

**Extract of Executive Board Minutes Relevant to the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board**

**EXECUTIVE BOARD HELD ON 19 NOVEMBER 2009**

**EXB 58 HALTON 2000 SURVEY ON THE COUNCIL'S BUDGET**

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, on the results of the recent Halton 2000 Survey.

In October 2009, members of Halton's Citizen's Panel were sent a questionnaire asking them for their opinions on a range of Council services. The response rate was 53.5% and a summary of the results were attached to the report.

The survey was aimed at gauging public opinion of the Council's spending on services. The first part of the survey asked about the top five priorities in relation to Council spending and preferences of spending and saving money in relation to those priorities identified within the Community Strategy. The top five priority spending areas selected by respondents were:

- Health Services
- The level of crime
- Education provision
- Job prospects
- Affordable decent housing

The second part of the survey invited opinions on Council Tax payments in relation to service standards and introducing/increasing charges for certain Council provided services. The Board noted that nearly 63% of respondents had shown support for the Council to increase its charges which included such services as pest control and the removal of bulky waste.

The survey also asked a question on the preferred methods of consultation on future Council budgets, the format of information available and the method of receiving information on the budget. The three preferred methods identified by respondents on how the Council spent its money were:

- Via the Council Tax leaflet
- Via 'Inside Halton'
- Via the local press

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Executive Board note the results of the survey; and
- (2) the results be taken into account when considering the 2010/11 Budget proposals.

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 5 NOVEMBER 2009**

### **ES30 CLG GRANT – EXTRA SUPPORT FOR TOWN CENTRES**

In August 2009 the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government announced, £3m funding package to support town centres in the current economic downturn. Halton Borough Council was now in receipt of £52,632 from this Grant to support town centres. Guidance on how local authorities could support town centres was provided in the “Looking After Our Town Centres” document. One of the key issues addressed in this, that led to the grant was the re-use of empty units in town centres.

There were already a number of on-going initiatives to regenerate and support the town centres in Halton. It was suggested that the CLG Grant should be used to augment, develop and compliment ongoing activities. It was also proposed that the grant be split between Runcorn and Widnes according to need. Given the commitment of Working Neighbourhood Fund spend in Widnes and the relative vacancy rates in the two town centres, it was proposed that the grant be split approximately 40% for Widnes and 60% for Runcorn, with a number of the proposed Town Centre Management Schemes covering both town centres. An element of over-programming was recommended to ensure the full spend within the financial year.

As the CLG grant was a relatively small pot of funding, it was proposed that the following principle be adopted of no more than 10% of the grant to be spent on any single individual scheme, unless there was exceptional merit to that scheme.

The report detailed Town Centre Management proposals for the allocation of DCLG grant for both Runcorn and Widnes Town Centres.

**RESOLVED:** That the Sub-Committee agrees the approach to implementing a support programme for Runcorn and Widnes Town Centres, funded by this new DCLG grant.

## **EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB COMMITTEE HELD ON 3 DECEMBER 2009**

### **ES45 MANAGEMENT OF MOOR LANE AND WATERLOO BUSINESS GENERATION CENTRES**

The Sub-Committee considered a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy which sought approval to revert the management of Moor Lane and Waterloo Business Centres from Halton Chamber of Commerce to the Council. The Waterloo Centre was to be closed on the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011 to facilitate the construction of the new bridge. The Centre currently had 75% occupancy rate. However, this would reduce in the coming months due to the Mersey Gateway requirement. The Mersey Gateway Team was currently giving support to the remaining businesses to find them new accommodation which would hasten the closure of Waterloo Centre.

It was noted that if this course of action was taken this would have an implication for the Chamber and their staff and would probably mean the transfer of one or more members of staff into the Council under the TUPE Regulations.

The current cost for management fees and the handyman were in the order of £49,000 per annum. It was anticipated that any additional costs to the Council would be covered by no longer paying the £49,000 fee to the Chamber.

RESOLVED: That the Sub Committee approve the following subject to there being no additional cost to the Council:

- (1) the Council terminates the contract with the Chamber of Commerce for the management of the two business centres;
- (2) three months' Notice of Termination be given to the Chamber of Commerce, in accordance with the contract; and
- (3) the Corporate Services portfolio holder be kept up to date on developments