

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 11 September 2008 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors McDermott (Chairman), D. Cargill, Gerrard, Harris, McInerney, Polhill, Swain, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Nelson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: L. Cairns, G. Cook, B. Dodd, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, M. Reaney and D. Tregoe

Also in attendance: Councillor Hodgkinson

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB35 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2008 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

EXB36 SUMMARY OF EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT 2008

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People outlining the 2008 performance data for Foundation Stage Profile and Key Stages 1 to 4. This was an initial report referring to currently available data reporting attainment only, not indicating the effectiveness of service delivery. A more detailed report covering locality, comparator and school interventions would be produced when reliable pupil level data was available.

It was advised that there had been a number of problems with the marking of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 papers. This had led to delays in the release of the results and, at the current stage, data was still incomplete for Key Stage 3 and so could not be reported. However, a detailed data report for Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1, Key Stage 2,

Action

GCSE and A-Level was included in Appendix 1 to the report. The Board noted that there had been tremendous progress again at both Key Stage 2 and GCSE, which were the key results in terms of an indicator of future outcomes for children and young people in Halton.

In receiving the report, the Board noted the following:

- there had been an improvement in relation to Children In Care (CIC) although further work was still required. Results for CIC were also dependent upon the particular cohort as each child had unique circumstances. However, in order to try and address this, a Personal Education Plan was produced for each child;
- it was considered that work carried out in relation to attendance figures had had a direct impact on improvement, and the Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) was very much a part of this;
- results in respect of Key Stage 3 and some for Key Stage 2 were still awaited which could have a further positive impact on the level of attainment;
- a second joint meeting had taken place at Cronton that morning to address the issue of children aged 16 – 19 going outside the Borough for further education. This had been attended by all of Halton's Head Teachers and positive steps had been made.

RESOLVED: That the attainment of children in Halton's schools for the 2007-08 academic year be noted.

EXB37 JOINT AREA REVIEW

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People summarising the key findings of the recent Joint Area Review (JAR) in Halton.

Halton's JAR was undertaken against a change of methodology from April 2007. This change had resulted in a "harder test" in which the emphasis was upon vulnerable groups. The result of the investigations in Halton were outlined for the Board's consideration. Overall, it was noted that:

- the combined score of the "core" investigation made Halton the most successful JAR in the North West to date (only Lancashire, Tameside and Blackburn were

- left to report);
- Halton was the only North West authority to secure a score of “outstanding” for safeguarding (one of only six nationally); and
 - Halton’s successful JAR put it in the top 4 nationally.

In addition, a number of key improvements had been highlighted, which could be categorised under the two sections of improvement in outcomes and improvement in processes. These were outlined for the Board’s information. In light of the recommendations for improvement a multi-agency improvement plan had been established and was attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

In presenting the report, the Portfolio Holder thanked all those across the children’s partnership that had contributed to the JAR.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and
- (2) the improvement plan be endorsed.

ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO

EXB38 GOVERNMENT POLICY FOR FREE SWIMMING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding the Government’s proposal to offer free swimming to all people over 60 and to all those aged 16 and under at public swimming pools. It was advised that the policy was to promote recreational swimming, address health issues, and meet the Government’s “Olympic” pledge to get more people engaged in sport and recreation. The Government had set a deadline of 15th September 2008 by which time the Council must respond if it wished to participate in the scheme.

The proposals offered financial support from four different pots of money and was available for two years only. Details of this funding was outlined within the report. It was advised that, from the information currently available, it was clear that if councils pursued these schemes and incurred a financial shortfall then it was at the Council’s own risk. However, if the level of grant exceeded the cost of providing the set schemes, the councils would be able to use the money to promote swimming initiatives in the community.

The funding was for 2 years only at the end of which

the Council would be faced with the prospect of either funding the scheme if it was to continue or reverting back to existing charging policies.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council confirms its participation in the proposal to offer free swimming to the over 60's in Halton and the scheme be reviewed in two years time when the funding ceases;
- 2) the Council submits an expression of interest in participating in the scheme to offer free swimming to those aged 16 and under, but that the Council's participation in this scheme be conditional on the terms and financial offer yet to be made by Government; and
- 3) subject to satisfactory grant terms and conditions, the Strategic Director – Health and Community and the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Leisure and Sport be granted delegated authority to determine and submit applications for capital monies as defined in the proposals.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB39 CARERS STRATEGY 2008-09

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding the review of the current Carers Strategy and the resultant revised Strategy and Action Plan. It was advised that the revised Strategy built upon the aims, objectives and activities outlined in the 2006-2008 Carers Strategy and included an action plan for the continued development of services for carers in Halton over the forthcoming 12 months.

The consultation undertaken was outlined for Members' consideration together with details regarding the format of the Strategy and the areas for proposed actions. It was noted that the main objectives of the Strategy included the need to identify hidden carers, recognise and respond to carers' needs, and improve information and access to support services. The Local Implementation Team (LIT) Carer Sub Groups and the Multi Agency Area Carers' Strategy Group would undertake monitoring of the implementation of the Strategy and associated action plan.

RESOLVED: That the Carers' Strategy 2008/09 be

endorsed.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB40 CPA CORPORATE ASSESSMENT REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive regarding the Corporate Assessment that had been conducted by the Audit Commission in April 2008. It was noted that this assessment had found that the Council was "performing strongly" and the report summarised key findings and considered the action required to ensure continued improvement.

It was advised that the Corporate Assessment was an in-depth inspection of the Council's services, which had been conducted simultaneously with the Joint Area Review (JAR) of services for Children and Young People. It formed part of the overall Comprehensive Performance Assessment and had a major influence on the annual star rating.

The findings of the report had been published on 22nd July 2008 and it was noted that, overall, the assessment had found that the Council was performing strongly, which was the highest of the four possible scores. Further information in respect of the scores for individual themes was outlined within the report for the Board's consideration. In addition, the Assessment had identified areas for improvement and these were also outlined.

As the Comprehensive Assessment and JAR reports, together with the findings of other inspections, provided a platform for developing improvement priorities for the Council, it was recommended that a single Organisational Development Plan be prepared to address all these issues taking into account existing commitments and future resources. The proposed Plan would be subject to the formal scrutiny processes and be submitted to full Council for approval and adoption.

In presenting the report, the Chief Executive thanked all those who had been involved in the Assessment including Officers, Members and the Council's partners.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the findings of the Corporate Assessment be welcomed; and
- 2) the Chief Executive prepare an Organisational

Chief Executive

Development Plan to ensure further improvement in Council services.

EXB41 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION GOVERNANCE MODEL AND MULTI-AREA AGREEMENT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy advising on the proposed governance arrangements and next steps in the development of the Liverpool City Region Governance Model, and providing an update on the development of a Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement (MAA).

It was noted that, following the publication of the Local Government White Paper, Government had commissioned a Sub-National Economic Development and Regeneration Review (SNR) setting out proposals for how existing sub-national structures in England could be improved in order to strengthen economic performance in regions, cities and local areas throughout the country. The SNR stated that there would be certain issues that could best be tackled at a regional, sub-regional and local level.

In regard to sub-regional working, the ensuing SNR consultation document outlined options to establish permanent sub-regional structures through, for example, the introduction of a City Region Cabinet. It also encouraged the adoption of more formal arrangements for collaborative working between neighbouring Local Authorities and partners in the form of Multi Area Agreements (MAAs).

Leaders and Chief Executives of the six Greater Merseyside Authorities had been working together to agree a new governance model for the Liverpool City Region. Further work was also being undertaken to prepare a constitution for the Liverpool City Region which would need to be ratified by each Local Authority. It was proposed that these new governance arrangements would enable Local Authorities in Greater Merseyside to operate together more formally and would enhance the way in which they collaborated with partners both within the Liverpool City Region and how they contributed to the regional agenda.

Leaders in Greater Merseyside were progressing the development of a Liverpool City Region Cabinet, which would comprise the Leaders of the six Local Authorities and the Chairman of The Mersey Partnership as the representative from the Private Sector. It was intended that a series of Strategic Boards would report to the Cabinet. The likely role of the Cabinet was outlined for Members'

consideration. It was envisaged that the Cabinet would operate in shadow form from May 2009 and as a fully incorporated structure by May 2010.

In addition, it was advised that there was a strong interrelationship between the introduction of a City Region Governance Model and the development of the MAA. A significant proportion of the MAA document highlighted current and future governance structures proposing that, through the introduction of effective governance and strong leadership in the Liverpool City Region, this would have a positive impact on the successful operation of an MAA.

The MAA aimed to enhance the contribution of the City Region to meeting regional and national economic growth targets and involved the six Greater Merseyside Authorities coming together on a voluntary basis to agree collective targets and performance indicators.

Overall, the MAA focused on key priorities for the City Region in terms of Economic Development, Employment and Skills and Housing and Transport. A draft document was appended to the report for consideration and a submission to Government was expected in late September/October 2008.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the proposed governance arrangements and next steps in the development of the Liverpool City Region Governance Model be noted; and
- 2) the update on the development of a Liverpool City Region Multi Area Agreement be noted.

**COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO, AND PLANNING,
TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL
PORTFOLIO**

EXB42 PROCUREMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
RECOMMENDATIONS – THE ROLE OF THE COUNCIL'S
PROCUREMENT POLICY IN DEVELOPING LOCAL
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment outlining recommendations from a Scrutiny Panel Topic Group report. This report had explored the role of the Council's procurement policy in developing local employment opportunities and had been considered by the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance

Board (PPB) on 23rd June 2008. At that meeting it was requested that a number of recommendations arising from the Scrutiny Panel Topic Group work programme be considered by the Executive Board. These recommendations were outlined in detail within 3.2 of the report. In addition, indicative costs in respect of each recommendation were outlined for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the recommendations of the Procurement Scrutiny Panel Topic Group, listed in paragraph 3.2 of the report, be accepted subject to consideration of the budget implications as part of the 2009/10 budget setting process.

(NB The Chief Executive declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item of business due to being a Director of the Widnes Vikings and left the meeting for the duration of consideration of the following items.)

EXB43 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 Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A 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 paragraphs 1, 2 and 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 outweighs the public interest 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 Sub-Section 4 of Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 because it is likely that, in

view of the nature of the business, exempt information will be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB44 WIDNES VIKINGS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy providing an update on the position of Widnes Vikings, outlining support provided by the Council in the past and more recently, and seeking authority to enter into a partnership with Widnes Vikings to secure the long-term future of the Vikings and professional rugby league in Halton.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the position of Widnes Vikings be noted;
- 2) the Council continue to support the activities of Widnes Vikings; and
- 3) the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy be authorised to negotiate a package of support with the new “Widnes Vikings” Company as outlined in paragraphs 3.14 and 3.15 of the report.

Strategic Director
- Corporate and
Policy

MINUTES ISSUED: 18th September 2008

CALL IN: 25th September 2008

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 25th September 2008

Meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.