



**MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE held on Wednesday 12 September 2012  
at Fire Service Headquarters, Winsford at 10 a.m.**

**PRESENT:** Councillors J Joyce (Chair), D Brickhill, L Jones, J Leather, G Merry, S Nelson, B Rudd, C Thorley and D Topping.

**PART 1 – MATTERS CONSIDERED IN PUBLIC**

**1 PROCEDURAL MATTERS**

**A APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Councillor Kerr-Brown.

**B DECLARATION OF MEMBERS INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of Members interests.

**C MINUTES OF THE POLICY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That

**the Minutes of the meeting of the Policy Committee held on 20 June 2012  
be confirmed as a correct record.**

**E MINUTES OF THE CLOSURE OF ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE MEETING**

**RESOLVED:** That

**the Minutes of the meeting of the Closure of Accounts Committee held  
on 20 June 2012 be confirmed as a correct record.**

**2 UPDATED CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS AND CONSULTATION  
STRATEGIES**

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications introduced the report which provided details of the revised Corporate Communications Strategy and the Consultation and Engagement Strategy to cover the period from 2012 - 2015. The report highlighted the key changes to each of the strategies and Members approval was sought.

The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that as the two publications both fell due for review this year they had been updated at the same time to improve consistency and clarity in advance of the Authority's

next round of major consultation over its next Integrated Risk Management Plan.

The key issues and influences that had shaped the changes to the strategies were highlighted. The Head of Planning, Performance and Communications explained that there were three main issues that the Communications Strategy had been updated to address:

- Changes to the traditional media landscape
- Growth of Social Media
- Financial constraints due to the cuts in public sector finances

The Corporate Communications Strategy contained a number of proposals to address these issues and improve internal and external communications.

The updated Consultation and Engagement Strategy clarified the revised expectations on the Service in light of the Government's reform of public services and the development of the Localism agenda. The strategy included revised principles and processes and a matrix to highlight how the consultation approaches would be varied according to the type of engagement being carried out.

Members discussed the revised strategies and in particular the need to adapt to the changes in the communications environment. Overall Members agreed that the revised strategies provided clear guidance on the approach and principles that the Service would follow to improve both internal and external communications and consultation processes over the next three years and thanked the Officers involved in the production of these documents.

**RESOLVED: That**

**[1] the Corporate Communications Strategy 2012-2015 be approved; and**

**[2] the Consultation and Engagement Strategy 2012-2015 be approved.**

**3 RUNCORN HEALTHY HEARTS GYM**

The Head of Community Safety presented this report to Members which sought Members approval for additional funding for the Halton Healthy Hearts project. Members had previously approved funding of £122,000 to support the refurbishment and alteration of an auxiliary building at Runcorn Community Fire Station in partnership with Warrington and Halton NHS Foundation Trust and Halton Housing to provide a free to use Community Gym.

Following approval of funding the Service went through a competitive tendering process and the five tenders received were all over budget. Amendments to the plans which resulted in moving the location of the toilet/shower facilities in the gym had reduced the costs, however there was still a shortfall of £22,546.

Members discussed the content of the report and supported the request for the additional funding for this project. There were a number of points raised which included ensuring that specifications/costings were as accurate as possible before bidding for funding in future and incorporating a contingency arrangement into agreements with partners.

The Chief Fire Officer recommended to Members that tolerance levels be built into funding bids as a contingency for the Service to give more flexibility to deal with the impact of internal and external changes to projects.

**RESOLVED: That**

- [1] additional funding for the Runcorn Healthy Hearts Gym project of £22,546, with a tolerance level up to a maximum of £25,000, be approved**

**PART 2 – BUSINESS TO BE DISCUSSED IN PRIVATE**

**NONE**