

COUNCIL

At a meeting of the Council on Wednesday, 21 February 2007 in the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors Swain (Chairman), Bradshaw, Blackmore, D. Cargill, E. Cargill, Cole, Cross, Dennett, Edge, Findon, Fraser, Gerrard, Gilligan, Harris, Higginson, Hignett, Hodgkinson, Horabin, Howard, C Inch, D Inch, Jones, Lloyd Jones, Loftus, Lowe, Marlow, Massey, McDermott MBE, McInerney, Nelson, Nolan, Norddahl, Osborne, Parker, Philbin, Polhill, E Ratcliffe, M Ratcliffe, Redhead, Rowan, Rowe, Sly, Stockton, Swift, Thompson, Wallace, Wharton, Whittaker, Worrall and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Drakeley, Leadbetter, Lewis, Morley, Pearsall and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: D. Parr, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, J. Tradewell, P. Watts, L. Cairns and C. Foley

Also in attendance: 2 Members of Public

	<i>Action</i>
COU59 COUNCIL MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13th December 2006, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting be confirmed and adopted.</p>	
COU60 THE MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS	
<p>The Mayor had no announcements.</p>	
COU61 LEADER'S REPORT	
<p>The Leader of the Council reported on the following issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A draft calendar for the 2007/08 Municipal Year had been tabled for information. Members were requested to submit any amendments within the next week.	

- The results of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) had been received and it was advised that the Council's status had been confirmed as a four star excellent authority. It was noted that no service had deteriorated and, in some instances, there had been a substantial improvement; for example Cultural Services had gone from two stars to four stars in the space of one year. The effort in the Library Service was of particular note: Halton was one of only seven local authorities where the score had improved. Achievements in sport were also commendable. The Leader stated that this was a credit to all the staff and Councillors involved, as well as the Authority's partners, without whom these results could not be attained.
- The planning application in respect of the Priory Development on Bennett's Lane was being contested as it was considered that the application had been submitted under the wrong planning category.
- The Council had been put in Wave 6 of "Building Schools for the Future", which meant that the anticipated start date was eight months later than originally planned.

COU62 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

The Council considered the Minutes of the Executive Board held on 7th December and 21st December 2006, and 25th January 2007. In receiving the Minutes, it was noted that the principle of including sprinkling systems in all new builds was one that was adhered to wherever possible. However, difficulty arose when new builds were being carried by the Schools themselves: governors sometimes decided to spend their resources elsewhere.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

COU63 MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE

The Council considered the Minutes of the Executive Board Sub-Committee held on 7th December and 21st December 2006, and 11th January and 25th January 2007.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

COU64 QUESTIONS ASKED UNDER STANDING ORDER NO. 8

It was noted that no questions had been submitted under Standing Order No. 8.

COU65 EXECUTIVE BOARD SUB-COMMITTEE - 21ST DECEMBER 2006 (ES62 REFERS) - THE USE OF PROCEEDS OF CRIME ACT 2002 BY THE CONSUMER PROTECTION SERVICE

The Executive Board Sub-Committee had considered a report seeking support for the use of the full "confiscation regime" and "offences" under the Proceeds of Crime Act 2002 by the Consumer Protection Service.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the scheme of delegation be amended to show the Borough Solicitor as the delegated person for instituting proceeds for the Council, with Trading Standard Officers/Consumer Protection Offices delegated as investigating officers;
- (2) in agreeing to the above, it be noted that the Council would be committing to undertake confiscation cases at Crown Court in Consumer Protection Prosecutions where it can be shown that assets are available for confiscation; and
- (3) a financial investigator, to act on a chargeable consultative basis for other local authority services requiring the use of an accredited financial investigator in appropriate cases, be permitted.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

(NB Councillor Harris declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a governor of The Bankfield School.)

COU66 EXECUTIVE BOARD - 25TH JANUARY 2007 (EXB76 REFERS) - CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2007/2008

The Executive Board had considered a report providing a summary of the funding available for the schools capital programme 2007/08, and outlining the process for prioritisation for capital repairs and the proposed programme.

RESOLVED: That the Capital Programme for 2007/08, identified in Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

COU67 EXECUTIVE BOARD - 8TH FEBRUARY 2007 - LOCAL TRANSPORT EXPENDITURE SETTLEMENT 2007/08 AND LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

PROGRAMME 2007/08

The Executive Board had considered a report advising of the announcement made by the Secretary of State for Transport on 18th December 2006 that had given details of the 2007/08 Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement and the classifications awarded to the Council's second Local Transport Plan 2006/07 – 2010/11 (LTP2) and the first Local Transport Plan 2001/02 – 2005/06 (LTP1) delivery report.

It was noted that the settlement had included an additional £392,000 awarded for the high performance achieved in both the LTP2 and the LTP1 delivery report. Members were advised that both documents had been classed as "excellent" and Halton was one of only thirteen local authorities in the country to achieve a top grading for both documents.

RESOLVED: That the implementation programme for 2007/08 at Appendix A to the report be included in the Council's Capital programme.

COU68 MONITORING OFFICER

The Council was advised that the Council Solicitor was to leave the Authority on 2nd March 2007. Under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, every Local Authority was required to designate one of its officers to be the Monitoring Officer with various corporate governance related responsibilities. There were no specific qualification requirements for this role but it could only be filled by one of the Council's Officers and it could not be the Head of Paid Service.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Mr. J. Tradewell be thanked for his committed and professional approach to the role of Council Solicitor whilst with Halton, and wished well for the future in his new post at Staffordshire County Council; and
- (2) Mr. I. Leivesley – Strategic Director (Corporate and Policy) be appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer for the period between the departure of the current Council Solicitor and his replacement taking up post.

COU69 CHANGE TO APPOINTMENTS TO OUTSIDE BODIES

The Council was advised of the following change in appointments to outside bodies which had been made in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation (Matters relating to Council Policy – 17);

- Rural Commission – Councillor Nelson appointed (with Councillor McDermott appointed as substitute).

COU70 MINUTES OF POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARDS AND THE BUSINESS EFFICIENCY BOARD

The Council considered the reports on the work of the following Boards in the period since the last meeting of the Council:

Children and Young People
Employment, Learning and Skills
Healthy Halton
Safer Halton
Urban Renewal
Corporate Services
Business Efficiency Board

In receiving the minutes, it was noted that:

- The MegaDrive presentation (Minute No. SAF32 of the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board meeting held on 23rd January 2007 refers) had outlined the positive effect this had had on the youth of the Borough in respect of improving road safety. Currently, 50 pupils from secondary schools across the Borough were accommodated and it was hoped that this number could be increased in the future.
- The Chairman of the Business Efficiency Board stated that it had been intimated that, in future, the Government may top slice savings from the Council's budgets. It was considered that the Council should make appropriate representations if this occurred.

COU71 COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Council considered reports on the following Committees in the period since the last meeting of the Council:

Development Control
Standards
Regulatory

Appointments

COU72 MOTION RECEIVED IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER NO. 6

The following motion was moved and seconded by Councillor C. Inch and Councillor Redhead respectively:

“The Liberal Democrat group of Halton Borough Council proposes that Council Tax increase should be minimised.

The rise should be kept in line with inflation to ensure that people on pensions (30% of Halton households) and hard working families are not disadvantaged. Following the poor and unfair Government settlement every effort must be made to reduce any increase.

With this in mind the following proposals are submitted for approval:

Energy Savings 190

The Council proposed a 10% reduction in energy in reference to the appointment of an Energy Officer. This should be implemented as agreed by the Corporate PPB.

Cost of Energy Officer (50)

Executive Board 56

This should be re-organised to match the directorate structure. Last year the Opposition position was removed but the Board decided to re-allocate responsibilities and maintain 11 posts. A structure with 6 posts is recommended.

Councillor Allowances 12

The council should vote to freeze councillors' allowances to protect front line services.

Joint Area Review 90

We do not believe the addition of two posts to prepare for the audit next March is a justification for an increase in council tax. Hence these posts if necessary must be self-financed.

Advertising, Marketing and Promotion 120

A 15% reduction is proposed, to protect council services and employment. The £931,000 the council spent on this area last year is not appropriate in the current climate.

Citizens Advice Bureau

(60)

Cutting the grant to the CAB will impact those with the most severe hardships and concerns. The CAB provides an essential front line service, which should be protected.

Totalling at least a 1% reduction

358”

The Mayor ruled that, as this motion referred to budget proposals which were to be considered by the Executive Board the following day, this motion should stand referred in accordance with Standing Order No. 6(4).

Meeting ended at 7.02 p.m.