

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 12 February 2015 in The Boardroom, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: A. Scott, M. Reaney, I. Leivesley, G. Meehan, D. Parr, E. Dawson, Dr E. Anwar, J. Keogh, S. Wallace-Bonner and M. Osborne

Also in attendance: None

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EXB118 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 AND THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 URGENT BUSINESS

The Board was advised that a matter had arisen which required immediate attention by the Board (Minute EXB 123 refers), therefore, pursuant to Section 100 B(4) and 100 E and the urgent priority to secure a new location for the Post Office at Runcorn Shopping Centre, the Leader ruled that this item would be considered at this meeting.

EXB119 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2015 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

HEALTH AND WELLBEING PORTFOLIO

EXB120 HALTON SUICIDE PREVENTION STRATEGY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which presented the final draft of the Halton Suicide Prevention Strategy 2015-20 (the Strategy).

The Board was advised that the Strategy, attached at

Appendix A, was written in partnership and sets out evidence-based actions based upon national policy, research and local insight, to prevent suicide and support those that had been bereaved or affected by suicide in Halton.

It was noted that the Strategy was supported by a detailed action plan, attached at Appendix B, which outlined actions, responsible leads, timescales and outcomes. The plan would be monitored by the Halton Suicide Prevention Partnership and the outcomes reported to the Safer Halton Partnership, the Health and Wellbeing Board and all other relevant bodies.

Reason(s) for Decision

The Suicide Prevention Strategy was a statutory document.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

No alternative options considered.

Implementation Date

With immediate effect following approval by Executive Board.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and
- 2) the Strategy outcomes, objectives and actions be supported.

Director of Public Health

EXB121 HEALTHWATCH INDEPENDENT COMPLAINTS
ADVOCACY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which sought approval for the joint commissioning of the Healthwatch Independent Complaints Advocacy service with Liverpool City Council.

The provision of an independent advocacy service was a legal requirement and responsibility for commissioning was transferred to local authorities in April 2013. The Board was advised that the contract for the current service would expire on 31 March 2015. The contract provided advocacy to help support people through the NHS complaints process. It was noted that two levels of support were offered, as detailed in the report.

Although the current sub-regional model of delivery was seen as best practice, it was not considered to be delivering value for money. Following discussions with the current provider to deliver a revised model, this was subsequently not seen as best practice. It was reported that Liverpool City Council was leading a tender and procurement exercise for an Independent Advocacy Service, with a draft service specification being consulted upon with the participating authorities. Details of Halton's financial contribution under the proposed model were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That the use of Procurement Standing Order 1.3.2 (c) be approved to allow for the joint commissioning of the Healthwatch Independent Complaints Advocacy Service with Liverpool City Council, and confirm that the Standing Orders of Liverpool City Council will apply.

Strategic Director
- Communities

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB122 HOUSEHOLD WASTE & RECYCLING COLLECTION POLICY - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided a draft updated Household Waste Recycling and Collection Policy (the Policy).

The Board was advised that the draft updated Policy did not introduce any new policies or collection regimes, but had been reviewed to reflect current service provision, policies or other decisions of the Council. It brought up to date the previous policy and reflected innovations which had been introduced, as well as recording minor changes in practice.

The Board noted that the updated draft Policy had been considered by members of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board at its meeting on 28 January 2015, and had recommended adoption of the Policy, which was attached at Appendix 1.

Reason(s) for Decision

It was important that the Council's Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policies remained fit for purpose in order to support the Council in meeting its waste related objectives, and to ensure that the service continued to be delivered as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The Council had a wide range of options available in relation to its waste collection policies and service standards. The options available were considered by members of the Waste Management Working Party, who were tasked by the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board, to review the Council's policies and service standards relating to the collection of household waste. The work carried out by the Working Party included research into the approaches adopted by other local authorities and took into account local circumstances within Halton.

Implementation Date

12 February 2015.

RESOLVED: That the Household Waste and Recycling Collection Policy, attached at Appendix 1, be approved and adopted.

Strategic Director
- Communities

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB123 DISCRETIONARY BUSINESS RATES RELIEF REQUEST

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources and the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, on requests for discretionary business rates relief.

The Board was reminded that in April 2013, the Government introduced a Business Rates Retention Scheme (the Scheme). The Scheme offered a financial incentive to Councils to promote economic growth and by offering discretionary rate relief for an initial period to businesses to encourage them to relocate or expand their existing business.

It was reported that a request had been submitted for a proposed development at Manor Park, Runcorn by a company wishing to re-locate from Warrington. Details of the request were set out in the report for Members' consideration.

Members considered that a proposed business rate relief should be granted initially for six months. A further six months of relief would only be awarded if the Company were able to provide evidence of satisfactory progress towards the creation of at least ten new sustainable jobs during the

first twelve months of operation from the Manor Park premises.

An additional request for discretionary business rate relief was considered at the meeting, as an urgent item of business. Members were advised that, following an announcement by Tesco Stores to close their premises in Runcorn Shopping Centre, the Post Office facility would have to re-locate within the Centre. Temporary premises had been identified and a request had been received to waive business rates for a six month period. The Post Office was seen as a vital facility for the local community.

Members were advised that the Leader and the Chief Executive, together with the Ward Members, would meet with Tesco to put the case for the retention of the store.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) 100% discretionary business rate relief be granted for Unit 118, River Walk, Halton Lea, for a period of six months;
- 2) 100% discretionary rate relief be granted "in principle" for Unit 7, Christleton Court, Manor Park, Runcorn, initially for a period of six months, based upon the economic and job creation opportunities outlined in the report and subject to the conditions detailed in paragraph 5.2;
- 3) at the end of the first six month period, if satisfactory progress is evidenced towards the creation of at least ten new sustainable jobs within twelve months, a further six months relief be awarded as set out in paragraph 3.14; and
- 4) the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, in liaison with the Resources Portfolio holder, be authorised to action the initial six months and subsequent six months discretionary business rates relief in respect of Unit 7, Christleton Court, Manor Park, Runcorn, once the premises have been added to the rating list and subject to the conditions detailed in paragraphs 3.14 and 5.2 of the report.

Strategic Director
– Policy and
Resources

EXB124 TREASURY MANAGEMENT 2014/15 3RD QUARTER:
OCTOBER-DECEMBER

The Board considered a report of the Operational

Director, Finance, which updated them on activities undertaken on the money market as required by the Treasury Management Statement.

The report provided supporting information on the economic background, economic forecast, short term rates, longer term rates, temporary borrowing/investments and new borrowing. It was noted that no debt rescheduling had been undertaken during the quarter.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EXB125 TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY STATEMENT 2015/16

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, proposing the Treasury Management Strategy Statement (TMSS) which incorporated the Annual Investment Strategy (AIS) and the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Strategy for 2015/16.

The TMSS was attached to the report and detailed the expected activities of the Treasury function in the forthcoming financial year (2015/16).

The Local Government Act 2003 required the Council to “have regard to” the Prudential Code and to set Prudential Indicators for the next three years to ensure that the Council’s capital investment plans were affordable, prudent and sustainable. The Act therefore required the Council to set out its treasury strategy for borrowing as well as an AIS, which set out the Council’s policies for managing its investments and for giving priority to the security and liquidity of those investments. However, Government guidance stated that authorities could combine the statement and the strategy into one report, and the Council had adopted this approach.

Members noted that the production of a Minimum Revenue Provision Policy Statement was required and a formal statement for approval was contained within the report at paragraph 2.3, with Appendix A detailing MRP in more detail.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the policies, strategies, statements and prudential and treasury indicators outlined in the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB126 2014/15 QUARTER 3 SPENDING

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which summarised the overall revenue and capital spending position as at 31 December 2014.

In overall terms, revenue expenditure was £0.053m below the budget profile, however, this was only a guide to eventual spending. It was noted that spending on employees was £0.434m below the budget profile as at 31 December 2014.

Members were advised that there continued to be budget pressures on some budgeted income targets, including trade waste income and sales revenue from the Stadium.

With regard to capital spending, it was reported that spending to the 31 December 2014 totalled £20.9m, which was 97% of the planned spending of £21.5m at this stage. However, this represented 60% of the total capital programme of £34.7m (which assumed a 20% slippage between years).

The Council's Balance Sheet was monitored regularly in accordance with the Reserves and Balances Strategy which formed part of the Medium Term Financial Strategy. The key reserves and balances had been reviewed and were considered prudent and appropriate at this stage in the financial year.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) all spending continues to be limited only to the absolutely essential;
- 2) Strategic Directors ensure that overall spending at year-end is within their total operational budget;
- 3) the transfer of the remaining 2014/15 contingency budget to the Children and Families department, as outlined in paragraph 3.7, be approved; and
- 4) Council be recommended to approve the revised capital programme as set out in Appendix 3, attached to the report.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB127 BUDGET 2015/16

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director, Finance, which outlined a recommendation to Council in respect of the Budget, Capital Programme and Council Tax for 2015/16.

It was noted that, at the time of writing the report, the Cheshire Police and Crime Commissioner and the Cheshire Fire Authority had not set their budgets and Council Tax precepts. However, final figures would be reported to Council when the information was available.

The Government announced the Final Local Government Finance Settlement figure for 2015/16 on 5 February 2014, which was in line with the Provisional Settlement announced on 18 December 2014.

In terms of consultation, it was noted that the Council used various methods to listen to the views of the public and Members' own experiences through their Ward work was an important part of that process. Budget presentations had taken place at all of the Area Forums and details of the comments made were tabled at the meeting. In addition, individual consultations would take place in respect of specific budget proposals and equality impact assessments would be completed where necessary.

The Board was advised that the Medium Term Financial Strategy, approved on 20 November 2014, had identified a funding gap of around £19m in 2015/16, £13m in 2016/17 and £10m in 2017/18. The Strategy had the following objectives:

- Deliver a balanced and sustainable budget;
- Prioritise spending towards the Council's five priority areas;
- Avoid excessive Council Tax rises;
- Achieve significant cashable efficiency gains;
- Protect essential front line services; and
- Deliver improved procurement.

On 10 December 2014, the Council approved initial budget savings of £11.332m for 2015/16, and further proposed savings were shown at Appendix B. The Departmental analysis of the budget was shown in Appendix C and the major reasons for change from the current budget were outlined for Members' information in Appendix D. It was noted that the proposed budget total was £101.188m.

The Board was advised that the proposed budget incorporated the grant figures announced in the Provisional Grant Settlement, and included £440,000 for the New Homes Bonus Grant, payable to local authorities based on the net increase in the number of homes in their area. The grant was payable at this amount for six years.

It was noted that from 1 April 2013, the Local Government funding regime changed significantly with the introduction of the Business Rates Retention Scheme, as outlined in the report.

Further information was provided in respect of the budget outlook, although it was difficult to forecast resources over the following two years given the uncertainties caused by the current economic climate and the Government's continuing austerity measures and the national election in May 2015. The Medium Term Financial Forecast had been updated and was attached at Appendix E. It was noted that the resultant funding gap over the next two years was forecast to be in the region of £31.9m.

Further information was provided in respect of Halton's Council Tax, Parish Precepts, Capital Programme, the Prudential Code and school budgets.

Members wished to place on record their thanks to all members of the Budget Working Group, Policy and Performance Board Chairs and staff for their hard work in producing this year's budget.

RESOLVED: That Council be recommended to adopt the resolution set out in Appendix A of the report, which included setting the budget at £101.188m, the Council Tax requirement of £38.649m (before Parish, Police and Fire Precepts) and the Band D Council Tax for Halton of £1,204.01.

Operational
Director - Finance

EXB128 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 paragraph 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 outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information, members of the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items 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, exempt information would be disclosed, being information defined in Section 100 (1) and paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

EXB129 JOHN BRIGGS HOUSE AND THE POLICE & MAGISTRATES SITES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, on proposals for John Briggs House and the Police and Magistrates Court sites in Widnes.

The report set out details of the proposed occupation of John Briggs House by Cheshire Police and the arrangements for the disposal of the Police Station and Magistrates Court sites, for Members' consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the disposal of John Briggs House to Cheshire Police and the acquisition of the Police Station and Magistrates Court sites be approved;
- 2) a variation to the Capital Programme of £350,000 be approved, to enable the proposal to proceed;
- 3) the Operational Director, Economy, Enterprise and Property, be authorised to arrange for all required documentation to be completed to the

Strategic Director
- Children and
Enterprise

satisfaction of the Operational Director, Legal and Democratic Services; and

- 4) Council be recommended to approve the addition to the Capital Programme, of a scheme for the demolition and fencing of the Police and Magistrates Court sites, as set out in paragraph 3.10 of the report.

MINUTES ISSUED: 16 February 2015

CALL-IN: 23 February 2015

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 5.00pm on 23 February 2015

Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.