

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 15 November 2023 at the Civic Suite - Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: K. Butler, S. Burrows, J. Gallagher, I. Jones, A. Plant and I. Saxby.

Also in attendance: None

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EUR17 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR18 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
EUR19 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.	
EUR20 THE BIG CONVERSATION UPDATE	
The Board received a presentation which provided an update on 'The Big Conversation'.	
The Board previously received a report about the 'The Big Conversation' at its meeting in June and were reminded that the initiative was about engaging with the public so that they understood the challenges that the	

Corporate
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Council was facing. It was an approach between the Council and those who lived or worked in Halton to work together to create an improved Borough in all aspects of everyday life. A stakeholder analysis and a Communication Plan had been developed in order to generate and establish as many opportunities as possible to involve all stakeholders in many different ways.

Members were advised that up until 13 November 2023, over 1,000 responses had been received and a breakdown of responses by source was provided. The report outlined the promotion, consultation and engagement carried out so far as well as the emerging themes. The gaps and actions were set out and some examples were given to how these had been addressed e.g. visits made to Riverside College and Family Hubs in both Runcorn and Widnes; information had been shared via social media to target relevant groups; and iWalkers had targeted those wards with low responses.

It was noted that the consultation would end on 30 November 2023, after which an analysis would be undertaken to identify the key priorities. January and February 2024 would see further consultation with stakeholders prior to the Corporate Plan being finalised in March, ready for its launch in April 2024.

Members of the Board discussed the report and the following comments were noted:

- 222 survey responses had been received by Council staff and there was a concern that some of those staff would not live in the Borough and therefore have an impact on their views. However, Members were reminded that the survey was aimed at anyone who lived or worked in Halton;
- It was suggested that the survey should be promoted via the front page of the Council's website; and
- A Board Member expressed their disappointment that more focus had not been given to Halton Lea Ward and that some opportunities to engage with some summer activity groups had been missed.

Thanks were noted for all the efforts made to consult with the public and the Chair reminded the Board that it was everyone's responsibility to promote the survey and encourage as made people to participate as possible.

It was also noted that this had been the second most successful survey undertaken by the Council in terms of

number of responses received. A further two weeks remained before the consultation ended and it was hoped that more responses would be received during that period.

RESOLVED: That the Board

- 1) note the report; and
- 2) continue to endorse the approach to facilitate 'The Big Conversation'.

EUR21 ANNUAL ROAD TRAFFIC COLLISION & CASUALTY REPORT

The Board received a report on the latest road safety statistics released by the Department for Transport through the publication of the 2022 Comprehensive Annual Report.

The report set out full details of the numbers of traffic collisions and casualties in 2022 and compared these figures with those from previous years. Of those killed or seriously injured, the number of adult and child casualties increased. However, due to the low numbers recorded annually in Halton, this number did fluctuate from year to year. In 2022, the country emerged from a succession of Covid Pandemic lockdowns and the small rise in road casualty numbers, both in Halton and nationally, almost mirrored the rise in traffic levels.

Halton had achieved its performance targets as set by the Department of Transport. There were 157 road traffic collisions involving personal injury within Halton, 9 more than the previous year. These incidents resulted in 188 casualties, a 7% increase on the 2021 figure but 24% below 2019 when traffic levels were comparable.

In addition, the report highlighted the work the Road Safety Team had undertaken in 2022/23 and the programme for 2023/24 which would continue to cover road traffic reduction schemes, road safety education, training and publicity as well as engaging with Cheshire Police to target effective enforcement action.

Members also considered information on the following road safety initiatives:

- "Smiley" Speed Indicative Device/Sign (SiDs);
- Speed Camera A562;
- Gyrotray Red Light Camera;

- Mobile Speed Camera Sites;
- Collision Sites;
- Safer Active Travel;
- Education; and
- Halton 2023/24 Strategy.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) the overall progress made on casualty reduction in Halton over the past decade be noted; and
- 2) the 2024/25 strategy of road safety schemes and road safety education, training and publicity be endorsed.

EUR22 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION - WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The Board received an update report on the progress of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Party Action Plan which had been endorsed by the Board on 15 February 2023. The updated Action Plan was attached in Appendix 1 of the report.

Executive Director
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It was noted that since the last update report to the Board in June 2023, the following progress had been made:

- The Council's Executive Board formally adopted the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Licensing Requirements and Amenity Standards Policy at its meeting on 14 September 2023; and
- A Supplementary Planning Document had been drafted and submitted to the Board for approval, under separate cover.

Members were advised that over the summer, independent studies had been undertaken by MetaStreet and Opinion Research Services (ORS) to provide an evidence base on the make-up of Halton's housing stock. ORS carried out 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 analysis of the survey concluded that there was only a small number of HMO's within the West Bank ward, however, there was a high number of private rental properties compared to the rest of the Borough. The full survey results and associated conclusions were outlined in Appendix 2 to the report.

MetaStreet carried out a study on stock condition and

the results of this would be presented to the Board in due course.

The Board discussed the report and concerns were raised that there was a discrepancy between the results of the survey and the experience of those that live and work in the West Bank ward. It was noted that the survey had received a response rate of 45% and detailed analysis was undertaken into the properties that did not respond. There was no evidence which showed the properties who had not responded to the survey were known to the Council in terms of anti-social behaviour issues etc. Following discussions, it was agreed that some further work would be undertaken with West Bank Councillors to explore the discrepancies.

RESOLVED: That the Board note the progress against the Action Plan.

EUR23 HOUSES OF MULTIPLE OCCUPATION - SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENT

The Board received a report on the draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) regarding Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) which had been prepared by the HMO Working Party. An SPD is an important material consideration in the determination of planning applications for HMOs and should not add unnecessarily to the financial burden on developments.

Since 2018, a large HMO must be licensed by the Local Authority. The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 permits development rights for the change of use of a dwelling to a small HMO for 3-6 occupants without the need to apply to the Council. Properties with 7 or more unrelated occupants would still require planning permission.

In Halton, there were 121 licensed HMOs (properties with 5 or more tenants), however, the number of smaller HMOs was unknown. This was not unique to Halton due to no requirement needed for a license or planning permission and therefore there was no reason for any landlord to notify the Council.

Members were advised that the SPD would apply to any planning applications submitted to create large HMOs (properties for 7 or more unrelated occupants) and would introduce planning controls to ensure the amenity of neighbours was protected.

The Board discussed the report and queried what powers the Local Authority had to prevent too many HMO's in one area. It was confirmed that providing there was a good evidence base, the Local Authority could apply to the Secretary of State under Article 4 to withdraw specified permitted development rights across a defined area.

RESOLVED: That the Board endorse the draft SPD for public consultation.

EUR24 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT - QUARTER 2 OF 2023-24

The Board received the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter 2 of 2023/24.

Executive Director
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The key priorities for development of improvement in 2023/24 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.

The Board raised a concern regarding the School Cleaning Service Level Agreement which had been running at a deficit and as more schools were converting to academies the demand for the service was decreasing. It was agreed that Property Services would be asked to provide some further information regarding this matter.

RESOLVED: That the Board:

- 1) receive the second quarter performance management report;
- 2) consider the progress and performance information and raise any questions or points for clarification; and
- 3) highlight any areas of interest and/or concerns where further information is to be reported at a future meeting of the Board.

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Meeting ended at 7.45 p.m.