

## ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

*At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 14 March 2012 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn*

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), J. Gerrard (Vice-Chairman), Baker, J. Bradshaw, E. Cargill, Hodgkinson, A. McInerney, Nolan, Thompson, Wainwright and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, I Boyd, D. Cunliffe, G. Hazlehurst, S. Rimmer, W. Salisbury and J. Sutton

Also in attendance: In accordance with Standing Order 31 Councillor Stockton.

### ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EUR41 COUNCILLORS JOHN SWAIN AND DAVE LEADBETTER	
The Board stood in silence as a mark of respect for the sad passing of Councillors Dave Leadbetter and John Swain.	
EUR42 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 <sup>th</sup> January 2012 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR43 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
EUR44 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Executive Board Sub Committee relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.	

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR45 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR  
QUARTER 3 OF 2011/12

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which detailed the third quarter performance management reports on progress against service plan objectives and performance targets, performance trends/comparisons and factors affecting the services for:-

- Economy, Enterprise and Property (Development and Investment);
- Policy, Planning and Transportation Logistics and Transport Management and Building Control and Contaminated Land);
- Environment and Regulatory (Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Spaces); and
- Commissioning and Complex Care (Housing Strategy)

In receiving the second quarterly monitoring reports, Councillor Hodgkinson submitted the following questions:

1. **Page 58 Major Maintenance on SJB.** I would like to know about the major maintenance work needed for the SJB, which would require it to be closed with Department for Transport agreement for 6-9 months when Mersey Gateway is open to traffic.

**In response Officers advised that:**

We are considering requesting the DfT to defer an element of the SJB Complex Major Maintenance Scheme grant funding they have awarded us (£18.6m over 5 years commencing 2011/12) to allow us to paint the high level elements of the SJB under a total closure.

We will have completed the side spans and lower arch areas but there are hugely expensive logistical difficulties associated with removing existing and applying new coatings at high level over 4 lanes of busy traffic on which we cannot apply lane restrictions. It becomes a much more cost effective solution if we can tackle this work under a total closure

as it opens up the use of long reach mobile platforms for some of the steelwork and conventional scaffolding for the remainder. If we get the thumbs up from DfT it will maximise the amount of grant we can hand back to them in addition to the funding we can hand back for maintenance of the structures which have a limited future as they are part of a delinking proposal.

The idea was that there will be a period of time after opening of the MG when the modifications to the approaches and cross section of the SJB would be carried out under full closure and it would make sense to carry out the deferred maintenance work at the same time. Unfortunately the timing of this may be an issue as it would probably be in financial year 2016/17 (or 17/18?) whereas our 5 year Grant period expires in 15/16.

If this were to be accepted it would make sense for HBC to carry out the modifications to the approaches and cross section of the SJB outside the DBFO possibly as a hybrid contract including the high level painting, with a total SJB closure over a period of 6 to 9 months. However, one other sticking point is that there is no certainty that HBC would have the funding to complete this MG related work although we will make a case to DfT for substituting surplus bridge maintenance funding

2. **Page 61 PPT LI 31** Do the number of local bus journeys originating in the Borough reflect the total up to the end of the third quarter, as in the previous performance indicator, or simply those for the third quarter? It is a steep drop in both cases.

**In response Officers advised that:**

The figure of 1.287m journeys relate to Quarter 3 only. Unfortunately this was an oversight as figures are normally reported on a cumulative basis for the period in question. As we have also now received confirmation from one bus operator as to the accuracy of data originally provided we can confirm that the cumulative

total up to the Q3 period end is 4.510m journeys.

As reported the bus industry is facing its most difficult period with an increase in operating costs and a 20% reduction in Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) commencing in April 2012. In advance of this operators are presently seeking to balance operating costs and profit margins and this has resulted in some routes already being affected. Additionally the need for the Council to make continued efficiency savings has impacted upon the local bus budget which has had consequences upon the level of subsidy for services operated on behalf of the Council.

However Officers will continue to work closely with operators to ensure that as far as is possible any negative impact can be minimised

3. **Pages 82& 83** Halton targets beyond 2010/11 are 700kg for residual household waste per household and 40% for percentage of household waste recycled and composted. It seems that these targets will be exceeded in 2011/12 which is a good performance. Will the targets for the later years be revised? If there is a slowdown in moving to fortnightly black bin collections, this improvement will not be maintained and resentment over the fortnightly black bin collections in participating wards will increase.
4. **Page 99** What action is being taken to ensure that residents of Halton know that the level of waste produced by Halton households is one of the highest in the country?

**In response to questions 3 and 4 Officers advised that:**

Future recycling and waste production targets will be reviewed and, when being set, will reflect the waste and recycling collection service provision at that time. However, regardless of what targets are set, the intention will be to maximise recycling performance and exceed targets where possible. The Alternate Bin Collection scheme will continue to be rolled

out to suitable properties across Halton.

Over the past fortnight, the scheme has been extended to households within the Beechwood and Broadheath wards and plans are being drawn up to deliver the scheme in other areas of the borough. The introduction of the scheme to other areas will ensure on-going increases in recycling performance and a reduction in waste sent to landfill.

The Waste Division is planning a comprehensive publicity campaign, through the local press, to highlight issues around waste. A particular focus of the campaign will be the high levels of waste produced by households in Halton. The campaign will aim to encourage residents to think more about the waste they produce, to reduce it and then recycle as much of what they produce as possible. An initial meeting has been held with a local newspaper to scope out the publicity campaign, which is due to commence in April.

In addition, Councillor Thompson requested further information on:

- DIS LI07 – locations of the jobs that have been created i.e. their geographical location/distribution;
- where apprenticeships have been created geographically; and
- how each Housing Association had allocated the 'dowries' received as part of the transfer from Warrington and Runcorn Development Corporation.

RESOLVED: That the third quarter performance management reports be received.

EUR46 SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY  
PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK 2011 - 16 AND MID-  
YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2011/12.

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources which provided information on the progress in achieving targets contained within the 2011 – 2016 Sustainable Community Strategy for Halton.

The Board was advised that selected measures and targets for Environment and Regeneration Community priority were summarised in Appendix 1 to the report, using

the Halton Corporate template, designed for the purpose of bringing together all relevant items of performance information. The template also provided a clear evidence based rationale for measure selection, which would further evidence and support value for money judgements by the Audit Commission and ensure outward accountability.

Members were advised that although this strategy was until 2012, it would be revisited regularly and updates and amendments required would be added to the strategy.

In addition, the Board also considered a mid-year progress report from 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2011 which detailed how performance had improved against the same period of time from last year and a projection of expected levels of performance to the year end.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR47 PETITION REQUESTING THE BUILDING OF A CAR PARK, PARKING SPACES AND ROAD WIDENING, GORSEWOOD ROAD AND ST MARTINS LANE, MURDISHAW, RUNCORN

The Board was advised that a petition had been received requesting a car park be built, extra parking spaces be provided and road widening take place at Gorsewood Road/St. Martins Lane, Murdishaw in the area of the central "square" adjacent to the Health Centre, St. Martins R.C. Primary School and Gorsewood Primary School. The petition was signed by 351 persons and contained a drawing prepared by the lead petitioner setting out the areas in question.

Members were advised that at school opening and closing times the Gorsewood Road/St. Martins Lane route, which gave access to the Health Centre and two primary schools adjacent to the central Gorsewood Road "square", did become extremely busy and traffic had to proceed through the route at low speeds. It was noted that there were inadequate parking spaces available for the number of drivers wishing to reach the schools. However, over the five years 2006 to 2010, there were no reported road traffic accidents resulting in injury on Gorsewood Road or St. Martins Lane. It was also noted that the Council promoted sustainable modes of transport to schools and continued to seek ways of increasing the proportion of children who chose to walk, cycle and use public transport. Increasing the volume of parking available and otherwise facilitating car transport to schools would be contrary to this approach.

In response to the request for construction of a new parking area it was noted that the area in question was not in the ownership of the Council but was owned by Liverpool Housing Trust. The Trust had been sent a copy of the petition and other associated information to enable them to consider the request. A verbal response had been received indicating the Trust was not in a position to finance construction of a new car park.

Further, in response to the request for an extension of existing car parking to provide extra spaces, it was noted that the areas were not in the ownership of the Council but were owned by Liverpool Housing Trust or Halton and St. Helens Primary Care Trust. Both organisations had been sent copies of the petition and a verbal response had been received indicating neither was in a position to finance construction of new parking spaces.

A similar response had been received from Halton and St. Helens Primary Care Trust in response to the request for carriageway widening. However, the Trust had agreed to cut back vegetation on the corner to improve sight lines across the corner.

Whilst the central square at the junction with St. Martin's Lane and Gorsewood Road did become extremely congested at school opening and closing times, it was not felt that the carriageway needed widening as the current traffic system operated acceptably with the intended narrowness of the route serving to restrict the vehicle speeds. The option of making Gorsewood Road/St. Martins Lane route one-way had been investigated and consultation had been undertaken with Cheshire Police and Ward Councillors. The proposals did not prove acceptable because it would have caused inconvenience to a large number of residents, could create congestion at the Gorsewood Road/Murdishaw Avenue or St. Martins Lane/Aldersgate Avenue junctions and removal of the likelihood of oncoming traffic would have led to an increase in traffic speeds.

Arising from the discussion the Board requested that:

- Officers write again to the landowners LHT and Halton and St Helens PCT to obtain a written response to the petitioners requests;
- Officers contact the Police regarding the issues raised by the petitioners;

- Officers contact school Headteachers/Governors to ensure they continue to support School Travel Plans and the action plans contained within them area carried through and updated as necessary.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petitioners' request for car park to be built, extra car parking spaces to be provided and for road widening to take place at Gorsewood Road/St. Martins Lane, Murdishaw in the area of the central "square" adjacent to the Murdishaw Health Centre be refused, as the areas in question were not in the ownership of the Council; and
- (2) the lead petitioner be informed accordingly.

#### EUR48 DRAFT TENANCY STRATEGY

The Board was advised that under the term of the Localism Act local authorities must develop a Tenancy strategy setting out recommendations for the type of tenancies that should offered in the local area, the length of those tenancies (if fixed tenancies were proposed) and the circumstances in which they should be offered and renewed. In developing their own tenancy policies Registered Providers (RPs) were to have due regard to the local authority's Tenancy Strategy, however, they do not have to adhere to the recommendations of the Local Authority Strategy.

The timescale for local authorities to develop their tenancy strategies was to the proposed within 12 months following enactment of the Localism Act (November 2011). A copy of Halton's draft Tenancy Strategy was circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

Following a meeting with RPs in September 2011 it was agreed that RPs would provide examples, together with copies of early drafts of any Board's reports on affordable rent. The Council would then pull together common themes with a view to developing a permissive rather than prescribing strategy e.g. describing the circumstances where it may be appropriate to use flexible tenancies.

Members were advised that the draft Strategy for Halton permitted RPs to make use of the new fixed term tenancies should they wish to do so, whilst at the same time

making it clear that the Council's preference was to maintain the status quo. The Strategy outlined the parameters for their use. The maximum term for fixed tenancies proposed was to be five years but RPs could extend this period if they wished. The Strategy document also recommended:

- Where fixed term tenancies were not suitable;
- Cases where the Council expected fixed term tenancies to be renewed upon review; and
- Circumstances where the tenancy may not be renewed.

It was also noted that Tenancy strategies were not intended to be a means of enforcing tenancy agreements and, therefore, the strategy stated that it did not expect RPs to use fixed term tenancies as an enforcement tool, for example refusing to renew a tenancy on the grounds of rent arrears or anti-social behaviour. Existing legal remedies and possession proceeding as appropriate should be pursued to tackle these issues. In all circumstances, it was recommended that the RP arrange for more suitable accommodation to be offered to the household within its own or another RP stock.

The draft Strategy would be subject to further consultation with existing Social Housing Tenants and prospective tenants who were on the Council's and other RP's waiting lists. It was expected that the consultation period would be from 26<sup>th</sup> March to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2012 and that the strategy would be submitted to the Executive Board in June 2012.

RESOLVED: That the draft Tenancy Strategy be noted.

#### EUR49 SUSTAINABLE DRAINAGE SYSTEMS (SUDS) DEFRA CONSULTATION

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Policy and Resources which advised on the planned implementation of the Sustainable Drainage System (SUDs) provisions of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010. The report also outlined the response to the Defra consultation prepared jointly with partners from the Cheshire and Mid Mersey regional sub-group of Lead Local Flood Authorities.

Members enquired if benefits could be achieved from joint working between Officers working on SUDs and those from Greenspace. It was agreed that this would be looked

into.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the key points relating to the proposals for the implementation of the Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS) provisions of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and the main issues that have currently been identified with these proposals be noted; and
- (2) the joint response of the Cheshire and Mid Mersey Regional Sub-Group to the Defra consultation be endorsed.

EUR50 POLICY & PERFORMANCE BOARD WORK PROGRAMME  
2011/2012

The Board considered a report which requested the establishment of a Scrutiny Topic Group to review Halton Community Transport operations and determine whether it was providing the service and value for money that the Council would expect. As part of the budget savings for 2011/12, the grant that the Council awarded to Halton Community Transport was reduced by £40,000. A further saving was being considered for 2012/13 financial year. It was recommended that because of the cross cutting nature of the topic, the work of the Group should also be endorsed by both the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board and the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board.

In addition, due to the immediate need to establish the Group (as budget savings proposals for 2012/13 were being recommended), nominations from Members had been sought. Those subsequently nominated were Councillors Hignett, Gerrard, A. Lowe, Edge, Nolan, Zygadlo and E. Cargill. The Group had already met on more than one occasion before this meeting and a verbal update on progress was provided at the meeting.

RESOLVED: That the work of the Halton Community Transport (HCT) Working Group and the Topic Brief be endorsed.

EUR51 HALTON HEALTHY HOMES NETWORK

The Board received a presentation regarding the Halton Healthy Homes Network which was launched in February 2012 with the help of funding from the Department

of Health under their Warmer Homes, Healthy People programme. The aim of the network was to increase awareness of the health implications of poor housing and fuel poverty so that front line staff from the Council and partner organisations and community advocates were able to identify those at risk and signpost them to organisations who could offer appropriate assistance. The presentation contained an overview of the following:-

- Housing conditions and fuel poverty in Halton;
- The health implications of poor housing and fuel poverty;
- The assistance that was available to help tackle poor housing and fuel poverty;
- The challenges faced by the Council and partners in tackling the issues; and
- Progress to date in implementing a Healthy Homes Network approach.

It was noted that the Halton Healthy Homes network had been launched and to date had 80 members. It was suggested that Estate Agents should be approached to become involved in Halton Healthy Homes network.

RESOLVED: That the presentation be noted.

*NB: Councillors Gerrard, Hodgkinson and Wainwright declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business as a Non-Executive Board Member of Halton Borough Transport).*

#### EUR52 PETITION ON 3A BUS WITHDRAWAL

The Board was advised that a petition had been received from residents of Halton Brook following notice of consultation on the potential withdrawal of bus service No: 3A which operated on a Saturday only. The petition had been signed by 83 residents. The bus service currently operated on an hourly basis in conjunction with the 3C service to provide a combined 30 minute service. It was noted that if the 3A were withdrawn, the 3C would still be available on an hourly frequency.

Members were advised that the petition suggested that those objecting to the potential withdrawal of the service were pensioners who, although understood about Government cutbacks and the Council's need to respond to them, had suffered a reduction in their disposable income. They felt that having to pay for taxis to go about their daily lives on a Saturday would reduce this income even further.

At present the 3A Saturday service was supported under a Deminimis agreement at a cost of £3518 per annum to Halton Borough Council. A Diminimis payment was one that a Council could make to an operator to divert or extend an existing service. Under the Service Subsidy (Agreements) (Tendering) (England) Regulations 2004, a Deminimus subsidy may only be paid for a maximum of five years per service. In the case of service 3A, this period had now been reached.

The funding for this particular service had been identified as a cost saving contribution for the next financial 2012/113.

It was reported that the operator, Arriva North West, may operate the service on a fully commercial basis, although the Council had yet to receive confirmation that this would be the case.

Arising from the discussion Councillor Wainwright requested that Officers write to Halton Borough Transport to enquire if they would be prepared to operate the 3A bus service.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted; and
- (2) Officers continue to discuss the potential for the 3A service to be operated on a commercial basis, without subsidy, by the current provider; and
- (4) Ward Members be informed of the outcome of the Board's consideration of the petition.

*NB: Councillors Gerrard, Hodgkinson and Wainwright declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business as a Non-Executive Board Member of Halton Borough Transport).*

EUR53 RECEIPT OF PETITION - POTENTIAL WITHDRAWAL OF 26 BUS SERVICE (SATURDAY AND JOURNEYS AT 1504, 1534 AND 1604 MONDAY TO FRIDAY)

The Board was advised that a petition had been received from West Bank residents following notice of consultation on the potential withdrawal of bus service No: 26 (Saturday and journeys at 1504, 1534 and 1604 Monday to Friday). The petition had been signed by 329 residents. If the service was withdrawn, passengers in the West Bank

area could access alternative services at the Irwell Street bus stop on the A533 Silver Jubilee Bridge. The petition suggested that those objecting to the potential withdrawal of the service were residents who felt that the walk through the subway to access the alternative services was unacceptable.

It was noted that the majority of the No: 26 service Monday to Friday, was operated on a commercial basis by Halton Transport. However, the schedule operated on Saturday and the journeys at 15.04, 15.34 and 16.04 were supported under a Deminimis agreement at a cost of £21,391 per annum to Halton Borough Council. A deminimis payment was one that the Council could make to an operator to divert or extend an existing service.

Under the Service Subsidy (Agreements) (Tendering) (England) Regulation 2004, a Deminimis subsidy may only be paid for a maximum of five years per service. In the case of the service 26, this period had now been reached.

In addition, the funding for this particular service had been identified as a cost saving contribution for the next financial year 2012/13. Members were advised that the operator, Halton Transport, may operate the service on a fully commercial basis, although the Council had not yet received confirmation that this would be the case.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the petition be noted;
- (2) Officers continue to discuss the potential for the 26 service to be operated on a commercial basis, without subsidy, by the current operator; and
- (3) the local ward members be informed of the outcome of the Board's consideration of the petition.

*Meeting ended at 8.15 p.m.*