

## EXECUTIVE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 21 November 2013 in The Boardroom, 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 W Rourke

Also in attendance: Audrey Williamson, Independent Chair LSCB and Councillor N Plumpton Walsh and one member of the press

### ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

*Action*

EXB107 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 November 2013 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

#### **CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES PORTFOLIO**

EXB108 HALTON SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARD : ANNUAL REPORT 2012-13

The Board considered a report of the Independent Chair, Halton Safeguarding Children Board, on the Halton Local Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) Annual Report 2012/13.

The LSCB described how organisations and individuals across all sectors were working together to safeguard children and young people. The Annual Report provided a rigorous and transparent assessment of the performance and effectiveness of local services to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people. The report included lessons from reviews undertaken within the reporting period including Serious

Case Reviews, Practice Learning Reviews and Child Death Reviews. In addition, it listed contributions made to the LSCB by partners with details of its' expenditure.

It was reported that from November 2013, the Local Safeguarding Children's Board would become subject to inspection in its own right, with the Annual Report a grade descriptor within the inspection framework. A copy of the report was attached at Appendix 1.

Audrey Williamson, Independent Chair of LSCB, attended the meeting to present the Annual Report and answer Members' questions. It was reported that Ms Williamson had resigned from the Board, after chairing it since its formation in 2006. Members thanked Ms Williamson for attending and for her contribution to the development of the LSCB.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the report be welcomed;
- 2) the recommendations be noted; and
- 3) appropriate action be taken to address the matters raised within the report.

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB109 HALTON - A PLACE WITHOUT LONELINESS - KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which presented the scoping document Halton – A Place Without Loneliness.

The Board was advised that Halton had been at the forefront of initiatives to prevent and alleviate social isolation for a number of years. However, partners and individuals involved in the development and provision of prevention services for Older People have recognised the need to further develop services and activities associated with combating loneliness. The scoping document, attached at Appendix 1, provided an initial approach to address the issue in Halton. The Board noted that, through a steering group and with input from key partners such as Public Health, Clinical Commissioning Group and those in the community and voluntary sectors, a strategic approach would be further developed.

### Reason(s) For Decision

To ensure that Halton could continue to effectively address the Government's national agenda around preventing and alleviating loneliness.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Other approaches would not have involved a partnership approach to tackling the issue and as the issue of preventing and alleviating loneliness could only be effectively tackled via a partnership approach, other options were quickly discounted.

### Implementation Date

December 2013.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report and Scoping Document, attached at Appendix 1, be noted.

## **COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

### EXB110 DRAFT NIGHT TIME ECONOMY SCRUTINY REVIEW REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which presented the Draft Night Time Economy Scrutiny Review undertaken by the Safer Policy and Performance Board.

Councillor Norman Plumpton Walsh who chaired the Scrutiny Review, attended the meeting to present the report. The Board was advised that the Scrutiny Review, conducted between November 2012 and August 2013, was commissioned because of the many positive benefits of a thriving night time economy for the Borough. The importance of a well-managed, accessible night time economy was recognised, with a range of activities on offer in a safe and clean environment.

The Scrutiny Review report, attached at Appendix 1, highlighted a number of recommendations. It was noted that the first four recommendations had potential funding requirements which would require further investigation. However, it was further noted that a number of other recommendations were unlikely to require additional funding and could be undertaken within current resources.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Executive Board support, in principle, the findings of the report and thank the Topic Group for their work;
- 2) further work be undertaken to identify the cost of implementing the proposals set out in the report; and
- 3) a further report be presented to Executive Board
  - a) Setting out the financial implications should the recommendations in the Topic Group Report be implemented; and
  - b) Giving consideration to how the proposals relate to the Council's available budget and spending priorities.

Strategic Director  
- Communities

## **HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO AND COMMUNITY SAFETY PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB111 SAFER HALTON PARTNERSHIP DRUG STRATEGY - KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, on the Safer Halton Partnership Drug Strategy 2014-18 (the Strategy).

The Board was advised that the National Drug Strategy 2010 changed the focus of drug service delivery. The Substance Misuse Service was a partnership approach which improved the outcomes for individuals and families affected by drug misuse problems. In addition, it aimed to reduce the impact of drug related crime and anti-social behaviour for Halton communities.

It was noted that the Strategy, attached at Appendix A, had been extensively consulted upon with a range of partner agencies, service users, carer groups and voluntary agencies. It focused on the strategic objectives and priorities which linked to a drugs service action plan which would become the focus of the Substance Misuse task group, reporting quarterly to the Safer Halton Partnership Board. A supporting evidence paper, attached at Appendix B, set out the context in which the Strategy had been developed. The vision, objectives and priorities for the Strategy were detailed in the report.

### Reason(s) For Decision

To ensure that Halton continued to meet the requirements of the National Drug Agenda, to ensure effective prevention and treatment service were delivered locally to tackle the issues associated with drug misuse and the impact on individuals, families and communities in Halton.

### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Other approaches to the drug strategy had been considered, including a Local Authority only strategy. It was clear that drug misuse impacted on all areas of society and a joint approach to the drug strategy was the most appropriate way to co-ordinate all partners' responses to address the identified areas.

### Implementation Date

January 2014.

RESOLVED: That the contents of the report and the Boards' comments be noted.

## **RESOURCES PORTFOLIO**

### EXB112 DETERMINATION OF THE 2014/2015 COUNCIL TAX BASE

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the requirement for the Council to determine the 'Tax Base' for its area and the tax base for each of the Parishes.

The Council was required to notify the figure for the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Environment Agency by 31 January 2014. In addition, the Council was required to calculate and advise the Parish Councils, if requested, of their relevant tax bases.

The Board was advised that the Tax Base was the measure used for calculating the council tax and was used by both the billing authority (the Council) and the major precepting authorities (the Cheshire Fire Authority and the Police and Crime Commissioner), in the calculation of their council tax requirements. It was arrived at in accordance with a prescribed formula representing the estimated full year number of chargeable dwellings in the Borough expressed in terms of the equivalent of Band "D" dwellings. Taking account of all the relevant information and applying a

96.5% collection rate, the calculation for 2014/15 gave a tax base figure of 31,400 for the Borough as a whole.

It was noted that from 2013/14 onwards, the tax base calculation included an element for the Council Tax Reduction Scheme (the replacement for the Council Tax Benefit).

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve

- 1) the Council Tax Base for 2014/15 to be set at 31,400 for the Borough, and that the Cheshire Fire Authority, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Environment Agency be so notified; and
- 2) the Council Tax Base for each of the Parishes be set as follows;

Operational  
Director - Finance

Parish	Tax Base
Hale	643
Halebank	494
Daresbury	150
Moore	316
Preston Brook	319
Sandymoor	950

*(N.B. Councillor Ron Hignett declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item of business as he was a member of the Public Sector Joint Venture Board)*

#### EXB113 2013/14 HALF YEAR SPENDING

The Board received a report of the Operational Director, Finance which reported on the 2013/14 Half Year Spending as at 30 September 2013.

A summary of spending against the revenue budget up to 30 September 2013 was attached to the report at Appendix 1. This provided individual statements for each department. The Board was advised that in overall terms, the revenue expenditure was below the budget profile, although this was only a guide to eventual spending.

The report contained details on a number of significant areas of the budget including:

- The employee budget, vacant posts, overtime and agency staff;

- Expenditure on general supplies and services;
- Children's residential placements;
- Spending on in-house adoption;
- Income affected by the economic downturn, such as fees and charges, rental income and catering sales;
- The Complex Care Pooled Budget (attached at Appendix 2);
- The collection rate for Council Tax and Business Rates; and
- The Council's net overall spending.

The report also outlined details of a revision to the capital spending programme at Appendix 3 and monitoring of the Council's balance sheet.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited to the absolutely essential;
- 2) Strategic Directors ensure overall spending at year-end is within their total operational budget; and
- 3) Council be recommended to approve the revised capital programme as set out in Appendix 3.

Operational  
Director - Finance

#### EXB114 MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on the Medium Term Financial Strategy for 2014/15 to 2016/17.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) set out a three-year projection of resources and spending based on information currently available.

The projections in the forecast clearly showed there was a need to make a significant level of savings over the next three years, as a result of the effect of the Government policy to reduce the national deficit through reductions in public sector funding. The strategy took into account the following:

- The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review;
- The 2013 Comprehensive Spending Review; and
- The 2014/15 and 2015/16 Technical Consultation on the Local Government Finance Settlement.

The forecast provided initial guidance to the Council on its financial position into the medium term. Revenue savings of approximately £15m, £17m and £14m would be required over the next three years. It was noted that as a result, £46m would need to be removed from the Council's budget which represented 26% of the gross expenditure budget.

The Board was reminded that the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) had a number of objectives, as listed in the report. The Council would need to consider these objectives when balancing its budget over the next three years.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the Medium Term Financial Strategy be approved;
- 2) the base budget be prepared on the basis of the underlying assumptions set out in the Strategy;
- 3) the Budget Strategy and Capital Strategy be approved;
- 4) the Reserves and Balances Strategy be approved; and
- 5) the award of Council Tax support for 2014/15 remain at the 2013/14 level of 21.55%.

Operational  
Director - Finance

EXB115 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2013/14 2ND QUARTER:  
JULY - SEPTEMBER

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which updated Members on the activities undertaken on the money market, as required by the Treasury Management Policy.

The report provided supporting information on the economic background, interest rate forecast, short term borrowing rates, longer term borrowing rates, borrowing/investments, new long term borrowing, policy guidelines and treasury management indicators. It was noted that debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

## EXB116 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2014/15

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, on initial revenue budget proposals for 2014/15.

The Board was advised that budget savings proposals for 2014/15 were being developed by the Budget Working Group. However, a number of those proposals detailed at Appendix 1, could be implemented immediately in order to achieve a part-year saving in 2013/14. In addition, a number of the proposals would take time to implement and therefore by commencing the process as soon as possible, would assist in ensuring that they can be fully implemented by 1 April 2014.

It was noted that the Government would announce its Grant Settlement for Local Government in late December 2013, at which point the Council's actual funding gap would be identified. Further savings proposals that would enable the Council to deliver a balanced budget would be recommended to Council at its meeting on 5 March 2014.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to approve the initial budget proposals for 2014/15 as set out in Appendix 1.

Operational  
Director - Finance

## EXB117 INCOME MANAGEMENT SYSTEM - ONLINE PAYMENTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought approval for the waiver of Procurement Standing Orders for the provision of the Income Management System – Online Payments.

The Board was advised that the Council was in the process of replacing its website to facilitate a larger number of transactional services, which required the upgrade of the payment engine to allow integration with current financial systems. It was noted that, as there was only one provider of compatible systems - Paye.net portal and Internet Payments portal - it was not possible to undertake a procurement exercise. Details of the costs for the purchase and installation of the equipment before and after the 30 November 2013 were given in the report. It was further noted that there would be a significant financial saving if the equipment was purchased before this date.

RESOLVED: That the competition requirements of Procurement Standing Order 4.1 be waived to facilitate the

Strategic Director  
- Policy &

upgrade of the Council's online payment engine with Capita Paye.net portal and Internet Payments portal.

Resources

## **PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT PORTFOLIO**

### **EXB118 RE-TENDERING OF ADULT DOMESTIC ABUSE SERVICES**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which sought approval to extend the existing contract with Halton and District Women's Aid Association (HADWAA), for the provision of domestic abuse services.

The Board was reminded that at its meeting on 5 September 2013, it had considered a report on Homelessness Services. The Board had agreed to the retendering of the domestic abuse service, currently delivered by HADWAA, to be in place by April 2014. It was reported that the refurbishment works of the Refuge building, due to commence mid November 2013, may overrun the planned completion date of April 2014. The Board was advised that it had always been the intention to align the start of the new contract to the completion of the refurbishment works. However, given the potential slippage of the planned works, it was proposed that the existing HADWAA contract be extended on a month by month basis, up to a maximum of four months, with the intention of commencing the new contract as soon as possible upon completion of the refurbishment works.

**RESOLVED:** That, acting in accordance with Procurement Standing Order 1.8.4 (a), Procurement Standing Order 4.1 be waived, to enable an extension of up to four months, on a month by month basis, to the HADWAA contract for domestic abuse services.

Strategic Director  
- Communities

### **EXB119 WIDNES WATERFRONT INFRASTRUCTURE - KEY DECISION**

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which provided an update on regeneration projects at Widnes Waterfront and Johnson's Lane, and sought approval to vary the Capital Programme to allow these projects to proceed.

The report set out the background to each site and details of previous approvals granted by the Board for the disposal of each site. In addition, the reasons for the delay in

disposal and in the development of each respective site was set out for Members' consideration.

#### Reason(s) For Decision

To alter the Capital Programme to allow funding to be made available to bring forward the former Bayer site and Johnson's Lane, specifically for the provision of remediation and infrastructure.

#### Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The do nothing option would mean that the former Bayer Crop Science site and Johnson's Lane sites would remain unused for a further period of time, which potentially would result in further security and maintenance costs to the Council.

#### Implementation Date

Once approval was received, the recommendations would immediately be acted upon.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to include the £0.52m remediation costs of the former Bayer site and £0.5m for the provision of infrastructure at Johnson's Lane, Widnes, within the Capital Programme, to initially be funded from Growing Places Fund (GPF) loans (subject to successful bids) which will thereafter be repaid from the capital receipts generated from the sale of the respective sites.

Strategic Director  
- Children and  
Enterprise

**MINUTES ISSUED: 26 November 2013**

**CALL-IN: 3 December 2013**

**Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 3 December 2013**

*Meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.*