

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CABINET COMMITTEE

26 OCTOBER 2011

SUBJECT	POLICY UNIT
WARD/S AFFECTED	ALL
REPORT OF	CHIEF EXECUTIVE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER	COUNCILLOR STEVE FOULKES
KEY DECISION	YES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is for the Cabinet Committee to consider the principle of the establishment of a dedicated Policy Unit working directly to myself and the establishment of a new post of Head of Policy Unit.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Corporate Governance Cabinet Committee authorise the Chief Executive to establish a Policy Unit through in the first instance, secondment of existing staff.
- 2.2 That the Corporate Governance Cabinet Committee authorise the Chief Executive to appoint a Head of Policy Unit.
- 2.3 That further discussions take place on the precise role of the Policy Unit and the ability to take into account perspectives from Departments across the Council.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 The reason for these recommendations is to respond to the findings of the AKA Report on Corporate Governance and to strengthen the Council's existing arrangements for the development and co-ordination of policy.

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Cabinet on 22 September 2011 considered a report by AKA into the Council's Corporate Governance arrangements.
- 4.2 At a meeting of the Employment and Appointments Committee held on 29 September it was agreed that the Cabinet Committee should be asked to consider the principle of the establishment of a dedicated Policy Unit and the establishment of a new post of Head of Policy Unit working directly to myself.
- 4.3 The development, co-ordination and implementation of policy is a critical function of any local authority. The policy function sits at the heart of setting the authority's future direction and must ensure that the authority is aware of and is responding to changing circumstances whether as a result of new legislation, social or economic changes or whatever other reason. It is also critical that we ensure that when we agree to introduce new policies that they are appropriately implemented and that their impact is monitored and evaluated.

- 4.4 It is suggested that the primary responsibilities of the new Policy Unit would be to ensure that the Authority is aware of and responds to changing circumstances. The Policy Unit would also be responsible for the development and co-ordination of policy work across the Council. A major element of this work would be the ongoing development of the Council's Corporate Plan which is the Authority's foremost policy document. The Policy Unit would also take the lead on a number of other major policy initiatives including the Council's Child Poverty Strategy.
- 4.5 Current thinking is that in the first instance the Policy Unit should be established by the incorporation of existing officers currently working directly to me on policy issues but that other officers elsewhere in the Authority be seconded to the Unit. I think that it would also be appropriate for the Policy Unit to be part of the rotation for the Authority's Graduate Trainees.
- 4.6 It is also proposed that the Unit be headed by a new post entitled Head of Policy Unit.
- 4.7 The establishment of the dedicated Policy Unit is an important element in the Council's response to the AKA Report. I would therefore welcome the Cabinet Committee's views on this matter.
- 5.0 **RELEVANT RISKS**
- 5.1 In the light of the AKA Report, it is essential that the Council's capacity to develop and co-ordinate policy is improved.
- 6.0 **OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**
- 6.1 In the first instance the only option for the creation of a dedicated Policy Unit was through the use of existing staff.
- 7.0 **CONSULTATION**
- 7.1 Consultation on the development of policies and initiatives will be undertaken and the Policy Unit will liaise with the Communications and Policy Engagement Team to ensure that it is dealt with appropriately.
- 8.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**
- 8.1 The development of policy will have implications for the above groups and it is important that their needs and views are fully taken account of in the development of new policies.
- 9.0 **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS – FINANCIAL**
- 9.1 It is anticipated that the Policy Unit would be created through the use of existing staff and resources however there will be a financial implication as a result of the creation of the new post of Head of Policy Unit.
- 10.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**
- 10.1 The legal implications of new policy initiatives will have to be given careful consideration.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 The equalities implications of new policy initiatives will have to be given careful consideration.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The carbon reduction implications of new policy initiatives will have to be given careful consideration.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The planning and community safety implications of new policy initiatives will have to be given careful consideration.

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