



**ANNUAL REPORT
CORPORATE POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD
APRIL 2011 – MARCH 2012**

We have faced another year of austerity and significant cuts in Government Grants. I would like to thank the chairs of all the committees and the officers for their commitment and input to the budget process. It has been a difficult year and worse is to come.

My thanks also to my vice chair Joe Roberts and all the Members of the Board for their hard work and the contribution they have made to its activities over the past year. This year, key areas have included development of a People Plan for the Authority, a detailed review of the Performance Management framework, and consideration of the emerging legislation regarding the localisation of Council Tax support, and Business rates retention. This year, work will continue on Locality Working, Halton Strategic Partnership, and Markets.' Councillor Alan Lowe – Chairman of Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board.

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2011/12 the Board comprised of eleven Councillors – A. Lowe [Chairman] J. Roberts [Vice Chair] Browne, Dennett, Gilligan, C. Loftus, A. McInerney, Philbin, N. Plumpton Walsh, Redhead and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, Personnel and Training, ICT, Property, Democratic Services, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Stadium Civic Catering, Procurement, Corporate Complaints and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the Reporting Departments which during the last year were Legal and Democratic Services, Human Resources, Financial Services, ICT and Support Services, and the Policy and Performance Divisions.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year. Set out below are some of the main initiatives upon which it has worked during that time.

REVIEW OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Board received an initial Report at its May meeting in regard to future Performance Management arrangements for the Council in the light of changing regulatory requirements and reduced resources. It was noted that the existing framework was developed primarily as a result of Audit Commission findings from the pre existing Corporate Assessment process

which had served the Council well. As a result of a number of changes including the abolition of the CAA, the Audit Commission, Local Area Agreements, and the National Indicators Set. The principles for developing a new framework were discussed and Members gave initial views. The Board would oversee the process of developing the new framework and would receive a report at the September meeting.

That meeting received a further report from Strategic Director – Policy and Resources updating Members on the progress in the Review. The Report indicated that the Council had been afforded some degree of flexibility in considering the development of future Performance Management arrangements, which would reflect a transition away from authorities being performance managed by central government to being held to account at a local level. However, it had been clarified that the national inspection framework for Children’s Services and Adult Social Care by OFSTED and CQC would remain in place. Also, performance data would continue to be submitted as prescribed in the National Single Data Set. Members considered the proposals in detail and recommended to the Executive Board that:-

1. the development and use of a priority based performance report for each of the Council’s six corporate priorities in 2012/13 for each Policy and Performance Board be approved;
2. the presentation of Directorate overview reports on a quarterly basis and progress against the Corporate Plan on a six monthly basis for 2012/13 be approved; and
3. the availability of existing departmental focused performance reports for operational management purposes be continued and made available to Members via the Council Intranet as advertised in the Member’s bulletin.

LOCAL AREA FORUMS

The November meeting received a report on the spending profiles of the Local Area Forums for the financial period 1st April 2010 to March 2011 Members were provided with information on the spend allocation and expenditure within each Area Forum for the year which was categorised into a number of key areas as follows – Landscapes, Safety, Youth Facilities, Improved Parks, Pedestrian Access, Security, and Other. Members considered the amended Area Forums Grant Funding proposal form which was appended to the Report. The Report was welcomed and Members suggested that future reports could include the following information:

- data from the previous years spend so that comparisons could be made
- the types of projects applied for; and

- information on the percentages of applications that are approved and not approved.

LOCALISATION OF COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

In January, the Operational Director Finance submitted a report informing Members of the proposals being made as part of the Government's Local Government Resources Review in relation to the localism of Council Tax support. The Government had announced that it would localise support for Council Tax from 2012/14 thus reducing expenditure by 10%. The Welfare Reform Bill contained proposals for the abolition of Council Tax benefit from 2013 paving the way for new localised schemes. The Report then set out the proposed scheme that the Council would adopt. Members asked for a further report to be brought to the Board to assess and make recommendations on:-

1. the financial impact to claimants and the Council of the proposals; and
2. an outline local scheme for Halton for subsequent recommendation to the Council.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT RESOURCE REVIEW PROPOSALS FOR BUSINESS RATES RETENTION

Also at its January Meeting, the Board received a report detailing the Government's proposals for Business Rates retention and the potential financial implications for the Council. There would be fundamental changes to the funding of local government which would have a significant impact on future resources available to the Council. A consultation had taken place in relation to the proposals for Business Rates retention as part of the resource review. Under the Government's proposals, from 2013/14, formula grant would be fully funded from business rates with the removal of revenue support grant. The Report outlined the financial risks for Halton associated with the proposed changes.

PEOPLE PLAN 2012/15

The February Meeting received a detailed presentation on the draft People Plan, which had been developed by the Organisational Development Group chaired by the Strategic Director – Policy and Resources with membership from the three Directorates and including Trade Union representation. It was important to have a new plan which was flexible in order to respond to changing circumstances. The draft had been developed as a result of key research and findings derived from the Staff Survey 2011 and the Workforce Profile 2011. The plan consisted of four key strategic aims -

- Attract Develop and Retain excellent people
- Excellence in Leadership and Management development
- Being an excellent employer
- Promoting organisational excellence.

It would be monitored by the Organisational Development Group and as part of the Evaluation Process; a further staff survey would be carried out in 2015. Members considered the plan in detail and asked a number of questions of the presenters before resolving that the plan be approved for onward transition to the Executive Board.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the year the Board also focused a significant amount of time and effort monitoring the performance of the reporting departments. A number of performance issues that were overseen by the Board during the year have been –

- School Catering and the operation of the Stobart Stadium
- Sickness absence
- Accident statistics

WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year 2012/13 it would carry out detailed work on the following topics –

- Locality working
- Halton Strategic Partnership
- Markets