

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 11 September 2013 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gerrard (Chairman), P. Hignett, MacManus, T. McInerney, Sinnott, Thompson, Woolfall and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor J. Bradshaw and Fraser

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Keith Morley

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, A. Cross, T. Gibbs, S. Rimmer and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: Two Members of the public. Councillors R. Hignett and J. Stockton in accordance with Standing Order 33.

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EUR16 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 12 th June 2013 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR17 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that one public question had been received and would be submitted and addressed as part of Minute No 21.	
EUR18 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.	
EUR19 SSP MINUTES	
The Board received the draft Minutes relating to the	

Environment and Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership from 7th May 2013.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR20 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2013/14

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which detailed the first quarter Management Report 2013/14 on progress against objectives/milestones and performance targets, in relation to the Environment and Regeneration Priority and described factors affecting the following service functions:-

- Development and Investment Services
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services
- Highways, Transportation, Logistics and Development Services
- Housing Strategy

It was noted that Councillor MacManus had submitted a number of questions and a written response had been provided.

RESOLVED: That the Board receive the first quarter performance management reports.

EUR21 PETITION REQUESTING THE INTRODUCTION OF BOLLARDS AND WAITING RESTRICTIONS TO PREVENT PARKING ON PART OF CRONTON LANE, WIDNES

The Board was advised a petition had been received from 18 residents of Cronton Lane, Widnes, to request the introduction of bollards and waiting restrictions to prevent parking on part of Cronton Lane, Widnes. The petition raised concerns over abuse of the existing waiting restrictions in the area, obstruction of driveway entrances and sight lines, and vehicles being parked on the footway. It requested that the existing "At Any Time" waiting restrictions at the east end of Cronton Lane be extended in effect as far as Hill View and that drivers be prevented from driving up onto the footway by the installation of a number of bollards on both sides of the road, installed as per the existing units in the area which had proved effective in stopping "driving on" near the Cronton Lane shops.

Members were advised that the requested waiting restrictions and installation of bollards would not be problem-

free and a number of issues needed to be considered:-

- Problems for the customers of the shops and potentially displacement of parking onto Norlands Lane, where parking was already becoming an issue and other adjacent roads;
- These measures would be visually detrimental to the area;
- Extra waiting restrictions could potentially be abused by “just for a minute” parkers. Parking in this area was mainly by customers of the shops, which was mainly short stay with a frequent turnover and by residents;
- The measures would be highly inconvenient for the residents themselves as it would prevent them from parking outside their own homes;
- These proposals could trigger objections from customers of nearby shops and business owners, as happened on previous occasions; and
- There have been no other requests for parking restrictions in this area.

It was noted that Ward Councillors had contacted Cheshire Police for more enforcement of the existing waiting restrictions. However, this could be exacerbated by the existing complaint. They had also been asked to ensure parked vehicles did not cause an obstruction to through traffic.

In accordance with Standing Order No.34 (9), the following public question was submitted to the Board by Mrs Upton from Cronton Lane, Widnes, by email:

“The residents of Cronton Lane have asked for an extension of the current double yellow lines and/or bollards along Cronton Lane because, at the moment we are at risk of having an accident trying to exit their own drives and pedestrians being injured on the paths as vehicles mount the kerb at speed to park. We have photographs to prove this. We need safety to be taken into account and H bars are not generally long enough over drives to clear a path of sight. We would like you to consider the safety of the residents and pedestrians that use the busy Cronton Lane.”

In response Officers advised the Board that in

addition to the issues previously highlighted, when the existing waiting restrictions were proposed in 2002, a counter petition was submitted. Also to install bollards without extending the existing waiting restriction would result in drivers parking vehicles on the carriageway causing an obstruction. It was noted that Cronton Lane was part of a major bus route into Liverpool.

Arising from the discussion, it was agreed that Officers should carry out a wider consultation exercise on the request to install bollards and waiting restrictions on part of Cronton Lane and a further report be brought back to the Board.

RESOLVED: That

1. with regard to the residents request for waiting restrictions and bollards on part of Cronton Lane, wider consultation be carried out to seek views on the proposal from the surrounding area, following which a further report be brought back to the Board; and
2. on behalf of the Board the Operational Director Policy, Planning and Transportation write to the Police to request enforcement of the existing waiting restrictions in Cronton Lane.

Strategic Director
Policy and
Resources

EUR22 FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Communities, which outlined the research carried out by officers into schemes whereby private environmental enforcement companies issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) for litter and dog control offences on behalf of local authorities. The report provided Members with details of such schemes and the potential benefits.

At present, the Council had an Environmental Enforcement Team that sat within the Waste and Environmental Improvement Division. Over time, the Team's ability to undertake enforcement patrols had reduced as a result of increased involvement in activities to tackle a wide range of Environmental nuisance and anti-social behaviour related offences. The team also provided an increasing level of support to ensure that residents complied with the requirements of the Council's Household Waste Collection Policy. It was noted that the reduced amount of time that could be committed to carrying out enforcement patrols was affecting the Council's ability to both deter environmental crime offences and tackle those who commit them.

It was proposed that under the terms of any agreement with an external enforcement company, no targets would be set for the issuing of FPNs and the company would be prohibited from introducing any financial incentives for its Enforcement Officers that would be linked in any way to the number of FPNs issued by individual officers. As part of the research undertaken into private environmental enforcement schemes, Officers had contacted a number of other local authorities and a summary of their experiences was outlined in the report.

Members were advised that, whilst at present there was a high level of payment for FPN's issued in Halton (approximately 85%), not all individuals paid their penalty notices, which resulted in Court proceedings being initiated. If an increased number of FPNs were to be issued, the amount of Court cases would increase. Dealing with non-payment of FPNs was resource intensive and required work from Officers of both the Environmental Enforcement Team and the Council's Legal Services Team.

It was noted that there would be no cost to the Council if it were to engage the services of a private enforcement company. The service would be self-financing, with the company receiving a fixed sum for each FPN issued and the Council receiving the balance from any Penalty Notice paid, which could lead to an increase in income.

Arising from the discussion the following comments were made:

- The Council should consider employing staff to provide a FPNs service if the pilot scheme proves to be financially successful; and
- A smoking cessation course should be offered as an alternative to a fine for those people with smoking related litter offences.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be received; and

(2) a report be presented to the Executive Board recommending the approval of a pilot scheme for the issuing of Fixed Penalty Notices for litter and dog control offences by a private enforcement company on behalf of the Council.

Strategic Director
Communities

EUR23 OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED 20MPH SPEED LIMITS,

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which outlined objections that had been received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce a 20mph speed limit on roads within the Halton Castle ward. The purpose of 20mph speed limits was to encourage lower driving speeds and create a safer environment for vulnerable road users in essentially residential areas, redressing the balance between people and traffic.

Members were advised that following an extensive consultation exercise, two objections had been received. In addition, two residents requested the introduction of 20mph limits on Castlefields Avenue East and North, however these routes were presently not suited to a 20mph limit, although this situation could be reviewed in the future as the continuing regeneration of the neighbourhood may change the character of these two roads.

It was noted that the 20mph speed limit proposals had the support of Ward Councillors, Executive Board Member for Transportation, the Castlefields Implementation Group and Cheshire Police had been consulted and raised no objections.

RESOLVED: The Executive Board be recommended that:

- (1) notice be given of the Council's intention to introduce an Order to implement a 20mph speed limit on those roads listed in Appendix B; and
- (2) the objectors be notified accordingly.

Strategic Director
Policy and
Resources

EUR24 PARTIAL GREEN BELT REVIEW - NORTH WIDNES AND HALE GREEN STUDY

The Board received a presentation which provided an overview of the methodology for the Widnes and Hale Green Belt Study (the Partial Green Belt Review). The Green Belt Study would not release or allocate land for development but would be a key evidence-based document for the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan, which would identify land to meet development needs.

It was noted that following a recent examination of the Core Strategy Local Plan, the Government appointed

Inspector concluded that there was insufficient identified land within Widnes/Hale to deliver the level of development to meet the assessed requirements, particularly for housing.

In order to have the Plan found “sound” the Council had to commit to undertaking a review of the Borough’s Green Belt boundaries across Widnes and Hale to ensure there was sufficient development land for the longer term needs to 2028 and beyond. The Inspector also ruled that a partial Green Belt Review should take place in the early part of the Core Strategy’s plan period (2010-2018) and inform the development of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.

Members were also advised on the consultation process for the proposed methodology, project timetable and received a detailed technical report which listed the scoring for each of the four stages within the Green Belt Review Methodology.

RESOLVED: That the proposed methodology be noted.

EUR25 USE OF SECTION 215 NOTICES UNDER THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

The Board received a presentation on the powers available under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, to require the owner and occupier of land which the Authority considers to be in such a condition as to adversely affect the amenity of the area to take steps to remedy that adverse condition. This would take the form of a formal Section 215 Notice and 28 days’ notice had to be given. Failure to comply with such notice was a criminal offence, and the Act also made provision for the Council to carry out works in default and recover its costs from the landowner.

The presentation outlined to Members examples of where a Section 215 Notice had been applied, and the financial and resource implications. It was noted that a significant financial implication was carrying out works in default, pending recovery of such costs from the person responsible. The Authority would consider such action on a case by case basis and take into account the financial implications at that time. Whilst Section 215 powers were a useful addition to the statutory enforcement powers available to the Authority, the practice of the Authority was to resolve cases through negotiation and informal means.

RESOLVED: That the powers available to the Council

under Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act, together with the potential financial and resource implications of applying them, be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.