

BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 26 November 2014 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Joe Roberts (Chair), M. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chairman), J. Bradshaw, Cole, Fry, Lea, A. Lowe, McDermott, MacManus, N. Plumpton Walsh and J. Stockton

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: E. Dawson, L. Derbyshire, I. Leivesley, M. Murphy and R. Rout

Also in attendance: Liz Temple Murray (Grant Thornton)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

BEB21 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2014 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

BEB22 EFFICIENCY PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which gave Members an update on the progress made to date on the Efficiency Programme and as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Board noted the progress in relation to the review of:-

- Adult Social Care (Intermediate Care) (Wave 4);
- Library Services (Wave 5);
- Learning and Achievement (Wave 5);
- Halton's Supported Housing Network (Wave 5);
- The Supplier Relationship Review (Wave 5);
- Highways Services (Wave 5); and
- Premium Pay, use of Agency Workers and use of Casual Staff (Wave 6).

The Board noted the challenges in respect of pursuing

outstanding library fines and that the new service arrangement would help to address this matter.

The Board noted that the review of the library services would have staff implications and was currently the subject of negotiation with the Trade Unions. It was requested that further information be provided to Members on the number of staff affected by this workstream.

It was noted that it was anticipated that the Library Review would achieve savings in the region of £450,000.

Clarity was sought on the number of agency and casual workers used by the Council in each department. It was agreed that a summary of the cost would be circulated to Members of the Board.

The Chairman reported that it was important for Members to attend training on the efficiency programme in order to fully understand the process. He reported that training would be arranged for January 2015 and he encouraged all Members to attend.

RESOLVED: That the report and comments raised be noted.

BEB23 2013-16 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which provided an update regarding the progress with the Council's Procurement Strategy 2013-16 targets and performance measures.

The Board was advised that evidence on the Council's achievements in the procurement arena in 2013 had been presented to the House of Commons Select Committee in October 2013 to inform the inquiry into Local Government Procurement.

The Board was further advised that the key areas identified by the Select Committee Inquiry confirmed that the Council's approach had been and remained appropriate, and was delivering savings as well as wider social value gains.

The Procurement Division, it was reported, remained engaged with the Cabinet Office and was in a strong position to adopt Lord Young's Procurement Reforms in early 2015. In addition, it was reported that the Procurement Division had developed a Social Value Procurement

Framework, which had been aligned to the Council's Social Value Strategy. The Division would also remain engaged with the Cabinet Office, effectively adopting the upcoming procurement reforms, and revised Public Contract Regulations 2015, into the prevailing business model.

Furthermore, it was reported that the Procurement Division had continued to deliver three support service commissions, delivering consultancy support in two other Councils, as well as delivering a procurement support service to Halton Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

It was reported that an event would take place at The Heath next week to raise awareness on the procurement rules. Halton businesses had been invited to attend and take up had been encouraging. The event had been arranged in order to build up the supplier base and to target local businesses. It was also reported that further events and activities would be arranged.

The Board took the opportunity to place on record their congratulations to the team for the excellent work that had been undertaken on the procurement service.

It was noted that Halton was further ahead than other Authorities in respect of procurement as the Council's new approaches had commenced in 2008. It was suggested that Halton could look for opportunities to disseminate best practice to other public bodies.

RESOLVED: That the position statement and comments raised be noted.

BEB24 CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND RISK REGISTER - PROGRESS COMMENTARY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which provided progress on the actions in the Corporate Risk Register for 2014/15.

The Board was advised that the Risk Management Policy, attached as Appendix 1 to the report had been reviewed and updated in line with the revised arrangements for Directorate Business Plans requiring annual reviews of the plans at Directorate level to take place in conjunction with Directorate Risk Registers.

The Board was further advised that the implementation of high-risk mitigation measures on the Directorate Risk Registers were reviewed at mid-year and progress on these

would be reported to Management Team and Policy and Performance Boards. This, it was reported served to inform the Corporate Risk Register and ensured that the Council maximised its opportunities whilst minimising and controlling the associated risks in delivering the Council's vision and services for Halton

It was reported that the Corporate Register had been reviewed and updated in consultation with internal stakeholders. The risks had been grouped in order of priority; in the first instance pertaining to 'Unmitigated Risk Scores' and then 'Mitigated Risk Scores'. The headings in order of priority were as follows:-

- Budget Reductions;
- Capacity and Resilience;
- Safeguarding Children and Adults;
- Mersey Gateway;
- Community Expectations;
- Architectural Landscapes;
- Partnerships;
- Funding and Income Generation; and
- Fraud.

Members were advised that the Board, would undertake further in depth work on the Corporate Risk Register in the New Year, as agreed at the previous meeting.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress of action be noted; and
- (2) the robustness of the Corporate Risk Register and the adequacy of the associated risk management arrangements be supported.

BEB25 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION - ANNUAL UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which gave Members an update on the developments in regard to the Council's anti-fraud and corruption arrangements

The Board was advised that each year the Council submitted a return to the Audit Commission providing details of fraud and corruption identified against the Authority. A summary of the 2013/14 return was provided in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the actions being taken to counter fraud and corruption be endorsed.

BEB26 EXTERNAL AUDIT - UPDATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update from Grant Thornton (External Auditors) regarding the following:-

- the progress made in delivering their responsibilities as the Council's external auditors; and
- a summary of emerging national issues and developments that may be relevant to the work of the Board.

The 2020 Vision booklet, (a report produced by Grant Thornton which looks at the future of Local Government in the current financial climate) was circulated at the meeting and it was reported that it was available on the website

The Board noted the update in respect of the following:-

- 2014-15 Accounts Audit Plan;
- the interim accounts audit;
- the 2014-15 final accounts audit;
- the value for money conclusion;
- other areas of work – certification work under the Audit Commission Regime; and
- other activity undertaken in respect of claims and returns and tax.

The Board discussed and noted the level of reserves held by the Council in comparison with other Authorities and the factors that could affect the reserves.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

BEB27 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 Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the 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 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 outweighed that 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 Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 because it was likely that, in view of the nature of the business, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Note: The following Councillors declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business:-

Councillor M Lloyd Jones, as a Governor of St Edwards Catholic Primary School;

Councillors McDermott and Joe Roberts as a Governor of St Michael's Catholic Primary School; and

Councillor J. Stockton as a Governor of St Martins Catholic Primary School.

BEB28 INTERNAL AUDIT PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided Members with a summary of internal audit work which had been completed since the last progress report to the Board on 6 June 2014.

RESOLVED; That the internal audit work that had been completed since the last report to the Board on 6 June 2014 be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.