



Chairman
Councillor
Gilligan

ANNUAL REPORT

CORPORATE SERVICES POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

APRIL 2006 – MARCH 2007

“ I would like to thank the members of the Board for their hard work over the last year. The Board has been very effective in reviewing some key areas, and its recommendation on pension policy and partnership governance were accepted by the Executive Board. An in-depth review of Area Forums is also nearing completion .”

Councillor Gilligan

Chairman, Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/07 the Board comprised eleven Councillors – Councillors Gilligan (Chairman), Lowe (Vice-Chair); Blackmore, Bradshaw, Dennett, Edge, C.Inch, Loftus, Nolan, Norddahl and Wainwright.

The Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to Resources, Personnel, IT and E-Government, Property, Committee and Member Services, Risk Management and Emergency Planning, Legal Services, Communications and Marketing, Registration Service, Stadium, Civic Catering, Procurement, Equalities (Employment Aspects), Corporate Complaints Procedure and Area Forums. The Board also has responsibility for monitoring the performance of the reporting departments namely, Policy and Performance, Legal and Member Services, Finance, Exchequer and Customer Services (Revenues), Property Services, Personnel, and IT.

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year, and set out below are some of the main initiatives that the Board has worked on during the year.

Area Forums & Community Engagement

As it is responsible for monitoring the activities of Area Forums, the Board was keen to review progress after almost 5 years of their operation. A Topic Group was established to look at how the Area Forums are working, to identify good practice within Halton and in other local authorities, and to consider the implications of emerging national policy. The group commissioned surveys and focus groups of residents who attend forums, and those that do not. It also interviewed partners, council officers, met with a selection of elected members from all 7 forums, and visited two other local authorities.

The Board's recommendations will be finalised early in the 2007/08 municipal year.

Partnership Working

During the year the Board assisted with the creation of a Partnership register, establishing some criteria for determining when it is appropriate for the Council to become involved in partnerships and to invest staff time or other resources in that partnership, whilst ensuring that arrangements for governance and accountability are in place in the partnerships with which the Council is involved. Consequently, the Board made the following recommendations which were agreed by the Executive Board on 29th March 2007:

- (1) the definition of partnership as set out above be agreed;
- (2) a register of all partnerships of which the Council is a member is created and kept by the Council's Solicitor including the information as outlined in the report;
- (3) all new partnerships created or joined by the Council were notified to the Council Solicitor by the Officer with responsibility for the partnership;
- (4) the governance of partnership checklist is formally endorsed;
- (5) the issues set out in the checklist are properly considered and addressed before a decision is taken to form or enter into a new partnership;
- (6) annual progress reports are presented by each partnership in the register to the appropriate PPB;
- (7) the Corporate Services PPB reviews the partnership register and partnership arrangements on an annual basis to make sure that they are working effectively; and
- (8) as the process with regard to partnerships is developed, additional reports be brought to the Board.

Equalities

As the Board with responsibility for Personnel and Staffing matters the Board considered the forthcoming changes in legislation in relation to age, disability and gender:

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006
Disability Discrimination Act 2005

The Board requested the Executive Board "to consider whether the Council should set a default retirement age in the light of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006". The Executive Board adopted a no default retirement age policy on 16 November 2006.

Halton Direct Link

During the previous municipal year 2005/06 the Board had commissioned a major review of the operation. The findings of the review undertaken by SOCITM highlighted future opportunities for delivering further services through HDL.

The Board recommended that the developments outlined be investigated and a programme of work developed to deliver the outcomes of these investigations. It was also agreed that a timetable for business process reviews be drawn up, and progress be reported back to the Board quarterly.

PERFORMANCE ISSUES

During the year the Board has focused a significant amount of effort on monitoring the performance of its reporting departments. Among the performance issues overseen by the Board during the year are:

- the Halton Stadium Annual Business Plan
- the successful implementation of the new payroll system Trent
- the completion of the Accommodation strategy
- the commencement of a review of the Council's training provision

Services monitored by the Board have successfully received Municipal Journal and APSE awards and been "highly commended" at the Local Government Chronicle awards.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/08

The Board has decided that during the current municipal year (2007/08) it will carry out full reviews of the following areas:

- Learning from Complaints
- Development of Web Based Service Delivery
- Disabled Access to Council buildings
- Performance Management

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 4242061 extension 1125 or email Lynn.Caims@Halton.gov.uk