



Councillor Hignett

ANNUAL REPORT URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD JUNE 2006 – MARCH 2007

“Once again the Urban Renewal PPB has overseen the vast amount of activity which is contributing to Halton’s renaissance. The number of cranes which have appeared on the skylines of Widnes and Runcorn are testimony to the priority which the Council attaches to renewing the economy and the physical fabric of Halton. Also, the development programmes which the Board has agreed in the past year will ensure that this dynamism will continue to fuel Halton’s renewal into the future.”

Councillor Hignett
Chairman, Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

During 2006/7 the Board comprised eleven Councillors –

Councillor R. Hignett (Chairman)	Labour
Councillor D. Leadbetter (Vice Chairman)	Labour
Councillor Ellen Cargill	Labour
Councillor K. Morley	Labour
Councillor P. Nolan	Labour
Councillor C. Rowe	Liberal Democrat
Councillor D. Thompson	Labour
Councillor T. Sly	Liberal Democrat
Councillor P. Wallace	Labour
Councillor I. Whittaker	Conservative
Councillor P. Worrall	Liberal Democrat

The Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board is responsible for scrutinising performance and formulating policy in relation to the following areas:

- Highways and Transportation,
- Environmental Health and Planning,
- Economic Regeneration and
- Major Projects Departments with the additional responsibility for
- Contaminated Land (as from 2005/06)
- Strategic Housing (as from 2006/07).

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The full Board met five times during the year. As well as considering Executive Board decisions relevant to the work of the Urban Renewal Board, agreeing the Service Plans of the relevant Departments and monitoring their general activities and performance against them, set out below are some of the main activities and issues that the Board has worked on during the year:

Corporate Responsibilities

- The terms of reference for the Board have been amended following changes to the Council's decision-making structures, implemented in 2006/07, in order to bring them into line with the Council's Strategic Priorities, as contained within the Corporate and Community Plans. One amendment to the terms of reference being that this Board be responsible for scrutiny of the strategic housing function.
- The Board received a report outlining the need for a Local Area Agreement, negotiated with Central Government.

Major Projects Department

- Progress on the implementation of the Castlefields and Widnes Waterfront Regeneration programmes was considered and noted. The Board was asked to review and agree the Widnes Waterfront NWDA Performance Plan for 2006/7 and then, later, for 2007/8.
- The Board received a presentation on the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review and noted the revised implementation timetable.
- A report reviewing the conclusions and recommendations outlined in a commercial property study, which assessed the supply of and demand for employment land and premises (industrial, office and retail) in Halton, was considered by the Board and resolved that recommendations set out in that report be supported.

Planning

- Consideration was given to a report which advised on new powers available to the Council to make Gating Orders. The report proposed policy to be adopted in relation to these which was supported and it was recommended that the Executive Board adopt a policy requiring Gating Orders be made against future alley-gate proposals.

Highways and Transportation

- The Board reviewed a Delivery Report of the First Local Transport Plan 2001/2 to 2005/6. Of particular note was the difference that the Plan had made in terms of the Council's strategic priorities at that time, as set out in the Borough's Corporate Plan.

- The Board was informed of the need to appoint a Chairman and three Members to the Public Transport Advisory Panel. As a consequence Cllrs Hignett, Leadbetter, Sly and Polhill's names were put forward.
- There was an update on the current position regarding the measurement and treatment of highway skidding resistance, which informed the proposal to introduce a policy for analysing skid resistance data in order to produce programmes of treatment, which was recommended for adoption.
- The Board received a presentation on the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access. Transport links to new developments and local hospitals were discussed and it was determined that the Public Transport Liaison Panel should scrutinise this further, to the benefit of Halton residents.
- The Street Lighting Topic Review was received.
- A petition requesting signals at Derby Road, Widnes, was considered by to the Board. A refuge was an option that was debated but not adopted due to the presence of the bus route. It was determined that this situation should continue to be monitored.
- The Local Transport Capital Expenditure Settlement 2007/8 was considered and welcomed. It was noted that this improved settlement rewarded the high performance achieved in both the LTP2 and LTP1 Delivery Reports and that Halton was now in the top quartile of the 82 local transport authorities in England.
- The Board reviewed and noted the Public Right of Way Milestone Statement Progress Report 2007/8 in which a reduction in core funding for Groundwork Mersey Valley was identified.

Economic Regeneration

- The Board considered a study undertaken in Runcorn and Widnes town centres to evaluate the level of support from traders and businesses for developing Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) and determined to support this initiative.
- The Board reviewed and noted the draft Town Centre Strategies for Halton Lea and Runcorn Town Centre, as Supplementary Planning Documents, which had been approved for public consultation. Widnes would, instead, have an Area Action Plan produced.

Housing

- The Board received a report on the Housing Needs Survey 2006, which had proved to be a comprehensive and robust housing market and needs assessment.
- An update on a review of Supported Housing by the Health PPB was given and, due to a change in the Board's remit, this will be considered as a future scrutiny topic.
- The Board reviewed an updated report on proposed changes to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy and determined that the document be accepted for public consultation purposes prior to being referred to the Executive Board.
- The draft of the House Extension Supplementary Planning Document was noted by the Board, prior to it going out to public consultation.

Other

- The Board reviewed the Natural Assets Strategy, which was adopted in 2000, together with associated DVD's entitled 'Swifts in Halton' and 'Pickering's Pasture'. The need to get the balance of vegetation right, particularly during the planning process was discussed, along with the regeneration works at Castlefields. The review was recommended to be published in 2007, as a document available to the public, and policies and actions contained therein be noted and followed by all services in the Council where this would have an impact.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2006/7

- A report on the topic brief 'Business Parks' was considered as part of the scrutiny programme and accepted, with key recommendations to be considered and decided upon by the Executive Board.
- The topic brief report on 'Raising Additional Revenue from Existing Services' was considered and recommendations made for further action.
- The Board considered a report on the topic brief for 'Street Lighting', which was noted and to be forwarded to the Executive Board for consideration of the various recommendations.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2007/8

The Board has contributed a number of Topic ideas to be considered by the 2007-8 PPB for inclusion in their work programme for the coming year.

- Future of Town Centre Management;
- Housing Strategy;
- Income Regeneration (continuation of).

Members of the Public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Committee Services in the first instance, telephone 0151 424 2061 extension 1125 or email Lynn.Cairns@Halton.gov.uk