

REPORT TO: 3MG Executive Sub Board

DATE: 16th October 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director Environment

SUBJECT: Progress on Implementing the 3MG Masterplan

WARDS: All Wards

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update Members on the progress of the 3MG Masterplan.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) **Members note the progress made and**
- (2) **support the continuation of the Masterplan programme.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Chief Executive presented a detailed update on 3MG to Council on 12th. December 2008. This report updates Members of the Board on progress.

3.2 **A5300 Western Approach** - A planning application was submitted jointly to Knowsley MBC and Halton Borough Council in March 2008. It was considered by KMBC on 14th. August. It resolved to approve the application subject to a referral to the Secretary of State. The Secretary of State confirmed that he would not be calling in the application. KMBC issued the full formal approval on 17th. September 2008. Halton Borough Council considered and approved the application 15th. September 2008 and issued its full approval on 30th. September 2008. Following successful discussions with the North West Development Agency regarding the possible need for 'gap' funding, it is likely that the construction of the Link Road will be coupled to the sale of HBC Field, thereby passing the cost and risk to the developer.

3.3 **Rail** - Planning permission was obtained for four new rail sidings on 17th. October 2007. Design has progressed to Network Rail's GRIP stage 3 (out of 8) and discussions are on-going with Network Rail, Halton Borough Council's advisors W.S. Atkins and the Stobart Group over the most cost-effective way for moving the project through GRIP stages 4 and 5.

3.4 **Landscaping** - United Utilities completed the diversion of the sludge main in May 2008. The structural landscaping contract commenced on

site in May 2008 and is progressing well. The planting will be completed in January 2009. The new parkland will be opened to the community in Spring 2009, once the seeding and planting has had time to establish.

- 3.5 **Halebank Rec** - Phase 1, the Play Area, tree planting and improvement works to changing rooms, was completed in May 2007. This was formally opened to the community in June 2007. Phase 2, the installation of youth activity equipment and pitch drainage, received approval from Biffa for a £50,000 grant in December 2007. Work commenced on 1st. September 2008 and was completed on 8th. October 2008. A formal opening will take place at the end of October 2008.
- 3.6 **Private Sector Investment** - The Stobart Group bought into 3MG in August 2007 by acquiring the former AHC site, the O'Connor operation and Tessengerlo. They are currently making progress acquiring the Eddarbridge properties and now own approximately 200 acres. Stobart obtained planning permission in December 2007 for a large development on the former AHC site. That application will not be implemented since the customer opted to take this development in the North East. However, an additional application has been submitted for the former Tessengerlo site for a large chilled food warehouse for the same customer which will generate an estimated 918 jobs. This will have been considered by the Development Control Committee on 13th. October 2008. Stobart has also acquired the Mersey Gateway Port (formerly the Port of Weston). Steve O'Connor has been appointed Stobart Ports Director and is responsible for both the Widnes and Runcorn operations. Stobart is working directly with the North West Development Association and has submitted an application for £3.8 million towards reclamation costs.
- 3.7 **Funding** – The North West Development Association has agreed an 'in principle' grant of up to £4.5 million towards 3MG. To date £1.7 million has been secured and a further application is currently being considered by the North West Development Association for £942,000.
- 3.8 **Acquisitions** – Halton Borough Council Field is now in the full ownership of Halton Borough Council. Terms have also been agreed with Cheshire County Council for the acquisition of the land known as Newstead Farm, some of which is necessary for the construction of the A5300 Link.
- 3.9 **Skills** - The Halton Employment Partnership (including Skills for Logistics, Learning and Skills Council and Job Centre Plus) is taking the lead on the skills and recruitment offer for logistics companies in Halton, specifically targeting 3MG. One of our Partners has devised an NVQ Warehousing Programme which has been piloted in the James Irlam division of Stobart and will now be rolled out throughout the Stobart Group nationally. A joint Topic Group was formed over the summer between the Urban Renewal and Employment, Learning and Skills PPBs which is looking specifically at skills and recruitment in this sector. An Investors' Handbook is currently being produced, detailing the Halton Employment Partnership's offer to existing and new logistics companies.

The aim of this is to give Halton the competitive advantage over its rivals and maximise the number of local people accessing the employment opportunities.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All of the projects detailed above are in accordance with the approved 3MG Masterplan and SPD.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Urban Renewal – 3MG is an integral part of Halton’s Urban Renewal strategy and will lead to job creation, the remediation of vast amounts of contaminated land, improvements to the environment and will put Halton on the national map as a centre for logistics.
- 5.2 Financial implications – 3MG has maximised the grant funding available from ERDF, NRF, WREN and Biffa, and will continue to work the North West Development Association to maximise its contribution to the delivery of the Masterplan. The balance will be generated as shown in the approved 3MG Masterplan.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 The key risks associated with this programme of work remain unchanged from those reported to Members in December 2007.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 Equality and diversity issues are considered at all levels, at programme and project delivery.

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

- 8.1 There are no background papers in connection with this item.