

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 13 December 2012 in Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors Polhill (Chairman), D. Cargill, Harris, R. Hignett, Jones, Nelson, Philbin, J. Stockton, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, E. Dawson and M. Allen

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB114 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2012 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO

EXB115 PRIORITY SCHOOL BUILDING PROGRAMME UPDATE- KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided a summary of the Priority School Building Programme.

The Board was advised, that in July 2011, the Department for Education (DfE) announced it was commencing the Priority School Building Programme, which was a privately financed programme to address those schools in the worst building condition. The report outlined the criteria for eligibility in the programme, and noted that local authorities were required to demonstrate that school buildings were in poor condition by utilising data extracted from building condition surveys.

The Board noted that three Halton community schools met the criteria of the rebuilding costs; these schools were:

- The Bankfield;
- The Park Primary School; and
- Halebank CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School.

It was further noted that, following the submission of applications, DfE consultant surveys, site visits and survey data validation, the DfE announced that Halebank CE Voluntary Controlled Primary School was eligible to be included on the list of schools. The local authority had requested details of the private finance arrangements to enable full consideration before a decision was made whether to proceed as part of the programme. The school would make an estimated contribution of around £12,000 per annum, and would be responsible for soft facilities management (i.e. repairs, maintenance, loose furniture and equipment). The DfE had advised that they would have an Outline Business Case submitted by April 2013.

Reason(s) for Decision

To enable further details of the private finance to be considered at a later date which would help decide whether to progress with inclusion in the programme.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

It was not possible for the local authority to fund new build school from its capital programmes.

Implementation Date

Not applicable.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the position of the Priority School Building Programme be noted; and
- 2) the sharing of asset management data with the Department for Education be agreed.

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

HEALTH AND ADULTS PORTFOLIO

EXB116 AMENDMENT TO HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on the amendment to the Council's

Housing Allocations Policy as it related to the treatment of Armed Forces personnel.

The Board was reminded that the Council's Housing Allocations Policy (the Policy) was approved on 3 March 2011. It was implemented with effect from 9 July 2012, when the new Choice Based Lettings Scheme, 'Property Pool Plus', went live in Halton. In order to give preference to local residents, the Policy contained a requirement for applicants to demonstrate a 'local connection'. Details of the current criteria for this 'local connection' was set out in Appendix 1.

As part of the Government's commitment to supporting the Armed Forces through the Military Covenant, new regulations came into force in August 2012 relating to Armed Forces personnel and the 'local connection' criteria. Where local authorities decide to use a local connection requirement as a qualifying criterion, they must not apply that criterion to certain defined categories of Armed Forces personnel, (which were detailed in the report), so as to disqualify them from an allocation of social housing.

The Board was advised that the sub regional Choice Based Lettings Group had proposed an amendment to the Policy in order to follow the spirit of the regulation. This would ensure that those defined categories of Armed Forces personnel were not disadvantaged in terms of securing accommodation. A similar recommendation would be presented to the respective Cabinet's of each of the partner authorities.

It was noted that further changes to the Policy would be considered as a consequence of new freedoms contained in the Localism Act 2011 and recent revisions to the Housing Allocations Code of Guidance. In addition, other changes to improve and clarify the existing Policy had been identified and it was proposed that partner authorities collaborate on a common consultation exercise to seek views on a number of options which were listed in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) subject to the unanimous agreement of the authorities participating in the sub regional Property Pool Plus scheme, the Council's Housing Allocations Policy be amended to include the additional wording in italics set out in Appendix 1, to exempt Armed Forces personnel from the local connection criteria;

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- Communities

- 2) consultation be undertaken for the purpose of further amending the Housing Allocations Policy to take account of provisions within the Localism Act 2011 and the new Housing Allocations Code of Guidance; and
- 3) a further report on the outcome of the consultation be submitted to the Board for consideration.

EXB117 RECONFIGURATION OF HOMELESSNESS SERVICE AT ORCHARD HOUSE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided an update on the reconfiguration of Orchard House.

On 12 July 2012, the Board had approved a proposal to enter into negotiations with Nightstop to reconfigure the service at Orchard House to provide an integrated Crisis Intervention Service for young people. A service delivery proposal was received on 19 October 2012 with a submitted proposal based on a five member staffing rota at a cost of £241,000. However, as the proposal was £44,866 in excess of the current budget, Officers advised Nightstop that they could not proceed with the service reconfiguration.

It was noted that Community Integrated Care (CIC), the current service provider, had indicated that they would not wish to enter into any long term agreement for the provision of homeless services, although a previously agreed variation to extend their contract to 31 January 2013 meant that they would continue to do so in the interim.

The Homelessness Scrutiny Group considered a number of options for Orchard House which were:

- Retain status quo and continue to provide hostel service at Orchard House and existing Nightstop service through Halton YMCA;
- Open tender for integrated Crisis Intervention Service at Orchard House; or
- Request waiver to standing orders to negotiate the reconfiguration of Orchard House as an integrated Crisis Intervention Service with Depaul UK.

Members discussed the options and a number of concerns that were raised were detailed in the report. It was reported that the Scrutiny Group recommended the first option - to retain the status quo - until further information was known about the position with the Cosmopolitan

Housing Association and the funding application for the Widnes hostel. It was noted that CIC had indicated their willingness to work with the Borough Council to provide a service at Orchard House, so long as they were delivering the Belvedere service.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board agree to maintain the status quo and continue to provide a hostel service at Orchard House and existing Nightstop service through Halton YMCA; and
- 2) a further waiver of Procurement Standing Orders be agreed for an extension of the existing contract(s) with Community Integrated Care until 31 October 2013, in line with the preferred option.

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HEALTH AND ADULTS PORTFOLIO AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO

EXB118 SCRUTINY REVIEW OF ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN THE PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on the outcomes of the Scrutiny Review of anti- social behaviour in the private rented sector.

The Board was advised that the Scrutiny Review was instigated in response to a number of issues relating to the private rented sector which included poor property conditions, anti-social behaviour by private tenants and absentee landlords who were reluctant to take appropriate action. The full findings of the review were set out in Appendix A, along with details of the topic brief and accompanying evidence and an action plan drawn up from the thirteen recommendations listed in the report.

It was reported that the findings and recommendations were originally presented to the Safer Policy and Performance Board (PPB) in March 2012, with further work carried out as necessary, to consider the legal and cost implications. An update report was then presented to the Safer PPB in November 2012, which outlined activity that had taken place.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Board supported the findings and recommendations of the Safer Policy and

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Performance Board;

- 2) the Board were concerned to ensure a partnership approach to tackling issues raised by the Safer Policy and Performance Board;
- 3) Officers be asked to bring together partners to consider a collaborative approach to these matters;
- 4) a further report be presented to the Board, should additional resources be required for any of the recommendations; and
- 5) in the light of the Executive Board's comments, Officers were asked to report further on the Landlord Accreditation Scheme after seeking legal advice.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY PORTFOLIO AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PORTFOLIO

EXB119 THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE ENERGY ACTION PLAN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan (SEAP).

The Board was advised that a SEAP had been prepared for the City Region by the Merseyside Advisory Service (MEAS) and consultants, ARUP. The SEAP was officially launched in July 2012 and had been welcomed by both the public and private sectors, including potential investors and energy companies, as it provided a larger scale and more co-ordinated response to the energy agenda for the City Region. The SEAP set out a number of prioritised actions across the City Region to deliver a low carbon economy with potential to add value to a number of investment opportunities and projects, which were outlined in the report.

The Board noted that a benefit of the City Region SEAP Programme was to provide the framework within which Districts could take forward their own energy aspirations. The SEAP was a live document and would be updated periodically as and when required. The report provided details on the governance and reporting arrangements, opportunities for projects across the sub-region and the various stages of development of the low

carbon projects within the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Liverpool City Region Sustainable Energy Action Plan be endorsed as the programme and framework for the City Region to advance its sustainable energy actions; and
- 2) the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board receive progress reports on the SEAP Programme as and when appropriate.

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Resources

EXB120 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COVENANT OF MAYORS AND CLIMATE LOCAL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the Liverpool City Region Covenant of Mayors and 'Climate Local'.

The report outlined the benefits and implications of signing up to two climate change commitments. The European Commission launched the Covenant of Mayors (the Covenant) in 2008 to endorse and support the efforts deployed by local authorities in the implementation of sustainable energy policies. The Covenant was a charter of key commitments, outlined in the Adhesion Form attached at Appendix B. It was noted that to date, Liverpool City Council was the only City Region authority to have signed up.

'Climate Local' was launched by the Local Government Association in June 2012 as a replacement to the Nottingham Declaration on Climate Change. This also required the signing of a commitment to address climate change but had a wider scope than the Covenant, as it addressed climate resilience and the management of future impacts of climate change such as extremes of weather. A copy of this agreement was attached at Appendix C.

It was noted that the European Union target was a 20% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020. The report provided details on the implications for Halton Borough Council, the development of the Council's Carbon Management Plan, Low Carbon Plan and the Sustainable Energy Action Plan. Progress on the latter had been reported elsewhere on this agenda.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the Council's signing of the EU Covenant of Mayors 'Climate Local'.

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RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

(N.B. The following Councillors declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business for the reasons stated:

Councillor Wharton as Treasurer of Hale Youth Club; Councillor Nelson as a Trustee of the Mrs T H Brown's Trust).

EXB121 DISCRETIONARY NON-DOMESTIC RATE RELIEF

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources on new applications for Discretionary Non-Domestic Rate Relief.

The Board was advised that, under the Local Government Finance Act 1988, the Council was allowed to grant discretionary rate relief to organisations that were either a charity or a not for profit organisation. Five new applications had been received with details of each contained in the report. In addition, information in Appendix 1 provided a summary of the financial implications for each application.

It was reported that the Council grants discretionary rate relief to organisations for a three year period. Regulations required that a twelve month period of notice be given to organisations if this relief should cease. In March 2012, the Council gave the required twelve months' notice to all existing recipients, as 2012/13 was their third year of receipt of rate relief. A list of those organisations was contained in Appendix 2, along with details of the associated costs.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, discretionary rate relief be granted to the following organisations at the percentage indicated, for the period from 1st April 2012 or the commencement of liability, whichever is the later, to 31st March 2016:

Halton & St Helens Voluntary & Community Action	20%
Halton Haven Hospice	20%
Halton YMCA Ltd	20%
Widnes RUFC	20%

- 2) in respect of the following organisations, they be

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Resources

granted discretionary rate relief for the backdated element of the charge from 1st April 2010 and from the commencement of liability, respectively;

Halton Haven Hospice	20%
Widnes RUFC	20%

- 3) under the provisions of Section 47, Local Government Finance Act 1988, the following application for discretionary rate relief be refused:

Alzheimer's Society	20%
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- 4) under the same provisions, all current recipients of discretionary rate relief (except Moorfields Sports and Social Club for whom further information was being sought) who still satisfy the appropriate criteria, as listed in Appendix 2, be re-awarded relief from 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2016.

EXB122 ABOLITION OF THE DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, on the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund.

The Board was reminded that at its meeting on 18 October 2012, it considered a report which outlined that the Government had abolished Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants through the Welfare Reform Act 2012, and it was suggested that local schemes be developed by each local authority. Local authorities were to be provided with a grant from Government to do this but had a discretion as to whether they used the grant for this purpose. Following consideration of this report, the Board resolved that this item be deferred and referred to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board (PPB) who were asked to consider the issue and make recommendations to the Executive Board.

Following this decision, Members and Officers had worked together and consulted the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) who were the current provider, and had liaised with other local authorities about their approach to the issue.

It was noted that the Corporate PPB had met on 11 December 2012, and details of their recommendations were circulated prior to the meeting. Board Members recognised that, as this scheme would be introduced for the first time in April 2013, it would be beneficial to set up a Working Group

made up of Corporate PPB Members, to further fine tune the development of the scheme. The Board wished to place on record their thanks to the Members of the Corporate PPB for their input to date.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Council develops its own scheme to replace the current Crisis Loan and Community Care grant schemes, utilising the grant provided by Government for this purpose;
- 2) the draft scheme criteria outlined in Appendix 2 to the report submitted to the Corporate PPB, be used as the basis for developing the Council scheme, which would incorporate:
 - a) a scheme of grants rather than loans;
 - b) the limiting of cash payments through the introduction of voucher/prepaid card systems; and
 - c) a limit on two claims per claimant per year;
- 3) given the tight timescales available to get the scheme in place by 1 April 2013, delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director Policy and Resources, in consultation with the Resources Portfolio Holder, to make minor adjustments to the scheme in the light of experience or further information and the views of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board Working Group;
- 4) the Corporate Policy and Performance Board be requested to review the scheme after the first three months of its operation; and
- 5) the Corporate Policy and Performance Board set up a working group to fine tune the scheme, until such time as the adopted scheme had been fully developed.

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MINUTES ISSUED: 14 December 2012

CALL-IN: 21 December 2012

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 21 December 2012

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Meeting ended at 12.11 p.m.