

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 21 June 2023 at the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), P. Lloyd Jones (Vice-Chair), Abbott, Ball, Hutchinson, K. Loftus, Ryan, Stockton and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: Councillor L. Nolan and Skinner

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Burrows, K. Butler, J. Gallagher, T. Gibbs and R. Taylor

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

		<i>Action</i>
EUR1	MINUTES The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR2	PUBLIC QUESTION TIME It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
EUR3	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.	
EUR4	ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23 The Board considered a copy of the Annual Report from the Chair of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board for 2022/23. The Board had met four times during the year and the report set out the work carried out during the Municipal Year April 2022 to March 2023.	Operational Director - Community & Green Space

A question was raised about the completion date for the Coppicing Programme.

RESOLVED: That the Annual Report be endorsed.

EUR5 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE

The Board received a presentation on “The Big Conversation” which was the Council’s approach to formulating a new Corporate Plan to take effect from April 2024.

“The Big Conversation” would engage with the public so that they understand the challenges of the Council. It would be an approach between the Council and everyone who lives or works in Halton to work together in order to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life.

The Corporate Plan Survey would consist of 5 themes and 6 questions. There would be different consultation methods depending on the audience. Responses will be monitored during the consultation period and any low response area will be targeted with iWalkers which proved to be an effective consultation method during the elections. Staff within the One-Stop-Shops and Libraries would be able to offer assistance to anyone who required help to complete the survey.

All feedback and responses would be scrutinised and evaluated and then in conjunction with North West Employers, be summarised accordingly to establish a number of key objectives to form the Council’s new Corporate Plan.

Following the presentation, Members’ discussions and comments included the following:

- It was noted that at another meeting of Members, a suggestion had been made to using the term “under-served groups” instead of “hard to reach groups” and this was debated. It was suggested that “hard to reach” was a much more universal term;
- Members asked about the possibility of resurrecting “Halton 2000” which in the past had consisted of hard copy surveys but would now be much easier to compile as an online survey;
- There was some concern that some voices could be lost in the survey and therefore suggested that one theme each month be given some focus.

The comments and suggestions would be considered as part of the consultation process.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the approach to facilitate “The Big Conversation”.

EUR6 REVOCATION OF HALTON'S AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS IN WIDNES TOWN CENTRE - RESULT OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on the outcome of a public consultation on the revocation of the air quality management areas in Widnes Town Centre.

The public consultation ran for 3 weeks from 17 May 2023 – 7 June 2023. In total, 7 responses were received and these were outlined in appendix 1 of the report.

In 2011, the high levels of Nitrogen Dioxide measured $49\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ against the UK legal limit of $40\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$. Since then, a number of developments have resulted in a significant improvement in air quality. These included improvements in vehicle emission technology and the opening of the Mersey Gateway Bridge in 2017 i.e. reduced traffic congestion in Widnes Town Centre. Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide were now consistently below the UK legal limit.

The proposal was therefore to revoke the air quality management areas, which included Deacon Road Albert Road and the Peelhouse Lane area, and the area around Milton Road and Simms Cross.

The Board discussed the information presented in the report and the following comments were noted:

- The Liverpool City Region have a zero output target by 2040, however, it was suggested that as Halton is a much smaller Authority it should looking to reach this goal by 2035;
- Members asked what the Council did to make air quality better. It was noted that there was an Air Quality Action Plan which included improving the fuel efficiency of buses, preventing delivery vehicles from leaving engines running and timing of traffic light sequences.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) consider the consultation responses alongside the observations of the Council's Environmental Protection Team;
- 2) endorse the proposal to revoke the air quality management areas in Widnes Town Centre;
- 3) support that a report be presented to the Council's Executive Board recommending that the air quality management areas in Widnes Town Centre are revoked; and
- 4) note that should the air quality management areas be revoked there will be a requirement for Halton to produce a Borough-wide Air Quality Strategy.

EUR7 HMO - WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The Board considered a report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration which provided a progress update on the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Action Plan which had been endorsed by the Board in February 2023.

It was noted that currently, a HMO does not need a licence if it is occupied by less than 5 people. Therefore, the Council has started to gather intelligence to understand how many HMO's are in the Borough.

Meta Street and ORS had been commissioned to undertake some of the actions outlined in the Action Plan and to investigate and assess the following factors across the Borough:

- Accurate information on the current levels of private rental sector properties and tenure change over time by ward;
- Accurate information on the current level of unlicensed smaller HMO's (3-4 Occupants) by ward;
- Levels of serious hazards that might amount to a Category 1 hazard or high scoring category 2 hazard (HHSRS) across the private rented sector by ward;
- Ward level information on housing related stressors, including antisocial behaviour (ASB), crime, deprivation, and population changes including migration linked to the private rented sector in general and houses in multiple occupation specifically; and

- A detailed survey of properties within the West Bank area to identify the number of private rental properties and the number of smaller and unlicensed HMO's. The survey should identify tenure, property type e.g. self contained flat, HMO, the number of unrelated occupants who do not form the same household, the number of bedrooms and details of the landlord and letting agent.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the progress against the Action Plan contained in appendix 1 of the report.

EUR8 TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE UPDATE

The Board received an update report from the Executive Director – Environment and Regeneration on the improvements being made to the Borough's transport infrastructure.

It was noted that the Council was leading on a number of major transport interventions including the following:

- Highway Network;
- Silver Jubilee Bridge;
- East Runcorn Connectivity;
- Runcorn Town Deal;
- Electric Vehicle Charging Points;
- Network Models;
- Traffic Management and Road Safety; and
- Cycling and Walking Infrastructure.

Appendix 1 of the report outlined the future transport pipeline schemes and Appendix 2 outlined the current schemes.

Members of the Board considered the report and noted the following comments:

- A number of charging points across the Borough not working;
- Quality of bus journeys e.g. noise, heat etc.
- Consideration to be given to a consistent supplier of EV charging points to prevent the need for various Apps;
- Runcorn East Station – a lot of people from Cheshire West and Frodsham use this station as car parking is free. Suggested free car parking be limited to Halton residents only; and

- Concerns raised regarding the roads and delays surrounding the Redrow building sites.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the report and endorse the list of schemes set out in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2.

EUR9 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 4 OF 2022/23

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Reports for Quarter 4 of 2022/23.

The key priorities for development of improvement in 2022/23 were agreed by Members and included in Directorate Plans for the various function areas reported to the Board as detailed below:

- Development and Investment Services;
- Highways and Transportation, Logistics and Development Services; and
- Waste and Environmental Improvement and Open Space Services.

The reports detailed progress against service objectives and milestones, and performance targets and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen during the period.

RESOLVED: That quarter 4 performance management reports be received and noted.

Meeting ended at 7.55 p.m.