



**Special Corporate Policy and
Performance Board**

**Tuesday, 11 December 2012 6.30 p.m.
The Board Room - Municipal Building,
Widnes**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'David WR'.

Chief Executive

BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Councillor Robert Gilligan (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Joe Roberts (Vice- Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Ellen Cargill	Labour
Councillor Mark Dennett	Labour
Councillor Stan Hill	Labour
Councillor Chris Loftus	Labour
Councillor Alan Lowe	Labour
Councillor Angela McInerney	Labour
Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh	Labour
Councillor Gareth Stockton	Liberal Democrat
Councillor Kevan Wainwright	Labour

*Please contact Ann Jones on 0151 511 8276 Ext. 16 8276 or e-mail
ann.jones@halton.gov.uk for further information.
The next meeting of the Board is on Thursday, 10 January 2013*

**ITEMS TO BE DEALT WITH
IN THE PRESENCE OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Part I

Item No.	Page No.
1. DECLARATION OF INTEREST (INCLUDING PARTY WHIP DECLARATIONS)	
Members are reminded of their responsibility to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interest or Other Disclosable Interest which they have in any item of business on the agenda, no later than when that item is reached or as soon as the interest becomes apparent and, with Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, to leave the meeting during any discussion and voting on the item.	
2. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	1 - 3
3. DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY ISSUES	
(A) ABOLITION OF THE DISCRETIONARY SOCIAL FUND	4 - 16

In accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act the Council is required to notify those attending meetings of the fire evacuation procedures. A copy has previously been circulated to Members and instructions are located in all rooms within the Civic block.

REPORT TO: Corporate Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 11th December 2012
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Resources
SUBJECT: Public Question Time
WARD(s): Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To consider any questions submitted by the Public in accordance with Standing Order 34(9).

1.2 Details of any questions received will be circulated at the meeting.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That any questions received be dealt with.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Standing Order 34(9) states that Public Questions shall be dealt with as follows:-

- (i) A total of 30 minutes will be allocated for dealing with questions from members of the public who are residents of the Borough, to ask questions at meetings of the Policy and Performance Boards.
- (ii) Members of the public can ask questions on any matter relating to the agenda.
- (iii) Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. At any one meeting no person/organisation may submit more than one question.
- (iv) One supplementary question (relating to the original question) may be asked by the questioner, which may or may not be answered at the meeting.
- (v) The Chair or proper officer may reject a question if it:-
 - Is not about a matter for which the local authority has a responsibility or which affects the Borough;
 - Is defamatory, frivolous, offensive, abusive or racist;
 - Is substantially the same as a question which has been put at a meeting of the Council in the past six months; or
 - Requires the disclosure of confidential or exempt information.

- (vi) In the interests of natural justice, public questions cannot relate to a planning or licensing application or to any matter which is not dealt with in the public part of a meeting.
- (vii) The Chairperson will ask for people to indicate that they wish to ask a question.
- (viii) **PLEASE NOTE** that the maximum amount of time each questioner will be allowed is 3 minutes.
- (ix) If you do not receive a response at the meeting, a Council Officer will ask for your name and address and make sure that you receive a written response.

Please bear in mind that public question time lasts for a maximum of 30 minutes. To help in making the most of this opportunity to speak:-

- Please keep your questions as concise as possible.
- Please do not repeat or make statements on earlier questions as this reduces the time available for other issues to be raised.
- Please note public question time is not intended for debate – issues raised will be responded to either at the meeting or in writing at a later date.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton** - none.

6.2 **Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton** - none.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton** – none.

6.4 **A Safer Halton** – none.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal** – none.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 None.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

8.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

REPORT TO: Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11 December 2012

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Policy and Resources

PORTFOLIO: Resources

TITLE: Abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund

WARDS: Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to seek Board Members' views and to make recommendations to the Executive Board in relation to the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund. These changes have been brought about by the Welfare Reform Act 2012 and the transfer of certain grants to local authorities.

2.0 RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) the Executive Board agree that the Council develops its own scheme to replace the current Crisis Loan and Community Care grant schemes, utilising the grant provided by the Government for this purpose;**
- (2) the draft scheme criteria outlined in Appendix 2 to this report be used as the basis for the Halton Scheme;**
- (3) given the tight timescales available to get the scheme in place by 1 April 2013, that 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**
- (4) the Corporate Policy and Performance Board be requested to review the scheme after the first 3 months of its operation.**

3.0 BACKGROUND/SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Executive Board, at its meeting on 18 October 2012, considered a report which outlined that the Government, through the Welfare Reform Act 2012, had abolished Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants and 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 that purpose. A copy of the report considered by the Executive Board can be found at this Link

(18 Oct 2011)

<http://members/documents/s27093/Exec%20Board%20Social%20Fund%2018102012.pdf>

- 3.2 At its meeting on 18 October 2012 the Executive Board resolved as follows:

“That this item be deferred and referred to the Corporate Policy and Performance Board and they be asked to consider the issue and make recommendations to the Executive Board”.

- 3.3 Following that meeting an informal briefing took place for Corporate Policy and Performance Board Members on 30 October 2012 (before the last meeting of the Board). That briefing provided background to the issue and Members provided guidance to Officers on how the Council’s approach might be developed.
- 3.4 Following that meeting Officers have done further work on this, consulting with the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) [the current provider] and liaising with other local authorities about their approach to this issue. It is clear that, given the essential nature of the support these schemes give to the most vulnerable of individuals, all local authorities appear to be developing their own schemes. Most also appear to be using as the starting point the current schemes and criteria used by the DWP. Again, given the timescales involved this seems a sensible approach.
- 3.5 Following these discussions a draft scheme for both Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants has been produced for consideration and Members’ views are sought on that scheme. Appendix 1 shows a comparison between the current DWP scheme and the proposed new scheme. Appendix 2 shows the proposed criteria for the new scheme without the comparison.
- 3.6 A presentation will be made to Board Members at the meeting that will draw out some of the practical issues of the Council running such a scheme and the risks involved.
- 3.7 Assuming the Council chooses to run such a scheme, then staff will need to be appointed and trained in the scheme before it goes live in April 2013. The Council has been given a grant to cover the administration costs of running the scheme.
- 3.8 Having received the presentation and considered the draft scheme, making amendments where necessary, the Board is asked to approve the recommendations at paragraph 2 to the Executive Board.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Council has a discretion whether to operate its own version of the schemes but, given the importance of this type of support to the most vulnerable members of the community, it is considered important to provide such schemes.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Control of this expenditure will be extremely challenging. In developing the scheme close involvement will take place with the Internal Audit Team.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

- 6.1 **Children and Young People in Halton**
- 6.2 **Employment Learning and Skills in Halton**
- 6.3 **A Healthy Halton**
- 6.4 **A Safer Halton**
- 6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

As there were over 7,000 applications made in Halton to the DWP last year the scheme will have major implications for many individuals and households in the Borough. It has the potential to affect all Council priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 The timescale for introducing a new scheme by 1 April 2013 is very tight. Failure to deliver a working scheme in time would have a detrimental effect on individuals and households who will be most in need.
- 7.2 Any new fund would be cash limited. It is anticipated that demand will exceed the funds available. The risk is for people who access the new service and are not successful, as to what other sources of assistance would be available to them.
- 7.3 An application process and eligibility criteria needs to be established, which meets the requirement of those most in need without exceeding the funds available for distribution.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 8.1 The eligibility criteria and application process would have to ensure that no particular groups or individuals were excluded. An Equality Impact Assessment will need to take place once the scheme is agreed.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 There are no background papers under the meaning of the Act.

Proposals for a scheme to replace the current discretionary social fund

APPENDIX 1

	Current Scheme	Proposed scheme
Criteria	<p>Crisis Loans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover immediate short-term needs due to an emergency or disaster and, • the event is not the result of an act or omission of the claimant or partner and • an award is the only way to prevent serious damage or serious risk to the health or safety of the claimant or their family <p>Claimant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aged 16+ • be able to repay loan • have no funds to meet the need themselves • have no alternative forms of help available • not have had 3 previous awards in the last 12 months <p>List of exemptions to the above criteria (Appendix A)</p> <p>The award dependant on funds available</p>	<p>Awards to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cover immediate short-term needs due to a circumstance that presents a serious risk to the health or safety of the claimant or their family and the award is the only way to prevent this <p>Claimant must be a Halton resident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • be aged 16+ • agree to the terms of the award • have no alternative forms of help • not have had 2 previous awards in the last 12 months <p>Exceptions to be the same as for current scheme</p> <p>The award dependant on funds available</p>

	<p>Community Care Grants</p> <p>Awards to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vulnerable people to return to or to remain in the community or • ease exceptional pressure on families <p>Must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In receipt or imminent receipt of an income-related benefit, and • no funds to meet the need themselves and, • there are no other alternative sources of help and <p>The claimant is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moving out of institutional or residential care or, • moving to more suitable accommodation or, • under exceptional pressure or, • setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme <p>List of exemptions to the above criteria</p> <p>The award dependant on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds available • Priority- based on the impact the award would have to the claimant’s circumstances 	<p>Awards to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vulnerable people to return to or to remain in the community or • ease exceptional pressure on families <p>Must be a Halton resident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In receipt or imminent receipt of an income-related benefit, and • no funds to meet the need themselves and, • there are no other alternative sources of help and • not have had 2 previous awards in the last 12 months and, • agree to the terms of the award <p>The claimant is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • moving out of institutional or residential care or, • moving to more suitable accommodation or, • under exceptional pressure or, • setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme <p>Exceptions to be the same as for current scheme</p> <p>The award dependant on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funds available • Priority- based on the impact the award would have to the claimant’s circumstances
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<p>Application</p>	<p>Crisis Loans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually by phone (8am- 6pm) • Freephone • Decisions usually within 2 working days • Decision notice and appeal rights posted 	<p><u>2 stage application process</u></p> <p>Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone (during office hours) • Eligibility check and provisional decision given <p>Stage2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person to HDL for verification of information given over phone • ID check and pick up award and decision notice
	<p>Community Care Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually in writing • Decisions within 9 working days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On line • By referral from professional such as social worker, probation officer etc • Initial eligibility check • Decisions within 9 working days
<p>Awards Payment</p>	<p>Crisis Loans</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loans: Cash paid direct into claimants bank account <p><u>Loans usually cover costs for:</u></p> <p>Day to day living expenses such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nappies • Toiletries • Cleaning /hygiene products or • Money for pay as you go fuel meters 	<p>Loan for anything awarded with a monetary cost to the Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voucher or pre- paid card for specified goods or service • Direct payment to supplier <p><u>Loans to cover costs for:</u></p> <p>Day to day living expenses such as :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nappies • Toiletries • Cleaning /hygiene products or • Money for pay as you go fuel meters or, • White goods and furniture

	<p>In the event of a crisis loans can cover cost of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White goods or furniture <p>Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Based on up to 60% of income support rate • No min award • Max award of £1,500 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency travel <p>Awards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to food bank • No min award • Max award of £1,500
	<p>Community care Grants</p> <p>Non repayable grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cash paid direct into claimants bank account • Min award of £30 (other than travel) <p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White goods • Furniture – beds/bedding, sofa , carpets, curtains • Household equipment- cutlery , pans • Clothing • Removal expenses • Travel costs • Connection charges 	<p>Loan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voucher or pre- paid card for specified goods or service • Direct payment to supplier <p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White goods • Furniture – beds/bedding, sofa , carpets, curtains • Household equipment- cutlery , pans • Clothing • Removal expenses • Travel costs • Connection charges
<p>Appeals</p>	<p>Crisis Loans & Community Care Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal appeals process with further appeal rights via independent body • Appeals to be made in writing within 28 days of decision 	<p>Two stage process</p> <p>First Stage -Revision of original decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered as part of the initial telephone application or within 2 days of the original decision at officer level <p>Second Stage - Appeals Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals Panel (Members)

Appendix A

Needs which are not covered by a Crisis Loan

- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- **or** an educational or training need including clothing and tools
- **or** distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- **or** travelling expenses to or from school
- **or** school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- **or** expenses in connection with court (legal) proceedings such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (other than emergency travelling expenses when stranded away from home)
- **or** removal or storage charges if you are being re-housed following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under a housing authority's statutory duty to the homeless
- **or** domestic assistance and respite care
- **or** any repair to council property and, in the case of Scotland, any repair to property of certain housing trusts
- **or** a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (these needs can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit (which includes the guarantee credit))
- **or** work related expenses
- **or** debts to Government departments
- **or** investments
- **or** purchase, installation, rental and call charges for a telephone
- **or** mobility needs
- **or** holidays
- **or** a television or a radio, or a licence, aerial or rental charges for a television or a radio
- **or** garaging, parking, purchase, and running costs of any motor vehicle except where the payment is being considered for emergency travel expenses
- **or** housing costs, (other than intermittent costs not met by Housing Benefit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related) or Pension Credit, certain rent in advance payments, certain boarding charges, and minor repairs and improvements)
- **or** council tax, council water charges, arrears of community charge, collective community charge contributions or community water charges.

Claimants ineligible to Crisis Loan

- residents in care homes (within the meaning of specific Acts) with no plans for discharge within 2 weeks

- hospital in patients with no plans for discharge within 2 weeks
- people lawfully detained or on release on temporary licence
- members of a religious order who are being fully maintained by it
- people treated as in full-time relevant education
- certain students and people from abroad can only get an award because of a disaster
- certain people whose benefit claim is disqualified, disallowed or sanctioned can only get an award because of a disaster

Needs which are not covered by a Community Care Grant

- a need which occurs outside the United Kingdom
- **or** an educational or training need including clothing and tools
- **or** distinctive school uniform or sports clothes for use at school or equipment to be used at school
- **or** travelling expenses to or from school
- **or** school meals taken during school holidays by children who are entitled to free school meals
- **or** expenses in connection with court (legal proceedings) such as legal fees, court fees, fines, costs, damages, subsistence or travelling expenses (see [Crisis Loans for emergency travelling expenses if stranded away from home](#))
- **or** removal or storage charges if you are being rehoused following a compulsory purchase order, a redevelopment or closing order, a compulsory exchange of tenancies, or under homelessness legislation
- **or** domestic assistance and respite care
- **or** any repair to council property and, in Scotland, any repair to property of certain housing trusts (you should contact your local council for advice)
- **or** a medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental item or service (note that needs under all of these headings can be provided free of charge by the National Health Service, if you are getting Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance (income-related), or Pension Credit)
- **or** work related expenses
- **or** debts to government departments
- **or** investments
- **or** costs of purchasing, renting or installing a telephone and of any call charges
- **or** any expense which the local authority has a statutory duty to meet
- **or** costs of fuel consumption and any associated standing charges
- **or** housing costs, other than minor repairs and improvements and charges for accommodation associated with certain visits (see – [Expenses for certain journeys](#))
- **or** council tax, council water charges, arrears of community charge, collective community charge contributions or community water charges
- **or** daily living expenses, such as food and groceries, except when caring for a prisoner on release on temporary licence or where a Crisis Loan cannot be awarded for such expenses because the £1,500 limit has been reached by the applicant

	Crisis Loans	Community Care Grants
Criteria	<p>Awards to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cover immediate short-term needs due a circumstance that presents a serious risk to the health or safety of the claimant or their family and the award is the only way to prevent this <p>Claimant must be a Halton resident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> be aged 16+ agree to the terms of the loan have no alternative forms of help not have had 2 previous awards in the last 12 months <p>Exceptions to be same to those for current scheme</p> <p>The award dependant on funds available</p>	<p>Awards to support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> vulnerable people to return to or to remain in the community or ease exceptional pressure on families <p>Must be a Halton resident:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In receipt or imminent receipt of an income-related benefit, and no funds to meet the need themselves and, there are no other alternative sources of help and not have had 2 previous awards in the last 12 months and, agree to the terms of the award <p>The claimant is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> moving out of institutional or residential care or, moving to more suitable accommodation or, under exceptional pressure or, setting up home as a part of a resettlement programme <p>Exceptions to be the same to those for current scheme</p> <p>The award dependant on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funds available Priority- based on the impact the award would have to the claimant's circumstances

New Scheme Application Process

Application	<p><u>Crisis Loans</u> <u>2 stage application process</u></p> <p>Stage 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phone (during office hours) • Eligibility check and provisional decision given <p>Stage2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In person to HDL for verification of information given over phone • ID check and pick up award and decision notice 	<p><u>Community Care Grants</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On line • By referral from professional such as social worker, probation officer etc • Initial eligibility check • Decisions within 9 working days
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New Scheme Awards & Appeals

<p>Awards Payment</p>	<p><u>Crisis Loan</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repayable Loan for anything awarded with a monetary cost to the Council <p>Loans to cover costs for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nappies • Toiletries • Cleaning /hygiene products or • Money for pay as you go fuel meters or, • White goods and furniture • Emergency travel • Pre- paid cards for fuel, emergency travel • No min award • Max award of £1,500 • Voucher for specified goods <p>Awards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral to food bank 	<p><u>Community Care Grants</u></p> <p>Repayable loan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Voucher or pre- paid card for specified goods or service • Direct payment to supplier <p>To cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White goods • Furniture – beds/bedding, sofa , carpets, curtains • Household equipment- cutlery , pans • Clothing • Removal expenses • Travel costs <p>Connection charges</p> <p>Two stage process</p> <p>First Stage -Revision of original decision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considered as part of the initial telephone application or within 2 days of the original decision at officer level <p>Second Stage - Appeals Panel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appeals Panel (Members)
<p>Appeals</p>	<p>Crisis Loans & Community Care Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal appeals process with further appeal rights via independent body • Appeals to be made in writing within 28 days of decision 	