

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 19 July 2007 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors McDermott (Chairman), D. Cargill, Gerrard, Harris, McInerney, Nelson, Polhill, Swain, Wharton and Wright

Apologies for Absence: Councillors

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor

Officers present: D. Parr, L. Butcher, B. Dodd, D. Johnson, D Tregoea, S. Williams, M. Winstanley, M. Baker and L. Cairns

Also in attendance: 1 Member of the press

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21st June 2007 were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

(NB Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a Board Member of Halton Housing Trust.)

EXB16 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community seeking approval to change the Council's Housing Allocations Policy with regard to accommodation offers made to homeless households and responsibility for undertaking first stage reviews of homelessness decisions.

It was noted that, further to the resolution of the Board on 15th March 2007, stakeholders had been consulted about the proposed changes to the Council's Housing Allocations Policy and the responses were outlined for

Action

consideration. In particular, Members noted the concerns regarding the proposal to adopt a “one offer within the Borough” approach to homeless households and the subsequent proposal to revise this to read “one offer in either Runcorn or Widnes as preferred by the applicant”.

The Board was advised that the Policy needed to be tailored to reflect the local supply and demand situation rather than simply follow recommended practice. However, in view of the vulnerability of the clients involved, Members requested that this be reviewed by the appropriate Policy and Performance Board and a further report be submitted to the Executive Board in 12 months’ time.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the following revised wording to the Housing Allocations Policy be agreed – “Where the Council has a duty to secure accommodation for a homeless applicant, it will discharge that duty by making one offer only of suitable accommodation (under Part 6 of the Housing Act 1996), in either Runcorn or Widnes as preferred by the applicant. Whilst regard will be paid to the applicant’s preferred areas of choice within either Runcorn or Widnes, it may not be possible to meet such preferences given the shortage of accommodation.”;
- (2) future s202 homelessness reviews be undertaken by the Council’s Service Development Manager (Homelessness) or other nominated officer; and
- (3) a report be submitted to the Executive Board in twelve months’ time providing an update on how the revised Policy is working in practice.

(NB Councillors Nelson and Wright declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being Board Members of Halton Housing Trust. Councillor Gerrard declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to her husband being Landscape Services Manager at Halton Borough Council.)

EXB17 HALTON HOUSING TRUST PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community providing a further update on Halton Housing Trust’s progress since the Executive Board’s meeting of 16th November 2006.

Mr. Nick Atkins, Chief Executive of Halton Housing

Trust, attended the meeting to present his report setting out progress to date in delivering some of the key pledges prior to stock transfer and progress in meeting the Housing Corporation's regulatory framework. In particular, the following issues were discussed and noted:

- Difficulties had been experienced with one of the partners involved in delivering the investment programme; however, a plan was now in place to resolve this and so it was intended that the programme be accelerated, whilst maintaining standards, in order that it could be completed before schedule. A possible barrier to this was the legal governance arrangements that had previously been signed up to. However, following discussions with the newly appointed Regulation Account Manager, it appeared favourable that these covenants could be amended.
- An interim plan had been set in place for customers suffering problems with fencing and security. Each case was risk assessed and looked at individually considering issues such as the vulnerability of the resident and the contribution to wider crime.
- The consultation timeframe of 18 months in respect of the Environmental Improvement Programme had been set on the advice of Groundwork Mersey Valley who was undertaking the work. However, this would be completed in four tranches and, as each tranche came to an end, the Trust would be looking to start work in that area.
- Regarding the wider issue of climate change, the Trust had secured an alternative site to relocate its construction services team where there was sufficient space to recycle a higher proportion of materials. The Trust was also looking to procure materials from sustainable sources and was addressing in-house issues regarding recycling. Suppliers were being encouraged to look at alternative sources of fuel as part of any re-build programme and better use was being made of existing resources such as IT.
- It had been recognised that some aspects of Management Moves were overly complicated and this had now been resolved. It was anticipated that Choice Based Lettings would make the allocation process more transparent for applicants and the general public. In addition, a Business Analyst had

been appointed for a two year period to strip out inefficiencies in the organisation: this was already proving to be successful.

- Customer Liaison Officers were available to assist people in completing application forms. A customer panel had been established, which provided valuable feedback, and a number of customers had come forward to stand for election for Halton Housing Community Voices. As there were more applicants than seats, some would inevitably be disappointed. However, those who were would be contacted to see how area based work could be done on a more customer friendly basis.
- Since the transfer, the maintenance service had been enhanced to improve the green spaces. There had also been a number of specific initiatives where there were “hotspots”, for example intensive estate management and “clean up” days where everyone in the organisation went out with residents and Halton Borough Council services to clean specific areas.
- The help of Halton Borough Council, particularly the Chief Executive and the Strategic Director – Health and Community, was commended by Mr Atkin as being vital in the early stages of the Trust’s development. The Trust was now keen to play its part alongside the Council to help deliver the requirements identified in the Housing Needs Survey.

The Chairman thanked Mr Atkins for attending the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the progress set out in the report be noted.

EXB18 TRAVELLERS - PROVISION OF TRANSIT SITE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Directors of Environment, and Health and Community, considering the need for, and options for, the provision of a permanent transit site for travellers within the Borough.

It was noted that, since December 2006, the approach to travellers had been to utilise a length of unused busway as a tolerated/accepted unauthorised encampment for travellers, working with them and managing the situation as opposed to chasing them from site to site. It was considered that this approach had been largely successful,

with savings for the Authority in the region of £200,000, and had led to increased co-operation between the Council and Police in swiftly dealing with the small number of other unlawful encampments that had occurred.

Members were advised that the site currently being used did not offer a permanent solution and there was a need to identify an alternative “transit” site location if the current success was to be built upon. Following research, a preferred site had been identified in accordance with the Needs Study set out in the report, next to an established permanent private caravan site between Warrington Road and the Manchester Ship Canal. This was land that was in Council ownership presently forming an area of informal greenspace not generally accessed or used by the public.

It was reported that, although readily available and on assessment likely to receive planning permission for the use intended, the land was not entirely without development difficulty; however, it was anticipated that the scheme could be provided within the identified budget at between 12 and 15 months from the date when authority was given to proceed.

The financial implications were outlined for the Board’s consideration and an estimate of the ongoing revenue implications were attached to the report.

The Board considered the following issues:

- There was a need for a written protocol between Halton Borough Council and the police formally setting out the agreement and responsibilities of each organisation. The Chief Executive confirmed that negotiations were currently ongoing regarding a draft protocol that would be signed in due course.
- The rents needed to be reassessed in order that the site could be cost neutral in revenue terms.
- The proposed site was located next to a permanent site in order to assist in the relocation of any travellers who wished to stay indefinitely.
- Further detail was to be sought regarding the costs involved.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a detailed scheme be worked up to tender to confirm delivery within the set budget;
- (2) a further report on funding be presented to the

Executive Board once tenders have been received;

- (3) subject to this being confirmed, formal permissions/consents be applied for (September 2007); and
- (4) the Urban Renewal PPB be invited to review the approach proposed by the Executive Board and report back to the Executive Board on its findings.

EXB19 HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community outlining the financial outturn for the 2006/07 Housing Capital Programme and seeking approval for an amended 2007/08 programme. It was advised that the programme previously agreed by the Executive Board on 15th March 2007 had been amended in light of the actual outturn for 2006/07. The only new scheme was the provision of an additional £28,000 to fund further necessary repair works at Belvedere supported housing scheme in Runcorn, for which the Council was still responsible.

RESOLVED: That the 2006/07 outturn be noted and the amended programme for 2007/08, as set out in the appendix, be recommended to Council for approval.

ENVIRONMENT, LEISURE AND SPORT PORTFOLIO

EXB20 INTER AUTHORITY AGREEMENT AND WASTE ACTION PLAN - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment setting out the way in which the Council intended to discharge part of its Waste Disposal functions and seeking approval to move forward with the development and implementation of enhanced waste recycling services in Halton.

It was noted that a Members' Seminar had been held on waste management issues on 12th June 2007. This Seminar had set out the proposed future strategic and operational plans, including the implementation of enhanced recycling services and the partnership arrangement with the Mersey Waste Disposal Authority (MWDA). The Seminar had highlighted the significant financial implications associated with waste management and the major investment required in both the short and long term.

The Executive Board was now requested to consider and approve the delegation of defined aspects of the Council's waste disposal functions to allow MWDA to procure contracts on behalf of Halton, the principles of which would be detailed in a formal Inter-Authority Agreement (IAA) with the MWDA. Members were also asked to consider and approve Halton's Waste Action Plan, which had been updated following the Members' Seminar. Further information was provided within the report regarding the IAA and the Waste Action Plan.

The Board considered a number of issues including:

- the responsibility of contractors to replace splitting bins;
- who green bins were to be delivered to and how, if they were not required by a resident, the Council would collect the bin if requested to do so;
- the fact that the policy previously agreed, of not taking side refuse, was being phased in gradually;
- how a further 20 "bring sites" were to be identified across the Borough; and
- the fact that recycling facilities were being incorporated into developments as part of the planning process.

Reason for Decisions

A formal partnership agreement with the MWDA was required in order for Halton to be included in the procurement of Waste Treatment Services and facilities by the MWDA.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

The options that had been considered, and had led to a decision to work in partnership with the MWDA, were detailed in previous reports presented to the Executive Board.

Implementation Date

Implementation was expected by September 2007, following consultation between relevant Officers and Elected Members.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Council, acting under the authority of the Relevant Powers and in accordance with the Partnership

Ethos, enter into an arrangement with the Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority (“MWDA”) for the discharge by the MWDA of the functions of the Council (in its capacity as Waste Disposal Authority) specified in this resolution (“the Arrangement”) to achieve the Purpose;

- (2) the Strategic Director – Environment, in consultation with the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy, the Portfolio Holder for Environment, Leisure and Sport, and the Portfolio Holder for Corporate and Policy, be authorised to take all actions and to make any decisions deemed appropriate in connection with and in the furtherance of the Arrangement (including entering into the Inter Authority Agreement referred to below), and any modifications to the Arrangement which may be agreed with MWDA from time to time;

- (3) in this resolution:

“the Relevant Powers” mean section 19 Local Government Act 2000, the Local Authorities (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2000 and all other enabling powers allowed by law;

“the Partnership Ethos” means that in the discharge of the Arrangement the Council and MWDA shall act in a spirit of openness and trust in their dealings with each other and shall mutually support and co-operate with each other to ensure the success and performance of the Arrangement;

“the Purpose” means achieving the provision of the procurement, creation and administration of the Principal Contracts which will facilitate the delivery of the Council’s waste management targets;

“the Principal Contracts” mean the contracts proposed to be entered into by MWDA and a contractor or contractors in relation to firstly, Waste Management and Recycling, and secondly, Resource Recovery;

“the Inter Authority Agreement” means the Inter Authority Agreement defined in paragraph (4);

- (4) “The Arrangement”:

the Council delegates to MWDA that part of its waste

disposal function as relates to the procurement of the subject matter set out in the Principal Contracts subject to the terms, restrictions and limitations contained or to be contained in a document entitled "Inter Authority Agreement" in respect of the procurement and management of the Principal Contracts, a draft of which has been produced to the Council;

- (5) the principles of the Waste Action Plan and the delivery of the pilot study contained within it be approved; and
- (6) the financial expenditure required to deliver the enhanced recycling services, as contained within Halton's Waste Action Plan, are considered following the monitoring of the pilot study, and during the budget setting process for 2008/09.

EXB21 LOCAL AUTHORITY CARBON MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment outlining the process for taking forward the Council's involvement in the Carbon Management Programme.

It was noted that, earlier in the year, the Council applied for, and was accepted onto, the Carbon Trust's Local Authority Carbon Management Programme (LACMP). This programme would guide the Council through a number of processes, which were set out in the report for the Board's consideration. The final step in the process was the development of a Carbon Management Strategy and Implementation Plan by March 2008 to reduce energy bills and carbon emissions over the next five years. In signing up to the programme, the Council had committed to specific terms and conditions as outlined in the report.

There were now a number of key steps to be taken. The initial step in the process was for the Council to develop a Project Plan setting out:

- what the Council wanted to get out of the programme;
- who needed to be involved;
- what the project would cover; and
- activities in the eleven month programme and when these would be completed by.

The Project Plan needed to be signed off by the

Executive Board and a copy was attached for consideration.

The Plan set a target of reducing the Council's carbon emissions by 33% by 2012. This was ambitious and, if it was to be achieved, would likely require some financial investment over the five-year period. However, the development of the Action Plan should lead to long term cost savings for the Authority. In particular, it was noted that the current remodelling work on Runcorn Town Hall provided an opportunity to be explored.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Carbon Management Project Plan be endorsed;
- (2) quarterly reports on progress be submitted to the Executive Board Sub-Committee and the Corporate Services Policy and Performance Board; and
- (3) on completion of the Action Plan, annual reports on progress be issued.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB22 JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY FOR ADULTS WITH PHYSICAL AND/OR SENSORY DISABILITIES 2007-2011 - KEY DECISION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director - Health and Community presenting a draft Physical and Sensory Disability (PSD) Joint Commissioning Strategy, for Adults with Physical and/or Sensory Disabilities, for adoption. The document set out the overarching strategy for the commissioning, design and delivery of services to people in Halton who were physically disabled (including those with sensory disabilities), their families and carers. It was noted that this was the first strategy to be produced for this group of people.

The strategy had been developed from consultation events involving all stakeholders and evidence from the Housing Needs Survey 2005. Managers and practitioners attended a workshop to further develop ideas that had emerged from consultation. In addition, a half-day action-planning event had been held in April, chaired by the Operational Director for Adults of working Age.

The policy implications and financial implications were outlined for the Board's consideration. As with any change programme, it was expected that the implementation

of the strategy would be met with resistance and objections. However, this would be managed by ensuring that all staff, service users and carers were fully informed of proposals and rationale, and by listening to and acting on their suggestions.

Reason for Decision

The strategy provided a focus for the commissioning of services for people with physical and sensory disabilities. The documents would facilitate better business planning for current and prospective provider organisations, and for the Council it would enhance and assure both quality and value for money in the provision of these services.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

Not applicable.

Implementation Date

It was intended to begin implementation of the strategy action plan immediately.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the joint strategy be adopted; and
- (2) the Physical and Sensory Disabilities Local Improvement Team (LIT) take responsibility for implementation of the strategy and monitoring of progress.

EXB23 CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE DIVISION WITHIN 2007/8

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community providing detailed information in relation to the proposals to develop and improve services within Adult Social Care through the use of capital resources.

In December 2006, the Department of Health issued guidance LASSL (2006) 2 outlining how Adult Social Services departments could access capital funding and the amount allocated. In Halton, Supported Capital Expenditure (Capital Grant) of £58,000 was allocated towards Adult Services in 2007/8. Other specific capital grants included the Mental Health Supported Capital Expenditure (SCE) grant for 2007/8 of £95,000. As the Council was Excellent under

CPA, it was able to use this grant for any capital purpose and alternative uses had therefore been identified. Additionally, a new ring-fenced capital grant to improve care homes of £150,000 had been introduced by the Department of Health for 2007/8.

It was noted that the total capital available for Adult Social Care was £303,000. Further details of how this money was to be allocated were outlined for the Board's consideration.

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to approve the Capital Programme for Adult Social Care within 2007/8 as outlined within the report.

PLANNING, TRANSPORTATION, REGENERATION AND RENEWAL PORTFOLIO

(NB Councillor McInerney declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being an employee of Halton Transport.)

EXB24 2007 DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT BILL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment outlining the key changes proposed within the 2007 draft Local Transport Bill and advising on the intended response to the Department for Transport on the proposal.

It was noted that, in May 2007, the Department for Transport had published detailed plans to improve the quality of local bus services in a document entitled "Strengthening Local Transport Delivery: The Draft Local Transport Bill". The proposals built on the extensive review that was carried out into bus services across the country detailed in "Putting Passengers First" (December 2006). The draft Bill was intended to empower local authorities to develop local solutions to the local transport challenges they faced, consistent with the devolutionary principles set out in the Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities".

The key proposals for Halton fell into three areas:

- improving the quality of local bus services;
- reforming local transport governance; and
- taking forward local road pricing schemes.

The proposed changes, and related comments and issues, were outlined for the Board's consideration.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the proposed changes facilitated by the draft Local Transport Bill be noted; and
- (2) the Operational Director – Highways, Transportation and Logistics, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, be authorised to submit comments to Government on the Draft Local Transport Bill, reflecting those contained within the report.

MINUTES ISSUED: 24th July 2007

CALL IN: 30th July 2007

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 30th July 2007

Meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.