

## **BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Business Efficiency Board held on Wednesday, 26 September 2018 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors M. Lloyd Jones (Chair), E. Cargill, A. Lowe, MacManus, McDermott, Philbin, N. Plumpton Walsh and Joe Roberts

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Wall and John Stockton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: I. Leivesley, M. Murphy, A. Dalecki and A. Scott

Also in attendance: None

### **ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

#### **MINUTE'S SILENCE**

The Board stood for a minute's silence in memory of John Whittaker, who was the Mayoral attendant, and who had recently passed away.

#### **BEB10 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 July 2018 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **BEB11 FRAUD AND CORRUPTION - UPDATE REPORT**

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which provided an update on the Council's anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements.

It was reported that the Board was responsible for the monitoring and review of the Council's anti-fraud and anti-corruption arrangements. The Board was advised that the level of identified fraud in Halton remained relatively low compared to other authorities of a similar size and profile. The main areas of the Council's business thought to be susceptible to fraud and corruption were detailed in the report and included insurance claims; cash handling and

accounts; Council Tax discount/reduction schemes; blue badges; business rates; and adult social care financial assessments. Members were informed that details of frauds/attempted frauds detected, had been reported to CIPFA in their annual Fraud and Corruption Tracker.

It was further noted that the Council's Whistleblowing Policy allowed for employees, agency workers and contractors to raise concerns confidentially through a variety of channels. Five such complaints had been received during 2017/18 and these were detailed in the report with the outcomes alongside. In addition to this, the Council operated a confidential reporting system through which members of the public could submit concerns relating to fraud, misconduct or other issues. There had been an increase in the number of referrals in 2017/18, with a summary of details set out in the report.

It was reported that the Council was in the process of submitting datasets for the 2018/19 National Fraud Initiative (NFI) exercise. Outcomes from the previous exercise undertaken in 2016/17 were reported to the Board in November 2017. Data for the Business Rates pilot had been submitted to the Cabinet Office with results on matches expected by the end of September 2018.

Following a restructure of the Finance Department in July 2017, two Fraud Officers were now located within the Audit and Investigations Team. It was reported that the arrangement had worked well and that the team had developed an ongoing plan of work. The Council's Fraud Sanction and Prosecution Policy, approved by the Board in November 2017, allowed the Council to impose a financial penalty where a person had supplied incorrect information. To date, nine penalties had been issued totalling £840.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## BEB12 PROCUREMENT STRATEGY - UPDATE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on progress with the delivery of the Council's Procurement Strategy 2016/19 (the Strategy).

The Strategy, approved in June 2016, followed the format commended by the Local Government Association, and was based around four key themes. These were noted as being:-

- Making Savings
- Supporting Local Economies
- Leadership
- Modernising Procurement

An update on progress against the Strategy was attached to the report at Appendix 1. It was reported that a number of the areas contained within the Strategy were ongoing activities and would develop over time. The Procurement Team continued to work with partners, in particular across the Liverpool City Region, to make best use of the combined procurement resource so as to improve efficiency, innovations and achieve better outcomes from procurement.

It was noted that the Council's Procurement Strategy would need to be updated to take account of the Local Government Association's recently published document entitled 'Delivering Ambition'. This built upon the previous national strategy with three key themes of Achieving Community Benefits; Showing Leadership; and Behaving Commercially. It was planned that an update version of the Strategy would be presented to the Board in 2019.

The report outlined the wider impact of procurement activity and the benefit to the local economy, with opportunities for a wide range of local suppliers by creating jobs and generating income. Appendix 2 attached to the report, provided details of the current social value gains delivered as a result of procurement activity in the local community.

RESOLVED: That the progress achieved to date in delivering the Council's Procurement Strategy 2016/19, be noted.

#### TRAINING FOR BOARD MEMBERS

The Chair reminded Board Members that there would be two planned training sessions and encouraged everyone to attend.

The training would take place prior to the next two meetings of the Business Efficiency Board and would cover the topics of Fraud Awareness and Procurement.

*Meeting ended at 6.55 p.m.*