

EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Executive Board on Thursday, 1 November 2007 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

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

Apologies for Absence: None.

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Wharton

Officers present: D. Johnson, I. Leivesley, A. McIntyre, G Meehan, D. Parr, D Tregea, G. Cook, L. Cairns and C. Lawley

Also in attendance: 2 press and 6 public

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER POWERS AND DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

EXB44 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 18th October 2007 were taken as read and signed as correct record.

LEADER'S PORTFOLIO

EXB45 APPLICATION FOR TWINNING GRANT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate and Policy outlining an application being made to the Twinning Grant Fund from the Halton Swimming Team requesting support for 25 members to visit Usti nad Labem between 10th and 13th November 2007. During the visit the members would compete in a swimming competition in the Ing. Vilem Protschke swimming pool in Usti nad Labem. A return visit from the swim team in Usti Nad Labem was being planned for August/September 2008.

The applicant had identified total costs of £6,825 and had requested £3,000 from the Town Twinning Budget; however, the Board noted that a grant of £2,500 would be in line with previous grant awards. If Members were to approve the project, the grant would be offered subject to a number

Action

of conditions as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That £2,500 be awarded to the Halton Swimming Club.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE PORTFOLIO

(NB Councillors Harris and Swain declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being governors of The Bankfield School and Halton High School respectively. Councillor Nelson declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being the Chair of Governors at The Grange School.)

EXB46 SECONDARY SCHOOL RE-ORGANISATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People providing a summary of the detailed consultation process undertaken on the initial proposals for the reorganisation of secondary school and secondary special school provision. The report provided a summary of the outcome of the first phase of consultation; identified the key issues raised; and outlined how the Local Authority, through the next phase of school organisation proposals, was addressing these issues.

A Cross Party Members Advisory Working Group had been established to:

- (1) consider the key themes that emerged from the consultation and how these could be addressed; and
- (2) evaluate the initial proposals and the alternative proposals put forward.

The Working Group had recommended that the revised proposals be considered and a further pre-statutory stage of consultation be undertaken, which was to commence on 2nd November and run to 7th December 2007. The recommendations made in respect of the 11 – 16 provision were outlined in detail for the Board's consideration. The Board were also advised on which proposals a statutory notice would be required.

It was advised that the possibility of a similar arrangement to that proposed for The Grange had been considered for Fairfield High School; however, due to the numbers involved, this was not feasible. In addition, Members considered:

- zoning;

- the possibility of facilitating visits to schools in other areas where Academies had been completed; and
- consultation arrangements.

The Portfolio Holder for Children and Young People thanked everyone who had taken part in the consultation to date, and it was unanimously

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the revised set of school organisation proposals contained at paragraph 3 of the report be approved as the basis for the next stage of consultation on secondary and special school reorganisation;
- (2) a further stage of pre-statutory consultation on the revised school organisation proposals be approved; and
- (3) the outcome of the second phase of the consultation process be reported to the Executive Board and, after due consideration, recommendations for consideration be put before Council on the 12th December 2007.

(NB Councillor Gerrard declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being an associate governor of Simms Cross School.)

EXB47 SCHOOLS CAUSING CONCERN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Children and Young People seeking agreement to a revised policy for Schools Causing Concern.

It was noted that Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlined new powers for a local authority to intervene, take action and provide support to schools causing concern. The Local Authority was currently consulting with schools on revision to its procedures for identifying and intervening in schools causing concern, with a view to a revised policy being submitted to the Executive Board later in the calendar year. During the intervening period, it was important that the Strategic Director had delegated powers to act if schools were already presenting concerns and the Board was asked to approve the delegation of these powers with immediate effect.

Members were advised that a small number of primary schools presented concerns to the Local Authority.

In particular, Simms Cross was currently in Special Measures. It was considered that steps needed to be taken to consult the Governing Body with a view to replacing it with an Interim Executive Board (IEB) and approval was sought to enable the Strategic Director to take the appropriate steps. It was considered that the IEB would allow the newly appointed Head Teacher to focus on improving teaching and learning in the School.

Reason for Decision

Strengthened powers of intervention to prevent school failure and under-performance were a key component of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*. Local Authorities were expected to demonstrate deployment of these powers where appropriate.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None.

Implementation Date

With immediate effect.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Strategic Director for Children and Young People be authorised to take all such actions as shall be necessary to give effect to the Council's powers and duties in relation to the education of children at Simms Cross Primary School;
- (2) steps be taken to consult on the replacement of the Governing Body of Simms Cross School with an Interim Executive Board, for a time period yet to be specified; and
- (3) the Strategic Director for Children and Young People be authorised generally to exercise the powers and duties provided to the Council under Part 4 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, and the Council be recommended to amend the Constitution accordingly.

CORPORATE SERVICES PORTFOLIO

EXB48 POLLING DISTRICTS/POLLING STATION REVIEW -
APPOINTMENT OF WORKING PARTY

The Board considered a report of the Chief Executive outlining the requirement of the Electoral Administration Act 2006 for all local authorities to review their polling districts, polling places and polling stations by the end of 2007.

It was noted that the last major review of polling districts/polling stations had taken place in 2003 with the Periodic Electoral Review. A further review was now required by 31st December 2007 and every four years following that. The main purpose of the review was to ensure that all residents had reasonable facilities for voting.

The consultation procedures were outlined for the Board's consideration. It was noted that, on completion of the consultation exercise, a report would be prepared for submission to a Member Working Party. The Working Party would make recommendations to Council where the final decision would be made.

RESOLVED: That a Working Party, consisting of 4 Labour, 2 Liberal Democrat and 1 Conservative Group Members, be established to undertake the review of polling districts and polling places, following consultation, as required by the Electoral Administration Act 2006.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE PORTFOLIO

EXB49 ADVANCING WELL STRATEGY

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community presenting both an Advancing Well Strategy and an action plan. These had been developed in consultation with a wide range of people and other key partners in order to support healthy ageing within the Borough.

The action plan identified a number of areas for development, responsibilities, consultation arrangements and resource implications, making it clearer about how the Authority could develop and fund the proposals. Subject to agreement, the Strategy would be launched at the future Alive and Kicking event planned for February 2008.

The Board noted the difficulties that could be experienced with health practitioners, which was an impediment to work such as this. However, it was advised that this was an over-arching Strategy that would feed into the Council's partners.

Members commended this excellent report, which

had a range of options to help reduce the potential for social inclusion, and had an emphasis on prevention.

RESOLVED: That the Strategy and action plan be agreed.

COMMUNITY PORTFOLIO

EXB50 TRAVELLERS - PROVISION OF TRANSIT SITE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Directors of Environment, and Health and Community, providing an update on the provision of a transit site and outlining feedback following consultation.

Since the Executive Board's meeting on 19th July 2007, the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board had considered the matter and made a number of recommendations. As a result of this, the current position with adjacent and nearby councils had been appraised and was set out for the Board's consideration.

Work on establishing the capital and revenue costs for a transit site had been progressed and detailed plans had been produced. Information was provided in respect of capital costs for work on land and buildings, and work was ongoing in respect of the management and operational costs of the site with the aim of revenue costs breaking even. In addition, a draft protocol had been developed and shared with the Police articulating and reaffirming the working arrangements between the two organisations and the commitment of the Police to utilise their powers to move on unauthorised incursions.

The next steps were outlined for the Board's consideration. Subject to approval, formal tenders would be sought for development of the site and a planning application would be submitted in early November.

RESOLVED: That the strategy and process outlined in paragraphs 4.1 to 4.4 of the report be agreed.

QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE PORTFOLIO

EXB51 CULTURE AND LEISURE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community regarding the Halton Regional Cultural Stakeholder Commentary and the Improvement and Development Agency's (IdeA's) validation

of the self-assessment framework “Towards an Excellent Service” (TAES) of the Culture and Leisure Services Department, which was part of the Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA). The process was carried out against a standard benchmark and was intended to:

- (a) promote closer alignment of national, regional and local cultural objectives;
- (b) strengthen and extend relationships between cultural agencies and local authorities; and
- (c) achieve better, more effective cultural provision from a more unified approach to strategic and improvement planning.

The Regional Commentary, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, was produced after desktop research; consideration of relevant strategies, plans and reports; and in-depth meetings with relevant staff within Culture and Leisure Services and the Corporate Policy Unit. Members were advised that, in general, it was a very positive Commentary identifying key strengths and areas for development.

The Board noted that the TAES framework provided Culture and Leisure Services with an approach to assessing the quality of its services and was beginning to be used widely by local authorities across the country. The self assessment was carried out in June 2007 and was then validated by the IDeA. From this, an objective report and an Action Plan for Improvement had been produced, attached at Appendix 2 to the report. Again, this report had been very positive.

Members noted that both pieces of work had identified areas of good practice and improvement that was felt worthy of being shared with a wider audience. To that end, the IDeA/DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) had commissioned a case study of Halton’s Culture and Leisure Services and had asked the Operational Director – Culture and Leisure Services to sit on the DCMS’s Cultural Services Improvement Project – Sounding Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the reports be received;
- (2) the Action Plan included in the TAES report be endorsed; and
- (3) implementation of the Action Plan be monitored by the Employment, Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

Minutes Issued: 9th November 2007

Call in: 16th November 2007

Any matter decided by the Executive Board may be called in no later than 16th November 2007

Meeting ended at 3.25 p.m.