

CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Corporate Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 31 January 2017 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gilligan (Chair), A. Lowe (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Howard, C. Loftus, A. McInerney, N. Plumpton Walsh and Joe Roberts

Apologies for Absence: Councillors E. Cargill, G. Stockton and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Reaney, E. Dawson, G. Ferguson, C. Patino and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

CS22 MINUTES

The Minutes from the meeting held on 1st November 2016 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

CS23 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

CS24 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board was presented with the Minutes relating to the Corporate Services Portfolio which had been considered by the Executive Board since the last meeting of the Board. Arising from the discussion, the Board wished to highlight the good work of Halton Borough employees over the past twelve months.

RESOLVED: That the minutes be noted.

CS25 LOCAL AREA FORUMS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic

Director Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided details on the initial audit of Local Area Forums which took place in July 2015 and the findings report produced in August 2015. The findings report contained a number of recommendations which led to changes in practice to the way Area Forum grant funding applications were processed, approved and managed and to the way in which goods and services for approved projects were procured. These changes came into effect in November 2015.

Subsequently, a follow up Internal Audit review of Local Area Forums was carried out in October 2016. The purpose of the follow-up audit was to assess how effectively any issues identified in the original audit report had been addressed and to consider the impact of the changes that were made to the project approval and delivery processes.

Members had provided feedback on a number of the new arrangements introduced following the audit report. In particular, Members felt that some aspects of the new processes led to delays in projects being approved or delivered and that the required process for sourcing suppliers or service providers was restrictive and could lead to value for money not being achieved in some instances.

As a result of the follow up audit:

- Three quotations would continue to be submitted to the Council with all funding application forms, however, where appropriate, the quotations would be compared to prices available via the Council's corporate contracts to determine the best procurement option;
- Where it could be demonstrated that greater value for money could be achieved by doing so, goods or services would be procured from suppliers other than those contained on the Council's approved list; and
- The follow-up audit reaffirmed the recommendation contained within the original audit report that all invoices should be paid directly by the Council. As well as preventing inappropriate use of funding, this would enable the Council to recover VAT on project expenditure. The only exception would be minor expenditure items where invoices would be difficult to obtain, for example; £100 awarded for food supplies for a community fun day.

In line with normal practice, the follow-up audit report would be presented to a future meeting of the Business

Efficiency Board and details of the revised processes would be cascaded to Area Forum Lead Officers for implementation.

RESOLVED: That the report be received.

CS26 COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION COSTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which proposed a change to the treatment of costs relating to the collection of council tax arrears.

At a previous meeting of the Board held on 6th September 2016, the Board considered an update report on council tax income, council tax arrears, recovery action and the impact of the localisation of council tax support. The Board expressed concern at the significant increase in the level of council tax arrears following the localisation of council tax support, whereby approximately 6,300 households were now paying council tax for the first time, in addition to those who were partial benefit claimants.

This had led to a situation where a significant number of taxpayers with an attachment of benefits, were not able to clear their arrears by the end of the financial year, at which point they became liable for the following year's council tax. Hence their council tax arrears began to escalate year-on-year.

Before a taxpayer could be given an attachment of benefits to recover the council tax which was owed, the Council must first obtain a liability order. This currently carried an additional cost for the taxpayer of £77 which then increased their council tax arrears

A liability order must be obtained in these circumstances. However, in order to assist with this situation and avoid increasing the arrears burden unnecessarily for taxpayers, it was proposed that once a first attachment of benefits had been paid in full, the cost element for any subsequent attachments of benefit were written-off by the Council.

Further information on the current position of Castle View House in respect of business rates would be circulated to the Board.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board be recommended to approve, where a first attachment of

Strategic Director
Enterprise,

benefits has been paid in full, that the cost element for any subsequent attachments of benefit are written-off by the Council, as outlined in paragraph 3.5.

Community and
Resources

CS27 BUSINESS PLANS 2017 - 18

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided Members with an opportunity to contribute to the development of the Business Plan for 2017-18. Members considered a number of priorities for development that they would like to see reflected in the Business Plan. As Plans could only be finalised once final budget decisions had been confirmed in March 2017 annual targets could only be properly determined once this information, along with year-end outturn figures for 2016/17 became known.

Arising from the discussion, the Board agreed to set up a working group to discuss the sickness monitoring policy. It was agreed that the working group would be set up shortly, with a view to meetings being held before the end of May.

In addition, information would be circulated to the Board on the possible impact of the apprenticeship levy on Halton schools.

RESOLVED: That the information provided be received.

CS28 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 2 OF 2016/17

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which presented the Performance Monitoring Reports for Quarter 2 of 2016/17.

The reports related to the following functional areas which reported to the Board and detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period:

- Finance;
- Human Resources and Organisational Development;
- ICT and Administrative Support;
- Legal and Democracy;
- Policy and Performance;
- Property Services; and

- Catering, Stadium and Registration Services.

It was agreed that further information would be circulated to the Board on the cost of missed bin collections.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter performance monitoring reports be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 7.20 p.m.