AREA PANEL FOR BROADHEATH, DITTON & HOUGH GREEN

At a meeting of the Area Panel for Broadheath, Ditton and Hough Green held on 7th November 2002 at Halebank School, Widnes

Present: Councillors Osborne (in the Chair), Harris, Wright, K. Morley, Nolan, and Gilligan.

Apologies for absence: Councillor McDermott.

Also in attendance: A. Hill – Executive Director, Resources and Corporate Services
A. McCormick – Housing Manager (Widnes West)
A. Grant – Committee Services Manager
D. Sutton – Operational Director, Regeneration
J. Salt – Divisional Commander – Cheshire Fire Brigade
J. Westwood – Neighbourhood Travel Team
T. Ward-Dutton – Pride of Place Team
56 Members of the public

000. MINUTES

The Divisional Commander (Cheshire Fire Brigade) addressed the meeting to reassure the public regarding contingency plans if a fire strike occurred and the services that were offered by Cheshire Fire Service.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9th July 2002 be approved.

000. NEIGHBOURHOOD TRAVEL TEAM

At the last meeting, it was reported that funding had been secured for the provision of a Neighbourhood Travel Team. The purpose of the team is to identify, and remove travel barriers for those residents seeking employment or personal development.

The leader of the Travel Team, Dr. Julian Westwood gave a presentation relating to the team’s key activities. His presentation outlined:

(i) why public transport matters, the effects of poor transport on employment and education;
(ii) Halton’s research and what was found;
(iii) statistics about the state of the Borough;
(iv) the purpose and social aims of the Neighbourhood Travel Team;
(v) the way forward;
(vi) prospective partners; and
(vii) early indicators for success.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be received.
Questions on the following topics had been submitted:

1. Mrs. A. Jones asked the following question:

I would like to know why we cannot have a Number 12 bus from Widnes to Halebank via Ditchfield Road. Many residents in Hough Green are registered with the doctor’s surgery at the bottom of Ditchfield Road. They have to go to the surgery to put in their prescriptions and go again 2 days later to collect it, but cannot get a bus to get there, as the No. 12 has been diverted along Coronation Drive into Widnes again.

People from Halebank cannot get a bus to Hough Green to catch a train to Liverpool, go to church or to pensioner’s clubs, i.e. Quarry Court and Chapelfields. The people in Hough Green cannot get a bus to Halebank to do their shopping at Asda or to visit relatives and friends there. I know a few people who have to walk from Liverpool Road to Coronation Drive to get a bus to a pensioners club in Halebank. Surely we are entitled to some consideration. I have contacted the Manager at the Transport Garage to be told that there is no way that the bus is being put back, so I hope this letter will get a result.

In response Mrs. Jones was informed that the Council would investigate the cost of reinstating the bus service No. 12 operating into Halebank and via the full stretch of Ditchfield Road, and also investigate whether it was possible to connect with train timetables.

2. Mrs. Fahey asked the following question:

The Halebank Community Action Group recommend more and regular cleaning of the parking place at the top of Halebank Road. This spot is near the Halton boundary and gives a poor picture of the borough as people drive in.

In response the questioner was informed that arrangements had been made for the neighbourhood sweeper for Halebank to clean the parking area three times per week and to improve litter bin provision. The principle of the Neighbourhood Cleansing Programme was to develop work plans for each area in consultation with the local community. The Halebank Community Action Group was thanked for their suggestion which had been actioned.

Arising from the public question, it was noted that the proposed leaflet drop on Neighbourhood Cleansing had not been carried out in Halebank. It was agreed that this would be looked into.
3. Mrs. Swanber asked the following question:

Double yellow lines and guard rails were asked for at the last Area Panel. Can the answer be reconsidered? There is a dangerous two foot drop outside the Foundry Pub and outside the newspaper shop. HGV’s and JCB tractors and trailers park endangering people driving around the corner. Please follow up the idea of legally enforced zig zag lines and/or 20 mile an hour signs in Heathview Road, Baguley Avenue alongside the school entrances.

In response the questioner was informed that this issue would be investigated and reported to the next Area Panel. The school zig zag orders were currently being actioned and the possibility of installing railings would be looked into.

In response to the question, the amount of traffic on Hale Road was discussed along with possible weight restrictions on Ditton Bridge. The Panel were informed that the Ward Councillors and the Executive Board member for Planning, Transportation and Development had met with Railtrack to discuss keeping the bridge open but restricting the weight limit and the community were asked to support their actions.

4. Mrs. Longmire asked the following question:

What progress is being made over investigating the recent chemical leak at Ellis & Everard? The Emergency Officer promised to investigate the possibility of an alarm. Has this been considered? Local forums could contribute towards it.

In response the questioner was advised that the investigation of the problem rested with the Health and Safety Executive. However, the Council’s Risk Manager was currently investigating a telephone alarm system rather than a siren. Arising from the question, members of the public raised several issues regarding air pollution in the area and were advised to contact the Environmental Health Department with any complaints they may have in order for them to be investigated.

5. Mrs. Foster asked the following question:

(a) Who is funding the Regeneration Plan for Halebank?
(b) Does the Regeneration Plan depend on the EDP plan going ahead?
(c) If land is not found to build houses here in Halebank, does that mean that the regeneration does not go ahead?

In response the questioner was advised that currently officers were working on the Regeneration Plan for Halebank, together with staff from St. Modwen Properties PLC, the Borough Council’s Partner in the Joint Venture Company with the Regeneration Limited. The costs were therefore being met from within normal budgets. Development would be brought forward as
part of the Plan’s proposals would be funded individually from sources appropriate to the project whether they be public or private. The Asda site, for example, would be purchased by St. Modwen Properties plc.

The UDP would set the context of the future development of the Borough, regeneration proposals for Halebank would therefore have to accord with it.

It was envisaged that the regeneration of Halebank would involve developments other than housing. When the proposal to relocate Asda was consulted upon, Halton Borough Council gave an undertaking to the residents of Halebank that it would make every endeavour to provide a replacement shop in time for Asda’s closure. As consequence, the Council, together with its partners, St. Modwen Properties, was investigating the possibility of developing a supermarket and pharmacy on the site on Hale Road. Plans were being drawn up and being marketed to ascertain commercial interest in such a proposal.

Currently interest was being shown by several operators and the signs were promising. The outline proposal had been discussed with the two residents groups, The Friends of Halebank and the Halebank Action Group and the Council was addressing the issues which they had raised. In due course, if the proposal was to go ahead, an application for planning permission would be made.

The Council was also aware that facilities such as medical facilities had been requested by residents. Council officers were working therefore to help secure them even though they would ultimately be provided by other organisations. Site investigations were being carried out on the Asda site to ascertain any constraints which could be placed on the future development and if the results show that the land could be suitable for redevelopment and housing sites then this would therefore be taken into consideration in producing any proposals.

It was noted than an eight man working group had been established to meet with the Executive Board Member for Planning, Transportation and Development to discuss the Halebank Regeneration Proposals. It was suggested that this was an appropriate body to channel questions regarding Halebank regeneration.

6. Linda Beale asked the following question:

Regarding the progress of the Regeneration Plan and would these include shops and facilities that will be lost when Asda goes, i.e. pharmacy and clinic? Also what will be the outcome for Ditton Bridge, lights or a weight limit – nothing seems clear from my correspondence with Derek Twigg.

In response the questioner was advised that once the Halebank Regeneration Panel had met, it would be asked to set up a public meeting to discuss these issues.
7. Bernard Allen asked the following question:

Have the Council been and seen any of these so-called freight parks in working order – and if so, where and how close to residential areas were they built?

In response the questioner was advised that Council officers had visited examples of working rail freight operations around the country including Daventry in a semi rural area and Knowsley and Wakefield Europort which were both within industrial developments immediately adjoining housing areas. It was intended that independent consultants with a background in the development of rail facilities would be employed to bring their experience to bear on the wide range of issues involved in the possible creation of the Ditton Rail Park including the environmental impact of such a development and advise the Council accordingly.

In response to the question members of the public asked for a public meeting with Councillors, Planners and the Operational Director for Regeneration to discuss the Unitary Development Plan.

HALEBANK COMMUNITY PROJECT

The Methodist Church in Halebank had been working for some considerable time now on creating a community facility on the site of the Methodist Church in Halebank. The funding had been identified by the Church itself, together with a promised contribution from WREN which was a grant from the landfill tax, and a contribution of £25,000 from the Halton Primary Care Trust. At the moment there was a shortfall in the funding required, and it was suggested that the Area Panel made a contribution of £25,000 towards the project.

The proposals involved the demolition of the existing church building and the construction of community facilities on the site adjacent to the existing church hall. The church hall, in addition, would be refurbished. As far as the extension was concerned, it was proposed to create two consulting rooms which would replace the temporary facility currently situated on the Asda car park.

The whole of the new facility, including the church hall, would be available to the residents of Halebank, and the project offered enormous potential to develop a wide range of services, as well as a venue for community activities.

RESOLVED: That a grant of £25,000 be made.

REQUESTS FOR FUNDING

Several requests for funding from the Area Panel Budget had been received:

Executive Directors
Regeneration &
Neighbourhood
Services and
Environment &
Development
- the Friends of Pickerings Pasture had requested funding to help tarmac the car park and a path for disabled people at Pickerings Pasture at an approximately cost of £15,000;
- a traffic warning signal was proposed for Liverpool Road by Plumley Gardens and it was requested that further information be required on the scheme before the next meeting of the Panel;
- funding was requested towards a ball court and goalposts for a site in Royal Avenue. The Area Panel were asked to contribute approximately £7,000;
- it was requested that lighting at the Lovell Terrace Playing Fields be investigated;
- a request was made for approval in principle for a contribution towards additional floodlighting at the Widnes Tigers Rugby Club in Prescot Road;
- a request for funding was received for improved lighting and alleygating at Lune Way and Kendal Way subject to further investigations. The lighting was costed at approximately £5,000;
- funding was requested for alleygating schemes in the Foxcote area and at 110 Cradley. It was noted that further investigations were required but the Panel were asked to agree funding in principle.

RESOLVED: That

(1) funding for the schemes at Pickerings Pasture, the ball court in Royal Avenue, the floodlighting at Widnes Tigers Rugby Club, alleygating and lighting at Lune Way and Kendal Way, and alleygating in Foxcote and 110 Cradley be approved in principle;

(2) further information be provided to the next Panel Meeting on the traffic warning signal at Liverpool Road by Plumley Gardens; and

(3) further information be provided to the next Panel Meeting on the possibility of additional lighting at the playing fields at Lovell Terrace.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

RESOLVED: That the date of the next meeting be noted as follows: 24th February 2002 at 7.00 pm at Upton Community Centre.

Meeting ended at 9.02 pm

Executive Director
Resources & Corporate Services