

URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board held on Wednesday, 15 November 2006 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), E. Cargill, Morley, Rowe, Nolan, Thompson, Wallace and Whittaker

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Sly, Worrall and Polhill (in accordance with Standing Order 33).

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Leadbetter

Officers present: C. Halpin, S. Baxter, P. Brown, G. Collins, D. Owen, A. Villiers, W. Watson, A. West and S. Williams

Also in attendance: (none)

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
URB24 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2006, having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
URB25 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
URB26 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board.	
RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.	
URB27 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS FOR THE 2ND QUARTER (2006/07)	
The Board received a performance briefing paper	

which highlighted aspects contained in the full versions of the monitoring reports, which set out what the services had been planning to achieve and demonstrated how they contributed to the Council's strategic priorities.

A number of emerging issues and key developments that would impact upon the service or where any action was required to address performance were detailed within the report, for the following services:

Environment Directorate

1. Highways & Transportation
2. Environment & Regulatory Services
3. Economic Development
4. Major Projects

Health & Community Directorate

5. Culture & Leisure

The Board discussed a number of issues in relation to road repairs, planning enforcement issues and whether an appointment had been made with the funding identified by NWDA for an individual, based in Halton, who would have a region-wide 'China brief' to support businesses that wished to trade with China.

RESOLVED: That the service performance and progress towards achieving objectives and targets be received.

URB28 TRAFFIC ISSUES IN WEST BANK

The Board received a report which related to a 34 name petition and letter which had been received relating to traffic issues in West Bank, Widnes. The petition and letter raised a number of issues in relation to the area wide traffic calming scheme which had been undertaken in 2002/3. The following issues were outlined in detail within the report, along with the proposed actions to be taken:

- that the calming did not have the desired effect;
- that residents suffer undue noise and vibrations from speeding vehicles;
- drainage problems on the west side of the raised junction at Mersey Road/Terrace Road; and
- a parking restriction request.

A member requested that consideration be given to

installing additional 20mph and no right hand turn road signs in the area.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Board support the conclusion of the report, in particular that:
 - (i) the traffic calming scheme in West Bank, be retained in its present form, subject to the enhancements detailed in the report;
 - (ii) the existing waiting restriction be retained un-amended; and
- (3) petitioners be informed accordingly.

Strategic Director,
Environment

URB29 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS SURVEY

The Board received a presentation on the findings of a study undertaken in Runcorn and Widnes town centres to determine the level of support from traders and businesses, for developing Business Improvement Districts (BIDS) from the Head of Business Development. The presentation outlined:

- what a BID was;
- how BID's are funded;
- the rationale for the study;
- the background to the study;
- the sectors survey of the study;
- the study findings – Widnes;
- the study findings - Runcorn; and
- conclusions – in particular that there was some support but it was short of the 50% needed to proceed with a BID.

The Board discussed whether clearer promotion of how street furniture, Christmas lights etc could increase trade was needed, alternative ways to fund town centre events and whether there had been any issues during the transfer of tourism enquiries to the Halton Direct Link.

RESOLVED: That support be given to the conclusions in the report.

URB30 PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL STRATEGY

The Board received a report on the proposed changes to the Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy, which reflected both the recent legislative changes and the different forms of financial assistance which could be

provided to clients. The updated Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy was submitted to the Board for consideration.

It was noted that there were a number of factors which made it necessary to update this strategy, including:

- an increased Government focus on tackling none-decent housing in the private sector that was occupied by vulnerable households;
- the need to provide incentives to promote membership of the recently introduced Landlord accreditation scheme;
- the need to provide assistance to reduce the number of long term empty properties, as this was a best value performance indicator;
- a new requirement under the Housing Act 2004 to license certain houses in multiple occupation; and
- under the Housing Act 2004 there was a need to introduce the Housing Health and Safety rating system, replacing the 'fitness' standard which for several decades was the yardstick for measuring housing conditions.

The Board discussed a new Government initiative which provided equity loans to home owners to enable housing repairs; focusing on older style properties. Liverpool Housing Trust and CDS Housing were acting as the Council's agents on the project which was focused on the Castlefields area. 23 loans had been agreed which amounted to approximately a third of the funding. In addition reference was made to the problems being experienced by tenants due to lack of experience and problem solving of landlords.

RESOLVED: That the document be accepted for public consultation purposes prior to being referred to the Executive Board.

URB31 CONTAMINATED LAND INSPECTION STRATEGY REVIEW

The Board received a presentation on the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review, from the Principle Contaminated Land Officer, which set out:

- the background to the review;
- the key achievements;
- the risk scores for Runcorn;
- the risk scores for Widnes; and

- the key outcomes and the conclusions of the review.

The Board had been supplied with copies of the Contaminated Land Inspection Strategy Review document as part of the agenda, for consideration.

Arising from the discussion reference was made to St. Michael's Golf Course, health issues and new technologies for treating contaminated sites.

RESOLVED: That the review document and revised implementation timetable be noted.

URB32 HIGHWAY SKIDDING RESISTANCE POLICY

The Board was updated on the current position regarding the measurement and treatment of highway skidding resistance and informed of the proposal to introduce a policy for analysing skid resistance data to produce programmes of treatment.

The new policy had been prepared to take into account a number of developments, which were outlined in detail within the report. The proposed policy sites identified as having low resistance would now be correlated against road geometry, surface characteristics and accident statistics, to provide a mechanism by which the Highway Engineer could make a reasoned assessment to determine what treatment, if any, needed to be carried out, at any particular locations or at any point in time.

Arising from the discussion reference was made to the frequency of resurfacing of roads and whether the Council encouraged local road users and companies to report problems they had experienced.

RESOLVED: That the Skidding Resistance Policy be recommended to the Executive Board for adoption.

Strategic Director,
Environment

(NB: Councillor Morley declared a personal interest in the following item due to being a Board Member of Halton Transport).

URB33 BEST VALUE REVIEW: TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

The Board received a presentation on the Best Value Review of Transportation and Access, from the Operational Director, Highways and Transportation. The presentation set out:

- the scope of the review;
- the review team and key players;
- the Passenger Transport Expenditure for 2005/6;
- the no. of Annual Passenger Trips in 2005/6;
- key review outcomes;
- key recommendations – such as better accessible transport, better local bus services, better information, post 16 transport;
- the comments made by the Business Efficiency Board and responses;
- the improvement plan.

The Board discussed the need for transport links to new developments, the service being provided by the North Cheshire NHS Trust between Halton and Warrington hospitals and whether the Public Transport Liaison Panel could scrutinise this further as the service was not adequate for the needs of Halton's residents.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be received; and
- (2) reports on the progress towards implementing the Improvement Plan be included in future performance monitoring reports to the Board.

Strategic Director,
Corporate and
Policy

Meeting ended at 8.24 p.m.