

CORPORATE STRATEGY AND FINANCE

A record of decisions made by the Executive Member with responsibility for Corporate Strategy and Finance on:-

WEDNESDAY, 11TH APRIL, 2007

following consideration of the matters detailed below in the presence of:-

Councillor Morris	Executive Member Corporate Strategy and Finance
Councillor Critchley (as deputy for Councillor Rushton)	Major Opposition Spokesperson
Councillor Mrs. Ronson	Minor Opposition Spokesperson
Mr. S. Harriss	Chief Executive
Mr. S. Arnfield	Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. K. Davies	Director of Development and Regeneration
Ms. S. Crossley	Assistant Director Adults Services
Ms. C. James	Head of Strategic Projects
Ms. K. Warriner	Principal Policy Officer
Ms. J. Spencer	Head of Libraries
Mr. A. Jennings	Democratic Services Manager

76. VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR REVIEW

The Chief Executive submitted a report that highlighted a number of issues regarding a review of the Voluntary and Community Sector , particularly the Council's Voluntary Sector Grants Scheme , and sought approval to focus the Council's grant aid at a more local community level through area forums building on the grants already awarded through the area forums, including arrangements for some Borough wide projects and a potential one off contribution to the Big Bolton

Fund.

The review was being undertaken within both a policy and financial context in terms of the focus by Government on the relationship between the Government and the voluntary and community sector, in particular through the Treasury's Third Sector Review and proposals laid out in the recently published Strong and Prosperous Communities – Local Government White Paper, and as part of the Council's wider policy and financial context.

The report explained that there were three distinct elements to the review ;

- Wider role of the voluntary and community sector –the sector in Bolton was stable and strong but needed to develop locally to respond to the changing national agenda in particular regarding public service delivery.
- Examine financial support to the voluntary and community sector across Council departments – this was a complex piece of work that would encompass all areas of support including grants and commissioned services.
- Consideration of grant programmes including the Council's own Voluntary Sector Grants programme.

The Voluntary Sector Grants programme had been in existence for many years with voluntary, community and non profit-making organisations being able to apply for assistance towards projects that benefited the people of Bolton. There were two levels of grant aid available:

- Main grants of up to £2,500
- Small grants of up to £500 – the majority of which were awarded via the nine Area Forums towards small, locally-based projects. Small grants had been awarded since the start of Area Working and

an amount of £30,000 had been allocated over the past few years from the Voluntary Sector Grants pot to the Area Forums for this purpose based on an amount of £1,500 per ward. Some money was also available to support Borough wide schemes at up to £500 per award.

In addition to the Voluntary Sector Grants programme, the Council had one-year Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with ten revenue funded organisations that reflected the service provided by each organisation and the funding (approximately £621,000 for 2007/2008) granted by the Council.

Following an increase in the number of groups requesting the maximum grant of £5,000 the Voluntary Sector Grants programme had been over-subscribed in recent years. Consequently ,amendments had been made to the scheme in 2006 including a reduction in the maximum amount that could be awarded to £2,500 .

The report highlighted a number of key issues as part of the evaluation of the current position including ;

- Area forums – a large number of groups had been supported via the grants awarded by forums allowing members to support local groups in their areas and the area support officers undertook some elements of administration of the Voluntary Sector Grants Programme;
- Reduction of funds available – it was noted that the administration costs of the scheme were now disproportionate to the monies available through the programme ;
- Additional Grant Programme from other sources ;
- Bolton Community and Voluntary Service – the service offered advice and assistance and operated a number of grant schemes for other organisations .

The Corporate Strategy and Finance PDG had examined the options to streamline the Council's Voluntary Sector Grants Programme with a preferred focus on more locally based grants and increased scope for more local member involvement and considered that the best option was to continue and increase the level of grants via the area forums and that additional funds (£10,000) be distributed between the area forums.

The PDG also considered the need to make provision (£5,000) for activity of a more Borough wide nature or activity which covered more than one area forum. Potential arrangements for such applications would be provided as part of the wider arrangement for area forum grants.

The PDG considered a one off investment into the Big Bolton Fund endowment (up to £25,000) that would realise a more sustainable future for local grant making. The Big Bolton Fund was being developed by Bolton CVS to support sustainable grant making for the voluntary and community sector.

A number of guiding principles had been discussed by the PDG which would be considered in detail and reported back to Executive Member in due course including:

- Revised criteria ;
- Potential to raise the grant threshold, possibly up to £1,000 ;
- Arrangements for decision making and grant threshold in particular when considering applications that crossed a number of area forum boundaries – providing flexibility to allow applications to be judged on their merits ; and
- Monitoring - in particular the other sources of funding groups were in receipt of or applying for particularly via the Council.

The Executive Member AGREED –

- (i) to discontinue the voluntary sector grants programme and that £15,000 of the funds be distributed between the area forums to be allocated via their grants scheme ,subject to £5,000 being ring fenced to deal with applications of a borough wide nature or covering more than one forum area;**
- (ii) that further details will be provided to the Executive Member in due course regarding the arrangements for distributing area forum and Borough wide grants including criteria, grant threshold, decision making arrangements, monitoring and arrangements for any groups who have previously received grants on a regular basis;**
- (iii) that a one off contribution of £25,000 be made to the Big Bolton Fund ;and**
- (iv) to review the operation throughout the year in order to consider arrangements for future years.**

77. PROVISION OF LEGAL SERVICES TO REGISTERED SOCIAL LANDLORDS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report that informed the Executive Member that Bolton At Home had requested the Council's Legal Services section to provide legal advice/services in relation to domestic violence cases to Registered Social Landlords/Housing Action Trusts (RSL/HAT) with housing stock in the Bolton area.

It was explained that such services would include legal advice from any new referral to the conclusion of the case and any necessary advocacy in the County Court and include drafting of warnings, notices and legal papers and also appearance in the County Court on behalf of the RSL/HAT. Legal Services would represent the claimant landlord using the landlord's powers to tackle anti social behaviour under the various housing acts and the Anti Social Behaviour 2003 Act ; however they would not be representing the victim personally.

It was noted that ,in the past ,domestic violence had been treated by the court as Family Law jurisdiction and not Housing Law jurisdiction. The Community Legal Team had advised that it may be possible to take legal action (injunction/possession) under the tenancy conditions or section 153A of the Housing Act 1996. However ,this approach was, as yet, untried in Bolton County Court and Bolton At Home was aware of, and accepted, the risks of such an approach.

Case referrals to Legal Services were expected from mid April 2007 onwards.

The Executive Member AUTHORISED the Director of Legal and Democratic Services to provide ongoing legal services to Registered Social Landlords and Housing Action Trusts in the Borough area, in relation to legal work involving domestic violence.

78. REVIEW OF CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report that considered the updated Risk Management Strategy and Policy.

The policy was last reviewed by the Executive Member in December ,2005 and the Risk Management Strategy stated that the Strategy would ,in the future ,be reviewed every year .

Each of the documents approved in December ,2005 had been reviewed against a number of criteria:

- National guidance and best practice
- CPA requirements
- Practicality and fitness for purpose
- Experience in operation of the process
- Independent review from Internal Audit

and the Executive Member was informed of the following ;

Risk Management Policy Statement:

The statement was basically still relevant and no major changes were proposed. However, changes had been made to emphasise the opportunities for the Council that came from the process and not just the negative elements of the risk process.

Risk Management Strategy:

The strategy statement had been changed to better reflect the strategic nature of risk management and to emphasise its role in ensuring that the objectives and key aims of the organisation were met . Following consideration at the Council's Audit Committee the strategy now more expressly stated the requirement to include risk management in all partnership arrangements.

Role and Responsibilities:

The role and responsibilities had been amended to reflect changes in titles and to strengthen the roles of departmental PMG members as risk champions.

Risk Management Process:

Minor changes had been made to the process to fit in with changes to the Council's Corporate Business Planning Process (CBPP).

The revised documents were attached as appendices to the report .

The report concluded that ,overall ,risk management had worked well in the Authority and external review had reported favourably on it. The strategy, processes and how they had operated over the last two years had been subject to independent review by internal audit .

The report had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 30th March ,2007.

The Executive Member AGREED - the Corporate Risk Management Strategy and Policy ,as detailed in the appendices to the report .

79. CORPORATE RISKS

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report which informed the Executive Member of the corporate risks as identified by the Council's Executive Management Team .

The process involved a thorough review of the existing risks to decide whether they were still relevant and to consider any new risks. New risks were considered under the STORM methodology which the Council had adopted. This identified risks under a range of headings:

- Political
- Financial
- Environmental
- Social
- Managerial/professional
- Legislative
- Physical
- Competitive/Contractual
- Technological
- Customer/citizen

The result of this process was that one of the old risks had been managed down to an acceptable level and therefore removed from the monitoring process. Five risks remained and risk management action plans for these were in place.

The five remaining risks were as follows:-

- That the Council did not achieve the longer term recycling rates and did not adequately reduce the

residual waste volumes;

- Gaps in the local employment market left skills shortages in the local economy;
- External funding received by the Council each year reduced in the future;
- Sustaining the level of investment in Bolton Town Centre in the long term; and
- Issues on problematic sites.

In addition to the above three further risks had been identified:

- Failure to be fully prepared for government investment in schools ;
- Potential equal pay claims ; and
- Disruption of the implementation of new pay structure .

The lead officers for each of the new risks had been identified and risk management action plans would be prepared for each new risk showing the actions planned to negate each risk.

The report had also been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 30th March ,2007 and the Executive Member indicated that the issue should also be considered via an appropriate policy development group in the future.

The Executive Member AGREED the corporate risks as identified by the Executive Management Team.

80. LOCAL AUTHORITY BUSINESS GROWTH INITIATIVE

The Director of Development and Regeneration submitted a report that requested the Executive Member's approval to the release of part of the funding achieved through the success of the Local Authority Business Growth Initiative for promotional & marketing initiatives and activities to promote Bolton .

The Executive Member was reminded of the major development programme commencing in the Town Centre and it was considered crucial to promote the Town Centre as much as possible in the short to medium term in order to try and retain retail activity and visitor footfall during this period of development. Consequently, it was proposed that £100,000 of funding be made available from the LABGI resources for an Events Officer to be located within the Marketing & Communications Agency for a two-year period and to fund promotional events and activities within the Town Centre. It was anticipated that the Officer would cost around £50,000 over the two-year period leaving a further £50,000 to fund activities and events.

The Council had received £1.495M in Local Authority Business Growth Incentive monies for 2006/07 and £1M of this had been allocated as part of the 2007/08 Revenue Budget with the remainder helping to support the Council's Balances . The proposals now submitted would be funded from part of the balance of £495,000 which would lead to the overall Balances being lower but still above the minimum recommended. The Director of Corporate Resources has been consulted and was supportive of the proposal.

The Executive Member APPROVED the use of £100,000 of LABGI resources to fund an Events Officer in the Marketing & Communication Agency for a two year period and to promote events within Bolton Town Centre to encourage footfall within the Town Centre .

**81. BIG LOTTERY COMMUNITY LIBRARIES
PROGRAMME : BID FOR THE BRIGHTMET
LIBRARY**

The Director of Adult Services submitted a report which explained the criteria for an application to the Big Lottery Community Libraries Fund and the rationale behind a bid for funding to replace the current library service point in Brightmet.

The Community Library Fund was a competitive programme, with £80million available to bid against and the main criterion was to fund projects which were more than traditional library services.

A local Health Centre (the Alistair Ross Centre) was undergoing a programme of redevelopment to incorporate a wide range of services across the Health and Social Care sectors and become a Primary Care Resource Centre (PCRC) and it was considered that this site had the potential to accommodate a community library as an extension to the building.

The existing library had declining usage owing to its poor location, inappropriate facilities and poor image. Consequently, the new library would be located at the heart of the community, within easy reach of local schools, in close proximity to a supermarket and a variety of local retail outlets. There were also regular buses along the road on which the library would be located and the centre would have substantial parking facilities, including dedicated disabled spaces.

The projected total project cost was £1,200,559 and the revenue costs would transfer from the current library ,although there may be increased running costs for the building due to the nature of the lease and discussion with the PCT and the Centre was continuing on this.

It was also explained that ,as the application had to be submitted by the end of March,2007, the Director of Adults Services was seeking the Executive Member's retrospective approval . A decision on the Council's application was likely in September ,2007 at which time the Council would make its definitive commitment .

The Executive Member gave retrospective APPROVAL to the submission of the bid as now detailed.

82. BOLTON, ROCHDALE, HEYWOOD AND MIDDLETON (BRAHM) LIFT PROJECT- LEVEL OF BOLTON COUNCIL SIGN UP TO THE STRATEGIC

PARTNERING AGREEMENT

The Chief Executive submitted a report that updated the Executive Member on the latest developments in the Bolton, Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton Local Improvement Finance Trust (BRAHM LIFT) programme ; the role that Bolton Council was playing in these developments and requested authority for the Director of Legal and Democratic Services, in consultation with the appropriate Executive Member , to sign up as a Level 2 signatory (once he was satisfied with the legal documentation) to the Strategic Partnering Agreement that would govern BRAHM LIFT.

The Executive Member was reminded that ,following publication of the NHS 10 Year Plan in 2000, the Government identified the Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT) as the procurement vehicle for improving and developing local primary and community health care services. LIFT was a joint venture between the Department of Health, Partnerships for Health, Primary Care Trusts, other public sector stakeholders and the private sector, resulting in a 25 year public private partnership.

Bolton Council had entered the LIFT process as a 'Level 1' stakeholder in BRAHM LIFT meaning that the Council would have the opportunity to take lease plus arrangements in relation to specific LIFT schemes, if appropriate.

However, it was considered that, in order to retain an influence on the Strategic Partnership Board following the establishment of the LIFT Company, it would be beneficial for Bolton Council to sign up to the Strategic Partnering Agreement as a Level 2 stakeholder.

It was explained that the key difference in Level 1 and Level 2 sign up was that the risk of the procurement becoming time elapsed for the Council ,should it participate in future schemes ,was greater if it did not sign the Strategic Partnering Agreement (Level 2). Furthermore, there was a reduced scope to have influence on the make up and direction of future schemes through being a participant on the Strategic Partnering Board.

The Executive Member NOTED :

- (i) the contents of the report relating to the current developments of the BRAHM LIFT programme ;and AGREED**
- (ii) that Bolton Council should be a Level 2 signatory to the Strategic Partnering Agreement providing that the legal documentation is completed to the satisfaction of the Director of Legal and Democratic Services ;and**
- (iii) that the Head of Strategic Projects as the Bolton Council representative on the BRAHM LIFT Shadow Strategic Board and its successor Board be authorised to take the necessary steps to facilitate Bolton Council's sign up at Level 2.**