

## Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership (UR SSP) Meeting Minutes

**Marketing Suite, Municipal Building, Kingsway, Widnes WA8 7QF**

**3.00 pm, Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> January, 2010.**

### **Present:**

ClIr Ron Hignett	(RH) Chair	HBC/Member;
Neil McGrath	(NM)	Director of Resources, Halton Housing Trust;
Julie Hall	(JH)	Partnerships Officer, Job Centre Plus (for Jane Trevor);
Chris Koral	(CK)	Partnerships Manager, NWDA;
Claire Griffiths	(CG)	Managing Director/Development, Plus Dane Group;

### **In Attendance:**

Dick Tregoa	(DT)	HBC/Strategic Director – Environment;
Derek Sutton	(DJS)	HBC/Operational Director – Major Projects Dept;
Mick Noone	(MN)	HBC/Operational Director/Transport;
Richard Stevens	(RS)	HBC/Head of Research & Intelligence;
Debbie Houghton	(DH)	HBC/Policy Officer;
Marie Hoyles	(MH)	HBC/Skills Strategy Officer
Pat Audoire	(PA) Minutes	HBC/Urban Renewal SSP Co-ordinator.

### **Apologies:**

Janitha Redmond	Homes & Communities Agency;
Claire Bunter	Environment Agency;
Ellen Fenton	Deputy to Claire McDade, Norton Priory.

				<b><u>Action</u></b> <b><u>s</u></b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Apologies, Minutes &amp; Matters Arising</b>	1.1 1.2	RH asked for introductions around the table and took apologies from delegates who were unable to attend. There were no matters arising from the previous Minutes that had not already been dealt with.	
<b>2.</b>	<b>Presentation: IPSOS MORI Consultation Feedback – Richard Stevens</b>	2.1.1 2.1.2 2.1.3	RS gave a summary of the recent MORI consultation, explaining that this was developed out of the Places Survey, the first of which took place in 2008; the next being this year. MORI were engaged to undertake qualitative research, to drill down into the data and responses previously given, concentrating on the minority views (30%), where the areas of dissatisfaction were that needed to be addressed. RS took us through the findings, with the main concerns for UR being street cleanliness; pollution and a wish to keep up the good work in our Parks.	

		<p>2.2.1</p> <p>2.2.2</p> <p>2.2.3</p> <p>2.2.4</p> <p>2.2.5</p>	<p>There were a number of questions following the presentation:</p> <p>RH asked if all the respondees would be followed up. RS explained that this would be done through MORI. In addition, feedback would be left on the HBC/LSP website to show outcomes: i.e., residents asked for this; we have now done that.</p> <p>DJS noted that the Priority of Urban Renewal had been omitted in favour of Environment by MORI; that all the regeneration around shopping and community buildings had been ignored; that we should be concerned that Urban Renewal was in fear of being relegated.</p> <p>DH clarified that the consultation was a performance management issue around NI5 and that residents' perceptions had been interrogated.</p> <p>However, DJS suggested that MORI should have been properly guided by the HBC facilitators so that the Priorities were more sharply in focus.</p> <p>DT emphasised that the Council's Priority was Urban Renewal, not Environment; that facilitators in focus groups may have misinterpreted the feedback and that is why UR was not brought to the fore; that we should consequently treat the results with caution because some of our issues were not teased out and that it was not helpful the way MORI had put the slides together.</p>	
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Project Commissioning –</b> Derek Sutton</p>	<p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3.1</p>	<p>DJS referred to his report. There had been a call for project proposals by the LSP last Autumn. LPSA2 reward funding (HBC) of £1.6m had been made available, together with a further £300k of WNF 'underspend' to support projects that meet the LAA and Community Strategy objectives. However, the SSP Chairs have subsequently decided that the LSP should prioritise and provide additional information. DJS is still awaiting the promised revised application form in order that the UR proposals can be completed.</p> <p>The funding has been split by revenue and capital, with £900k of capital being available in total. This funding split cannot be vired one to the other. The UR SSP wishes to submit capital proposals, the total value of which can be met out of that allocation, together with a third application by the Safer Halton SSP for a CCTV project.</p> <p>Officers have therefore re-appraised the proposals initially submitted. Two have been removed because they do not meet the criteria laid down; two proposals are to be put forward and are</p>	

		3.4	<p>recommended to this Partnership for support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bayer site reclamation: £350,000;</li> <li>▪ Venture Fields - £500,000.</li> </ul> <p>Partners confirmed their support to the proposals.</p>	
4.	<b>Urban Renewal Update</b> – Dick Tregoe	<p>4.1.1</p> <p>4.1.2</p> <p>4.2.1.1</p> <p>4.2.1.2</p> <p>4.2.2</p> <p>4.3.1</p> <p>4.3.2</p> <p>4.3.3</p> <p>4.4.1</p> <p>4.4.2</p> <p>4.4.3</p> <p>4.5.1</p> <p>4.5.2</p> <p>4.5.3</p>	<p>A Defra funding award of £2.4m has been confirmed for St. Michael's Golf Course and work started before Christmas.</p> <p>Restoration work for the tees will need to be done and officers are focusing on resolving issues around that.</p> <p>There is lots happening at Daresbury, with a joint venture set up (NWDA / STFC / HBC) to deliver more science related activity on the site.</p> <p>There has been significant interest in this development by the private sector and three companies have reached the final selection point, leading to intense discussions to determine the preferred partner.</p> <p>Work has now commenced on the grow-on building, Vanguard House, to take up the slack required because the Innovation Centre is at capacity. An 18-month contract has been set in place to bring this forward.</p> <p>The new freight facility at 3MG has now been completed, but there is still little activity on site.</p> <p>Meetings have recently taken place and there is a positive slant to that, although nothing has yet been made public.</p> <p>All the indications are that Stobarts have had lots of interest in developing sites at 3MG and there is movement at HBC Fields.</p> <p>With regard to Widnes Waterfront: DJS previously mentioned the Bayer proposal and NWDA funding to support that is very welcome.</p> <p>HBC had expressed interest in acquiring the Gyproc site and had been told that a better offer had been received. This has now fallen through and HBC will consequently take the site acquisition forward with the further support of the NWDA.</p> <p>The Future Flower public artwork is to be completed within the next two months, together with the replacement of Carter House Bridge, due to commence in two weeks.</p> <p>The Widnes Retail Park development, by Stadium Developments, is due to open in two months time. Signs have now been installed and recruitment has commenced.</p> <p>Events are being planned, to ensure that the rest of the town is not overlooked.</p>	

- 4.5.4 MN is looking at signage to assist with this and to facilitate traffic flow.
- 4.5.5 The recently awarded Town Centre Grant has been used to develop further foot-fall in the town centre.
- 4.5.6 There has been a tentative securing of a new retail opportunity on the vacant Focus site. Outline planning permission has also been sought for a major supermarket development, to be located at the old B&Q site, Lugsdale Road.
- 4.5.7 URBED have now completed their work on the new Branding Strategy for Widnes, to ensure full utilisation of the town centre for the future.
- 4.6 The Receivers have been called in at Halton Lea. The main shopping facility is at present being run by Savills, but Fordgate have split up the sites and Savills do not have responsibility for all areas, including the car parks. Tiles are falling from the roof of the Green Car Park and Fordgate are not willing to rectify this, given the current situation, and 500 car parking spaces have been lost as a consequence. This will make life difficult for HBC employees, many of whom park there.
- 4.7.1 DJS also interjected to update about the Castlefields Local Centre, where demolition will commence mid February. Operators have been moved into temporary accommodation and the new replacement centre will take 18 months to complete.
- 4.7.2.1 In addition, LHT have submitted HCA funding bids for all but four of the deck access flats. DJS is disappointed with the attitude of HCA who have now declared that they are favouring Housing Pathfinder areas, of which Halton is not one. The 'Single Conversation' is to be sub-regional – Merseyside; Manchester; Preston - and the local Halton voice is therefore lost.
- 4.7.2.2  
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- 4.8.1 DH suggested that locals were shopping elsewhere because of an issue about the local air quality. However, DT refuted this: it might have been the case a few years ago, but recent research has proved that the lack of parking charges in Halton attracts shoppers to the area.
- 4.8.2.1  
1 MN referred DH to the Air Quality Action Plan, implementation of which will ensure that traffic queues are minimised and that the Milton Road junction will be improved.
- 4.8.2.2  
2 There is a need to look at travel plans through a travel partnership.

		4.8.2. 3	Parking fees are likely to become an issue if introduced by the private sector and this could be overcome if a shuttle bus service were to be supported by them.	
5.	<b>Urban Renewal Projects Update: Q3 Outturn Position</b> – Pat Audoire	5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4	PA referred to a brief report supporting a spreadsheet showing the outturn position for Q3 with regard to WNF expenditure and project performance. This summarised activities by the projects and their most recent achievements, together with a review of budgets. PA reported that project managers had previously spent to target and that, with the end of the financial year coming, they were confident of a positive outcome, as in previous years. DJS commented that Urban Renewal was the only partnership where this could be said to be the case.	
6.	<b>Presentation: Halton Employment Partnership</b> – Marie Hoyles	6.1	MH gave an interesting presentation on the HEP, which brings together expertise from various learning & skills and employment agencies. The Partnership offers a single point of contact to overcome the difficulties of employers as to who provides what training. The aim is to ensure that local unemployed are given specific training through the Partnership to ensure they are job-ready and that on the other hand training is sector specific. More recently, redundancy support has been added to the offer, for both employees and employers, to reflect the current economic situation.	
7.	<b>Environment Subgroup Progress Report</b> – Mick Noone	7.1 7.2 7.3 7.4 7.5 7.6.1	MN gave feedback from the Environment Subgroup meeting of last week. Halton Housing Trust have now made links with HBC's Waste Management section and will consider working on joint ventures. Groundwork Merseyside gave feedback on the Enworks Programme and is happy to give a presentation for the July meeting. There was criticism of the two Climate Change LPSA2 proposals, as it appeared there was a lack of co-ordination between HBC departments and that these could be combined. In this regard a strategic focus and champion would direct progress and ensure distance travelled could be measured. The group received a presentation on LTP3 and aspects of that in relation to climate change: the need to focus more on a low carbon economy and expanding the use of travel plans beyond the borough council.	

		7.6.2	The main responsibility of the group is the monitoring and reporting of National Indicators in relation to urban renewal and the environment. A new reporting system has recently been introduced and Urban Renewal was being used as a pilot, before the system is fully launched in the new reporting year. This system is more detailed in order to get around the usual problems around reporting, e.g., annually available data, where it is suggested progress can not therefore be reported upon.	
		7.6.3		
		7.7.1		
		7.7.2	MN requested the UR SSP Partners to engage with this and pursue progress under his responsibility. Under AOB, an important and over-arching issue to come out of the meeting was around the need for a Strategic Plan for climate change, which partners thought was not being badged properly in Halton.	
		7.7.3	By way of example, the Environment Agency has recently overhauled its reporting systems and officers now receive fulsome monthly reports showing progress against its climate change initiatives. Claire Bunter has offered to organise a presentation on how this was achieved, by one of her performance colleagues, at the April meeting of the Environment Subgroup.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Urban Renewal WNF Funding Allocations 2010-2011 – Pat Audoire</b>	8.1	PA presented another very brief report, by way of a reminder and update, detailing the funding allocation of WNF for 2010-2011 as agreed in January 2009.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b>	9.1.1	DH fed back from the LSP Chairs' Training event, the previous day and reminded partners that WNF would run out at the end of the next f.yr.	
		9.1.2	PA also noted that a summary of WNF projects progress would be required to be presented by each SSP Chair for the future. This is already in hand with regard to Urban Renewal and a report has now been provided to the LSP Partnership Team for the last quarter.	
		9.2.1	RH and DT asked the group to join together to express their warm appreciation to DJS for the much valued work he has accomplished in the field of Halton's Urban Renewal, in light of his impending retirement, at the end of March. The fruits of that labour can be seen all around the borough	
		9.2.2	Partners wished DJS a happy and healthy retirement.	

10.	<b>Next Meeting &amp; Future Diary Dates</b>	10.1  10.2	<p>The next meeting will take place at 3.00 pm, Tuesday, 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2010 in the Marketing Suite, Municipal Building, Widnes.</p> <p>Future meeting dates beyond that:</p> <p>3.00 pm, Tuesday, 7<sup>h</sup> September, 2010;  3.00 pm, Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2010,  - as per the UR SSP &amp; Env. Subgroup 2010 Year Planner</p> <p>The meeting closed at 5.10 pm.</p>	
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