

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 18 September 2024 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chair), Hughes, Hutchinson, K. Loftus, L. Nolan, Ryan, Stockton and Wall

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Skinner and Thornton

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: W. Rourke, G. Ferguson, T. Gibbs, D. Cooke, A. Plant and S. Burrows

Also in attendance: Councillors Begg, Bevan, Bramwell, Garner, C. Loftus, Lowe, M. Lloyd Jones, Thompson, Wallace and Wharton. Two members of the public

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

| | | <i>Action</i> |
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| EUR1 | MINUTES | |
| | The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 February 2024 having been circulated were signed as a correct record. | |
| EUR2 | PUBLIC QUESTION TIME | |
| | It was confirmed that no public questions had been received. | |
| EUR3 | EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES | |
| | The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board. | |
| | RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received. | |
| EUR4 | ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 | |
| | The Board considered a copy of the Annual Report from the Chair of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board for 2023/24. The Board had | |

met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2023 to March 2024.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be endorsed.

EUR5 REGENERATION IN HALTON

Members of the Board received a presentation on regeneration in Halton which provided an update on the Runcorn Town Plan, the seven projects contained within it and details on the emerging proposals for the Runcorn long-term plan funding, which had been announced earlier in the year.

The presentation also provided an update on the key regeneration sites in Widnes, which included:

- Widnes Town Centre, including the Kingsway Quarter;
- Widnes Waterfront;
- Foundry Lane, Gorsey Point Business Park and University of Liverpool partnership with Carpenters;
- the Multi Model Gateway 3MG;
- Liberty Park – potential development opportunity; and
- HBC Field, including the recently designated Freeport.

The following matters were raised:

- The Town Deal funding is focused on a particular area in Runcorn are there proposals for other areas in Runcorn? It was noted that information on potential projects in other areas of Runcorn would be presented to a future meeting;
- A Runcorn Town Deal Board had been established and Members can email Councillor Thompson with any potential project ideas;
- Clarification was sought on the work at the Camden Buildings and an outline of the development was provided;
- Consideration should be given to exploring the use of water taxis on the canal;
- 'Unlock Runcorn' the canal project and the opportunities it could bring was discussed;
- Members were encouraged to attend stakeholder events. A link would be sent to members to enable them to provide feedback; and
- The possible progression of the development of a Mersey Gateway Regeneration Plan for West Bank

was discussed.

RESOLVED: Members to note the presentation.

EUR6 TOWN DEAL PROGRAMME UPDATE

Members of the Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, which provided an update on the delivery and monitoring of the Town Deal (Reconnecting Runcorn) Programme.

The report provided an overview of the Programme, funding allocation and period, spend and progress to date on each of the following projects:

- Reconnecting Runcorn Programme;
- Runcorn Station Quarter Enterprise Hub (Elite House);
- Unlock Runcorn – landscaping and visitor centre and canal boat trip experience;
- Brindley Theatre Enhancements – extended café, new library and outdoor performance area;
- Creative and Digital Skills Centre;
- Town Centre New Homes – High Street and Rutland Street.
- Health and Education Hub; and
- High Street Connectivity.

RESOLVED: That the Board notes the content of the report.

EUR7 HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPATION AND THE PRIVATE RENTAL SECTOR - UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration and the Director of Public Health, which provided a progress update on the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Action Plan which had been endorsed by the Board in February 2023. The report also updated Members on the development of policy relating to the wider private rental sector.

The report set out the key findings which included:

- Tenure type and changes over time;
- Property standards;
- Energy performance;
- Complaint volumes and nuisance; and
- Houses in multiple occupation.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) note the progress made to date on the HMO Action Plan; and
- 2) endorse the proposal that further policy to control and maintain standards in HMO's and the wider private rental sector is taken forward and considered during development of the Borough-wide Housing Strategy.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EUR8 STRAY DOG COLLECTION AND KENNELING SERVICE

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which outlined the changes to the stray dog collection and kennelling service, and the approach to procuring this service.

Halton had been part of a consortium of Local Authorities for the past ten years which had provided a kennelling service. However, in February 2024 the provider indicated that they no longer intended to bid for the contract which was due to expire on 31 May 2024. Due to this notice being less than 12 weeks, the Council was unable to procure a new contract under the usual tender process, which included scrutiny and approval via the Policy and Performance Board and Executive Board. Therefore, Acorn Kennels, based in Shropshire, was identified as a potential provider. The report outlined further information about this provider and explained the steps that were taken to ensure that it would offer a suitable service.

It was noted that approximately 60 stray dogs were collected in Halton each year and only 14 of those were reclaimed. The number had significantly reduced since the introduction of compulsory microchipping in 2016. If any dog cannot be returned to its owner, it would be taken to the licensed dog kennels in Whitchurch, Shropshire, which had been issued a 5 star rating by the Local Authority. It was acknowledged that the kennels are some distance from Halton and therefore, some changes had to be made to the fees charged in an attempt to reduce the number of dogs that need to be taken to the kennels.

Members were advised that previously, there was a £125 fee for dogs to be returned to the owners at their home address, by the contractor. Going forward, owners would now have the option to collect their dog from the kennels in Whitchurch, or for a fee of £20, the contractor will transport the dog back to the owners home.

It was noted that, by law, an owner must reclaim their dog within 7 days. After that period, the Council was allowed to gift the dog to an organisation that would be able to look after the dog. Acorn Kennels operate a re-homing service and therefore any unclaimed dogs would be gifted to them after 7 days, with the expectation that as many dogs as possible would be found a new home.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR9 CONTROL OF FLY POSTING AND BANNER ADVERTISEMENTS

The Board received a report from the Executive Director, Environment and Regeneration, regarding its available powers under the Section 224 and 225 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to control fly posting and banner advertisements.

Members were advised that Officers had been notified that there had been a proliferation of banner advertisements being fixed to highway furniture which could potentially cause highway safety issues and effect the amenity of the area.

The report outlined the available powers, their purposes and implications, in the event of them being exercised.

It was noted that the use of the power to remove advertisements could have a beneficial impact on the look and appearance of the Borough. However, due to limited resources, Officers would focus on being proactive in areas where a number of signs had been erected and were affecting the amenity of the area. Officers would work with colleagues in other departments e.g. Highways, Environment and Community Safety to carry out this work and at least 14 hours a month would be allocated to tackle this problem and take enforcement action.

RESOLVED: That the resource/priority implications of the approach and priority areas for action be identified and considered.

Executive Director
Environment &
Regeneration

EUR10 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2023/24

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Reports for Quarter 4 of 2023/24.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2023/24 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services; and
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That quarter 4 performance management reports be received and noted.

EUR11 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2024/25

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 1 of 2024/25.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2024/25 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services; and
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

The Board discussed the number of vacancies within the Planning Department and were advised that steps were being taken to address the situation.

RESOLVED: That the quarter 1 performance management report be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.