

MERSEY GATEWAY EXECUTIVE BOARD

At a meeting of the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on Thursday, 29 January 2009 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building

Present: Councillors McDermott (Chairman), Polhill, Wharton, Findon and Redhead

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: B. Dodd, D. Parr, M. Reaney, D. Tregaea, S. Nicholson, M. Noone and M. Simpson

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

MGEB13MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2008, having been printed and circulated, were taken as read and signed as a correct record.

MGEB14PREPARATIONS FOR THE MERSEY GATEWAY PUBLIC INQUIRY

The Board received a report of the Mersey Gateway Project Director, which updated Members of the progress made in preparing for the public inquiry, which had now been announced.

The Board was advised that the Department for Transport (DfT) were to issue the formal Statement of Matters for the public inquiry, which in effect would set the terms of reference for the inquiry. It was noted that the deadline for the DfT to issue the Statement of Matters had been extended to the 23 February 2009 in order to allow the tolling proposals in the Transport and Works Act Application (that would apply to the new crossing), to be reviewed against the road user charging scheme as defined in the made Road User Charging order for Silver Jubilee Bridge (SJB).

It was reported that the extended period up to the issuing the Statement of Matters would still enable an Inquiry to commence this spring. The additional time would be used to resolve as many objections as possible leading to a shorter Inquiry and potentially earlier decision.

It was reported that preparations were in place for the inquiry to be held in May 2009 rather than March 2009. However should the Council be in a position to hold it earlier this would be arranged.

RESOLVED: That the progress made be noted.

MGE15RELOCATING BUSINESSES AFFECTED BY MERSEY GATEWAY

The Board received a report of the Mersey Gateway Project Director which provided an update of the progress made in negotiating land acquisition with those parties affected by the published Compulsory Purchase Orders and Applications.

It was reported that all businesses affected by Mersey Gateway had been contacted and invited to discuss acquisition in advance of exercising any Compulsory Purchase powers, should such powers be confirmed in due course by the Secretary of State. It was advised that these negotiations were applying the advanced land acquisition and relocation policy agreed with the Mersey Gateway Executive Board.

Detailed in the report for Members consideration was the breakdown of the businesses who had expressed an interest in relocation.

The Board was advised of the successful agreement reached with Thermo Fisher to relocate to Manor Park. It was noted that a small number of other businesses had been identified as having exceptional needs and negotiations were currently ongoing with those businesses with the aim to reach a similar satisfactory conclusion in the near future.

Members queried whether any businesses were

planning to locate outside of the Borough. In response it was noted that so far only one business was considering this as an option.

RESOLVED: That the progress made be noted.

MGEB16MERSEY GATEWAY FUNDING FOR ADVANCED LAND ACQUISITION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Environment which provided an update of the information reported to the Mersey Gateway Executive Board on 15 November 2007 in relation to funding required to support the acquisition of land, including the interests of tenants and freeholders prior to receiving Government grant.

It was proposed that the land acquisition budget was reviewed annually at this time of year so that any changes could be considered as part of the Council's budget deliberations.

It was advised that there was a funding gap and options to manage this for land acquisition had been assessed in some detail. Seven options for meeting the short term funding gap had been identified and evaluated and were detailed in the report for Members consideration.

The Board was advised that the most favourable option for the Council would be the acceleration of the RFA grant as it would minimise the gap in funding land assembly, therefore avoiding any significant external finance. However due to the constraints on the funding provided by DfT and by the North West Region this option may prove to be undeliverable.

Members raised concerns in relation to RFA getting into financial difficulties during this economic climate. In response it was noted that as Mersey Gateway has Programme Entry the RFA funding is secure at present. Schemes without Programme Entry were more at risk in the event of a wholesale review of RFA.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The revised budget for Advanced Land Acquisition and Negotiations be approved;
- 2) The Council amend the Capital Programme

accordingly; and

- 3) The potential call on the Council Priorities Fund be noted.

COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLORS FINDON AND REDHEAD

Councillors Findon and Redhead took the opportunity at the invitation of the chair to reaffirm their complete support for the Mersey Gateway bridge project.

MINUTES ISSUED: 18 February 2009

CALL IN: 25 February 2009

Any matter decided by the Mersey Gateway Executive Board may be called in no later than 25 February 2009

Meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.