

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 12 September 2012 at the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Gerrard (Chairman), Fraser, P. Hignett, MacManus, Parker, Sinnott, Woolfall and Zygadlo

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Thompson

Absence declared on Council business: Councillor Keith Morley

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, S. Rimmer, H. Coen and G. Hawkesford

Also in attendance: 4 Members of the public and Councillor N Plumpton Walsh

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EUR14 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 th June 2012 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR15 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that two public questions had been received and would be submitted and addressed as part of Minute No 19 and 21.	
EUR16 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.	
EUR17 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2012/13	
The Board received a report of the Strategic Director	

Policy and Resources which detailed the first quarter performance management reports on progress against service objectives/milestones and performance targets affecting the services. In line with the revised Council's Performance Framework for 2012/13 (approved by Executive Board in September 2011), the Board had been provided with a thematic priority based report; which identified the key issues arising in the following areas:

- Economic Regeneration (Development and Investment);
- Environmental (Open Spaces & Waste Management Services);
- Highways, Transportation and Logistics (Mersey Gateway/Core Strategy, Transport, Bridge and Highway Maintenance, Highway Development, Flood Risk Management);
- Physical Environment (Statutory Plans and Housing Issues).

In receiving the first quarterly monitoring reports, Councillor MacManus submitted the following questions and the responses given are detailed:

1. Item 1 page 27 - paragraph 2.1.2
Line 4 makes reference to many homes. "Consultation has begun on a new Biomass plant which is capable of serving the whole of 3MG and many homes and Civic Buildings in Halton". Do we have an idea of how many and where they are?

Response

45,000 homes in residential areas close to the 3MG site, Hale Bank and West Bank could be served by the Biomass plant in addition to the requirements at 3MG. The developers have had initial discussions with the Council in respect of the Civic Quarter and a local housing association to ascertain the likely demand. This will be examined further following the planning process.

2. Item 2 page 30 - paragraph 3 Relating to the Council now being responsible for processing and determining applications to carry out works to certain watercourses - "There is a fixed fee of £50 per application for consent of works". Is the fixed fee determined by the Environment Agency or can the Council increase it?

Response

The £50 fee is set under legislation following the introduction of the Flood and Water Management Act 2010:

Land Drainage Act 1991 (c. 59) Control of flow of watercourses etc.

Prohibition on obstructions etc. in watercourses

23 (2) The drainage board concerned may require the payment of an application fee by a person who applies to them for their consent under this section; and the amount of that fee shall be £50 or such other sum as may be specified by order made by the Ministers.

3. Item 3 page 33 - paragraph 3.1.3. What is the likelihood that we will not get the grant funding towards the Daresbury Enterprise Zone?

Response

The Growing Places Fund has been secured in principle and the terms of the funding are currently being negotiated. The Regional Growth Fund application has been shortlisted and the outcome will be announced in October.

4. Item 4 page 36 - DIS LI 01 What was the source of the 2012/13 target?

Response

All targets are established on an annual basis taking account of prior and anticipated levels of performance and market trends. The 2010/11 Actual occupancy rate was 81% with new marketing initiatives developed in the year 2011/12 to promote these units. In this particular instance, the economic climate remains very challenging which continues to have an effect upon performance. However, as these are ageing buildings requiring repair and investment, a paper is being prepared for submission to the Asset Management Working group to review the strategy for these assets.

5. Item 5 page 41 - 2nd to last paragraph. In relation to

'poor contractor' performance what monitoring arrangements are in place?

Response

The monitoring of contractors performance is undertaken through monthly progress meetings, regular site inspections and fortnightly programme meetings.

6. Item 6 page 45 – PPT LI 06 What was the source of the 2012/13 targets?

Response

The targets against these measures were determined taking account of latest national average planning statistics available from the DCLG. Given existing resources these targets should be considered as aspirational and this area of the Council's operations is currently the subject of review as part of the Council's on-going efficiency programme.

Typographical errors noted

7. Page 42, PPT 09 refers to 2011/12 programme and March 2012. Are these meant to be 12/13 and March 2013?

8. Response

Yes 2012/13 with a deadline of March 2013

9. Page 44, PPT 01 has Feb 2012, is this meant to be 2013?

Response

Yes, Feb 2013

Arising from the discussion it was agreed that further information on the Biomass scheme would be forwarded to Councillor Woolfall.

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

EUR18 OBJECTION TO PROPOSED 20 MPH SPEED LIMITS, HALE VILLAGE

The Board considered a report of the Strategic

Director Policy and Resources, which informed Members of an objection that had been received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce 20mph speed limits on roads in Hale Village. The purpose of the reduced 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. The policy of introducing 20mph areas was contained within the Local Transport Plan.

The objection received was based on a number of issues:

- Existing traffic speeds were low and the proposed speed limit was unnecessary and wasteful;
- Signing would spoil the visual appeal of Hale;
- Lack of pedestrian traffic; and
- The objector requested removal of the existing traffic calming features on the approaches to the village from Speke and Hale Bank and 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions be introduced on parts of Arklow Drive.

The Officer's responses to each of the objections and proposals were outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the proposal to make an Order to implement 20 mph speed restrictions on those roads in Hale Village listed in 'Appendix B' be supported and the report be submitted for resolution by the Executive Board.

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NB: Councillor MacManus declared a disclosable other interest in the following item of business as he recently worked with HCT on the Russell Court project in his role as Councillor.

EUR19 OBJECTION TO PROPOSED WAITING RESTRICTIONS - RUSSELL COURT, FARNWORTH

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Policy and Resources, which informed Members of objections that had been received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to introduce 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions in Russell Court, Widnes. At a previous meeting of the Board held on 15th June 2011, (Minute No8 refers), a petition from residents of Russell Court relating to long standing car parking problems in the area was considered. It was recognised that there was no on-highway parking permitted on Farnworth Street and little off-street provision; the lack of any visible controls on

parking in Russell Court had meant that this small cul-de-sac had become the parking place of choice for more drivers than the space available could comfortably accommodate.

In a subsequent consultation exercise with residents of Russell Court, provision of 4 additional parking spaces on the 'drying area' was proposed. However, this proposal was not generally accepted due to the loss of amenity and comments from the residents that the disabled parking bays should be near the houses. In view of the comments Halton Housing Trust (HHT) decided that the scheme did not represent good value for money, so the scheme was not progressed. However, the following was constructed:

1. three new disabled person parking spaces at the head of Russell Court;
2. a former highway grass verge was replaced to create additional road space;
3. two new 'private' off-street parking spaces in the gardens of other properties owned by HHT;
4. 'H-bar' markings to protect adjoining accesses from obstruction; and
5. bollards had been installed in some of the highway verges to prevent 'driving on' abuse of these areas.

However, parking congestion had continued, creating access difficulties and leading to inter-driver/ neighbour disputes. As Russell Court, was only 5.5 metres wide, parking could take place on one side or the other, not on both sides simultaneously. In light of this, in June 2012 parking restrictions shown in the report were sent out to public consultation. The proposed restrictions sought to prevent parking where it should be avoided, in order to prevent obstruction and to maintain the unrestricted flow of traffic.

Subsequently, four objections to the waiting restrictions have been received. There were no objections to designation of the three disabled person parking spaces at the head of the cul-de-sac. The objections referred to:

- Russell Court was congested at the present time and raised concerns over parking displacement into adjacent areas;
- congestion and parking space pressure in Russell Court;
- the measures that have been taken to try and alleviate the problems. Again the fears are for displacement of parking demand and particular concerns over the behaviour of neighbours

and the possibility of further animosity and the parking difficulties facing visitors to Russell Court; and

- pressure on available parking space if the proposed restrictions go ahead, and fears her garage entrance would be blocked routinely despite the recently installed 'H-bar' marking.

The Officer's responses to each of the objections and proposals were outlined in the report.

In accordance with Standing Order No.34 (9), the following public question was submitted to the Board by Ms Wilson:

"Why is there a proposal to restrict parking when it has been highlighted that there should be an effort to resolve the issues with new parking bays and that if restrictions were to go ahead this would have a knock on affect to adjacent streets?"

In response it was reported that efforts had been made to provide extra parking and resident consultation had taken place on a joint construction project with HHT for parking bays on the 'drying area' as Para 3.2 of the Board item. Unfortunately, as a result of the consultation feedback, HHT decided the scheme did not represent good value for money, and the project was not progressed. At the turn of the year in response to demand from the residents and local members, using Area Forum/HHT funding, three new disabled person parking spaces were constructed at the head of Russell Court, replacing a former highway grass verge to create additional road space. In addition, two new 'private' off-street parking spaces have been created in the gardens of other properties owned by HHT, and 'H-bar' markings had been installed to protect adjoining accesses from obstruction.

It was acknowledged that the proposed restrictions would displace a small amount of parking from Russell Court. These vehicles could start parking in other side roads, such as Farnworth Close and Windermere Street. This was an unfortunate side-effect of any waiting restrictions, and any issues created would need to be dealt with in the future. It was accepted that there was an unresolved, general lack of on-highway parking in the area. However, it must be stressed that the proposed restrictions in Russell Court sought only to prevent parking where it should be avoided, in order to prevent obstruction and to maintain the unrestricted flow of traffic.

Ms Wilson asked supplementary questions relating to the following:

- the new bollards have resolved any parking issue of parking on both sides of Russell Court;
- in 5 years of living at her current address she had not seen cars double parked;
- visitors to Russell Court would have nowhere to park; and
- there were existing parking problems at Farnworth Close and Windermere Street and this would displace cars to those areas.

In response Officers advised that the new bollards were installed to assist with the free flow of traffic and to avoid parking on both sides of the road at this location on Russell Road; the proposed parking restriction would ensure this happened. With regard to no cars seen double parked and visitors having nowhere to park, the Board noted that the parking problems highlighted were part of a petition received from Russell Court residents. The subsequent Traffic Regulation Order was in response to the petition. Also Officers reported that to date no parking issues had been reported at Windermere Street or Farnworth Close.

RESOLVED: That the proposal to make an Order to implement 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions on Russell Court, Farnworth, as listed in Appendix 2, be supported and the report be submitted for resolution by the Executive Board.

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EUR20 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

The Board considered a report which provided an overview of the Neighbourhood Planning process. The 2011 Localism Act introduced the ability for local communities to shape their community and have a greater say in the planning of their areas by producing Neighbourhood Development Plans, neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders. The emphasis was placed on the local community leading the process, with support from the local authority in relation to conformity with higher order planning policy and statutory process requirements.

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan, once adopted, would form part of the development plan for the local authority alongside the Unitary Development Plan, Regional Strategy and emerging Core Strategy. A

Neighbourhood Plan could be used to:

- Develop a shared vision for a neighbourhood;
- Set out where residential, retail, business or other development should be located;
- Protect local green infrastructure; and
- Influence building design

Members were advised that the process of producing a Neighbourhood Plan was governed by the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations which came into force on 6th April 2012 to supplement the provisions of the Localism Act. The five key stages in the production of a Neighbourhood Plan were as follows:

- Defining the neighbourhood;
- Preparing the Plan;
- Independent examination;
- Community referendum; and
- Adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan.

It was noted that the cost of producing a Neighbourhood Plan was estimated to be between £20-86k and would need to be met by the community. The Council had a duty to support this process by providing officer time and certain costs related to the production of the plan. The cost of these activities was estimated to be between £13-16k per plan. Funding of up to £50m had been identified through the Comprehensive Spending Review to allow local authorities to recoup the costs.

RESOLVED: That the Council respond to any requests for Neighbourhood Planning, in accordance with the relevant legislation, thereby fulfilling its statutory duty to support and advise its communities in this regard.

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EUR21 OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSED TRAFFIC REGULATION ORDERS, VARIOUS LOCATIONS, WIDNES & RUNCORN

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director Policy and Resources, which outlined objections which had been received following public consultation on proposed Traffic Regulation Orders to impose 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions on parts of Cowan Way, Upton Lane, Green Lane, Cawfield Avenue, Primrose Close, Alder Avenue, Birch Road, Acacia Avenue, Lockett Road, Church Street, Upper Mersey Road and Mersey Road, Widnes and Kenilworth Avenue, Penrhyn Crescent and Ludlow Crescent in Runcorn and also to remove existing 'At Any Time' waiting restrictions from Blundell Road, Widnes.

In accordance with Standing Order No.34 (9), the following public question was submitted to the Board by Mrs Coleman from 20 Kenilworth Avenue by telephone:

“Mrs Coleman repeated the points in her original letter. In addition Mrs Coleman asked if the Council could consider providing residents-only parking permits or drop crossings to allow residents to get off the carriageway to park.”

In response Officers advised that:

The Board item addresses all the grounds for objection that were originally submitted. In relation to the additional request, for the provision of a residents-only parking permit scheme, at the present time this Council does not operate any such arrangements. This issue was the subject of a report to the Executive Board in September 2009, when it was resolved that residents only parking schemes should not be introduced.

As regards the provision of drop crossings, this would be a matter for the individual house holder to organise and fund, as is the case elsewhere in the Borough. Although it was not always readily accepted, drivers have no absolute right to park on the highway, even near their own homes, and in reality parking should only take place in locations where this would not create an obstruction. Whilst any useable space was available purely on a first come, first served basis, in the case of the Coleman family home approximately 20 metres of their Penrhyn Crescent property frontage would remain clear of waiting restrictions, and in any case drivers were allowed to stop on double yellow lines to load and unload. It was believed that there were no grounds to change the Board item recommendation that the objection be over ruled.

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the following proposed Orders with its conclusions being submitted to the Executive Board for its consideration:

1. the implementation of 'At Any Time' Waiting Restrictions as detailed in Appendix '3', namely on Alder Avenue, Birch Road, Acacia Avenue, Lockett Road and Mersey Road/Upper Mersey Road in Widnes and on Kenilworth Avenue/Penrhyn Crescent/Ludlow Crescent in Runcorn;
2. the intention to revoke existing 'At Any Time' Waiting Restrictions as detailed in Appendix '3', namely on Blundell Road, Widnes;

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3. the proposals to introduce restrictions on Cowan Way, Green Lane, Cawfield Avenue and Primrose Close, Widnes as detailed in the report be discontinued; and
4. the proposal to implement restrictions at Church Street/Upper Mersey Road, Widnes be progressed to cover a reduced length as detailed in the report.

EUR22 OBJECTIONS TO OFF STREET PARKING PLACES ORDER 2012 RUNCORN TOWN CENTRE

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which outlined objections received following public consultation on a proposed Traffic Regulation Order to name and set the operating conditions on, the central car parks in Runcorn Town Centre. Members were advised that redevelopment work in the area had created the need to formalise the naming of the central car park areas, as the previous names were no longer applicable. In addition it was proposed to introduce standard operating conditions, to provide a turnover in the use of these parking areas to improve the availability of immediate parking for shoppers using the adjacent Co-Op, Lloyds Pharmacy and Cooltrader stores.

In order for this restriction to be effective it would be necessary to consider enforcement options as follows:

- arrange for a private company to enforce the restriction. Depending on the penalty and the number of motorists not complying with the order, this could be at no cost to the Council or at a cost to be determined by a tendering exercise;
- authorise Council officers to carry out enforcement, although there would be a high initial set up cost and resources would be difficult to allocate on a regular basis; and
- authorise a neighbouring Authority to enforce the restriction, although there would be a cost to the Council.

Depending on which option may be deployed, there could be costs for the Council and funding for this purpose would have to be identified. The area was not part of the public highway; therefore the police could not carry out enforcement.

It was proposed that an overstay charge of £50.00 be introduced, which would be reduced to £25.00 if paid within 14 days. There were similar restrictions on car parks within neighbouring Town Centres but not within Halton.

RESOLVED: That the Board supports the revised proposal to make a Traffic Regulation Order, the main effects of which would be to:

- name the central Runcorn Town Centre car parks adjacent to the Co- Op, Lloyds Pharmacy and Cooltrader stores (basically the former Princess Street car park) as High Street Car Park;
- impose standard operating conditions generally as within Appendix 'A', though with a revised maximum stay period of three hours and no return within an hour Monday to Saturday 8.00 am to 5.00 pm., on both the High Street car park and the Penketh Court car park; and
- introduce a charge of £50.00 for drivers exceeding the maximum stay period, but reduced to £25.00 if paid within 14 days.

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Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.