

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 14 September 2011 at the Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

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

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Nolan, Thompson and Wainwright

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, J. Unsworth, J. Briggs and I Boyd

Also in attendance: Chris Adam Halton Transport, John Rimmer - Arriva Manchester and Councillor McDermott.

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

At the start of the meeting Councillor McDermott introduced himself as the Scrutiny Co-ordinator and gave a brief outline of his role. A seminar focussing upon scrutiny would be held 20th September 2011 and all members had been invited to attend.

EUR15 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15th June 2011 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

EUR16 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

EUR17 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.

In respect of Minute No EXB18 Halton Core Strategy

– Submission to the Secretary of State, Councillor Bradshaw advised that he had submitted a number of comments which had not been included due to timescales. It was agreed that this would be looked into and a response provided to Councillor Bradshaw. Arising from the discussion the Board was advised that a recent Enterprise Zone award for Daresbury Science and Innovation Campus would result in the requirement for a Local Development Order. There would be full consultation on the Local Development Order.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR18 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 1 OF 2011/12

The Board received a report of the Chief Executive which detailed the first 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 & Transportation (Highways & Transportation, Logistics & Transport Management, and Building Control and contaminated Land)
- Environment & Regulatory Services (Waste & Environmental Improvement & Open Spaces)
- Commissioning & Complex Care (Housing Strategy)

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

Question 1

How does the 5th column in the revenue budget help Councillors to understand whether the budget is likely to be over or under spent at the end of the financial year?

Response

Ed Dawson responded direct to Cllr Hodgkinson on this matter with a detailed explanation on the 9th September. This column, inserted into budget data for the purposes of operational management, would be removed from future reports as it was recognised that it may not be appropriate for the purposes of Members at PPB's and may cause unnecessary confusion.

Question 2

Why are there 25 key performance indicators that are unable to be reported at this time?

Response

12 of the indicators related to data on modes of transport for children travelling to school which was captured through an annual school survey. The details of the latest 2010 – 11 survey were not yet available from the Department of Education although it was anticipated that this would be available for the Quarter 2 reporting period.

Additionally those remaining indicators were subject to annual surveys / collection, e.g. condition of roads, previously developed land etc. For future reports information would only be included for those measures where data was available.

Question 3

Why is our KSI target for 2011 – 12 worse than the previous year?

Response

This measure was based upon a five year rolling average. In setting future targets account has to be taken of years where casualties were disproportionately low (for example, 2009 saw only 4 as compared to figures that generally fall within a low double figure range).

Additionally, the recent removal of the Road Safety Grant had led to a halving of road safety officer numbers and other government cuts have meant the abandonment of the Safe Routes to School programme which may have negative consequences in terms of this measure.

Question 4

The commentary for PPLI 25 (mode of travel to school) does not contain 2010 – 11 data – why is this still not available?

Response

Please refer to para 1 in question 2 above.

It should be noted that the DfE has very recently announced its decision to remove the question about how children travel to school from the annual school census. It follows that data for the current year (2011 – 12) was unlikely to be collected which was likely to have implications for school travel planning.

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

(NB: Councillor A McInerney declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business as her husband is an employee of Halton Transport).

EUR19 LOCAL BUS SERVICE NETWORK

The Board received a report from the Strategic Director Policy and Resources which provided details on the overall vision for public transport provision in Halton and the goals that had been set in order to achieve this. In addition the report highlighted recent bus service changes affecting the public transport network within the Borough and other relevant challenges and issues currently being encountered which included:

- since April 2011 changes to the network had seen service reductions in terms of frequency and route coverage and some services had been withdrawn;
- bus operators had reported that fuel had increase on average 13.5% during the past year and was one of the main contributors to commercial services being reduced or withdrawn;
- with effect from April 2012 Bus Service Operators Grant would be reduced by 20% and operators may reduce commercially operated mileage or increase fare levels;
- bus operators had reported an increase in insurance costs;
- there had been a 15% reduction in the approved revenue budget for Supported Bus Services for 2010/11;
- as a result in the reduction the Council had had to withdraw 12 local bus contracted services; and
- the annual grant issued by the Council to Halton Community Transport had reduced by £40,000 resulting in the introduction of fares on services.

Members were advised on a number of potential measures that could be considered or explored to address the reductions in bus services.

In addition to service changes, the future of the Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system needed to be considered. The current system was delivered in partnership with Merseytravel. However Merseytravel were now in the

process of procuring a new RTPI system which would render the current system obsolete. Therefore Merseytravel had decided to de-commission the current system by March 2012 at the latest. The three options available to the Council were detailed in the report with the cost of each and were briefly as follows:

- upgrade the current system to operate as a bespoke system to Halton;
- continue working in partnership with Merseytravel; and
- to discontinue the RTPI system on a permanent basis.

Chris Adam and John Rimmer attended the meeting on behalf of Halton Transport and Arriva Manchester respectively; and discussed with Members the difficulties facing bus companies at the present time and in the coming months.

RESOLVED: That

1. the Council's vision for public transport be noted;
2. the recent changes to the bus service network within the Borough and the potential effect further reductions could have on the public transport network and passengers as outlined in the report be noted; and
3. the measures that could be used to address the impacts of reductions in bus services be noted.

(NB: Councillor A McInerney declared a Personal Interest in the following item of business as her husband is an employee of Halton Transport)

EUR20 PETITION REGARDING NUMBER 17A BUS

The Board was advised that a petition had been received from residents of Claremont Avenue, Claremont Drive, Derby Road, Marsh Hall Road, Windermere Avenue and Windermere Street, Widnes, in connection with the withdrawal of the commercially operated No 17A bus service from the Derby Road and Lunts Heath Road sections of route in Widnes. The petition was signed by 88 residents and highlighted that the majority of people who use the bus service were elderly and that accessing alternative services at other bus stops would prove extremely difficult.

Members were advised that Halton Transport had recently made the commercial decision to withdraw the 17A service. Halton Transport had provided passenger figures for the service on this route and on average it amounted to five passenger journeys on a daily basis. In order for the previous service to be reinstated it would cost the Council £40,000.

It was reported that as an alternative to the 17A service Halton Community Transport operated a Dial-a-Ride service which was open to residents with disabilities or those who find difficulty in using conventional public transport.

On behalf of Halton Transport Chris Adam discussed with Members the issues around the withdrawal of the 17A service.

In addition it was noted that discussions were ongoing with Arriva St Helens with regard to the potential to divert the current 33A service along this route.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the issues raised by the petition and the request for the service to be reinstated be noted;
- (2) the Board note that if the reinstatement of the service were to be funded by the Council it would cost £40,000 per annum for which there is no currently identified budget and consequently agree that the Council is unable to fund the reinstatement of the service;
- (3) the Board note the potential alternatives available to bus users; and
- (4) the lead petitioner be informed of the outcome of the Board's consideration of the matter.

Meeting ended at 7.25 p.m.