

CORPORATE RESOURCES

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

TUESDAY, 31st MARCH, 2009

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

Councillor Mrs Thomas	Executive Member Corporate Resources
Councillor R. Allen	Major Opposition Spokesperson
Councillor Hayes	Minor Opposition Spokesperson
Mr. S. Arnfield	Director of Corporate Resources
Mr. A. Eastwood	Director of Legal and Democratic Services
Mr. A. Donaldson	Assistant Director
Ms. L. Ridsdale	Assistant Director
Ms. C. Hyams	Assistant Director
Mr. J. Rolands	Assistant Director
Mr. R. Guenther	Assistant Head of Policy and Improvement
Mr. J. Midlane	Head of Internal Audit and Risk
Ms. A. Mason	Energy Strategy Manager
Mr. A. Jennings	Democratic Services

60. MONITORING OF EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISIONS

The Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report which monitored the progress of decisions within the portfolio of the Executive Member Corporate Resources.

The Executive Member Corporate Resources NOTED the progress of the decisions taken.

61. CENTRAL DEPARTMENTS THREE YEAR PLAN

The Chief Executive and Directors of Corporate Resources and Legal and Democratic Services submitted a joint report that introduced the Central Departments Three Year Strategic Plan. The departments played a key role in providing strategic leadership to the Council and a range of key corporate policy areas; providing strategic and operational support to a number of programmes and delivering a range of front line services.

The plan would be performance managed every 6 months by the Executive Member and more regularly at Departmental Management Teams.

The key high-level success measures for the central departments were as follows:-

- supporting Members and partners to ensure effective delivery the key local priorities and the 80 outcomes in the Community Strategy 3 Year Plan; and
- effective delivery of the Council's value for money, improvement and transformation agenda, leading to better outcomes and value for money.

The Executive Member APPROVED the Central Departments Three Year Strategic Plan for 2009/12.

62. CENTRAL DEPARTMENTS PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD QUARTER 3 2008/09

The Chief Executive and Directors of Corporate Resources and Legal and Democratic Services submitted a joint report that provided the Executive Member with an overview on the performance data and financial outturn for the central departments for the third quarter of 2008/9.

The key findings were as follows :-

- key financial, HR and customer service outcomes were largely on track;

- the overwhelming majority of tasks and targets set out in Service Improvement Action Plans (SIAPs) were on track;
- the majority of targets in the revenues and benefits service for quarter three had been met or exceeded; and
- the three central departments were in good financial health, with revenue and capital expenditure largely on track, healthy balances and Gershon efficiency targets being exceeded;

However, challenges remained in some areas and the Executive Member was requested to work with the respective Directors in the three central departments to deliver the recommended improvement actions contained in the report as follows :-

- whilst customer service was good and improving, there was scope to further strengthen the overall rate of responses to complaints and the rate of telephone calls answered within standard;
- whilst levels of sickness absence had fallen in Legal and Democratic and Corporate Resources, efforts were needed to ensure that this downward trend continued. A rise in Chief Executive's needed to be reversed in the remaining quarters;
- whilst high performing overall, quarter 3 targets around answering calls and waiting times for cashiers were missed in the Contact Centre / One Stop Shop. Updated technology had now been implemented but efforts were needed to make sure this was back on track for the remaining quarters;
- benefit fraud investigations, prosecutions and recovery of overpayments were below target. This was due to capacity issues and high levels of overpayments in quarter 3. Services were now back to full staffing and

performance was predicted to catch up in quarter 4;
and

- whilst revenue spend was on track, there was a risk that rising fuel costs would lead to additional pressures as existing contracts were running out. Officers needed to ensure this was managed appropriately by good housekeeping (e.g. continuing to reduce energy use) and getting the best energy deals where possible when renegotiating.

The Executive Member AGREED to work with Directors to deliver the recommended improvement actions contained in the report.

63. DATA QUALITY – ANNUAL REVIEW AND POLICY

The Chief Executive submitted a report that updated the Executive Member on the findings of KPMG's 2008 review of data quality in Bolton and proposed a refreshed Data Quality Policy for Bolton Council.

Data quality was assessed annually by the Council's external auditors KPMG. This review consisted of an overall assessment of the Council's broad approach and a detailed audit of a number of performance indicators.

The Executive Member was reminded that

- Bolton was one of only a few councils nationwide to have been awarded a top score of 4 on data quality in 2007 and 2008; and
- Bolton had not had any performance indicators deemed unreliable ('qualified') by auditors for the last six years.

Following the latest annual audit by KPMG Bolton was awarded a top score of 4 overall, with top scores for each of the individual themes covered.

The report outlined two recommendations to further strengthen the arrangements and progress made against these recommendations was set out in appendix 1.

In response to one of the recommendations made in the report it was proposed to refresh the Data Quality Policy, which was originally agreed by the Executive Member HR, Diversity and Performance on 13 June 2007.

This was necessary due to changes in the national performance framework for councils, which gave local authorities more flexibility to focus on local priorities.

Efforts would continue to make sure data continued to be collated and used efficiently and effectively to drive service improvements and better outcomes for local people. Key activities included:

- refreshing the data quality policy to reflect the new national and local performance framework;
- sharing the data quality policy and the refreshed approach with the Bolton Lead Agencies Group for endorsement to ensure partners continued to be signed up;
- refreshing the in-house performance management system in time for first quarter performance management reporting in 2009/10;
- undertaking a risk assessment against all indicators used as part of the local performance framework, with clear action plans to address any issues identified; and
- identifying any additional training needs arising from the new framework and addressing these proportionally.

The Executive Member AGREED -

(i) to endorse the external audit report on the Council's approach to data quality (appendix 3);

(ii) to note the progress made against the action plan in response to the external audit recommendations (appendix 1);

(iii) to endorse the proposed way forward and next steps in terms of further strengthening data quality (paragraph 4 in the report);

(iv) the proposed updated Data Quality Policy for the Council (appendix 2); and

(v) to receive regular updates on further strengthening the Council's approach to data quality.

64. ENERGY UPDATE

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report that update the Executive Member with respect to the legislation relating to the Carbon Reduction Commitment and changes made in the assessment of water charges and the introduction of Energy Performance Certificates and Display Energy Certificates which would have a financial impact on the Council

The report also sought approval for the method by which energy will be procured for the Council's operational portfolio and street lighting.

The Carbon Reduction Commitment (CRC) which was to be phased in over three years was due to start in April 2010, and was a mandatory emission trading scheme which formed part of a wider European initiative to cut carbon emissions. The scheme would be administered by the Environment Agency.

During the three-year introductory phase, set to commence in April 2010, all allowances would be sold at a fixed predicted price of £12/tonne of CO₂. The first sale would take place in April 2011.

At the end of each year, the Council's performance would be summarised in league tables. Positioning in the league tables would be determined by a number of factors in order to identify the best and worst performers in terms of both carbon

emissions and reduction.

The Executive Member was reminded that the regulatory body of the Water Industry (Ofwat) temporally reintroduced the facility for claiming retrospective refunds (for up to 6 years) on errors in water bills that were calculated on rateable value.

A total of 72 appeals were submitted to United Utilities and 67% were successful. A total refund of £380,454 was achieved and a potential consultants bill of £95,114 avoided by the work having been undertaken in house. The bulk of appeals were for schools but administration buildings benefited by £97,000.

Corporate Property Services had also identified a further opportunity from which it was hoped would secure a further £78,000.

Furthermore, United Utilities (UU) had made significant changes in the way they charged their non-household measured customers for the surface water and highways drainage. The changes came into effect from April 2008.

From this date UU began to move customers to a charge based on the drained area of their premises instead of the rateable value. In essence this shifted the emphasis from charges made on internal areas of buildings to charges made on site area.

The charges would be phased in over 3 years. In the first year one third of the new charges would replace one third of the existing charges. This would be repeated in years 2 and 3.

This could result in an increase in costs amounting to approximately £450,000 across all sites with schools, sports grounds and car parks being the most significantly affected, (although this may be reduced to some extent once the site areas were corrected).

To re-measure the sites required significant input and as part of a group of AGMA Councils the Director had complained to UU that the measurement of site area had been carried out negligently and the introduction of the new charges should be

deferred until areas could be verified.

UU had now agreed to provide Corporate Property Services with a spreadsheet listing all of sites with the necessary information for officers to check their measurements.

The Executive Member was reminded that Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation (YPO) had been appointed to tender and procure the Council's energy supplies.

Eon Energy was successful in procuring both the electricity and gas supplies for all of the Council's operational portfolio and street light contracts.

The Council's contract for electricity was fixed until 31st October, 2009 (including street lighting) and the gas contract was fixed until the 31st May, 2010.

However, due to the recent drop in energy prices YPO were recommending that electricity contracts be taken now for the November, 2009 to October, 2010 period and were conducting a fixed term contract with Npower.

The Executive Member NOTED the challenges facing the Council and the financial implications of Carbon Reduction Commitment, the Water Industry (Surface water charges) and the introduction of Energy Performance Certificates and Display Energy Certificates and AGREED the ongoing use of Yorkshire Purchasing Organisation to tender and procure Bolton Council's gas and electricity supplies.

65. ANTI-FRAUD AND CORRUPTION STRATEGY

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted the revised Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy and Fraud Response Plan.

In reviewing the existing Anti-Fraud and Corruption Strategy a variety of research was undertaken:

- legislation and regulation;
- best practice;
- professional guidance and advice;
- Greater Manchester Anti-Fraud Group;
- Greater Manchester Chief Internal Auditors Group;
- experience of using the existing policy; and
- CPA and CAA

Based upon the above research the revised strategy had been brought together and was attached as an appendix to the report. There were no fundamental changes to the existing policy but the document took account of some revised policies relating to ICT.

In addition to the strategy a Fraud Response Plan had been produced, which was a guide to aid managers when fraud or corruption was suspected. This would ensure that all issues were investigated properly and in a consistent way.

The report had been agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 17th March, 2009 and would be forwarded to the Executive.

The Executive Member AGREED the report for submission to the Executive.

66. ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING POLICY

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted the updated anti – money laundering policy.

The report had been agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 17th March, 2009 and would be forwarded to the Executive.

The Executive Member AGREED the report for submission to the Executive.

67. CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY AND REVISED CORPORATE RISKS

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report that detailed the revised corporate risk management policy and revised corporate risks as identified by EMT.

The report had been agreed by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 17th March, 2009 and would be forwarded to the Executive.

The Executive Member AGREED the report for submission to the Executive.

68. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HR/OD REVIEW – TRANSACTIONAL HR

The Chief Executive submitted a report which described the principal transactional HR functions, largely contained within the HR Shared Service Centre (HRSSC), together with proposals to improve the efficiency of the service and enable it to better respond to customer need and emerging organisational priorities

The HR Shared Service Centre was established in 2003 to deliver efficiencies in HR administration through “economies of scale” and to achieve greater standardisation and consistency of approach between council departments.

The centralisation of HR administration had achieved a number of benefits and improvements including :-

- improved the consistency of practices between each department;
- the standardisation of relevant letters, forms and other templates;
- improved compliance with relevant policies and procedures; and
- the release of administrative activity from expensive HR professionals to free up their time to focus on more strategic, value added activities.

A post implementation review of the HRSSC against the original business case justification had been undertaken and had established that :-

- the planned economies of the HRSSC had not been achieved; the service was now around 30% more expensive than the projected cost;
- the departmental customer base was less satisfied with the quality and consistency of the processes now than they were before the HRSSC was established and considered the service too removed from operations to respond proactively to their requirements;
- significant duplication had arisen in the process of checking and processing employee records between the HRSSC, departmental HR and payroll administration teams;
- improvements could be made to all processes to improve efficiency through greater data quality and ownership from line managers; and
- the job design for HRSSC staff was poor. The removal of the centre from HR operations could have contributed to low staff morale and contributed to a high turnover rate and high sickness records. The HRSSC had the highest sickness record of the HR/OD function.

Consequently, it was proposed that the HRSSC be moved from a centralised to dispersed delivery model, to maintain a consistent approach to HR administration but improve the efficiency of service provision and responsiveness to customer demand.

Under this arrangement the administrators would move to be located with the relevant service or customer interface point. Those managing HR processes would, however, continue to be managed by a corporate HR lead.

Additionally, the new delivery model for the HRSSC would release resources to re-direct some administrative resources to other priorities within the HR/OD services :- viz

- the creation of a new safer employment team, which would be responsible for processing and maintaining CRB checks and phasing in ISA registration;
- the creation of a corporate resources team, which would be responsible for supporting the recruitment and resourcing manager to manage redeployment issues proactively through ongoing analysis of actual and potential groups of staff at risk of redundancy and close working with managers and HR teams to identify and manage opportunities;
- monitor and maintain consistent quality standards of agreed templates and documents relating to recruitment and resourcing across the Council;
- support to the team of equal pay analysts who were collating and processing information to support the claims the Council was responding to at Tribunal; and
- support to the pay and grading project which was currently resourcing administrative support through the use of Agency staff

The outline implementation plan for the new model was described at Appendix B.

All staff with permanent contracts of employment would be placed within the new structure in accordance with the corporate restructure principles. The following vacancies would, however be deleted from the current HRSSC establishment:

- 1 x PO 10 Manager (Currently covered by a secondment which was due to end); and
- 2 x scale 2/3 administrator

The Executive Member AGREED – subject to the conclusion of satisfactory consultation with the Trades Unions and the agreement of the Executive Member Human Resources and Diversity the change from a centralised to dispersed delivery model for the HR Shared Service Centre as detailed in the report submitted.

69. UPDATE ON BOROUGHWIDE VOLUNTARY SECTOR GRANTS

The Chief Executive submitted a report that provided an update on the decisions made by the Executive Member for Corporate Resources on the award of grants to groups covering more than three Forum areas and outlined arrangements for the award of borough wide grants during 2009/10.

A total of £45,000 had been devolved to Area Working with the purpose of making grants available to voluntary sector groups through the Area Forums and on a borough wide basis. The sum of £2,000 had been devolved to each ward and each Area Forum could award grants to groups providing a benefit in their areas. The sum of £5,000 had been allocated for grant applications which covered three or more Area Forums. Decisions on boroughwide grant applications had been delegated to the Executive Member for Corporate Resources. The total sum for 2008/9 was £5058.23 which included carry forward from 2007/8 of £58.23.

The awards were outlined in the report and indicated a small overspend of £39 which would be picked up by next year's allocation.

The total number of grants awarded was 21 and the 2008/9 allocation had been expended on these awards.

The Executive Member Corporate Resources NOTED the report.

70. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM) TENDER AWARD

The Director of Corporate Resources submitted a report that provided details of the evaluation to select a preferred supplier for the replacement CRM system following the formal tender exercise.

The Executive Member AGREED - That Lagan Technologies Ltd be selected as the preferred supplier for their CRM system, subject to a satisfactory contract being agreed and that the option to enter into a “site licence” be considered and that ,if this proves to offer better Value for Money, then permission be granted to the Director of Corporate Resources to contract on this basis.

71. HR/OD REVIEW : OCCUPATIONAL SAFETY AND HEALTH RESTRUCTURE

The Chief Executive submitted a report that informed the Executive Member of the proposed restructure for Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) support following the recent HR/OD Review and its recommendation to implement a specialist team for OSH.

It was explained that the restructure would also allow for the Council to be adequately supported in respect of OSH advice, with regard to statutory requirements, effective risk management and in alignment with corporate aims and key strategic priorities.

The proposed organisational structure was contained in Appendix 3 to the report.

The restructured service would be achievable within the current budget provision) with some posts continuing to be supported by income generation through service level agreements .

Grades for the revised positions within the structure had been, or were currently being, evaluated in respect of the Pay and Grading Review, although the restructure had taken account of this.

It was proposed to implement the restructured service on 1st April ,2009, subject to approval and job evaluations as part of the Pay and Grading Review.

Existing staff within the service would be ring-fenced to positions which accounted for at least 80% of their existing role. It was noted that no staff would be displaced by the process and vacant positions, some of which were currently delivered via agency staff, would be recruited in line with corporate policy.

The Executive Member AGREED- subject to the agreement of the Executive Member Human Resources and Diversity the establishment of the new structure for OSH specialist services and endorsed the implementation arrangements, subject to job evaluation as part of the Pay and Grading Review.

72. NEW GOVERNANCE FOR REGISTRATION SERVICE

Further to the Executive Member's meeting on 20th January, 2009 the Director of Legal and Democratic Services submitted a report that sought the Executive Member's approval for the change to New Governance for the Registration Service.

The Executive Member was reminded that the white paper 'Civil Registration: Vital Change (2002)' set out the agenda for a modern, effective and high quality registration service.

Consequently, it was proposed that local authorities should be given responsibility for delivering the local registration service and that all statutory staff should become local authority employees. In December 2007 all staff of the registration service became local authority employees and the local authority was now able to review how, where and when its registration services were delivered.

The report considered the present registration service and how it could be improved and streamlined to meet future needs and demands of the people of Bolton and ,in particular, examined the following :-

- Hours of opening;
- Hours staff worked;
- Staff establishment;

- Services offered;
- Service delivery points;
- Staffing structures;
- Out of hour's service;
- Re naming of job titles; and
- Improved web site and links to stakeholders and partners

The new structure for the Registration Service would enable the service to be more customer focused and flexible as all staff would be multi tasking. It would allow flexibility in the delivery of the Registration Services in Bolton allowing the service to respond quickly to demand which the service was unable to do at the moment as all principle officers could only use their own registers, certificates and stock. This meant that if they were not able to move locations quickly as all their registers, certificates and stock needed to move with them taking up valuable appointment time and making services very inflexible.

The report also provided details with respect to approval requirements; process for seeking approval for the new scheme and consultation and representations.

The new staffing structure was appended at Appendix 1.

The Executive Member AGREED- subject to the agreement of the Executive Member Human Resources and Diversity to the adoption of the new governance arrangements and the submission to the Registrar General.

CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

The background papers and reports in relation to the following items were considered confidential as defined in paragraph 3 and 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 and that it be deemed that, in all the circumstances of each case, the public interest in their exemption outweighs the public interest in their disclosure.

73. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT SECRETARIAL/ADMINISTRATIVE RESTRUCTURE

The Chief Executive submitted a report that outlined the proposed restructure of the secretarial/administrative arrangements across the new Chief Executive's Department.

The retirement of the Assistant Chief Executive and the move of the Assistant Director Democratic Services to Children's Services BSF Programme had created efficiencies for the department resulting in capacity within the secretarial/PA support.

The proposal was to create one team of secretarial/PA support with a ratio of approximately 0.5 FTE per chief officer with additional capacity to work across as one generic team. The team would be managed by a Policy Officer in the Policy and Performance Team. The new structure was detailed in appendix 3.

The Executive Member AGREED- subject to the agreement of the Executive Member Human Resources and Diversity the Staffing structure for secretarial/ PA arrangements in the Chief Executive's Department.

74. WRITE OFF OF UNCOLLECTABLE DEBT

The Executive Member AGREED the write offs as detailed in the report.