

## **ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD**

*At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 24 November 2011 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor P. Blackmore and Hodgkinson

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: D. Cunliffe, L. Derbyshire, M Noone, W Rourke, J Unsworth and A. Villiers

Also in attendance: In Accordance with Standing Order 31, Councillor Stockton, Portfolio Holder - Transportation.

### **ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD**

*Action*

#### **EUR24 MINUTES**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2010 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

In respect of Minute No: EUR 20 – Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust - it was reported that the Mersey Gateway Executive Board had not approved the increase of Councillor Membership on the Trust to three. It had been recommended that the E & UR PPB nominate a member of the PPB to replace Councillor Polhill on the Trust. It was agreed that Councillor Thompson be nominated as the representative for the Mersey Gateway Environmental Trust.

#### **EUR25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

#### **EUR26 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES**

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Environment, Urban Renewal Policy and

Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR27 SSP MINUTES

The Board received the Minutes of the Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership meetings held on 12 May and 7 September 2010.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

EUR28 PETITION FOR IMPROVED LIGHTING IN THE COPSE, PALACEFIELDS, RUNCORN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which informed Members of a petition that had been received from a group of residents who lived at 1 to 8 The Copse, requesting that the Council provide lighting on the access way to their houses. The petition stated that there were potholes in the access way, but they were not requesting that these be repaired as it was the responsibility of the residents to maintain this area.

The Board was advised that the houses within The Copse had been built in the 1970's during the period when Runcorn Development Corporation was controlling and developing this area of Runcorn. The access to these houses was via an unsurfaced access way off the surfaced road. The access way served eight properties and was about 4.0m wide.

The Board was further advised that checks had been carried out and the land was not within the ownership of the Council. Furthermore, the Authority had checked with the Land Registry and had determined that the actual ownership of the access way was with the eight property owners.

It was reported that as the land was not in the ownership of the Council and not part of the adopted highway, lighting could not be provided at a public expense. However, if the residents wished to install lighting themselves then the Council could carry out the works on a rechargeable basis. Also future maintenance (including energy charges) would be the responsibility of the residents and this could also be carried out on a rechargeable basis.

Arising from the discussion it was suggested that the

residents may be able to access external funding or submit an application for area forum funding for the installation of a flood lighting unit on their properties. However, it was reported that the installation of a flood lighting unit on properties would not meet the criteria for area forum funding.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted and the residents be informed that the area is not part of the adopted highway and therefore the Authority would not be able to provide lighting on the access way to their properties; and
- (2) it be recommended that residents consider the installation of a flood lighting unit on their properties to help address this matter.

Strategic Director  
– Environment &  
Economy

## EUR29 CONSTRUCTION HALTON

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which gave Members an update on the implementation of the Construction Employment Integrator Model (now re-named Construction Halton). The report also set out the action plan for the next phase of the Project to March 2011.

It was reported that the forecast scale of development and other construction related activity in the Borough offered significant potential for moving people from benefits into work. The Mersey Gateway Project, Building Schools for the Future Programme and 3MG highway infrastructure works had been identified as offering significant training and employment and supply chain opportunities.

The Board was advised that the aim of Construction Halton was to provide a mechanism that would ensure people from disadvantaged groups and areas within Halton were able to access jobs and training opportunities arising in the construction industry and promote growth of local Small and Medium Enterprises (SME's) through supply chain linkages.

It was reported that this would be achieved by using procurement processes and planned engagement with employers and contractors to ensure that recruitment and training provision was more relevant and demand led, provided tailored pre-recruitment support and routeways and encouraged and assisted Halton based SME's.

The report advised the Members on the progress to date and the initial findings and work that was being undertaken.

Since the initial workshop in 2009 a further workshop had taken place in September 2010 which had reviewed and considered the next steps.

The Board was advised that the action plan (set out in Appendix II to the report) set out the next steps for implementing the project and identified the lead officers that had been tasked with taking the various actions forward. In summary the action plan focussed on:-

- establishing the infrastructure to deliver the project;
- securing a skills forecasting tool;
- establishing a Section 106 Protocol;
- developing and implementing a communication plan;
- rolling out the Due North registration process to local businesses;
- continued research into targeted recruitment and training best practice;
- gaining exemption for local labour clauses in the 1988 Local Government Act;
- assessing the impact of the De centralisation and Localism Bill; and
- assessing the extent to which sustainability is embedded into the Council's procurement processes and policies, in relation to the geographical location of the supply chain.

Arising from the discussion, clarity was sought on whether the Authority had considered setting up a construction programme for people with learning difficulties. In addition, whether the Authority were able to ensure that the developers preferred list of contractors included local people/companies. In response it was reported that the Authority had not as yet considered establishing a construction programme for people with learning difficulties. In respect of the preferred list of contractors, it was reported that this was part of a wider consideration when working with employers and the employment charter ensuring employers

recruited local residents. In addition, it was reported that this suggestion would be considered.

It was recognised that Construction Halton was an excellent scheme. However, the implications of the WNF funding ceasing in March 2011 and the impact the uncertainty of future funding could have on the scheme was noted.

RESOLVED: That the report, action plan and comments be noted.

#### EUR30 REWARDS FOR RECYCLING PRESENTATION

The Board received a presentation from Jimmy Unsworth, Divisional Manager, Waste and Environmental Improvement which provided Members with information on the Rewards for Recycling Scheme.

The presentation:-

- Set out the Council's current waste disposal costs of £2.56m per year of which £1.92m tax which would significantly increase year on year;
- Explained that recycling costs less than disposal and highlighted the multi material re-cycling service in Halton;
- Emphasised that any system the Council implemented would only be successful in achieving targets with residents co-operation;
- Outlined the Recycle Rewards Scheme in Halton;
- Explained the background to the Recycle Bank scheme in Halton – the pilot scheme to 10,000 households in October 2009, the extension to 37,000 more households in August 2010 and the planned roll out to all properties in 2011;
- Set out the challenges that the Council faced when introducing the scheme;
- Explained how the RecycleBank Account was activated, the range of rewards and the levels of rewards redemptions;
- Set out the scheme outcomes and the positive feedback from residents; and

- Outlined the successes to date and the next steps.

The Board was advised that in October 2009 the Council became only the second local authority in the UK to introduce the Recycle Bank 'Rewards for Recycling Scheme' and the first to introduce the scheme to an established kerbside multi-material recycling service.

The Board was further advised that the scheme had been originally introduced as a pilot to 10,000 homes in seven areas of the Borough in October 2009 and, following the success of the pilot, had been extended to a further 36,000 households in August 2010.

Arising from the discussion it was noted that work was being undertaken to consider the provision of a Green Waste Recycling Scheme for properties that cannot accommodate wheeled bins. It was also noted that a default 'opt in' option for activating accounts for the scheme could not be considered as it would breach privacy laws and therefore the scheme had to be operated on a voluntary basis. The excellent work that had been undertaken by Officers and the success of the scheme to date was noted.

The benefits of having the scheme and in particular the significant savings that could be made via recycling as opposed to landfill was noted. It was recognised that the focus had been on encouraging residents in all areas of the Borough to participate in the scheme and recycle more household materials. The next steps would be to identify who was not participating in the scheme and identify the reasons in order to reduce landfill costs in the future.

It was also recognised that there was approximately 110 local businesses and 10 national businesses participating in the scheme currently. It had been disappointing that more national companies had not agreed to participate in the scheme as the wider the rewards the more successful the scheme would be. It was noted that market traders may be approached to participate in the scheme.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the presentation be received;
- (2) Jimmy Unsworth be thanked for his informative presentation; and

- (3) Officers be congratulated for their success and excellent achievements to date on the Rewards for Recycling Scheme.

#### EUR31 SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT PLAN - PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which informed the Members of the process being followed and progress made in relation to the preparation of a Surface Water Management Plan for Widnes.

The report advised that at its meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> June, the Board had considered a report on Flood Risk Management and the various plans and funding arrangements which supported the introduction of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The Board had been informed that Halton had been granted £100,000 for the development of a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) for Widnes, which was ranked 156<sup>th</sup> in Defra's list of settlements in England susceptible to surface water flooding, and that work was underway to establish partnerships and to identify the scope of the SWMP study. The finished plan would describe the causes and effects of surface water flooding and set out the most cost effective way of managing surface water flood risk for the long term.

The report further advised that in accordance with Defra's guidance on the preparation of SWMPs, a Partnership had been formed between Halton Council (as Lead Local Flood Authority - LLFA), the Environment Agency and United Utilities (as the water and sewerage company for the area). Each partner had agreed to engage actively in the SWMP process, working together in co-operation and sharing information with all partners openly. Furthermore, initial meetings had taken place with partners to scope and plan the study and to identify and agree the exchange of information necessary to carry out risk assessments. It was noted that a significant amount of work had already been undertaken to map flood risk in Halton as part of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Level 2.

It was reported that Halton together with its partners had agreed the objectives of the Study, and these were circulated at the meeting as Appendix 2. There was also an additional recommendation circulated at the meeting to adopt these objectives. It was also reported that DEFRA had confirmed that the study would now include the whole of Halton and not just the Widnes area.

In addition, Halton's successful 'Early Action Bid' for funding to produce the SWMP had identified the surcharging of sewer systems under storm and tidal conditions as a source of flooding at various locations. It was expected that the study and plan to address such problems and to help to inform drainage strategies for major new developments in Widnes, including:

- Widnes Waterfront;
- the Mersey Gateway Regeneration Strategy for southern Widnes; and
- the Housing growth Point area of north Widnes.

United Utilities had also stated that they wished to reach an agreement with local authorities to produce a strategy to deal with highway drainage and gully connections.

The Members were informed of the key and local objectives which had been discussed at the Partnership meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010.

In conclusion, it was reported that Defra's capital budget had been reduced by 34% over the course of the CSR period. As yet there were no details available about where cuts would be targeted, although the Government had indicated that improving flood protection remained a priority. The Authority were waiting for further information on what funding would be available to Halton in the future to undertake the new duties and responsibilities under the Flood and Water Management Act, and to develop and implement options identified within the SWMP to mitigate the effects of flooding.

Arising from the discussion, it was suggested that future planning applications could be put on hold until the study had been completed and there was an opportunity for developers to consider providing joint funding in order to establish sustainable drainage on their development sites. In response, it was reported that Planning Conditions ensured that developers dealt with surface water drainage in order to mitigate the risk of flooding and surface water. The study, it was reported would eventually consider how developers could work together to provide sustainable drainage systems.

It was noted that road gullies on the highway were



cleansed on an annual basis. However, the challenges and resource implications, especially at this time of year with the significant leaf fall was also noted. The study, it was reported would identify vulnerable problematic areas and enable the Authority to target these areas.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the continuing work undertaken by Officers, the Council's Consultants and Partners (Environment Agency and United Utilities) in the development of a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) and comments made be noted;
- (2) further reports be presented to the Board as work on the study and plan progress; and
- (3) that the objectives for Halton's SWMP Study as detailed in Appendix 2, as circulated at the meeting, be approved and adopted.

Strategic Director  
– Environment &  
Economy

#### EUR32 LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRESS REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which advised the Members of the progress that had been made during 2009/10 on implementing the capital programme of schemes to support the strategies and policies contained within Halton's second Local Transport Plan (LTP2).

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

The Board was further advised that the report summarised the programme of works and initiatives undertaken in 2009/10 and also described the progress that had been made against the performance indicators contained within LTP2.

It was reported that in Table 1 – the summary of the LTP Maintenance Expenditure 2009/10 had been £6.9m. However, this had been as a result of a special £14.3m Primary Route Network Grant over three years primarily for use on the Silver Jubilee Bridge and normal maintenance expenditure would be just over £2m. In addition, the £1.8m 2009/10 Integrated Transport Expenditure had been reduced because of Government cuts and was now only

£1.3m and this would impact on what could be achieved in LTP2. The reduction in funding would also impact on our Performance Indicators and what could be achieved in respect of targets.

It was noted that the feasibility work on car parking in the Borough had been completed and there had been a number of conclusions in respect of applying for civil parking enforcement powers. The study had shown that in order for a Parking Enforcement operation to be self financing this could only be achieved by introducing charges for parking on car parks and on some street locations. Before this could be undertaken however, the Authority would have to review every waiting restriction in the Borough at a cost of approximately £50,000. In the present economic climate, the Authority was not in a position to fund such a review. Members had also indicated that they did not wish to introduce car parking charges as it would significantly impact on the success of any regeneration of the Borough. A report detailing the feasibility study and the conclusions would be presented to a future meeting of the Board.

It was also noted that the Authority were working towards establishing a parking partnership with local businesses to develop a set of principles regarding parking operations and regulation.

Members of the Board welcomed the future report and that the conclusions had supported the continued Members view that car parking charges should not be introduced in the Borough.

Clarity was sought on whether the Government charged every Authority who had car parks on the assumption that they were obtaining money from charges. In response, it was reported clarity would be sought on this matter and circulated to Members of the Board.

In respect of Page 63 – target 1.5 – a Member of the Board requested clarity on how many of the 580 park and ride spaces were at Runcorn Mainline Station? how many were in use on a typical weekday? and how many monthly parking tickets had been sold? In response it was reported that there were 558 car parking spaces. However, as the car park was owned by Virgin Rail, Officers were unable to provide the information on the usage and how many tickets had been sold. It was reported that this information would be requested from Virgin Rail and, if made available, would be sent to the Member directly.

Strategic Director  
– Environment  
and Economy

Strategic Director  
– Environment &  
Economy

It was suggested that de-linking would probably resolve the problems on Holloway but as this was not in the near future clarity was sought on whether there were any alternative solutions to help the residents in that area. In response it was reported that any enforcement powers would need to be self sufficient and that the Police Community Support Officers (PCSO's) had the powers to give out Fixed Penalty Notices but chose not to and this could help address this problem. Numerous letters had also been sent to the Police to request that PCSO's issued fixed penalty notices in this area but to date no response had been received. It was suggested that PCSO's could only issue advice notices and not Fixed Penalty Notices and clarity on this matter was requested. In response, it was reported that this information would be circulated to Members of the Board.

Strategic Director  
– Environment &  
Economy

RESOLVED: That the progress made during 2009/10 and comments made be noted.

#### EUR33 ANNUAL ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION AND CASUALTY REPORT

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Environment and Economy which gave details of road traffic collision and casualty numbers within the Borough in the year 2009 and recommended a continuance of road traffic collision reduction work.

The Board was advised that Appendix A to the report set out the full details of the numbers of traffic collisions and casualties in the year 2009, and compared these figures with those from previous years. These results were exceptionally good. The report also gave details of progress towards various national targets for casualty reductions and highlighted concerns regarding the resources available to continue this work at its present level in the future.

The Board was further advised of the following:-

- There had been 291 road collisions involving personal injury in Halton, producing 415 casualties, both totals being the lowest in over 20 years;
- 39 of the casualties were classed as serious, and there were 2 deaths. The total of 41 serious injuries or deaths had been the lowest in over 20 years;
- The child serious injury and fatality total of 4 represented a large, if probably unsustainable,

reduction from the total of 11 in 2008;

- The number of people of all ages being slightly injured fell from 435 in 2008 to just 374; and
- The casualty numbers in the three key nationally set target areas remained well below the 2010 final target levels.

It was reported that overall, the results confirmed the success of casualty reduction work, funded through Halton's second Local Transport Plan and the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership, supported by targeted enforcement and local road safety education, training, publicity and traffic management initiatives.

In addition, although the 2009 total of just 4 casualties in the children killed or seriously injured category is an excellent and welcome result, as can be seen in Appendix 'A', there was considerable numeric volatility in this category and this yearly total was unlikely to be routinely repeated or bettered. However, a recent child safety audit and intensive accident data analysis work would be used to inform all future work in this area with the aim of producing consistently low casualty numbers in this category.

All schools in Halton now had School Travel Plans in place, but because of the scheduled withdrawal of Government grant support for this service at the end of the current financial year, these documents with their safety-based implementation plans were unlikely to be carried through without another funding source being identified. Not having identified funding to continue the service had already had an impact as two members of staff had sought alternative employment because of the uncertainty of their future.

In conclusion, it was reported that at the sites now being treated, collision patterns were extremely hard to establish and greater reliance had to be placed on Police advice and consultation to achieve further accident reductions. This approach was being successfully combined with a greater emphasis on road safety, education, training and publicity. However, the effectiveness of any casualty reduction approach could only be assessed over three and preferably five years to ensure that trends were firmly established and firm conclusions could be drawn.

It was noted that sixty people were employed as part of the Cheshire Safer Roads Partnership, two thirds of which

were police officers. This represented a potentially significant cost to the police force if the Partnership could not continue and consideration was being given to whether there would be a Partnership in the future if new funding was not identified.

It was also noted that more people were alive today because of the measures that the Authority had put in place and if new funding was not identified the successes to date would be reduced and more people in the Borough would be at risk.

Arising from the discussion, clarity was sought on who receives the revenue Cheshire Safer Road Partnership collected from fines. It was reported that a response would be sought and circulated to all Members of the Board.

Strategic Director  
– Environment &  
Economy

The comments raised by a Member of the Board via email, regarding the success of the reduction in Halton's road accidents, the loss of funding for accident reduction and future funding and the impact on national targets was circulated at the meeting be noted.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the overall progress made on casualty reduction in Halton and comments made be noted;
- (2) an ongoing programme of road traffic collision reduction schemes and road safety education, training and publicity be endorsed subject to resource availability;
- (3) concerns with regard to the achievement of further casualty prevention, as a result of resource reductions be noted; and
- (4) the Board congratulated everyone concerned in the success in reducing Halton's road accidents to date.

*Meeting ended at 8.25 p.m.*