

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 19 June 2008 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building.

Present: Councillors D. Cargill, Gerrard, Harris, Polhill and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors McDermott, McInerney, Nelson, Swain and Wharton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, G. Cook, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, M. Simpson, P. Watts, A. Williamson and D. Parr

Also in attendance: Councillors Bryant and Hodgkinson and Mr N. Atkin

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB17 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 5th June 2008, were taken as read and signed as correct record.

EXB18 THE MERSEY GATEWAY REGENERATION STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Environment, which outlined the content and purpose of the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy detailed as follows:

- the reason for commissioning the Strategy;
- how the Strategy would be used;
- the areas covered by the Strategy;
- outputs and outcomes;
- how the Strategy evolved;
- summary of the Strategy's proposals; and
- using the Strategy in Council policy documents.

Members were advised that there was a seminar for the Mersey Gateway on the 10th July 2008 and all Members were welcome to attend.

Action

RESOLVED: That:

Strategic Director
- Environment

- (1) the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy be agreed as a document that demonstrates the potential regeneration opportunities arising from the Mersey Gateway Scheme;
- (2) the Strategy is used to support the case for the Mersey Gateway Scheme;
- (3) the Strategy is used by the Council as Local Planning Authority to judge the potential regeneration benefits that may arise from the Mersey Gateway Scheme in consideration of planning applications made to it and in response to consultation from the Department of Transport; and
- (4) authority is given to the Strategic Director Environment, with the Executive Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, to make minor amendments as are necessary before publication.

EXB19 SUB NATIONAL REVIEW CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, which outlined the Sub National Review (SNR) consultation document.

It was reported that a consultation document entitled “Prosperous Places” on the Sub National Economic Development and Regulation Review was published on 31st March 2008.

It was noted that there was a twelve-week consultation, which would run until 20th June 2008.

The Board was advised of a number of key issues that were set out in the review, detailed as follows:

- a statutory economic development duty for Local Authorities to undertake an economic assessment of an area, either jointly with other authorities or on their own;
- reform of the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative;

- making LAA's the main delivery agreement between central and local government;
- extending the powers of the passenger transport authorities;
- formalising arrangements for collaborative working between neighbouring local authorities and partners in the form of multi-area agreements;
- outlined the option to establish permanent sub-regional structures;
- aligning regional strategies i.e. a single Regional Strategy;
- redefining regional strategic priorities and targets;
- proposals for greater scrutiny of RDA's; and
- abolishing Regional Assemblies, but acknowledging that Local Authorities would still need to work collectively at a regional level.

The consultation document was divided into five chapters, details of which were outlined in the report. It was reported that Government was asking for views on 15 questions. Members were advised that the Head of External Funding was leading on the development of a sub-regional response. A copy of the latest draft of the response as at 4th June 2008 was detailed within the report.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board approve the consultation response detailed within the report.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

EXB20 APPLICATION FOR TWINNING GRANT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy that provided details of an application being made to the Twinning Grant Fund.

It was reported in April 1996 Halton Borough Council set up a Grant Fund to assist in enabling all members of the community to access and gain benefit from the Council's International Links.

It was noted since 1996 a number of groups had accessed the fund to undertake exchange visits to various

twinned towns. It was reported that various schools and groups had hosted teachers and pupils from Tongling City in China previously, and these links had resulted in a number of reciprocal visits from each town.

It was advised that participants in previous exchanges had found that the benefits of learning about another culture and language were immense. A wide range of activity in the Borough had been facilitated by the provision of grant aid and had given an opportunity to those who would not otherwise be able to participate.

It was reported that the application received from Widnes Football Development Forum requested support for a visit to Marzahn-Hellersdorf in Germany during 27th – 29th June 2008. They had been asked to attend a football competition hosted by Berlin Football team. They would take 22 people to Marzahn-Hellersdorf.

The visit would provide an opportunity for players to represent Halton in the Twin Town. It was noted they would also expect to forge a partnership for future exchanges and a conditions of the grant was a return trip to take place in 2009.

The applicant had identified total costs of £4,775.60. This was broken down into Travel £2,925.60, Accommodation £1,250 and Insurance £600. Match funding declared £1,850. It was noted the team would be using club funds of £350, contributions from participants £1,000 and had been fundraising for the visit totalling £500. Therefore the Widnes Football Development Forum were requesting a grant of £1,850.

RESOLVED: That the following grant of £1,850 be awarded to Widnes Football Development Forum.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

EXB21 SECRETARY OF STATE'S PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT REGIONAL SPATIAL STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Environment, which outlined the Secretary of State's proposed changes to the draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) and sought retrospective approval of Halton's response that had been submitted to the Government Office for the North West.

It was reported that due to the new status of Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) as part of the "development plan", as set out in the new Planning and Compulsory Act, 2004, the

issues arising in the new RSS were of importance to Halton Borough Council in the production of the new Halton Borough Local Development Framework (LDF) and in decisions on planning applications.

It was advised the Secretary of State's response to the Draft Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) represented the latest, and an advanced stage, in the production of a new regional plan for the North West. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes were issued for public consultation in March 2008 with the period for comments running until 23rd May 2008. The Secretary of State's Proposed Changes were issued in response to the publication of the Panel Report into Draft RSS (March 2007), which was itself issued subsequent to the Examination in Public (EiP) into the draft document that was held between 31st October 2006 and 15th February 2007. The EiP considered the content of the submitted draft RSS (January 2006).

It was further advised Halton had played a full and active role at all stages of RSS production and had had some notable successes in influencing re-drafting of the emerging document to reflect the Council's priorities. It was noted that this had occurred in co-ordination with the Merseyside Policy Unit (MPU) who had also submitted comments regarding emerging RSS on behalf of the Merseyside authorities including Halton.

Detailed within the report was the 6 key areas that the RSS was broadly divided into as follows:-

- Spatial Development Principles and the Regional Spatial Framework;
- Working in the North West;
- Living in the North West
- Transport;
- Environment Minerals and Waste; and
- Sub Regional strategies.

It was advised that the RSS was expected to be adopted in mid 2008 once adopted, it would form part of the "Development Plan" and would be used in the making of decisions on planning applications.

It was noted that the next interim draft of the RSS was due October/November 2008 and would provide opportunities for stakeholders to make comments. The document would be taken to the UDP Working Party and would be considered before coming back to the Executive Board.

It was noted that the emerging RSS also had implications for the production of the Local Development Framework (LDF) and in particular for the Halton Core Strategy. As the key document within the LDF the Core Strategy was currently being produced and covered the period to 2026. Each of the recommendations detailed within the report would have to be considered within the Core Strategy and, where appropriate, changes would have to be made. This would need to be carried out to ensure that the Core Strategy remained in general conformity with the RSS as required by PPS 12.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the importance of the contents of the Regional Spatial Strategy was noted in relation to the development of the emerging Halton Local Development Framework; and
- (2) Halton's response to the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, detailed at Appendix are endorsed.

Strategic Director
- Environment

(NB: COUNCILLOR GERRARD DECLARED A PERSONAL INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM DUE TO HER HUSBAND BEING A CONTRACTOR FOR HALTON HOUSING TRUST)

EXB22 HALTON HOUSING TRUST MONITORING REPORT

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director Health and Community providing a further update on Halton Housing Trust's progress since the last report to the Board on 19th July 2007, in accordance with the monitoring framework agreed prior to housing stock transfer.

Mr Nick Atkin, Chief Executive of Halton Housing Trust advised Members that the Trust had made good progress since the last update and had focused on establishing foundations in order to build the next phase of development.

The Board was advised that good progress had been maintained in the delivery of the 100 pledges made in the "Offer Document to Tenants". Ninety-nine of those pledges were on target to be delivered and a recovery plan was in progress to deal with the one pledge that was not yet on target.

The Investment Programme was progressing well with all four partners reaching their optimum capacity. It was noted in 2007 – 2008, investment of over £15.4m in HHT homes was delivered. It was advised that the Trust's Board had recently approved the acceleration of the Investment Programme. Therefore delivery of the Investment Programme would be approximately 12 months ahead of schedule resulting in completion in December 2009, which would mean that all Halton Housing Trust's stock would meet the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

The report also detailed the following:

- the inspection that had recently been carried out;
- the first Corporate Plan for the Trust which focused upon the first two years of the organisation;
- annual review;
- the Housing Corporation Regulatory Compliance;
- a Governance update;
- access to services;
- environment Issues;
- community investment;
- enquiries complaints and compliments process;
- joint working;
- priorities for 2008/0;
- homelessness;
- adaptations;
- accommodation;
- customer first;
- forthcoming events;
- service level agreements;
- environmental improvement programme;
- development;
- right to buy receipts and trends;
- Summary.

The board discussed the following:-

- the homelessness Service being transferred back to the Council in the future;
- environmental issues;
- the purchase of properties from developers that were currently not selling; and
- support packages in place for vulnerable customers.

Mr Nick Atkin wished his thanks to be noted for support received across all sections and departments from the Council over the last two and a half years.

RESOLVED: That the progress set out in the report be noted.

EXB23 EDUCATION SKILLS BILL

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Young People, which provided background information on the Education and Inspection Bill.

It was advised that the Education and Skills Bill was a landmark piece of legislation. For the first time in over thirty years, the Government was legislating to change the education leaving age and provide extended educational opportunity to all people until the age of 18. It was reported that the Bill contained measures to encourage more young people to participate in learning post-16 and to achieve higher levels of skill and qualification. The Government proposals go beyond the current aspiration so that by 2013, all 17 year olds and by 2015, all 18 year olds were participating in some form of education or training. It was advised that 16 year olds could go to work as long as education was available. It was noted this would change the environment for education in the future.

Members were advised that the Bill would legislate to raise the participation age, young people would have a duty to participate in education and training post 16 which they would be able to do in a number of ways, including:

- full-time education, for example, at school or college;
- work-based learning, such as an apprenticeship; and
- part-time education or training, if they were employed, self-employed or volunteering more than 20 hours a week.

It was reported that the Education and Skills Bill seeks to carry out the following:

- set out duties on employers to release young people for the equivalent of one day a week to undertake training elsewhere (where the employer did not provide their own training.
- introduce a duty on local authorities to ensure that young people participate and provide the support service currently known as Connexions;
- require local authorities to assess the education and training needs of young people aged 16-19 with

special educational needs; and

- requires the Learning and Skills Council to secure the proper provision of courses for learners over the age of 19.

The Board discussed various issues such as how this would fit into the Building Schools for the Future, what methodology would be employed to encourage young people who refused to be educated, delivery of flexible curriculum for young people and the duty on young people and parents to assist their children to participate.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the Executive is kept informed of any changes;
and

(2) a further report is submitted later in the year.

Strategic Director-
Children & Young
People

MINUTES ISSUED: 27th June 2008

CALL IN: 4th July 2008

Any matter decided by the Executive Board called in no later than 4th July 2008

Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.