

## ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 26 February 2020 at the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), Fry (Vice-Chair), Gilligan, Howard, A. Lowe, Morley, Nolan, Joe Roberts, Rowe and Teeling

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Sinnott

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: G. Ferguson, T. Gibbs, S. Burrows and S. Rimmer

Also in attendance: One member of the public and B. Wade, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

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

	<i>Action</i>
EUR24 MINUTES	
<p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> November 2019 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.</p>	
EUR25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
<p>It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.</p>	
EUR26 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
<p>The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.</p>	
<p>Under Minute EXB74 a Member queried the reason for the extension in the contract with Halton Housing Trust and it was agreed that a written response would be provided.</p>	Operational Director, Policy, Planning and Transportation
<p>RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.</p>	

## EUR27 HIGHWAY WORKS PERMIT SCHEME - YEAR 3 UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the performance of the Permit Scheme which was in its third year of operation. The aim of the Scheme was to allow the Council, as a local highway authority, to coordinate both utility and local authority highways works on local roads. The purpose was to reduce the duration of these works on the local highway network to ensure the free flow of traffic and minimise disruption. Equally it was important to recognise the fundamental necessity of maintaining roads and utility infrastructure (sewers, water supply, drainage, communications, gas and electricity supply) to homes and businesses.

The Board was advised that a third year audit of the Permit Scheme had been undertaken independently to review the operation of the Scheme and to determine whether benefits achieved in previous years had been maintained. The findings of the audit were outlined in the report and highlighted that:

- From the previous year there had been very little change in the number of permits, however highway works had slightly increased. Utility works had been more consistent over the 3 year period to date;
- The duration of the permitted street work in number of days worked had reduced steadily year on year, with a 28% reduction since the scheme was implemented;
- The permit scheme had reduced the number of days worked on Halton's street network by 4,663 in the 3 year period; and
- The financial benefit to the road user in year 3 was:
  - i. Average monetary cost of works per day £192.00;
  - ii. Number of days saved under Permit Scheme 1,765;
  - iii. Monetary benefit to road users: £0.34m per annum; and
  - iv. the saving to the road user as a result of the permit scheme was just under £1m.

**RESOLVED:** That the third year performance for the Permit Scheme be noted.

## EUR28 PEST CONTROL SERVICE - UPDATE

The Board considered a report of the Director of Public Health, which provided an update on the Council's pest control service and a rationale for maintaining free rat treatments for all residents. The report outlined the number of staff within the team, the service provided and current pest treatment charges with income generated over the last 10 years.

In respect of charges for rat treatments, details were provided for fees charged by the Liverpool City Region and Cheshire Local Authorities. At present treatment of rats was provided to residents free of charge in Halton. However, in recent months some Members had suggested that a charge should be introduced for all rat treatments to help to subsidise the service further and make it more sustainable over the longer term.

Members were advised on the potential net income, against a likely drop in demand for the service should a charge be introduced. The report also discussed the impact of a charge on low income groups and the practicalities of introducing some form of means test to offset this. Further concerns about introducing a charge included:

- Rat activity was likely to increase;
- Many people who experienced rat activity on their property view the activity as a wider environmental problem caused by conditions beyond their own property. They would therefore be reluctant to pay for something they don't perceive to be their responsibility;
- Other local authorities who had introduced a charge suggested that members of the public delay reporting rats until the problem had got out of hand and was affecting a wider area. This was likely to require the input of the Environmental Protection Team to take action against the landowners to enforce the provisions of the Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949. Such action was costly and time consuming and represented a further hidden cost to a charging regime;
- The information received through requests for free treatments enabled the Environmental Health team to locate trends across the Borough. A reduction in

notifications means the Environmental Health team may be slower to identify and respond to these issues; and

- The Council placed bait in secure locations so that it cannot be tampered with by children or animals.

Due to these concerns it was noted that it was the view of the Environmental Health Department that introducing a charge for rat treatments would be counterproductive. Whilst this would significantly reduce demand for the service and make service volumes more manageable, it would have the unintended consequence of increasing rat activity in the Borough by reducing the number of pro-active rat treatments that were carried out.

Furthermore, the control of the rat population was a wider environmental concern that would be best addressed collectively through a universal service rather than on an individual basis by providing a service only to those willing or able to pay for it.

Arising from the discussion, the Board was advised on the service provided by the team to address dog fouling and it was agreed that Councillors would be updated by email on the current service.

Director of Public Health

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the maintenance of free rat treatments for all Halton residents.

#### EUR29 LOCAL CYCLING AND WALKING INVESTMENT PLAN (LCWIP)

The Board received a presentation on the progress of the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plan (LCWIP). The Plan had been developed locally within the LCR and linked with the national Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy. The Board received details on the three phases of the LCWIP and the priority routes within each phase.

The Board noted the progress on Phase 1 of the LCWIP which included a cycle link in Runcorn to Daresbury via newly improved and constructed tracks along the busway and the Bridgewater Canal. In addition, the Board received information on Bike Life, which was the largest assessment of cycle development in UK cities and the launch event in Runcorn on 4<sup>th</sup> March.

RESOLVED: That

1. the content of the report be noted; and
2. the 'Bike Life' launch on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 (at the Brindley, Runcorn) is welcomed as a prestigious event to publicise the active travel network (paragraph 3.14-3.16).

## EUR30 TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Enterprise, Community and Resources, which provided an update on the work to consolidate non-moving Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) such as yellow lines, clear way designations etc.

Members noted that a consolidation of speed limit Orders had already been undertaken and the work had been welcomed by the Police as it made prosecution straight forward due to the accuracy of the records held. Work was now being undertaken across the Borough to ensure that all road markings displayed on the streets corresponded with the records held for those Orders. To date:

- In Widnes detailed inspections and surveys of every road were undertaken to see how the signs and road markings for the existing TROs corresponded to existing paper orders. The surveys had revealed some anomalies and it was noted that 80% of the remedial work had been carried out; and
- In Runcorn initial site surveys had been completed. Results were currently being transferred onto a data base and any anomalies would be addressed prior to a consolidation Order being made.

It was reported that the number of TROs being actioned had been limited due to the focus on progressing the Runcorn and Widnes consolidation Orders, together with team capacity reducing to three staff. It was proposed that priority would be given to those Orders that would improve road safety or ease congestion at critical bottlenecks in the road network. A list of those TRO activities to be undertaken was outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That

1. the progress on consolidation of the non-moving Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) be noted; and
2. the TROs to be progressed once the consolidation

Orders for Runcorn and Widnes are made be noted.

*At the conclusion of the meeting the Chair thanked Councillors Joe Roberts and Pauline Sinnott for their contribution to the Board and wished them well for the future.*

*Meeting ended at 7.35 p.m.*