

URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board held on Wednesday, 25 November 2009 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), Balmer, P. Blackmore, E. Cargill, Hodgkinson, Leadbetter, Nolan, Rowe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Morley and Murray

Absence declared on Council business:None

Officers present: M. Noone, C. Halpin, G. Collins, M. Curtis, J. Farmer, A. McNamara, D. Owen, P. Watts and D. Ramsbottom

Also in attendance: Councillors Polhill, Nelson and Stockton and 2 members of the public

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
URB31 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 th September 2009 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
URB32 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
URB33 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee, 3MG Executive Sub-Board and Mersey Gateway Executive Board.	
RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.	
URB34 SSP MINUTES	
The Board was advised that the last meeting of the	

SSP on the 21st July 2009 had been cancelled. Therefore there were no minutes to consider at this meeting.

URB35 SERVICE PLANS 2010-13

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which gave Members the opportunity to contribute to the development of Service Plans at the beginning of the planning process.

It was noted that three-year departmental service plans were reviewed and rolled forward annually. The plans were developed in parallel with the budget. The process of developing service plans for 2010-13 was just beginning and at this stage members were advised of priority areas over the coming three years by Operational Directors from the following departments:

- Highways, Transportation and Logistics;
- Environmental and Regulatory Services;
- Economic Regeneration; and
- Major Projects.

The Board was advised that once Members had identified their priorities from the information provided, Operational Directors would then develop draft plans which would be available for consideration early in the New Year. It was noted that plans could only be finalised once budget decisions had been confirmed in March.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) a list of priority areas for each department be circulated to Members for consideration; and
- (2) Members of the Board email Derek Sutton with their priorities.

Strategic Director
- Environment

URB36 BIODIVERSITY INITIATIVES

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which informed Members of a number of new important initiatives implemented in research projects undertaken in Halton in connection with its natural environment.

The Board was advised that the report summarised those developments and set out proposals to hold a seminar, designed to inform Elected Members, Council Officer and other stakeholders about the developments and

their importance for the area's biodiversity.

It was noted that in addition to the regular exchange of biodiversity information and sharing of expertise, between the Mersey Gateway Team and Land Services, there were a number of new initiatives that had been either implemented, concerning biodiversity in Halton, as set out in the report.

It was further noted that to ensure Members, Officers and Partner organisations were made aware of these recent developments, it was proposed to hold a half-day seminar, for about 40 delegates, targeted at people and organisations that had an interest in the Borough's Biodiversity Programme.

The Board was advised that the agenda for the 3 hour event would include presentations on the Artery of Life, the Mersey Gateway Nature Reserve proposals and the research by Professor Norman and Dr. James, followed by three or four specific studies by Salford University students.

The Board was further advised that a charitable trust was being established and would be a fixed cost item included as part of the Mersey Gateway Procurement package.

It was noted that Members of the Board had not had an opportunity to scrutinise whether establishing a charitable trust would be more beneficial than the Council managing the essential mitigation scheme on the Reserve. It was therefore agreed that a letter be sent on behalf of the Board to the Strategic Director, Environment requesting further information and the justification for the establishment of a charitable trust in relation to the Mersey Gateway Nature Reserve.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the date of the Biodiversity Initiatives Seminar be noted; and
- (2) a letter be sent to the Strategic Director, Environment on behalf of the Board requesting further information and the justification for the establishment of a charitable trust in relation to the Mersey Gateway Nature Reserve.

Strategic Director
- Environment

URB37 RECEIPT OF PETITION - LEVEL OF PUBLIC
TRANSPORT PROVISION ON HALTON ROAD

The Board received a report a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which informed Members of a petition that had been received from residents of Halton Road and surrounding areas regarding the levels of public transport operating via Halton Road.

It was noted that the petition was received on 21st September 2009 by 106 residents requesting that the Council look again at improving the bus service along Halton Road, since the last review and at the decision not to continue subsidising the service.

The Board was provided with details of the timetable for the currently operating 52 bus service. Unfortunately, it was noted that there no direct commercial alternative bus services operating via Halton Road to help address this issue.

The Board was advised that the 52 service was subsidised by the Council and was operated under a local bus contract agreement by Anthony's Travel. The cost of the contract currently stood at £20,840 per annum and was subsidised due to there being no alternative commercial service operating via Halton Road.

It was estimated that the cost of extending the 52 service on a Monday to Saturday daytime would be in the region of £14,000 per year which would have to be funded from the Council's Bus Support allocation.

It was recognised that the existing service did not adequataely meet the needs of the residents in providing access to Runcorn Town Centre. However, there was considerable pressure on the Council's Bus Support allocation therefore the extended service would operate for a period of 6 months to enable an assessment to be made of the benefits.

It was further proposed at the end of this 6 month trial period that the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics), in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal, evaluate the assessment of costs and benefits and make a decision on whether to continue with the extension of the service, based on passenger numbers and availability of funding.

Councillor Stockton addressed the Board on behalf of local residents in support of the extension to the 52 service.

Arising from Members comments and questions it was noted that

- bus services in the Borough were reviewed as part of an annual process undertaken by Officers and where gaps were identified the Council's Bus Support Allocation was utilised to provide services as much as possible;
- the Council operated a Public Transport Advisory Panel (PTAP) which had representation from local residents, members of the Board and local bus service providers;
- although the PTAP met regularly and influenced bus service providers, there was no direct responsibility on providers to support loss making services.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) support be given to extending the 52 bus service so that the last journey departing from Runcorn High Street would be 18.10 (Monday to Saturday) for a period of six months to enable an assessment to be made of the benefits;
- (2) following an assessment of the benefits of the extended service, the Operational Director (Highways, Transportation and Logistics) in consultation with the Executive Board Member Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal make a decision on whether to continue to operate the extension to the service; and
- (3) Organisers of the petition be advised of this decision.

Strategic Director
- Environment

URB38 RECEIPT OF PETITION - WITHDRAWAL OF SUNDAY EVENING COMMERCIAL SERVICE X1 OPERATED BY ARRIVA NORTH WEST

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which informed Members of the petition that had been received from the residents of Murdishaw and surrounding areas following the withdrawal of the commercially operated Arriva Northwest X1 service from Liverpool City Centre, on Sunday evenings from 19.00 hours.

It was noted that the petition had been received on 25th August 2009, signed by 37 residents concerning the withdrawal of the commercial Arriva Northwest X1 service

from Liverpool City Centre on Sunday evenings. The basis of their concerns that there were a number of elderly people, who on occasions liked to go into Liverpool for shopping, theatre and other purposes but were unable to return home after 19.00 hours, without the added expense of a taxi fare.

It was further noted that Arriva Northwest operated the commercial service X1 Monday – Friday on a half-hourly frequency from 06.00 hours until 19.00 hours and then hourly until 22.00 hours, with the last journey leaving Liverpool at 23.15 hours. The Sunday service operated on an hourly frequency commencing at 10.00 hours with the last journey leaving Liverpool at 17.00 hours. The current level of service had been in operation since 6th May 2007.

The Board were advised that there were in fact two alternative public transport service available, should a return journey to Runcorn be required on a Sunday. It was, however, accepted that these services would take longer to return to Runcorn than the X1 service. The alternative services available were outlined in the report.

The Board was further advised that Arriva Northwest had indicated that the service after 19.00 hours on a Sunday evenings was not commercially viable and would, therefore, only be reinstated with a financial contribution from the Council.

It was estimated that the annual cost of extending the X1 service on a Sunday evening to 22.00 hours would be in the region of £18,000. The Council currently had a budget to provide socially necessary services which could not be operated on a commercial basis. Unfortunately, this budget was under severe pressure and, given that there were alternative facilities available, it was felt that it would be inappropriate to fund the extension.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) given the existing alternative services available, an extension to the X1 should not be supported using Council funding; and
- (2) the organisers of the petition be advised of this decision.

Strategic Director
- Environment

URB39 PROPOSED POLICY FOR VEHICLE ACCESS
CROSSINGS OVER FOOTWAYS AND VERGES

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director,

Environment which sought endorsement of a revised enforcement policy for the illegal crossing of vehicles over footways and verges and to establish a clear policy for the construction of access crossings. The aim was to minimise the problems encountered in enforcement using the existing policy and problems experienced in recovering the costs of constructing access crossings from offenders.

The Board was advised that vehicle access across a footway required a properly constructed access crossing to prevent the footway or any utility apparatus lying under the footway suffering damage as a consequence. The practice of vehicles repeatedly crossing footways which had not been strengthened not only caused damage to the surface and to any equipment beneath it, but also in many cases poses a hazard to pedestrians and other lawful users of the footway.

The Board was further advised that it was also the custom of some property owners to deposit objects such as planks of wood, metal ramps and even concrete in the drainage channel to aid access. These practices could cause serious injury to members of the public and damage to the vehicles that the public may be travelling in or on and may result in claims for compensation being brought against the Council.

The report set out the sections of the policy and explained the issues to be considered and proposed courses of action for each of the following:

- criteria for acceptance of a crossing;
- application Procedure;
- incorporation of crossings into the Council's Footway Structural Maintenance Programme (including a refund mechanism); and
- enforcement and recovery of costs.

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the following recommendations and forwards its comments to the Executive Board for consideration:

- (1) that access crossings only be permitted and constructed in accordance with the criteria set out in 3.2.1 of the report.
- (2) the application procedure be adopted as set out in paragraph 3.3.2 of the report.
- (3) should a programme structural footway maintenance scheme be carried out by the Council within two

Strategic Director
- Environment

years of an owner/tenant having paid for a crossing, then a partial or full refund would be offered in accordance with Appendix 7. This would be available, if requested, up to 12 months after the completion of the maintenance works. A crossing would also be offered, where appropriate, at a reduced cost or free of charge (depending on the scope of the works), if structural maintenance works were to be carried out as set out in paragraph 3.4.1 of this report.

- (4) the enforcement procedure set out in the report to Policy and Performance Board (Planning, Transportation and Development) on 11th October 2000 be amended as set out in paragraph 3.5 of the report.
- (5) for the avoidance of doubt, and in accordance with Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980, it was agreed that the Council should construct any, or all access crossings within the Borough, and seek to recharge the costs to the frontage property owner; and
- (6) the revised policy and procedure for the construction and enforcement of crossings over footways and verges be supported.

(NB: Councillor Hignett declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item due to being employed by Community Integrated Care and left the meeting during consideration of the item)

COUNCILLOR NOLAN IN THE CHAIR

URB40 FINAL REPORT FROM THE TOPIC TEAM ON THE SCRUTINY REVIEW OF SUPPORTED HOUSING

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Health and Community, which presented the final report and recommendations from the Topic Team following the scrutiny review of supported housing.

The Scrutiny Topic Team, following a number of delays, as set out in the report, was reconvened in April 2008 and a final series of meetings and visits was held with the Topic Team in September/October 2009 to approve the content of the final report and recommendations which were attached to the report.

The Board was further advised that each of the three areas recommendations had been outlined in the report:

- Commissioning and procurement;
- Performance and Governance; and
- Communication and Engagement.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Urban Renewal PPB considers the scrutiny report and comments on the content and recommendations, as summarised in section 4 of the covering report; and
- (2) the scrutiny report, subject to any amendments arising from the above, be presented to the Executive Board for decision as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Strategic Director
– Health &
Community

Meeting ended at 8.10 p.m.