m. A number of those would provide part year saving in 2013/14 and would assist in keeping overall spending within budget at year end.

The report contained details on a number of significant areas of the budget including:

- The employee budget, vacant posts, overtime and agency staff;
- Expenditure on general supplies and services;
- Children's residential placements;
- Spending on in-house adoption;
- The Complex Care Pooled Budget (attached at Appendix 2);
- The collection rate for Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- The Council's net overall spending.

The report also outlined details of a revision to the capital spending programme at Appendix 3 and monitoring of the Council's balance sheet.

RESOLVED: That

1. all spending continues to be limited to the absolutely essential;
2. Strategic Directors ensure overall spending at year-end is within the total operational budget; and
3. Council be recommended to approve the revised Capital programme as set out in Appendix 3.

156	TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2013-14, 3RD QUARTER OCTOBER - DECEMBER
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The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which updated them on activities undertaken on the money market as required by the Treasury Management Statement.

The report provided supporting information on the economic background, economic forecast, short term rates, longer term rates, temporary borrowing/investments and new borrowing. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

157	DISCRETIONARY HOUSING BENEFIT SCHEME GUIDANCE
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Discretionary Housing Benefit Scheme Guidance (the Guidance).

The Board was advised that Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) provided claimants with financial assistance, in addition to any welfare benefits, when the Council considered that help with housing costs was required.

Members were referred to the draft Guidance document which was appended to the report. They were advised that, due to the significant changes in welfare provision that were taking place, it was considered helpful to provide further guidance to staff who administered DHPs. The Guidance was intended to give Officers a framework to work to when assessing claims, thus ensuring an equitable treatment of applications for what was a limited sum of money.

It was noted that notwithstanding the Guidance, each case would still be looked at on its individual merits. Additionally there was an appeal process to Members which was already in existence, which provided a further test to the fairness of the application of the Policy.

At its meeting on 22 January 2014, the Corporate Policy and Performance Board had considered the Guidance and recommended that Executive Board approve its adoption.

RESOLVED: That the Discretionary Housing Benefit Scheme Guidance document be approved.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the adoption of a local Business Rates Relief Scheme.

The Board was advised that the Government had announced in its Autumn Statement on 5 December 2013, plans to provide a relief of up to £1,000 to all occupied retail properties with a rateable value of £50,000 or less in the years 2014/15 and 2015/16.

Local Billing Authorities would adopt a local scheme and decide in each individual case when to grant relief under Section 47 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988 (as amended). Government would reimburse local authorities that used their discretionary relief powers. The report set out details of the types of property that would benefit from the relief and how much would be available. It was noted that within Halton, 850 businesses could be affected by the Scheme, although approximately 400 of these already received Small Business Rate Relief and so would not benefit from this Scheme. For the 450 businesses that would be eligible, the relief would be worth in the region of £440,000, which would be fully refunded from Government grant.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Scheme for the award of Business Rates Retail Relief in Halton, as detailed in the report be approved; and
2. the granting of Business Rates Relief for any properties which meet the eligibility criteria set out within the report, be approved.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 13 MARCH 2014

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which detailed the Council's performance against key objectives, targets and milestones for Quarter 3.

The Board was reminded that in September 2011, a review of the Council's existing performance management and monitoring arrangements had been undertaken, based upon a set of principles agreed by the Corporate Policy and Performance Board. This was based around the better management of performance information in

terms of both strategic focus and volume. The Directorate Performance Overview Report provided a strategic summary of key issues arising from performance in the relevant quarter for each Directorate, being aligned to Council priorities or functional areas. The Board noted that such information was key to the Council's performance management arrangements, with the Board having a key role in monitoring performance and strengthening accountability.

It was reported that Directorate Risk Registers were under review and would be refreshed in conjunction with the development of Directorate Business Plans 2014-17; monitoring of high risks would be reported in due course to Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That the information contained in the report be noted.

172	REMOVALS CONTRACT – WAIVER OF PROCUREMENT STANDING ORDERS (PART II)
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which sought the approval of a waiver of Procurement Standing Orders with regards to the provision of a removals service for the Borough Council.

The Board was advised that a removals contract was awarded on 1 September 2013, following a procurement exercise. It was reported that in December 2013, the appointed contractor withdrew from the contract; in consultation with the Head of Procurement, action was taken to appoint a replacement contractor, the details of which were set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That

1. the waiver of Procurement Standing Order 4.1 (Competition Requirements) under Standing Order 1.8.4 (c) be approved. This would allow a direct award of a contract to the company named in the report for removal services for a period of 3 years, with an option to extend two separate periods of one year each; and
2. as a retrospective waiver report, it be noted that the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property's approval to an emergency waiver under Procurement Standing Orders 1.8.2, in consultation with the Head of Procurement, to enable the company named in the report to be appointed to undertake removal services on an interim basis, pending a new contractor being appointed through a competitive process or waiver approval.

EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 MARCH 2014

180	CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2014-15
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which set out the proposed Calendar of Meetings for the 2014/15 Municipal Year, which was appended to the report for information.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the Calendar of Meetings for the 2014/2015 Municipal Year, as appended to the report.

181	ANNUAL REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION 2014
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The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought the approval of the Council to a number of changes to the Constitution.

Members were advised that the revised version picked up the changes to the Council's working arrangements that had taken place during the year, as well as other changes which were intended to assist the Council to operate more effectively.

The proposals for change had been considered by the Chief Executive and the Executive Board Member for Resources in accordance with Article 16.02. It was reported that, apart from the purely technical changes, the proposed amendments that were considered to be of particular significance were listed as an appendix to the report.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the revised Constitution, including the amendments set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report.

182	POLLING DISTRICTS / POLLING STATIONS REVIEW
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the results of the formal Polling District, Places and Stations Review.

The Board was advised that the Electoral Administration Act 2006 required the Council to carry out a review of all its polling stations every four years. The main purpose of the review was to ensure that all residents had reasonable facilities for voting.

It was reported that, as part of the review process, electors, Councillors and other interested parties had been consulted; details of all polling districts and polling stations had been published on the Council's website. It was noted that no comments had been received. In addition, the Polling Station Review Working Party had considered the scheme and recommended it for approval.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the amendments to the scheme, as detailed in the Appendix to the report, for the period 2014/19.

183	DIRECTORATE PLANS 2014-17
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the adoption of the Directorate Plans for 2014/17.

The Board was advised that each Directorate was required to develop a medium term business plan or Directorate Plan, in parallel with the budget. These would be subject to annual review and refresh. Draft Service Objectives and Performance Indicators and targets had been developed and these would form the basis of the quarterly performance monitoring presented to the Board during the forthcoming year.

It was noted that Elected Members had engaged in the process primarily through the Policy and Performance Boards. It was reported that the plans could only be finalised once budget decisions had been confirmed.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Draft Directorate Plans be approved; and
2. the Chief Executive be authorised, in consultation with the Leader, to make any final amendments and adjustments that may be required.

184	REVIEW OF COUNCIL WIDE FEES & CHARGES
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The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 for Council services.

The Board was advised that a review of fees and charges had been carried out as part of the budget preparations for 2014/15. It was proposed that existing fees and charges be increased in line with inflation, although some would increase more to reflect charges in

adjacent authorities. In addition, others had been reviewed with consideration of the impact of the price change.

The schedule in Appendix 1 included a number of statutory fees which it was noted might increase during the coming financial year, with the relevant fees increased accordingly. Charges for The Brindley were listed in Appendix 2 and were for the 2015/16 financial year. Details of other increases were contained in the report.

RESOLVED: That the proposed fees and charges for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1, be approved and referred to the relevant Policy and Performance Boards for information.
