

SAFER HALTON POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board on Tuesday, 20 March 2007 at the River Suite, Halton Stadium

Present: Councillors Osborne (Chairman), Stockton (Vice-Chairman), Edge, Morley, E Ratcliffe, Rowan, Swift, Thompson and Wallace

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Lloyd Jones and Redhead

Absence declared on Council business: (none)

Officers present: S. Clarke, H. Cockcroft, J. Downes, M. Simpson, J. Unsworth, A. Villiers, P. Watts and A. West

Also in attendance: (none)

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

SAF41 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 23rd January 2007 having been printed and circulated were taken as read and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SAF42 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was noted that no public questions had been received.

SAF43 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the Executive Board and the Executive Sub-Committee relating to the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

(NB Councillor Osborne declared a personal interest in the following item of business due to being a board member of Halton Housing Trust.)

SAF44 ALLEY GATES AND GATING ORDER

The Board heard how this report would be presented to both Safer Halton and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Boards in order to advise of the new powers that were available to the Council to make Gating Orders and the proposed policy to be adopted that would respond to all future requests for alley gates.

The report outlined that Section 2 of the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act 2005 introduced a new power that would allow Councils to make, vary or revoke gating orders in respect of highways within their area. It was noted that this had been effected by inserting new sections 129A to 129G in the Highways Act 1980 that would enable Councils to restrict public access to any public highway by gating (at certain times of the day if applicable) without removing its underlying highway status.

Local authorities would now be able to make 'Gating Orders' on grounds of anti-social behaviour as well as crime.

Detailed within the report was the background to the legislation and the issues the legislation would require the Council to consider.

It was reported that there needed to be a balance of duties regarding crime and disorder and keeping the highways available. In addition, it was noted that this legislation would only refer to new schemes not previously on-going schemes.

Members discussed financial implications and concerns were raised with regards to the maintenance of alleygating. It was suggested that Housing Trusts and Housing Associations could be contacted in order to contribute in some way to the scheme. Members also suggested that there was a need to seek main stream funding for this from the Executive Board.

In addition Members felt that there was a need to look to the future provision of Area Forum funding as the current Neighbourhood Renewal Funding would be coming to an end, therefore there would be a need for a replacement stream of funding.

The Chairman reported that this would be Alan West's last meeting due to retirement and wished to record a vote of thanks for his contributions and commitment on behalf of the Board.

RESOLVED: That the Executive Board be asked:

(1) to adopt a policy regarding all future proposed alleygates to be supported by a Gating Order made under the provisions of Section 129A of the Highways Act 1980;

(2) a recommendation be put forward to Executive Board in order to obtain main stream funding for the future of alleygating; and

(3) a paper be brought back to the next meeting to look at the long term implications of alleygating.

Strategic Director
- Environment

SAF45 NEW GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE DELIVERY OF THE HALTON REGISTRATION SERVICE

It was reported that the Civil Registration Service was undergoing national modernisation therefore the Board considered a report which noted that the new governance arrangements would provide for a more flexible, less prescriptive scheme allowing local authorities greater discretion to deliver local services which would meet both national standards and local community needs.

The Board were informed that in order to seek approval for the scheme under the new arrangements, local authorities must agree to the terms of the Code of Practice attached to the new scheme, deliver local registration services which would meet at least the national standards set out in the Good Practice Guide, prepare an Annual Service Delivery Plan setting out the Local Authority's plans and targets for the year ahead, and have in place a reliable system for monitoring performance and annual reporting to the Registrar General.

Members were advised to read in detail the Code of Practice which was appended to the report.

It was felt that the new governance arrangements for the delivery of the Halton Registration Service would provide the Council with much more control and loosen the ties that the General Register Office set.

RESOLVED: That

(1) the report be noted;

(2) the Executive Board be requested to agree to the pursuance of the new governance arrangements for the delivery of Halton Registration Service, and in

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doing so to specifically agree to the Council's commitment to the Code of Practice that will form part of the new scheme; and

- (3) the Executive Board be requested to agree the Registration District Service Delivery and Improvement Plan.

SAF46 BRITISH REGISTER OF ACCREDITED MEMORIAL MASONS (BRAMM)

The Board received a report, which sought the pursuance by the Council of Burial Authority Registration with the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons, and for the requirement that only British Register of Memorial Masons (BRAMM) accredited Memorial Masons would operate in the Council's Cemeteries.

It was reported that the national problem of unsafe headstones in the country's cemeteries lead to the setting up of the BRAMM in 2004.

The primary aims of the BRAMM registration scheme were detailed within the report and that at present burial authority registration was free but would represent a clear demonstration that the authority would take its responsibility for the safety of memorials as seriously as the masons who register on the scheme.

In particular, the registration required the authority to meet obligations, which were outlined in the report. The Board were informed that this would be a way to guarantee the quality of workmanship of memorials, which would meet the national standards and would demonstrate that fitters were properly trained. Should masons be found to breach the rules BRAMM could take action.

Members were made aware that there would be a loss of income of £470 per year. However, when compared to the money spent on recent repairs to headstones, it would be more cost effective in the longer term.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;
- (2) the Executive Board be requested to agree to the Bereavement Services Manager submitting an application for Halton to be a registered burial authority with the British Register of Accredited

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Memorial Masons; and

- (3) the Executive Board be requested as to the rewording of Section 7.5 of the Cemeteries rules as detailed in paragraph 3.14 below, with the proviso that the amended wording comes into effect on 1st October 2007.

SAF47 DOMESTIC ABUSE

The Board was advised on the progress of the Domestic Abuse Forum. The report outlined recent successful events which had taken place – for example, a National Campaign, a multi agency risk assessment conference workshop, the prospect of a programme focussing on reducing the number of repeat victims who report incidents of domestic abuse on a regular basis and further implementation of the strategy which would involve more professions in the Borough.

The recent achievements attained and data, which was a completed record of Halton Police Statistics for the October – December 2006 targets set in the annual LPSA2 was detailed within the report.

It was reported that the Domestic Abuse Forum was largely funded by external grants, which may run out in 2008. Members felt that this was paramount to make a recommendation to Executive Board to seek future funding for the service.

Members held a wide ranging discussion regarding the huge success of the sanctuary scheme, the severe lack of police staff designated to cover domestic abuse, the 12% cut in funding the Domestic Abuse Forum had received and the loss of the Children and Young People's Contract which had to be added in to the remit of the Domestic Abuse Forum.

Members agreed that there was need to be a recommendation to Executive Board requesting funding and in addition a letter be drafted to the Constable of the Police requesting more staff be allocated to domestic abuse.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Board note the contents of the report; and
- (2) a recommendation be made to the Executive Board to seek future funding for the Domestic Abuse Forum; and

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(3) a letter be written to the Chief Constable of Cheshire Police requesting that more staff be allocated to Domestic Abuse.

SAF48 NOTES OF WORKING PARTY MEETINGS

Members were informed of topics and issues discussed at meetings of Working Parties set up by the Safer Halton Policy & Performance Board, details of which were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

SAF49 PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Corporate & Policy regarding the Third Quarter Monitoring Report for the Highways & Transportation, Environment and Regulatory Services, Health & Partnerships, and Cultural & Leisure Services. Detailed in the report was a briefing paper which highlighted aspects contained in the full version of the Monitoring Report which set out what the services had been planning to achieve and to demonstrate how they contributed to the Council's Strategic Priorities.

The Board raised concerns regarding the capital allocation for 2007/08 for Runcorn Library, in regard to the current situation. In response it was noted that there was a nominal sum of money which could be used should the Library be closed plus an extra sum of money for the possibility of a new HDL. The Council was currently looking at this being included in Urban Splash programme with a new option of a building adjacent to The Brindley.

RESOLVED: That the Policy and Performance Board

- (1) Scrutinise service performance and progress towards achieving objectives and targets and raise any questions or points for clarification in respect of the information contained in the quarterly monitoring reports;
- (2) Highlight areas of interest and/or concern that require further information or action to be reported at a future meeting of the Policy and Performance Board where appropriate.

Meeting ended at 8.12 p.m.