

URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board held on Wednesday, 16 September 2009 in the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), Morley (Vice-Chairman), E. Cargill, Hodgkinson, Leadbetter, Nolan, Rowe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: Councillors: Balmer, P. Blackmore and Murray

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Collins, L. Derbyshire, J. Farmer, C. Leyshon, M. Noone, N Renison, D. Sutton and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: In Accordance with Standing Order 30, Councillor Polhill, Portfolio Holder Planning, Transportation, Regeneration & Renewal

20 Members of the Public

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

URB18 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2009 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

URB19 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Board was advised that no public questions had been received.

URB20 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

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.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

URB21 SSP MINUTES

The Board was advised that there were no SSP Minutes for this meeting.

URB22 QUARTER1 TO PERIOD END 30TH JUNE 2009

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which detailed the 1st quarter performance management reports on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons and factors affecting the services for: –

- Highways, Transportation and Logistics;
- Environment and Regulatory Services;
- Health and Partnerships;
- Culture and Leisure;
- Economic Regeneration; and
- Major Projects

In receiving the 1st quarterly monitoring reports the following comments arose from the discussion:-

Major Projects

- Page 28 - Emerging Issues (Para 3.0) – Re the Homes and Community Agency (HCA) informing the Council that it would not maintain its commitment to the Canal Quarter development – the reasons and implications of this action was noted; and
- Page 38 – Clarity was sought on the spend of the 'Contaminated Land' funding allocation.

In reply it was reported that this information would be circulated to Members of the Board.

Environmental and Regulatory

- Page 70 – Clarity was sought on spend against financial allocations on the Growth Points programme.

In reply it was reported that this information would be circulated to Members of the Board.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the 1st quarter monitoring report be noted; and

Strategic Director,
Environment

- (2) information on the Growth Points Award be circulated to all Members of the Board.

URB23 WORKING NEIGHBOURHOOD FUND OUTTURN POSITION AND ACHIEVEMENTS 2008/2009

The Board considered a report of the Urban Renewal Co-ordinator which outlined the final financial outturn position and achievements of Urban Renewal projects receiving Working Neighbourhoods Fund (WNF) support. The report also reflected a re-profiling of the 2008/09 budget.

The Board was advised that the Partnership approved the 2008/09 funding allocations for projects receiving WNF in January 2008. This report had been deferred from the 17th June 2009 Board meeting, due to the high volume of business already being considered on that occasion.

The Board was further advised that Appendix XXb showed the project's estimated expenditure position at the end of March 2009. This could be compared with the original allocations and the level of over/underspend.

It was noted that, despite an overprofiling element having been added into the allocations profile (of £12,040), the total Urban Renewal project spend outturn position was almost on target, with a mere £132 overspend.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

URB24 CASTLEFIELDS REGENERATION PROGRAMME REVIEW

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment, which gave an update on progress of the Castlefields Regeneration Programme and outlined the potential next development phases which would continue to drive forward the regeneration of the area.

The Board received a presentation from Chris Leyshon, Castlefields Regeneration Programme Manager which:-

- Outlined the reasons for the need for the Castlefields Regeneration;
- Gave an update on the key projects and the delivery of housing renewal;
- Showed images of before and after regeneration

in respect of Caesars Close, Meadow Road and Oak Lodge;

- Set out an aerial view taken in the late 1980's and what the area would look like in 2012;
- Highlighted the place making – Astmoor Lane, the New Link Road, Rolands Walk Subway, Lighting, Signage, Branding, the Public Arts Strategy and environmental improvements;
- Showed images of Pheonix Park and the 'Party in the Park' which had taken place in August 2009 and which 8000 people had attended;
- Highlighted that the regeneration was more than just housing, it included apprenticeships, the Enterprise Game, Community Arts Projects, the Youth Squad and promoting civic pride; and
- Set out the challenges ahead.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received; and
- (2) the Board supports the Castlefields Re-generation Programme.

Strategic Director,
Environment

URB25 THE IMPLICATIONS OF DE-LINKING THE SILVER JUBILEE BRIDGE – TOPIC GROUP PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which reported back to the Board on the matters examined by the Topic Group set up to consider the implications of de-linking the Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB) in support of the Mersey Gateway Project.

The Board was advised that the Members of the Group concluded that the Topic Group meetings had enabled an open and frank discussion on the implications of De-linking the SJB. It was agreed that it made sense to await the outcome of the Public Inquiry before looking to influence proposals in Runcorn. It was concluded that there was no need for the Topic Group to continue in the immediate future, that support continue to be given to the various Mersey Gateway (MG) Applications and Orders to be considered by the Public Inquiry, and that support be given for the Preferred Options of the MG Regeneration Strategy

but that more work be undertaken on these and alternative options once the result of the Inquiry was known. It was further recognised that in order to consider any further evaluation of these options, the Topic Group may need to be reconvened subject to approval of this Policy and Performance Board.

The Board thanked everyone who had been involved in the Topic Group for the excellent work that had been undertaken on the review.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board note the progress made by the Topic Group in examining the issues associated with the proposed de-linking of the Silver Jubilee Bridge; and
- (2) endorse the Group's conclusion that any further consideration be deferred until the outcome of the Public Inquiry into the Mersey Gateway Project is known.

Strategic Director,
Environment

URB26 RECEIPT OF PETITION - RELOCATION OF BUS STOP AT DERBY ROAD, WIDNES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which informed Members of a petition which had been received from the residents of Claremont Avenue, Claremont Drive, Derby Rd, Marsh Hall Road, Windermere Avenue and Windermere Street, following the relocation of a bus stop by approximately 100 metres from its original location on Derby Road, at the junction with Claremont Drive, Widnes.

The Board was advised that Halton Borough Council had received a petition on the 10th August 2009, signed by 49 residents, concerning the relocation of a bus stop on Derby Rd (Set out in Appendix A to the report). The basis of the petition being that: the majority of the people who use the bus stop were between 60 and 80 years of age, had health and mobility problems and had a greater risk of falling, (particularly in the winter with icy pavements and the downhill location of the new bus stop); and that the current siting of the stop provided little protection from inclement weather. It was alleged that the original location of the stop had never caused a problem. Finally, the petition sought a 'Request Stop' to be placed in the vicinity of the old bus stop.

The Board was further advised that the bus stop was served by the Halton Transport Ltd service 17a, which operated on an hourly frequency Monday to Saturday between Widnes, Vicarage Rd and St Helens Town Centre.

The bus stop was originally relocated as part of a Borough wide scheme to improve access to stops and to bring the bus stop up to Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) compliance. Part 3 of the DDA gave people with disabilities the right to access goods, facilities, services and premises. Unfortunately, the bus stop, in its initial location could not accommodate the necessary improvements to make the stop DDA compliant (bus shelter, raised kerbing and bus box markings) and as such an alternative location was sought.

It was reported that as a result of the concerns raised in the petition, a site visit had been carried out by the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation, Regeneration and Renewal and relevant Council Officers, to assess the situation and if appropriate, identify an alternative location. It was subsequently agreed that for a trial period of six months, an alternative bus stop should be sited on Derby Rd, closer to its junction with Claremont Drive to enable an assessment to be made of the relative benefits of each bus stop location. However, the temporary bus stop would not comply with DDA standards, during the trial and the current bus stop would be taken out of use due to the close proximity of the temporary stop.

It was also reported that further consultation with the residents occupying frontage properties on Derby Rd, affected by the alternative bus stop location, would be undertaken.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted; and
- (2) the proposed course of action to relocate the bus stop on Derby Road on a temporary basis to enable an assessment to be made of the relative benefits be supported.

Strategic Director,
Environment

URB27 RECEIPT OF PETITION - PARKING PROBLEMS AT SOUTHWAY, WIDNES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which reported the receipt of a petition from residents of Southway and Ash Grove, Widnes

and actions taken to date.

The Board was advised that a petition by 19 residents of Southway and Ash Grove, Widnes (11 properties) had been received on 5 June 2009. This represented approximately 39% of households within the area of circulation of the petition. The petition outlined the problems associated with a lack of car parking. These included neighbourly disputes, possible damage to footways and vehicles and potential road safety issues. It requested that the Council consider the provision of additional parking spaces on the grassed verge in Southway.

The Board was further advised that there had been a history of parking problems in Southway and Ash Grove. The majority of houses in these streets were laid out generally perpendicular to the carriageway, with the fronts of properties accessed by a footpath only. There was limited carriageway space available for parking. Previously, car parking bays had been provided within grassed amenity areas in the Borough by the previous Housing Department. However, there was insufficient space to cope with current demand.

In addition, a written holding reply had been sent to the organiser of the petition on 19 June 2009. The response had referred to previous involvement by the Council in similar parking issues at Southway. It explained that grassed verges were owned by Halton Housing Trust and that their views on the proposal would be sought.

Given the responsibilities of Halton Borough Council for carriageway, footway and road safety in Southway and Halton Housing Trust's responsibilities for both the grassed amenity areas and for estate management, any scheme to provide parking spaces on the grassed verges would need to be developed in partnership. Also, any scheme to provide parking spaces would need planning permission and the issue of who should fund such a scheme also needed consideration.

It was reported that a preliminary design sketch had been prepared which showed how parking spaces could be provided, and Halton Housing Trust had been asked for initial views.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be received;

Strategic Director,
Environment

- (2) the Board notes that the initial design sketch had been submitted to Halton Housing Trust for its views on whether a parking scheme could be progressed; and
- (3) a further report be presented to the Board when the views of Halton Housing Trust on the feasibility of a parking scheme have been received.

URB28 RESIDENTS-ONLY PARKING SCHEMES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment, which sought to review the Council's policy in relation to residents only parking schemes. The Board's comments on the scheme were requested prior to being considered by the Executive Board.

The Board was advised that parking on Halton's roads was free and open to all highway users on an equal basis, provided their vehicles were street legal. The highway, it was reported was for the passing and re-passing of traffic and not for parking.

The Board was further advised that in Halton, there was no charge levied for the use of the limited number of Council owned car parks and thus there was no income from these facilities. In this respect, they represented a financial liability to the Council, due to their ongoing maintenance costs. Most parking provision associated with the town centre and supermarket shopping was in private ownership and again carried no charge, currently. However, there was charging by the owners of car parks at some locations such as the hospital and at Runcorn mainline railway station. It was noted, however, that the Council had commissioned parking studies in Runcorn and Widnes Town Centres and in Halton Lea. These studies provided the base data and analysis to enable consideration by the Council, in conjunction with private car park operators, of a future car parking management policy.

In addition, enforcement of on-highway parking restrictions is the responsibility of Cheshire Police. Cheshire Police had been consulted to ascertain if they would be prepared to enforce a Residents Only Parking (ROPS) scheme in Halton, if one were introduced. The request had been declined as the Police indicated that the "Force's position on residents only parking is that it was solely a local authority issue.

It was reported that using powers introduced by the Road Traffic Act 2004, it would be possible for Halton to take on responsibility for enforcing on-street parking restrictions instead of the Police, including any ROPS. These Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) powers would mean that the majority of parking offences, including parking on yellow lines and misusing disabled person parking bays, would no longer be criminal offences. A total of 247 local authorities had taken on CPE powers to March 2009, freeing some Police resources to tackle more serious crime.

It was reported that Council were in the process of considering the feasibility for introducing CPE in Halton and would include an assessment of the financial implications as well as any enforcement benefits. However, it was highlighted that the Council had no parking income against which it could offset the cost of a Resident Only Parking Schemes within a Civil Parking Enforcement regime.

It was noted that many of The Holloway's residents saw the introduction of ROPS as a simple solution provided that the restrictions were enforced robustly. However, it was also noted that based on the reported experiences of other local authorities available via the internet, such schemes had a number of associated problems and impacts that would need to be taken into account.

In conclusion, it was reported that the Council's ability to introduce Residents Only Parking Schemes within the Borough at this time was dependent on the viability of it adopting Civil Parking Enforcement powers. However, there also remained a substantial number of disadvantages to agreeing to the introduction of Residents Only Parking Schemes within the Borough associated with: inflexibility in the provision of licenses and parking spaces; the inability to guarantee parking spaces for individual residents; the inconvenience to residents and visitors; the displacement of parking problems; the potential reductions in the availability of parking space; and costs. It was therefore considered inappropriate to introduce Residents Only Parking Schemes in the Borough at this time.

The following points arose from the discussion:-

- It was noted that the view of the Board would be included in the report to the Executive Board for consideration at its meeting on 24 September 2009;
- It was reported that there were problems caused

by parking on The Holloway (adjacent to Runcorn rail station) and that they were getting worse. It was suggested that parking was being displaced from the station's multi-storey car park as the charge was considered expensive (£6 before 10.00am). Residents had to compete/share parking with train travellers;

- It was agreed that Residents Parking schemes need to be self financing and not funded via additional Council tax, suggesting that it could be put out to private contract or neighbouring authorities. It was also suggested that the Council apply for Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) Powers once the results of the CPE feasibility study were known;
- a Member of the Board reported via email that he had lived and worked in a residents parking scheme area. He thought it was an excellent idea but clarity was sought on who would police it, who would administer it and how it would be funded. In addition, it was reported that the scheme had worked when there was only one car per household, but that it was not a workable option when residents had more than one car. It was highlighted that the parking bays were less than 11 metres long and there was no provision for visitors who had to park up to three quarters of a mile away;
- It was noted that there was a parking problem across the Borough and the country and that ROPS would have to be introduced everywhere at a substantial cost if a parking scheme was introduced;
- It was suggested that the report was a useful document as background but the key to it was the proposed Civil Parking Enforcement Powers Feasibility Study. In addition, it was not only Holloway which was experiencing parking problems but other areas of the Borough also, i.e. the New Town area;
- In respect of East Runcorn station, it was highlighted that there had always been a problem in the surrounding streets for different reasons i.e the car park was not perceived as 'safe', In addition, it was felt that a Borough-wide view

would need to be taken and firm comments obtained from Network Rail / Virgin on the potential for reducing their charges or amending the times at which different rates were charged.

- The Board supported a recommendation that a report be brought back to the Board outlining the outcomes and conclusions of the CPE feasibility study as and when it was completed;
- It was noted that the timescale for the project would be presented to the Executive Board; and
- It was reported that there had been a parking problem in Victoria Avenue, Farnworth and that the Council had introduced a restriction of 1 hour in each 24 hours, on one side of the road. Some of the vehicles had been booked and it had been successful, but it had displaced some cars onto another road. It was suggested that ROPS were not the only answer and that any scheme would need to be self financing, possibly costing as much as £800 per permit to cover the administration costs.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the conclusions in the report and comments made be noted; and
- (2) a report be brought to the Board outlining the outcome and conclusions of the feasibility study as and when the study is complete.

URB29 HALTON LEA AND RUNCORN AND WIDNES TOWN CENTRE PARKING STUDIES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which advised of the key results and recommendations of Town Centre Parking Studies and sought approval to a number of actions which would enable a new parking strategy to be developed that would seek to sustain the viability of the Borough's Town Centres.

The Board was advised that Halton was one of only two boroughs in Merseyside (the other being Knowsley) where car parking was free. Therefore, the implications of imposing parking charges, parking enforcement and amending parking supply would need to be carefully considered in relation to their potential impact on the

Strategic Director,
Environment

attractiveness (and hence economic viability) of the town centres, and on nearby residents. In determining a car parking policy, the Council faced an unusual situation, due to a large number of the car parks within the Borough being privately owned. It was therefore essential, in developing new 'on' and 'off'-street car parking strategies, for the Council to work closely with the owners of these car parks to ensure that a consistent, practical and enforceable approach was adopted.

The Board was further advised that to progress this work, parking studies had been commissioned at three key locations within the Borough (Runcorn and Widnes Town Centres and Halton Lea). These studies provided the base data and analysis for consideration by the proposed Parking Partnership and thereby a foundation upon which decisions could be taken by the Council on future parking management policy and formation of a revised strategy. Whilst the existing strategy made some mention of parking management, charging and residents only parking, it was important that up to date parking study data continued to be collected to allow updating of the strategy following the proposed formation of the Parking Partnership, particularly in the light of recent and proposed developments. A parking strategy which responded to the current needs of visitors to the town centres would help ensure that the town centres' attractiveness as destinations was maintained, particularly in the light of new development and the current economic climate.

In addition, it was reported that in commissioning the parking studies, comprehensive briefs had been provided to the consultants, which detailed the broad aims & objectives.

The consultants had identified the parking patterns and problems for each of the centres. Whilst various recommendations were made, any decisions taken would need to take into account a range of factors and potential impacts. These included:

- town centre (economic) viability;
- the current economic downturn;
- impacts on residential parking;
- proposed tolling of the Mersey Gateway and Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- the costs and potential income from CPE;
- promotion of sustainable transport; and
- public reaction to the imposition of charging and/or parking restrictions.

There were considerable differences between the parking patterns and ownership in the three town centres. In Runcorn Old Town, with the exception of Somerfield & Poundstretcher, car parks were generally in the ownership of the Council. In the other Town Centres most were privately owned. Therefore, whilst their management requirements would vary, it was important that an agreed approach was developed, which was acceptable to the Council and all car park operators across the three Town Centres. The study identified the potential for a number of controversial decisions to be made to enable the three Town Centres to function and develop; unimpaired by inadequate parking provision resulting from current and future land uses. These included the following:-

- the introduction of limited period parking;
- the introduction of off street parking charges;
- the introduction of on street parking charges;
- the introduction of Residents' Only Parking Schemes (ROPS);
- the introduction of Civil Parking Enforcement (CPE) in Halton;
- the provision of a Multi Storey Car Park in Runcorn; and
- the provision of Long Stay Parking in Widnes.

The Board also received a presentation outlining the Halton Parking Studies Consultants findings and recommendations – Headlines.

The following points arose from the presentation and discussion:-

- It was reported that Halton Lea multi storey car park had restricted spaces close to the shops that were short stay only and that this could be considered in Runcorn Town Centre using a private operator to cover the costs;
- In respect of the railway station, it was suggested that the Council could put in competitive parking via a private contractor as the cost of the Network Rail/Virgin car park was displacing cars into residential areas;

In reply it was reported that Network Rail and Virgin had worked with the Authority to reduce the car parking charges to £6 before 10 am and £3 later as they were currently charging £8 in other places.

- The importance of free parking being retained in Halton was noted;
- It was noted that previous studies had shown a footfall in the town centre, particularly in Runcorn Town Centre and that most trade visits to the town were up to two hours. It was suggested that short term parking charges would have a devastating effect on retail footfall. However, consideration could be given to charging for long term parking which would not have such an impact on footfall;
- It was noted that car parking in Halton Lea had been successful as it was free for three hours; and
- It was noted that when looking at partnerships consideration would be given to consistency in respect of operators and parking charges.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board note the findings of the studies;
- (2) the Board support the need to pursue and establish a formal Parking Partnership by mid 2010 between the Council and the private operators of car parks within the Borough, the purpose of which would be to consider options and propose measures that are required to manage parking demand both 'Off' and 'On' Street and also to agree the basis of a new draft Parking Strategy for future consideration by the Executive Board;
- (3) the Board support the commissioning of a study, which is currently underway, that will explore the feasibility of the Council making an application for the introduction of its own Civil (Parking) Enforcement Powers and request that the results be brought back to a future meeting of this Board;
- (4) The Board note the consultant's conclusion that there is a potential need for a multi-storey car park in Runcorn, but endorse the recommendation that investigations into this proposal be deferred until the current

Strategic Director,
Environment

economic climate improves;

- (5) The current approach of seeking Section 106 agreements where appropriate to support small residential developments with no private off street parking around the Victoria Square area and seeking a financial contribution towards parking or transport infrastructure, be continued;
- (6) A further report on the establishment of a strategy for securing Section 106 contributions from development elsewhere within the Borough be prepared and submitted to a future meeting of the Board for consideration; and
- (7) The Board support the proposal for officers to investigate the feasibility of the Council keeping the temporary car park at Runcorn station open for use by rail users, to help ease parking problems on surrounding streets, and the potential for a charge to be imposed for its use with management by the private sector.

URB30 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment which advised on the progress that had been made during 2008/09 on implementing the programmes contained within Halton's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2) and on the targets that underpin LTP's policies and strategies.

The Board was advised that in March 2006, Halton submitted its second LTP to the Department for Transport (DfT) for approval which covered the five year period from 2006/07 to 2010/11.

The Board was further that for the first financial year of LTP2, (2006/07), a brief progress report had been required and submitted to the DfT, the contents of which were presented to Urban Renewal PPB on the 19th September 2007. In the subsequent financial year a more comprehensive progress report (Local Transport Plan 2006/07 to 2010/11, Mid Term Review) was required covering the first two years of delivery and this was approved by Executive Board and submitted to DfT in September 2008.

It was reported that the report summarised the

programme of works and initiatives that had been undertaken in 2008/09 and also described the progress that had been made against the performance indicators contained within LTP2. It was noted that the DfT did not require a report on 2008/09 progress.

It was also reported that during 2008/9 good progress had been made towards the achievement of the targets set. An analysis of progress against all the targets that could be reported on revealed that 67% of mandatory indicators were on target and that 73% of all indicators were on target and this provided a good base upon which further improvements could be made.

RESOLVED: That the progress made during 2008/09 on the LTP2 be welcomed.

Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.