

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board
DATE: 26th March 2014
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director: Children and Enterprise
PORTFOLIO: Physical Environment
SUBJECT: BIG Castlefields Survey – Analysis & Next Steps
WARD(S) Halton Castle Ward

1.0 **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 To provide Members with: results of the BIG Castlefields Survey resident consultation exercise; an overview of the on-going work of Castlefields Implementation Group, working towards Castlefields Capital Programme close; and, broader policy lessons for future housing-led regeneration programmes.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATION: That:**

1. **the content and results of the BIG Castlefields Survey, comprising the household questionnaire report and resident Pinpoint group sessions analysis, are noted;**
2. **the on-going work of the Castlefields Implementation Group, working towards Castlefields Capital Programme close in 2016/17, is acknowledged; and**
3. **broader lessons from the BIG Castlefields Survey for future housing and neighbourhood regeneration programmes are considered.**

3.0 **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

3.1 Since September 2003, the Council has been formally engaged in the delivery of the 'Castlefields Masterplan - An ambition for regeneration and a plan for action'. Delivery of Council capital investment into Castlefields has been administered through a dedicated Castlefields Officer resource. The established Castlefields Implementation Group (CIG), chaired by the Executive Board Member for Physical Environment, has provided a specific forum to communicate with appropriate Members on progress of the Programme.

- 3.2 Implementation of the Masterplan has been through a partnership which includes, Plus Dane Housing, Liverpool Housing Trust and the Homes and Communities Agency. Whilst it has operated as a partnership of equals, with delivery through collaborative working, with partners pooling resource and expertise; the Council can be seen to have provided strategic leadership and acted as guardian of the Masterplan.
- 3.3 One of the guiding principles of the Castlefields Masterplan was 'community led regeneration', whereby the regeneration process is driven by the residents, key stakeholders and local business community. Throughout the life of the Programme, consultation and community involvement has contributed to shaping the priorities of the Masterplan and individual projects. Residents have shaped everything from the layout of new build properties, to the design of play equipment within Phoenix Park and determining the location of the new local centre. After over 10 years of activity and with the majority of Masterplan projects delivered, in 2013 the CIG approved a survey of Castlefields residents.
- 3.3 The purpose of the BIG Castlefields Survey was to undertake a substantive community consultation exercise that provides residents with an opportunity to reflect on the regeneration programme and to express future aspirations for the neighbourhood. This approach was in accordance with the Council's Community Engagement Strategy to ensure "Every individual in Halton has the opportunity to play an active role in their community and feels that they can influence the services that affect them locally." Additionally, the results of the survey would be incorporated into any future whole programme review and be used to inform the production of a new 10 year action plan for Castlefields that will guide work of the Castlefields Partnership until 2023.
- 3.4 Delivered through cooperation with partners, the Survey was undertaken in two parts:-
- 1) Quantitative research through a questionnaire delivered to all households within Castlefields neighbourhood, with responses via free post envelopes; and
 - 2) Qualitative research through three 'Pinpoint' discussion groups comprising Halton Castle Ward Councillors, tenant representatives and residents.

Part 1 was undertaken between August and September 2013 and the pinpoint group sessions in October 2013.

3.5 The results of the household questionnaire are contained in Appendix A. 13.5% of households responded and this gives a margin of error of plus / minus 5.7% to all responses.

Involvement in the Programme has been high, with 56% of respondents feeling that they have had an opportunity to be involved in the regeneration of Castlefields, and a further 20% stating they did not want to be involved. Over 85% of respondents had read a newsletter and 37% had attended an information event.

In respect of overall satisfaction with the Regeneration Programme, 70% think that Castlefields is now a better place to live and 49% feel it has a positive impact on their health and wellbeing. Looking at each of the Programme strands:

3.6 Housing Renewal and Development

84% of respondents are satisfied with their home, which increases to 91% when broken down to just households within a new build property. As a result of the Regeneration Programme, 70% of respondents felt safer in their home and 62% felt warmer. The approach of demolishing unpopular deck access blocks and replacement with new build properties, complemented by refurbishment of retained stock has had a positive impact on residents' quality of life.

Housing renewal was complemented by the redevelopment of the existing local centre with a new community hub, this significant intervention has resulted in the following satisfaction with local facilities as a result of the Regeneration Programme:

- 84% health centre;
- 80% community centre;
- 76% local shops; and
- 80% access to these facilities.

3.7 Placemaking

A major focus of the Masterplan was 'placemaking' – creating a quality public realm within the neighbourhood through a series of environmental and infrastructure projects. Overall 58% of respondents felt safer getting around Castlefields, linked to this the following percentage of respondents felt these aspects of the environment had improved (as a result of the regeneration):

- 68% street lighting;
- 59% litter and recycling;
- 59% bus stops;
- 51% streets and paths; and
- 75% creation of and improvements to Phoenix Park / Lake.

Whilst residents clearly feel the overall environmental quality of the neighbourhood has been driven up, some aspects of the public realm are still viewed negatively. Only 42% and 35% of respondents respectively felt that residential car parks and subways had improved as a result of the regeneration.

3.8 People & Employment

As previously acknowledged to this PPB in a Castlefields Progress Report (16th September 2009), one area where the Programme has experienced difficulties is targeted interventions to improve economic prosperity within the neighbourhood.

This is reflected in only 25% of respondents having overall satisfaction with employment, learning and training opportunities in Castlefields. Additionally, the following percentage of respondents felt that the Regeneration Programme had improved the following opportunities:

- 26% employment information and advice;
- 26% training and learning
- 14% apprenticeships
- 11% employment

Although it must be noted that when broken down to respondents looking for work, satisfaction does increase.

3.9 Looking ahead, the results of questionnaire identified the top 3 residents' priorities for next 10 years as community safety (51%), health and wellbeing (37%) and housing (33%).

3.10 Analysis of the Pinpoint groups sessions are contained in Appendix B. Undertaken after initial analysis of the household questionnaire, the discussion groups represented a chance to both corroborate and dig a little deeper in respect of some of the responses.

Led by the Council's Customer Intelligence Unit, three sessions were held with two questions to guide group discussions:

- 1) What are the best things about the regeneration of Castlefields?
- 2) What still needs to be improved on Castlefields / What should the priorities for the next 10 years be?

In respect of each question the following headlines can be identified:

3.11 Of the best things about the regeneration of the neighbourhood, responses from the discussion groups, identified three overarching themes:

- Transformation of the **physical environment**, both the buildings and spaces around them, as having one of the biggest positive impacts on the neighbourhood;
- The removal of overbearing and imposing high-rise concrete buildings has not only created a more "open layout" but also created a stronger sense of ownership through creating "homes". In turn this has created greater **community pride**; and
- The "**flagship projects**" of the Programme (Phoenix Park and the Village Square) represent a massive vote of confidence in the neighbourhood and have given residents something to be proud of.

3.12 In terms of the 2nd questions on what still needs to be improved on Castlefields / what should the priorities for the next 10 years be, four overarching themes can be identified:

- Confusion over responsibility for **maintenance of the public realm** is impacting on its general upkeep;
- It was felt some residents still do not look after their properties and fly-tipping remains an issue. This lack of **respect** for Castlefields need tackling;
- **Getting around** Castlefields could be further improved, parking was an issue and the neighbourhood layout had changed so much that it had made orientation confusing for some. Subways were also felt to be redundant due to alternative routes; and

- More should be done for **children and young people** in the neighbourhood.

3.13 The acid test for the success of the Castlefields Regeneration Programme is whether the neighbourhood is now regarded as a better place to live and is providing a positive impact on people's lives. Taken as a whole the BIG Castlefields Survey, whilst highlighting some areas for further improvement, can be seen to testify to the Programme being a success.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 At its inception, the regeneration of Castlefields was recognised as being one of the most ambitious sustainable regeneration programmes to be undertaken by the Council. Officers are working with the CIG towards a managed exit from the Council capital projects within the Regeneration Programme in 2016/17. The intention being that any Regeneration Officer resource can be directed towards emerging priority areas.

4.2 The key to a managed exit, and agreed by CIG, is firstly the production of a Council Position Statement; and secondly a new 10 year action plan for Castlefields, including endorsement by partners. This will inform movement away from largely capital projects to delivery of appropriate generic mainstream services within the neighbourhood and provide a Council (and hopefully Partnership) position in respect of any outstanding matters from the Regeneration Programme, such as the remaining 3 deck access blocks. The BIG Castlefields Survey is part of this journey and helps ensure residents' views are taken into account going forwards.

4.3 With the recent adoption of the Halton Core Strategy and the Mersey Gateway Project now in its construction phase, the Borough is entering a new period in its continued regeneration and transformation.

Whilst the results of the BIG Castlefields Survey are specific resident views in relation to the Castlefields Programme; they do provide an opportunity to draw out and consider some broader lessons for the Council and its partners about what resident's value from regeneration programmes, particularly those that are focused on housing-led and neighbourhood scale interventions.

Broad lessons drawn out of the results from the BIG Castlefields Survey worth further consideration are:

4.4 **1) Residents valued engagement and being listened to**

The Castlefields Programme has maintained a continual dialogue with residents, partners and other key stakeholders. 56% of residents felt they had an opportunity to be involved. The Masterplan provided enough flexibility to enable the Partnership to listen to residents, learn and then adapt projects to take account of their views. After listening to residents, the Masterplan was amended to create a stronger core of shops and facilities within the Village Square, this can be seen to have a direct impact on the sense of ownership, and this in turn makes long term success more likely.

4.5 **2) Residents valued use of high quality design**

A golden thread running throughout the Masterplan and individual projects has been a focus on quality of design in both buildings and public realm. As a concept 'placemaking' could have easily got lost in the delivery, but this guiding principle has been adhered to by all partners and recently extended to private sector developer Keepmoat, who were encouraged to reach the expected design bar.

The results of the Survey demonstrate that residents have valued this emphasis on design quality and it can be seen to foster a stronger sense of community ownership and pride in the local area.

Credit must also be given to the regulatory functions of the Council, particularly Planning and Highways, in helping to secure high quality design.

4.6 **3) Residents valued "flagship" projects**

The Survey identified that residents valued the large scale projects, what they termed as "flagship" projects. For example, the £11 Million Village Square, funded through public and private money, has been a complex development for the Council to be involved in delivering - such as through the use of Council Compulsory Purchase Powers. The Survey tells us that residents feel it has put the heart back into the neighbourhood and is a focal point for the community.

4.7 **4) Castlefields has had a physical regeneration focus**

The Castlefields Programme has focussed on transforming the physical environment of the neighbourhood and providing decent homes and local facilities. Whilst this has laid the foundations and provided the social and physical infrastructure for a better quality of life for existing residents and helped attract new residents into the area, it has not directly and consistently tackled some of the socio-economic 'behind front door' issues. This is apparent in some of the responses in the Survey in relation to residents' satisfaction with employment, learning and training opportunities in Castlefields.

The new 10 year plan which is focussed on mainstreaming of interventions provides an opportunity to address this on Castlefields; future programmes can learn from the need to embed regeneration programmes within the broader activities of the Council and its partners from a much early stage. Recent organisational changes which place the Council's regeneration function within the same operational area as employment, learning and skills will help ensure this approach.

4.8 **5) Managing programme transition**

The results of the Survey, particularly the resident group sessions, shows that as the physical transformation of Castlefields concludes, residents' priorities are now focused on more mainstream service issues such as maintenance of public realm, community development and provision of services for children and young people.

The Castlefields Regeneration Programme has targeted sustained investment and multi-organisational resources into an identifiable geographical area (in this case a residential neighbourhood). This can create a continued sense of expectation from the community for on-going action.

The transition from a physical Programme guided by a Masterplan and with delivery managed by a dedicated resource, to moving to dealing with more mainstream service issues requires careful organisational management.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 All remaining Council funds in the Castlefields Regeneration Programme have been committed by the CIG and Officers are working towards a financial close on Council capital expenditure in 2016/17.

Both Liverpool Housing Trust and Plus Dane continue to access to Homes and Communities Agency funding for the continued delivery of affordable housing on Castlefields both organisation are expected to include further Castlefields sites within their respective bids for the 2015 – 18 delivery round.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The Regeneration Programme aims to have positive impacts for children and young people; most evident is the provision of youth facilities at Phoenix Park, giving young people a place which they can call their own.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

This area of the Regeneration Programme has been acknowledged as being least effective and this is intended to be addressed within new 10 year plan for Castlefields.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

The last Indices of Multiple Deprivation identified that two of Castlefields four Lower Super Output Areas are ranked as being within the 1% most deprived nationally for health indicators. Therefore, to make Halton healthier, Castlefields is one of the places which requires action.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

All new housing schemes are built to 'design out crime', and have been complemented by a comprehensive programme of environmental and public realm improvements aiming to create a safe and attractive neighbourhood.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

Completing the Castlefields Regeneration Programme remains a corporate priority within Halton's Housing and Urban Renewal strategies, and is one of the Council's most ambitious urban renewal initiatives undertaken to date.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 The Castlefields Programme is one of the Council's longest standing regeneration activities, with Council expenditure being delivered through a dedicated capital resource. The Council are operating within a stable partnership arrangement.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 Castlefields is a placed based regeneration project and as such is targeted at all residents within the locality on an equal basis.

9.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

| Document | Place of Inspection | Contact Officer |
|---------------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Castlefields Masterplan – | Regeneration Team, | Nathan Renison |

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| An ambition for regeneration & plan for action | Municipal Building | |
| Castlefields and Norton Priory Action Area SPD | Planning and Transport Policy Team, Municipal Building | Alasdair Cross |
| Executive Board Report: Castlefields Regeneration 25 September 2003 | Committee Services | Angela Scott |
| Environment and Urban Renewal PPB Report: Castlefields Regeneration Programme Review 16 September 2009 | Committee Services | Gill Ferguson |