

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 16 June 2010 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), Morley (Vice-Chairman), Balmer, P. Blackmore, E. Cargill, J. Gerrard, Nolan, Rowe and Wainwright

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Hodgkinson and Thompson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Noone, H. Coen, D. Cunliffe, J. Farmer, G. Ferguson, A. McNamara and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: Councillors McInerney and Stockton

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
EUR1	MINUTES	
	<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2010 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.</p>	
EUR2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	<p>It was confirmed that one public question had been received.</p> <p>As the question related to an item on the agenda it was agreed that the question would be answered under that item on the agenda (minute EUR8 refers).</p>	
EUR3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	<p>The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.</p> <p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.</p>	

EUR4 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the Minutes of the Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership held on 26th January 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

NB: Councillors Wainwright and Morley declared a personal and prejudicial interest in the following item of business due to being board members of Halton Transport.

EUR5 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY
PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Resources which provided information on the progress towards meeting Halton's Sustainable Community Strategy targets at 2009-10 financial year end.

The Board was advised that, in considering the report, Members needed to be aware of the following:-

- All the measures within the National Indicator Set were monitored through Quarterly Departmental Service Plan Monitoring Reports. The purpose of the report was to consolidate information on all measures and targets relevant to this PPB in order to provide a clear picture of progress; and
- In some cases, outturn data could not be made available and there were also some Place Survey based indicators for which information would not become available until 2010, i.e. the next date the survey was due to be undertaken.

The Board was further advised that it was important that progress was monitored and that Members were satisfied that adequate plans were in place to ensure that the Council and its partners achieved the improvement targets that had been agreed.

Arising from the discussion Councillor Wainwright requested further information on how the Enterprise Halton team linked with schools, colleges and universities to promote retail business opportunities within Halton.

Strategic Director
Environment and
Economy

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be noted; and

(2) the action being taken to achieve Halton's LAA targets be noted.

EUR6 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which detailed the 4th quarter performance management reports on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons and factors affecting the services for –

- Highways Transportation & Logistics
- Health and Partnerships
- Environmental and Regulatory Services
- Culture and Leisure
- Major Projects
- Economic Regeneration

RESOLVED: That the 4th quarter performance management reports be received.

EUR7 STANDING ORDER 34

The Board was advised that Standing Order 34 (9) (iii) states that "Members of the public can ask questions. Written notice of questions must be given by 4.00 pm on the working day prior to the date of the meeting to the Committee Services Manager. "

As the questions were received after the deadline had passed the Board was requested to waive Standing Order 34 (9) (iii).

RESOLVED: That Standing Order No. 34 (9) (iii) be waived.

EUR8 FALKIRK AVENUE - PETITION FOR NEW ROAD

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy, which informed Members of a petition relating to traffic conditions in Falkirk Avenue, Upton Rocks, Widnes. The petition was received by the Council in March 2010 and was signed by 47 residents, representing the majority of properties in Falkirk Avenue.

The petition requested that the Council build a new road to divert traffic away from Falkirk Avenue as the volume of traffic using the road had not reduced as expected since the opening of the new Queensbury Way link to Cronton Road. A letter detailing residents' concerns, which included a summary table of traffic flow figures gathered by the Council during the last three years, was included with the petition.

The letter accompanying the petition asked that:-

- 1) as a minimum, the promised weight restrictions should be implemented and clearly signposted at both entrances to Falkirk Avenue;
- 2) the speed limit should be effectively enforced; and
- 3) in the medium term, an alternative and quicker route from Birchfield Road to Queensbury Way should be constructed, to ensure that residents of Falkirk Avenue could use Falkirk Avenue with confidence and in safety.

Members were advised that several traffic surveys had been carried out in relation to traffic usage at Falkirk Avenue. An analysis of road traffic accidents data had also been undertaken. There were no personal injury accidents recorded in three years from 2007 to 2009. In summary, according to the collected traffic survey data, Falkirk Avenue currently carried less traffic than it was originally designed for and traffic flows had been reduced by approximately 10% since the opening of Queensbury Way. Only a small proportion of traffic appeared to be using the route as a through route from Upton Bridle Path to Queensbury Way and less than 3% of the traffic was HGVs. The records showed that there were no injury accidents, and traffic speeds were within acceptable limits. Therefore, there was little evidence to justify significant intervention.

Notwithstanding the above, a number of potential courses of action, which may reduce the impact of traffic using Falkirk Avenue, had been investigated and were outlined in the report together with officers comments on each option. The options were as follows:-

Option 1 – New road connecting 90 degree bends adjacent to House Nos. 3 and 23 Falkirk Avenue;

Option 2 – New road connecting the western end of Westerhope Way to Lanark Gardens;

Option 3 – New road connecting western end of Westerhope

Road to Galway Avenue through development site H3 (via Tickford Bank/Biddlestone Cross);

Option 4 – Introduce a weight restriction order covering the Birchfield Ward;

Option 5 – Closure of Falkirk Avenue to through traffic.

It was noted that the following public question was submitted to the Board:

- (a) The report relies on traffic survey data from 2009 despite traffic speed counters being in place since March 2010. Why haven't the most up to date figures been used in the report and can the findings of these surveys be made available to residents,*
- (b) The reliance of speed counters to estimate the average vehicle speed as the counter is immediately adjacent to a speed hump and vehicles have already slowed down at this point to cross the hump. Is it not possible that the counter could be moved (to near another lighting column) where more realistic speeds can be measured. While historically the speeds may have been measured from these points undoubtedly the finds are flawed and rather than relying on unrealistic data why not just start afresh?,*
- (c) Can more evidence be provided of the 'snapshot' number-plate survey undertaken in an afternoon in March that suggests that over 95% of the traffic had a destination of business in that area. I would dispute this figure and suggest the percentage level of through traffic was far higher. How long did the survey last, was it taken during the school run (when figures would be distorted), where all points of entry to the estate from Birchfield Road surveyed. This is the type of information that should be provided if the report suggests that less than 5% of traffic volumes is through traffic,*
- (d) Whist the report suggests that traffic levels through Falkirk Avenue are less than they were originally designed for there is no analysis of how the proposed local centre and school could affect these figures as quite clearly these development would set traffic levels above acceptable levels.*

In summary, it is my opinion that the report is distorted and gives an inaccurate reflection of the actual situation.

In response the Board was advised that:

- the Counter installed in March 2010 to monitor vehicles was found to be faulty therefore the most recent data was used for the report, however, the traffic situation would continue to be monitored;
- the Counters had been placed at locations chosen to ensure consistency, consultation with residents would take place concerning the location of the Counters;
- the March survey took place between 12.30 – 1 pm, results of the survey could be provided to residents;
- the local centre and school have been approved by Development Control Committee;
- a full detailed reply to the above questions would be provided to Mr McEvoy.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) Members consider the contents of the petition;
- 2) traffic conditions in Falkirk Avenue continue to be monitored;
- 3) the feasibility of constructing new roads connecting from the boundaries of planned development sites (Upton Rocks H3 and Proposed Local Centre) to Westerhope Way continue to be explored; and
- 4) the petitioners be informed of the Board's decision.

Strategic Director
Environment and
Economy

EUR9 CASTLEFIELDS VILLAGE SQUARE - LOCAL LETTINGS POLICY

The Board considered a report which sought its views on the proposal by Plus Dane Housing Association to introduce a local lettings policy to allocate the new properties being constructed as part of the Castlefields Village Square redevelopment. Plus Dane was the developer of the shop units and 16 flats above the shops at Castlefields Village Square. Mindful of the need to do everything possible to protect this investment and the new facilities for the long term benefit of the community and of the anti-social behaviour problems often associated with local centres and flats over shops particularly, Plus Dane was proposing to introduce a local lettings policy. This would only apply to the 16 new flats due to be constructed above the new shops and not the wider estate.

Members considered a copy of Plus Dane's overarching policy framework governing the use of local

lettings policies. The framework set out the consultation, implementation and monitoring process and the safeguards in terms of regular monitoring, analysis and review.

In addition, the report outlined the local context of why Plus Dane wanted to introduce a local policy for the Castlefields Village square area and the proposed criteria to be used to select new tenants. Essentially, it introduced two additional criteria on top of the normal conditions, in that applicants must be over 25 years of age and must either be working or engaged in voluntary work within the community.

RESOLVED: That the Board support the introduction of a local lettings policy as set out in the report and appendices and that the Board's view be reported to the Executive Board Sub-Committee in considering the Council's formal response.

Strategic Director
Adults and
Community

EUR10 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

The Board received an update on the implications of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 for Halton and information on the status of the various plans and funding arrangements which supported its introduction. The new Act was designed to provide more comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses. The Act received Royal Assent on 8th April 2010. The Act had significant implications for Lead Local Authorities in that:-

- A new statutory responsibility for managing flood risk;
- Responsibility for approving and maintaining sustainable drainage;
- Reservoir safety; and
- Other implications for Statutory Water and Sewerage Companies.

In addition, the report outlined the implications of the Flood Risk Regulations 2009 and the two Catchment Flood Management Plans covering Halton; the Mersey Estuary Catchment Flood Management Plan (covering north of the River Mersey) and the Weaver Gowy Catchment Flood Management Plan, (covering the south side of the Mersey estuary). Both plans were prepared in partnership with regional and local planning authorities, community and environmental groups and other stake holders and they were agreed by the North West Regional Flood Defence Committee in April 2009. It was reported that delivery

against the actions contained in the CFMPs was measured under National Performance indicator NI189. Halton had made satisfactory progress in meeting its actions required by 2009/10 under the action plan.

The Board was further advised on the Shoreline Management Plan and the Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP). With regard to the Surface Water Management Plan Halton had been granted £100,000 for the development of an SWMP for Widnes and work was now underway to establish partnerships and identify the scope of the SWMP study.

The report also set out the implications for the transfer of responsibility for private sewers. From 2011 all private sewers that drained to public sewers would become the responsibility of the statutory water and sewerage companies. The report also outlined the sustainable urban drainage systems approach to drainage which was intended to reduce flood risk and restore natural flows to ground water and water courses which would in turn reduce pollution, improve water resources and enhance the amenity of developed areas. The Flood and Water Management Act established SUDs approval bodies (SAB) with the responsibility for approval, adoption and future maintenance systems.

It was noted that prior to the recent elections, DEFRA had stated that they were fully committed to fully funding the net new burdens imposed on Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA's). It was hoped that this position at least would be maintained, if not improved upon, but the Government's planned cuts in public expenditure may have an impact in this regard and further developments were awaited.

DEFRA had estimated that the transfer of private sewerage to statutory water companies would produce savings to local authorities estimated at £50m and this saving would fund the majority of costs in undertaking new duties. Whilst DEFRA maintained that this was a conservative estimate, the LGA disputed this figure and say that dealing with private sewerage problems and issues was much less. DEFRA had agreed that, together with the LGA, they would jointly monitor the situation and would keep costs and assumptions under review, addressing any shortfalls that arose.

It was also noted that funding had been made available by the Environment Agency to jointly fund a post that would take on a co-ordinating and advising role across

LLFAs within an area, working together with partner authorities on flood related matters. Together with other Merseyside authorities, Halton would contribute £5,000 towards the cost of this post.

RESOLVED: That

1) the new duties imposed on the Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority and the financial and resource implications associated with them be noted; and

2) the Executive Board be requested to consider the financial and resource implications of the Flood and Water Management Act for Halton, including DEFRA's proposal to provide Area Based Grant to assist with the carrying out of its new duties.

Strategic Director
Environment and
Economy

EUR11 WINTER MAINTENANCE SERVICE PROVISION OF GRIT BINS AND FOOTPATH GRITTING

The Board considered a report which outlined the current practice relating to the provision of grit storage bins and manual gritting of footpaths, and to propose improvements for the delivery of the service in the future.

It was noted that the following proposals were recommended as being a reasonable and practical approach, which should provide the current level of service, without exposing the Council to significant revenue liability and additional funding demands:

- 1) Grit bins would continue to be maintained at existing locations on the adopted highway network, if a bin became damaged beyond repair, its location would be reviewed and risk assessed against the established criteria to ensure that its deployment was still appropriate;
- 2) Grit bins would be provided and maintained at new locations on the adopted highway network, which met the assessment criteria described in the report. Highway grit bins would be yellow in colour and stamped with an identifying mark to enable recognition in case of theft;
- 3) Halton's Bridge and Highway Maintenance Division would procure grit bins and salt on behalf of locality area forums, housing associations, PCT owned establishments, sheltered housing developments, schools and colleges etc. at the expense of the

applicant. The bins would not be sited at locations within the adopted highway and would be marked or coloured to distinguish them from the highway stock of bins. They would be filled with grit/salt at the start of each Winter maintenance season at the expense of the owner/provider. Any restocking of grit/salt would be carried out again at the applicant's expense, subject to current and forecast weather conditions and the availability of resources, including labour, plant, grit/salt material.

The Board discussed the provision of grit bins funded by area forum monies and housing associations. It was confirmed that the Council would procure bins and salt on behalf of area forums and housing associations but this would be at the expense of the applicant.

RESOLVED: That

1) requests for the provision of grit bins at new locations on the highway network, will be evaluated using the established risk assessment criteria for gritting routes as described in the report;

2) on request and subject to the availability of resources to respond, grit bins and salt be procured and subsequently maintained by the Council on behalf of Locality area Forums, Housing Associations and other community organisations at the expense of the applicant. These bins would not be located on the highway network; and

3) before the start of the next Winter maintenance season, information and guidance on the locations of grit bins and the restrictions on the use of salt for roads and pavements only, be publicised.

Strategic Director
Environment and
Economy

EUR12 2009/10 ANNUAL REPORT

The Board considered a copy of the Annual Report from the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board 2009/10. The full Board met five times during the year and the main initiatives that the Board had worked on during the year were as follows:

- a report on the future needs within the Logistics Sector in Halton;
- The implications of de-linking the Silver Jubilee Bridge in support of the Mersey Gateway Project;

- Scrutiny review of supported housing;
- Skills for the Science industry and the Local Development Working Party;

The Chairman thanked all the Councillors and Officers for their support during the year.

RESOLVED: That the Annual report be received for the purpose of its adoption at a forthcoming meeting of full Council.

EUR13 NOMINATIONS OF MEMBERS TO THE CONSULTATION REVIEW PANEL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which requested Members agree nominations of two members to represent the Board on the Consultation Review Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Chair and Vice Chair of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board sit on the Consultation Review Panel as may be required from time to time.

EUR14 NOMINATION OF MEMBERS TO HALTON PUBLIC TRANSPORT ADVISORY PANEL - MUNICIPAL YEAR 2010/11

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which requested Members to agree nominations to sit on the Council's Public Transport Advisory Panel for the Municipal Year 2010/11.

RESOLVED: That

1) the nomination for Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel for 2010/11 be as follows:-

Councillors Hignett, Morley, Stockton and 1 opposition member.

2) the key issues discussed by the Panel during the Municipal Year 2009/10 be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.53 p.m.