

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 25 June 2014 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors B. Woolfall (Chairman), Fry (Vice-Chairman), P. Hignett, V. Hill, C. Loftus, MacManus, Morley, Sinnott, G. Stockton and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Fraser

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, A. Cross, N. Goodwin, I. Munro and S. Rimmer

Also in attendance: Councillor Logan and 10 Members of the public. In accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor R. Hignett.

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
EUR1	MINUTES	
	The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 th March 2014 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
	It was confirmed that one public question had been received and would be submitted and addressed as part of Minute No 8.	
EUR3	EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
	The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.	
	RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.	
EUR4	ANNUAL REPORT - ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD	
	The Board considered a copy of the Annual Report	

from the Chair of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board 2013/14. The Board met five times during the year and the report set out the work carried out and the recommendations throughout the Municipal Year April 2013 to March 2014. During 2013/14, Members of the Board had agreed to continue with the Waste Management Topic Group, however, it was agreed that the Cemeteries Working Group was no longer to meet unless there was sufficient justification.

The Chair wished to note on record his thanks to Members and Officers for their continued support throughout 2013/14.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be accepted and the Topic Group Working Groups be supported in 2014/15.

EUR5 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2013/14

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which detailed the fourth quarter performance management report for 2013/14 on progress against service objectives/milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen in relation to:-

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services;
- Waste and Environment Improvement and Open Space Services; and
- Housing Strategy.

RESOLVED: That the Board receives the fourth quarter management report.

EUR6 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY QUARTER 4 YEAR-END PROGRESS REPORT 2013-14

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which outlined the progress in achieving targets contained within the 2011–2016 Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Halton.

The Board was advised that the SCS for Halton, and the performance measures and targets contained within the report would remain central to the delivery of community

outcomes. It was therefore 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.

The Board was also advised that Appendix 1 to the report outlined the progress for the period to year end 31st March 2014 which included a summary of all indicators for the Environment and Regeneration priority within the SCS.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR7 PETITION REQUESTING THE REMOVAL OF BOLLARDS AND PROVISION OF PARKING AT MANOR PLACE, WIDNES

The Board was advised that a petition had been received signed by eight residents of Manor Place, Widnes, requesting the removal of bollards which were installed in January 2014 to prevent vehicles being driven over a landscaped area in front of their homes. The petition also requested the provision of parking facilities and vehicular access to the petitioners' properties.

Members were advised that Manor Place consisted of a vehicle-free central landscaped area fronted by twelve properties which had no direct vehicular access, the properties being served only by a footpath network. The landscaped area, which was owned by the Council, served as a safe recreation/play area. In October 2013 a complaint was received from one of the residents to the effect that a neighbour had taken to driving their vehicle up the kerb and across the footpath of either Manor Road or New Bank Road and across the landscaped area to park off-road within the front garden of their home. It was alleged that "near misses" had occurred when children were playing out on the grass. From site inspections, it was evident that the vehicle was eroding and rutting the grass, especially during period of wet weather and was also damaging the footpaths of both adjacent highways.

Shortly after the resident's complaint, the whole area was dug up to lay new gas mains and then carefully reinstated and reseeded in January 2014. Due to fresh evidence of vehicular damage to the area, following consultation with the Ward Councillors, bollards were installed in the footpaths of Manor Road and New Bank Road to prevent drivers driving vehicles into the area. The landscaped area was intended to be used as a secure

recreation/play area and there were no funds allocated to convert the area into either a car park or an access road to the adjacent properties. This could create drainage problems due to the potential loss of permeable surface.

It was noted that Ward Councillors were consulted prior to the installation of the bollards and had been consulted since the petition was received and continued to support the need for the bollards.

RESOLVED: That the petition request for the removal of bollards recently introduced to prevent vehicles being driven over a landscaped area in Manor Place, Widnes, together with the provision of parking facilities and vehicular access to the petitioners properties should be refused and the lead petitioner informed accordingly.

Councillor Fry declared a Disclosable Other Interest in the following item as he knew a Halton Station Road Resident.

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EUR8 PETITION CONCERNING TRAFFIC ISSUES, HALTON STATION ROAD, RUNCORN

The Board was advised that a petition had been received, signed by 27 persons highlighting traffic issues, associated with renovation works to Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge, that were affecting Halton Station Road, Runcorn. It was noted that the Bridge was outside of the Halton Borough boundary and was the responsibility of Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWaC).

In order to renovate and carry out essential repair work to the Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge (SWSB) which was over the Weaver Navigation Canal, CWaC last year installed a temporary bridge next to the existing crossing. Work on installing this temporary bridge commenced in May 2013. Towards the end of August 2013, it then closed the SWSB to traffic to allow its contractor unrestricted access to the bridge and use of the temporary bridge commenced.

In addition, to improve traffic flow through the temporary crossing, CWaC implemented restrictions at the junction of the A56 Chester Road with the A557 Clifton Road, immediately east of the swing bridge. The restrictions had prevented east-bound traffic from travelling directly along the A56 Chester Road through Sutton Weaver as it would have done previously. All traffic had instead been required to travel north along the A557 Clifton Road into Halton, around the south roundabout of M56 motorway

Junction 12, with east bound/Sutton Weaver Village bound traffic then being required to travel back along Clifton Road before re-joining the A56 Chester Road adjacent to the SWSB. These arrangements indicated that this diversion would be necessary for the duration of the works which was anticipated to end in autumn 2014.

Whilst this had simplified and accelerated traffic flows in the area of the bridge throughout the period of the renovation works, not all of the re-routed traffic had followed the signed diversion route. Some continued to choose to take what was effectively a short cut by either turning right off Clifton Road into Halton Station Road or follow the diversion to a point on Clifton Road where they could then turn left into Halton Station Road and then travel along that road and onwards to Beechwood or Sutton Weaver via Wood Lane. This had generated an unanticipated increase in traffic flows along Halton Station Road which was a narrow, one way, traffic calmed road that was also subject to a weight restriction.

The petition received from residents of Halton Station Road highlighted a number of concerns about the diversion and its impacts as follows:-

- lack of consultation and notification on the traffic diversions by both CWaC and Halton Borough Council;
- extra volume of traffic using Halton Station Road, including heavy goods vehicles in contravention of the existing vehicle weight restriction on the route.
- excessive speed of traffic, despite physical traffic calming in Halton Station Road;
- vehicles being driven partly on the footways of Halton Station Road to avoid traffic calming features; and
- concerns that CWaC may wish to make the temporary traffic routing permanent when the bridge works were complete.

Members were advised CWaC had in place a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order which supported the diversion route that had been established, but it was not clear as to whether consultation was undertaken by CWaC with residents of Halton Station Road. As it was not Halton Borough Council's Scheme, it did not undertake any consultation. However, Officers from Halton Borough Council had been in regular contact with Halton Station Road residents since the problems associated with the bridge diversion were highlighted. A meeting had taken place in September 2013, once the bridge works started and

the traffic diversions were in place, there was little that could be done on a practical level to mitigate the problems subsequently experienced.

It was noted that the need for this diversion was felt to be reasonable on the grounds that it was meant to be for a 12 month period only and as it avoided a total closure of the route that would have, in turn, necessitated a diversion via either the M56 or A49 Acton Bridge. In addition, Officers had contacted Cheshire Police and requested that it provide enforcement of the vehicle weight restriction on Halton Station Road. Residents had also been encouraged to contact the Police over this and other observed traffic issues. Officers had also spoken to the On-Duty Manager at the Holiday Inn about the use of the road by HGVs and she agreed to e-mail the delivery companies to remind them of the weight restrictions and speed limit on Halton Station Road. The manager had also informed the Police and requested that they enforce the weight restriction.

It was also noted that a traffic count/survey of speeds that was taken once the diversions were underway, recorded few vehicles exceeding the speed limit. However, this did not necessarily mean that the traffic speeds could not be perceived as a possible road safety issue, bearing in mind the characteristics of the road. With regard to the request for temporary traffic cones, following consultation with the residents, it was confirmed that it was actually bollards which were being sought to prevent vehicles being driven on the footways so as to partially avoid the traffic calming measures. Unfortunately, the footways of Halton Station Road were too narrow to permit the installation of bollards and this had been explained to residents. Bus companies had also been contacted to request them not to use Halton Station Road.

Although the completion date for the works was not set, it was believed that the SWSB repairs would be completed in the Autumn of this year. Therefore, whilst the works should now be of a finite duration, it was likely that residents would continue to be inconvenienced. Although no formal approach had yet been made by CWaC to Halton Borough Council, it was understood that CWaC was now considering making the temporary arrangements permanent. It would appear that CWaC had held local meetings recently to discuss a range of traffic issues in that area of CWaC including the possibility of making the bridge diversion layout permanent, but unfortunately neither Halton Borough Council nor residents of Halton Station Road were aware of this possible opportunity to raise their concerns. It was

therefore recommended that the Board supports submission of a formal objection by the Council to CWaC in response to any proposal to make this temporary arrangement permanent.

In accordance with Standing Order No.34 (9), the following public question was submitted to the Board by Mr Whitlow, Station Road, Runcorn, by email:

“We the residents of Halton Station Road Runcorn are extremely concerned by the size, width, weight and speed that traffic is going up the road blatantly avoiding speed bumps. We have and are enduring visible damage by way of pathway damage (Cars hopping up to avoid speed bump) the wall outside No.1 and No 8 have significant cracks up the front walls coupled with damage to parked cars (visitors). The visible damage is a grave concern of ours as is the weight of coaches, heavy plant and trucks using this B-Road as an access point, we believe that weight restrictions were enforced in Halton Station Road previously for good reason (previous 3.5T limit. There is a large number of houses that are not built on unorthodox foundations and footings thus the vibration and weight distribution has cause the notable damage as mentioned above however we know feel that our properties are now at the detriment to this unreasonable traffic flow. We demand HBC send out a structural surveyor to give us some clarity and assurance that our homes are not suffering the same damage as the exterior garden walls etc. We are extremely pragmatic about keeping a safe and transparent community thus will attend this meeting accordingly”.

In response Officers advised the Board that Halton Station Road was a classified B-road with an environmental weight restriction in place. The weight restriction was intended to prevent heavy through traffic using the route but there was no structural requirement for the weight restriction. HGVs and similar heavy vehicles are not prevented from entering the area but the weight restriction was intended to prevent use of the road purely as a through route: to use it HGVs should have business within the restriction area.

The enforcement of the weight restriction was the responsibility of Cheshire Police, and they have been asked to give the area attention to this but the Police have their own operational priorities and they cannot be routinely present. The footpaths of Halton Station Road were too

narrow to allow the fitting of bollards without rendering them too narrow for use by those in wheelchairs or with pushchairs.

The Council does not normally carry out structural surveys of properties. It would arrange for the walls adjacent to the footpath to be checked.

Arising from the discussion, Councillor Logan addressed the Committee on behalf of residents and commented on:

- the lack of consultation for Halton Station Road residents by CWaC, future processes should be transparent and not exclusive to CWaC residents;
- impact on the environment at Halton Station Road and cracks in properties needed to be checked as they were evident;
- psychological impact on residents as their quality of life had changed with HGV's regularly using the road;
- how had CWaC measured that traffic has improved?
- Halton Station Road could become a cul-de-sac in future.

Further, Councillor C Loftus, Ward Councillor for Halton Station Road, also commented on the vibrations caused by speed bumps, police not deeming the road a priority to enforce vehicle weight restrictions, drivers using the pavement to avoid speed bumps and the need for a cul-de-sac.

In response the Board was advised that there would be implications for other road users with regard to the introduction of a cul-de-sac at Station Road and it was agreed that the proposal would be investigated if the Temporary Traffic Order became permanent.

Arising from the discussion, a Member sought clarification on if proposals by CWaC to make the Temporary Traffic Order into a Permanent Traffic Order needed planning permission. It was agreed that a response would be provided.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- (1) notes that Officers have contacted Cheshire West and Chester Council on behalf of Halton Station Road residents, setting out the problems its traffic diversions are causing;

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(2) notes that Officers have also contacted Cheshire Police requesting that it provides enforcement of the existing vehicle weight restriction on Halton Station Road; and

(3) endorse the proposal to formally object to any proposal by Cheshire West and Chester Council to make permanent the present temporary traffic arrangements in the area of Sutton Weaver Swing Bridge/Clifton Road.

EUR9 WINTER SERVICE PLAN 2014/15 - PART A

The Board was advised that following a revision to the National Code of Practice for Highway Maintenance – Winter Service by the UK Roads Liaison Group (UKRLG), Halton had reviewed its Winter Service Plan to meet the amended requirements. The Winter Service Plan aimed to:

- keep traffic moving safely both through and within the Borough during frost, snow and icy conditions;
- prioritise the treatment of the classified road networks, major distributor routes and bus routes which comprised around 45% of Halton's road network; and
- provide for an escalating response to deal with severe or prolonged weather events.

It was noted that the plan was reviewed and revised annually to ensure local, regional and national codes of practice, guidance and recommendations were considered and incorporated as required.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and the plan be endorsed.

EUR10 ARMED FORCES & VETERAN SUPPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which provided an update on the Armed Forces Covenant and the Armed Forces and Veteran support. The Board was advised on the various difficulties experienced in identifying accurate data for both the armed forces and Veteran community in Halton.

With regard to the Armed Forces Community Covenant, which set out 20 pledges, around 5 key themes, the Board received an update on each of the following:-

- Housing;
- Employment and Benefits;
- Education;
- Health; and
- Wellbeing.

The Board noted that the Cheshire Community Covenant Partnership, which consisted of the Armed Forces Champions from Cheshire East, Cheshire West and Cheshire, Warrington and Halton, the Lieutenant Colonel of 75 Engineer Regiment, Cheshire Probation Service and Job Centre Plus, was required to undertake annual reviews of the Covenant with the next review due in October 2014. It was also noted that there was a national pot of money to support initiatives endorsed through the Community Covenant Partnership. A pot £30m was initially allocated with £10m being available in 2013/14. The Cheshire Partnership had one successful bid in Cheshire East which was awarded £44,000.

In addition, the Board was advised that a Corporate Covenant had been designed to complement the Armed Forces Covenant and sit alongside the Community Covenant. The Corporate Covenant was designed to allow businesses and charitable organisations to express their support and commit to ways in which they could provide that support. Local Authorities were encouraged to collaborate with their local Chamber of Commerce to promote the Corporate Covenant. In Cheshire West and Chester an event had been held for employers in their business district to promote this supported by the Cheshire Covenant Partnership. It was hoped further events would be held in other Cheshire Authority areas.

Members were also advised on how the Council actively engaged with local Veteran Support Groups recognising their valued role in supporting Veterans and their families and organising commemorative events. The Board noted a number of national, local and regional events which would take place to mark 100 since the start of the First World War.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR11 HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT LAND DEVELOPMENT IN THE YEAR TO APRIL 2014

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Policy, and Resources, which provided a summary on the results of the annual housing and employment land

monitoring surveys undertaken by the Planning and Transport Strategic Section.

In line with national guidance, the Halton Local Plan set out policy targets for the delivery of additional housing and the provision of land for employment development. The Plan sought to facilitate the delivery of 552 dwellings (net gain) per annum and an average of 14 Ha. of employment development land.

With regard to housing, in the year to April 2014, there were 301 housing completions in Halton with 31 losses/demolitions giving a net dwelling gain for the year of 270 units. The 301 gross completions in Halton (2013/14) represented a modest fall from the previous year which saw 365 gross and was significantly behind the rates achieved before the recent economic upheavals and market collapse. Members were advised that permissions had been granted for a total of 795 units in 2013/14, the highest level for a single year since 2007/08, hopefully indicating that developer confidence was returning and that large sites, most notably in east Runcorn, were coming on stream and should start yielding units in the coming year.

In respect of employment land, monitoring recorded the take up of 3.53 Ha. of employment land with 2.03 Ha. being taken up in Runcorn and 1.5 Ha. in Widnes. Whilst this represented an increase on the previous year it was significantly behind the prevailing long term average of 14.47 Ha.

Arising from the discussion, a Member asked for clarification on why the policy requirement for houses was so high in Halton when there appeared to be many empty properties. It was agreed that a response would be sought from the Housing Strategy Officer.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR12 POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which sought to develop a work programme of topics for the Board to examine in 2014/15.

The Board had previously established the Waste Management Working Group and although it had not submitted a report to the Board during 2013/14, a report was submitted recommending approval of a pilot scheme for the

issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for litter and dog control offences by a private enforcement company on behalf of the Council. The lead officer for the Waste Management Topic Group had confirmed that more work remained to be done and it was therefore recommended that Members continued to support this Group.

Members were also asked to consider suitable areas for scrutiny during 2014/15 and forward any suggestions to the Chair of the Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Members of the Board forward suggestions for topic areas for potential scrutiny in 2014/2015 to the Chair of the Board;
- (2) Details of topic briefs be agreed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Board in conjunction with the Lead Officer; and
- (3) Members confirmed their support for the continuation of the Waste Management Working Party with the following nominations:

Councillors P. Sinnott, G. Zgadllo, C. Loftus, G. Stockton.

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EUR13 NOMINATIONS OF MEMBERS TO THE CONSULTATION REVIEW PANEL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which requested nomination of two Members to represent the Board on the Consultation Review Panel.

RESOLVED: That the Chairman and Vice Chairman 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 NOMINATIONS OF MEMBERS TO THE HALTON PUBLIC TRANSPORT ADVISORY PANEL - MUNICIPAL YEAR 2014/15

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which requested Members to agree nominations to sit on the Council's Public Transport Advisory Panel for the Municipal Year 2014/15.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the nominations for Halton Public Transport Advisory Panel for 2014/15 be as follows: Councillors Woolfall, McInerney, Morley and G. Stockton;
- (2) the Chairman of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Transportation, nominates a Chairman and the Chairman agree such deputies, as may be required from time to time;
- (2) the nominations be endorsed; and
- (3) the key issues discussed by the Panel during the Municipal Year 2013/14, as set out in the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.