

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 27 February 2014

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Children & Enterprise

PORTFOLIO: Leader

SUBJECT: Marking 50 years of Runcorn New Town 1964 – 2014

WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To set out: the planned activities to mark the 50th anniversary of Runcorn being designated a New Town; bring national and local focus on the opportunities and challenges from Halton's New Town heritage; using the anniversary for the purpose of community development and cultural learning and; acknowledge any modest Corporate resource implications pertaining from these activities.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That Executive Board

- 1) support utilising the 50th anniversary for the purposes of community development and cultural learning within the Borough;**
- 2) the 50th anniversary activities are also geared to maximise exposure to the opportunities and challenges of Halton's New Town heritage over coming years;**
- 3) review and approve the proposed calendar of local events; and**
- 4) it is noted that non-emergency procurement waiver is used for purpose of securing the restoration of New Town Models.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Runcorn was designated a New Town by National Government on the 10th April 1964 for the purpose of providing housing and employment for people from Liverpool and North Merseyside. To guide development a Masterplan was produced by the Architect and Urban Planner Arthur Ling in 1965 (subsequently amended on 2 occasions). The Masterplan envisaged Runcorn would become a Town of over 100,000 people by the year 2000.

- 3.2 Between 1964 and 1989 Many aspects of the statutory functions of the Runcorn Urban District and Runcorn Rural District (and its successors) were administered by Runcorn Development Corporation (and its successors). The New Town was design-led, characteristics of which are still evident, notably:
- Unique housing and estate designs;
 - Extensive areas of green space and landscaping;
 - High concentration of social housing stock;
 - Expressway and Busway networks;
 - Creation of a new town centre; and consequently, the downgrading of traditional Old Town Centre; and
 - Large dedicated 'planned' industrial areas.
- 3.3 Many of the effects of these and other aspects of the New Town are felt today. Over the years the Council has addressed some of the New Town legacy it has inherited (such as at Southgate and Castlefields). At Sandymoor the major land owner remains the Homes and Communities Agency, as the successor organisation to Commission for New Towns. The Council continues to plan and facilitate the expansion of Runcorn to the original New Town Masterplan. Indeed the Halton Core Strategy identifies that East Runcorn is a major focus for growth, contributing 3,000 new homes (28%) and 49 hectares of new employment land (25%) by 2028.
- 3.4 The New Town also provides a social context and identifier for many of the Halton's residents. Approximately 30,000 initially migrated to the New Town, from largely Liverpool, with many of these now having 3rd generation descendants. The current population of the new town is approximately 45,000. This has resulted in a strong sense of community within some individual New Town estates. However, local historians, historical societies and enquiries to the Libraries historical collections tend to focus on the Old Town and borough's chemical industry. More recently Community Development Officers have seen an interest from residents in activities linked to the New Town, such as the 30th anniversary of Runcorn East Station and establishing a 'Friends of Astmoor School' group.
- 3.5 The former New Town and its 50th anniversary provides an important context and framework in which to reaffirm and engage with some of the Councils existing priorities and activities. These activities are primarily focused within the operational areas of Community & Environment and Economy, Enterprise & Property, and are set around four themes:
- Community Engagement;
 - Cultural Learning;
 - Regeneration; and
 - Growth & Investment.

Appendix A provides a summary of activity around each theme and sets out the target audience, resource implications and outcomes of each of these.

- 3.6 Coordination of event and activities has been through a small officer steering group consisting of representation from three service areas (through their existing functions): Libraries; Community Development, and; Development And Investment Services. Overall project administration sits with the Regeneration Officer, drawing upon the roles project management experience. Supervision is through existing line management, and formal oversight from the Chief Executive and Lead Member, Cllr Dave Cargill.
- 3.7 In respect of community engagement and cultural learning themes, the 50th anniversary presents an opportunity to engage more broadly with local residents around identity, history and community pride. Linked to this, Council facilities and services can be promoted within the Halton Lea Library and other appropriate community buildings. To summarise, the events planned are:
- 50th years of Runcorn New Town Exhibition, Halton Lea Library and Runcorn Shopping Centre;
 - 1974 Runcorn New Town Documentary – Community Screenings;
 - Presidential visit by the Royal Town Planning Institute;
 - ‘Re-inventing Runcorn’ Young People engagement; and
 - Canal Boat Adventure Project – New Town Dreams Documentary.

Appendix B is a complete calendar of proposed events and activities currently in Halton around the 50th anniversary. These are being planned to avoid commemorations for the 100 years anniversary of the 1st World War and look to concentrate events and activities around the 10th April New Town anniversary date.

- 3.8 There is also the opportunity to reflect the 50th anniversary within existing local planned activities and events such as: displaying clips of the 1974 documentary on Council VDU screens in HDL buildings; Children of Halton Sing ‘Songs for special events’; a presence at Party in Phoenix Park and the Vintage Rally.
- 3.9 The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) has also identified the New Town movement and the 50th anniversary of Runcorn New Town to form a part of their centenary year celebration in 2014. This is likely to include a visit by an RTPI delegation, presentation of a Centenary Certificate and Runcorn being featured in a New Town Summit to be held in Letchworth.
- 3.10 Local Youth Group – The Canal Boat Adventure Project have recently secured £35,000.00 funding through the Heritage Lottery Fund’s ‘Young Roots’ scheme to make a documentary in 2014 to

commemorate 50 years of Runcorn New Town. This is intended to reflect on the original 'dream' of the New Town and also look to the future dreams and aspirations of the young people within the New Town today. A premier screening of this documentary will make a fitting finale to the 50th anniversary. HBC Officers have been requested to sit on their advisory group.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Approximately 45,000 residents currently live within Runcorn's New Town areas, and its heritage continues to shape and influence the policies and strategies of the Council. Everything from planning and regeneration; managing and maintaining unique infrastructure; and dealing with the ageing population spike as 1st generation migrants to the New Town reach retirement age.
- 4.2 Within Halton, Runcorn's brand as a place to live and do business is evolving. Major growth and regeneration focused in East Runcorn is planned over the next 15 years, particularly at Daresbury and Sandymoor. 50th anniversary activities around the themes of growth and regeneration present an opportunity to highlight Runcorn's strengths and associated development and investment opportunities. Alongside this the Council can shape and share our broader vision for Halton with two towns but one big future. Links could be made with Sci-Tech Daresbury and rebranding of Runcorn Shopping Centre etc.
- 4.3 At the request of the Council, the RTPI New Town Summit plans to include revisiting two National Government Reviews of New Towns:
- The Transport, Local Government and the Regions Committee Report on The New Towns: Their Problems and Future (17 July 2002); and
 - Transferable Lessons from the New Towns, undertaken for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2006.
- 4.4 The opportunity to engage funders and partners, such as a special session with Housing Associations (i.e. through the Housing Visioning Group) on matters relating to the New Town, can be given added pertinence due to the 50th anniversary. Another example of this could be seeking to secure the blanket waiver of the Homes and Communities Agencies 'clawback' within Halton from land and assets that were transferred to the Council by the Commission for New Town land (or its successors). Waiver would ensure that Halton can retain 100% of land sale value to reinvest.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Whilst cutting across the functions of the organisation, delivery of

the planned events will be focused through the collaboration of three service areas (through their existing functions): Libraries, Community Development and Development And Investment Services.

- 5.2 A funding bid has been made to Area Forums for £3,500.00 to secure the restoration of two Commission for New Town models, which are the only known surviving examples from the period and have been kept in storage at a council depot. Being at least 40 years old these models require some repair. This specialist task is being undertaken by Museum of Liverpool. Waiver of non-emergency procurement standing order has been necessary for this due to the specialist nature of work and transportation constraints.

A match funding bid for £3,000 - £4,000 is being sought from the Heritage Lottery Funds 'Sharing Heritage' grant. This will cover the following aspects of the exhibition and associated activities (including):

- Room hire costs
- School based activities
- Costs / expenses for speakers
- Materials/resources for exhibition i.e. photographs, plans.
- Publicity/marketing

The long term aspiration is to utilise the material collated as part of the project to create a digital New Town archive.

- 5.3 Should the above funding applications be unsuccessful it envisaged that events could go ahead but on a reduced scale.
- 5.4 Public Relations and Marketing are coordinating free publicity via local media, web, social media, School E bulletin, posters and an Inside Halton feature.
- 5.5 Should it be deemed appropriate, material from the exhibition could also be utilised to help tell Halton and Runcorn's story of place within any Mersey Gateway Visitor Centre.

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

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

A focus of planned activities is to engage with young people about their new town heritage and their aspirations for the future. The involvement of the Canal Boat Adventure Project will ensure that opportunities to capture the involvement of young people will be maximised.

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

50th anniversary events provide a good opportunity to engage residents, particularly within some of Halton's most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, with cultural learning and local history opportunities.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Fostering a sense of community is recognised as being an important contribution to people's health and well-being.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Engaging with young people on civic pride and a sense of identity can help reduce some forms of crimes and anti-social behaviour.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

One aspect of the 50th anniversary activities will be to bring focus to growth, regeneration and investment opportunities within Halton and seek partner support and resources to tackle any New Town legacies.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 50th anniversary activities can be used to help highlight the opportunities and challenges facing Halton as a result of our new town heritage. Risks are limited as this proposal is modest in scale and is being delivered through existing resources shared across three service areas. Whilst it will benefit from additional external monies via a Heritage Lottery Fund bid; it is not reliant on securing external funding to go ahead.

7.2 Where necessary, appropriate health and safety risk assessments will be undertaken of any individual events, especially where the public will be present.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None.

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

None under the meaning of the Act.

