

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 26 March 2014 at the Council Chamber, Runcorn Town Hall

Present: Councillors J. Gerrard (Chairman), J. Bradshaw, P. Hignett, MacManus, T. McInerney, Sinnott, Thompson and Zygadllo

Apologies for Absence: Councillors Morley, Fraser and B. Woolfall

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: M. Noone, G. Ferguson, N Renison, S. Rimmer, A. Cross, P. Preston, J. Unsworth and W. Watson

Also in attendance: Councillors E. Cargill, Cole and Howard. In accordance with Standing Order 33, Councillor R. Hignett

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

	<i>Action</i>
EUR42 MINUTES	
The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 st January 2014 having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.	
EUR43 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME	
It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.	
EUR44 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES	
The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board and Mersey Gateway Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.	
RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.	
EUR45 SSP MINUTES	
The Board received the draft Minutes relating to the	

Environment and Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership from 25th February 2014.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

EUR46 PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORTS FOR QUARTER 3 OF 2013/14

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which detailed the third quarter Performance Management Report 2013/14 on progress against service objectives/milestones and performance targets, and provided information relating to key developments and emerging issues that had arisen in relation to:-

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

RESOLVED: That the Board receive the third quarter Performance Management Report.

EUR47 CONSULTATION RESULTS REGARDING REQUEST FOR WAITING RESTRICTIONS TO PREVENT PARKING ON PART OF CRONTON LANE, WIDNES.

At a previous meeting of the Board (Minute No. 21/2013) an 18 name petition was considered from residents of Cronton Lane which raised concerns over abuse of the existing waiting restrictions in the area, obstruction of driveway entrances and sight lines, and vehicles being parked on the footway. It was requested that existing "At Any Time" waiting restrictions at the east end of Cronton Lane, be extended and that drivers be prevented from driving up onto the footway by the installation of a number of bollards on both sides of the road.

With regard to the request for waiting restrictions and bollards, the Board resolved that wider consultation be carried out to seek views on the proposal from the surrounding area and a report be brought back to the Board. The consultation boundary and the extent of suggested waiting restrictions was pre-agreed with Ward Councillors before contacting households. It was reported that 168 letters were distributed to all properties within the area shown on the plan in Appendix C, attached to the report. A

total of 64 responses were received with 38 (59%) in favour of the proposal, 25 (39%) against and one which did not state a preference. Of the 21 responses received from households on Cronton Lane between Hill View and Lunts Heath Road, being the section most affected by the current parking issues, 14 of the 21 responses were in favour of waiting restrictions (67%).

Following a review of the consultation results, Ward Councillors agreed that the legal process should commence to extend the existing "At Any Time" waiting restrictions on Cronton Lane from Lunts Heath Road junction at the east end as far west as Hill View. Any objections to the proposal would be reported back to the Board prior to being considered by the Executive Board.

In addition, Members were advised that compliance with any waiting restriction was dependent on enforcement action from the Police. If effectively policed, there should be no need for the introduction of bollards to prevent parking on the footway and Cheshire Police had been contacted to request attention to the area. If parking on continued to be an issue, consultation with individual households could be undertaken regarding introducing more bollards to footway areas.

RESOLVED: That the necessary steps be taken to introduce a Traffic Regulation Order to implement "At Any Time" waiting restrictions on both sides of Cronton Lane, Widnes, extending from its junction with Lunts Heath Road/Birchfield Road to Hill View.

Strategic Director
Policy and
Resources

EUR48 BIG CASTLEFIELDS SURVEY – ANALYSIS & NEXT STEPS

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Children and Enterprise, which outlined the results of the BIG Castlefields Survey resident consultation exercise.

After over ten years of activity and with the majority of the Castlefields Masterplan projects delivered, in 2013 the Castlefields Implementation Group (CIG) approved a survey of Castlefields residents. The purpose of the BIG Castlefields survey was to undertake a substantive community consultation exercise that provided residents with an opportunity to reflect on the regeneration programme and to express future aspirations for the neighbourhood. Additionally, the results of the survey would be incorporated into any future whole Programme review and be used to

inform the production of a new ten year action plan for Castlefields that would guide the work of the Castlefields Partnership until 2023.

Members were advised that the consultation was delivered through co-operation with partners and was undertaken in two parts:-

- 1) a questionnaire delivered to all households within the Castlefields Neighbourhood; with responses via free post envelopes; and
- 2) through three "Pinpoint" discussion groups comprising Halton Castle Ward Councillors, tenant representatives and residents.

The results of the household questionnaire were outlined in the report and in respect of overall satisfaction with the Regeneration Programme:

- 70% thought that Castlefields was now a better place to live;
- 49% felt it had a positive impact on their health and wellbeing;
- 84% were satisfied with their home;
- 70% felt safer in their homes;
- 62% felt warmer.

An analysis of the pinpoint group sessions was also outlined in the report. Undertaken after initial analysis of the household questionnaire, the following two questions were asked to guide group discussion:

- 1) What were the best things about the regeneration of Castlefields?
- 2) What still needed to be improved on Castlefields, what should the priorities be for the next ten years?

With regard to the first question the following three overarching themes were identified:

- transformation of the physical environment, one of the biggest positive impacts;
- removal of the high rise concrete buildings had not only created a more open layout but a stronger sense of ownership through creating homes and greater community pride;
- flagship projects such as Village Square and Phoenix Park had given residents something to be proud of.

In terms of the second question, the following was identified:

- confusion over responsibility for maintenance of the public realm was impacting on the general upkeep;
- fly tipping remained an issue;
- parking was an issue and subways were felt to be redundant; and
- more should be done for children and young people in the neighbourhood.

It was reported that Officers were working with the CIG towards a managed exit from the Council Capital Projects within the Regeneration Programme in 2016/17. The key to a managed exit, and agreed by CIG, was firstly the introduction of a Council Position Statement and secondly a new ten year Action Plan for Castlefields, including endorsement by partners.

Arising from the discussion, it was agreed that a meeting would be organised between the Registered Social Landlords and Council Officers to discuss a co-ordinated approach to maintenance in New Town areas. A further progress report would be submitted to the Board in due course.

On behalf of the Board, the Chairman congratulated the residents, Halton Castle Ward Councillors and Nathan Renison for their contribution towards the progress made at Castlefields during the past ten years.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the content and results of the BIG Castlefields Survey, comprising the household questionnaire report and resident Pinpoint group sessions analysis, be noted;
- (2) the on-going work of the Castlefields Implementation Group, working towards Castlefields Capital Programme close in 2016/17 be acknowledged; and
- (3) broader lessons from the BIG Castlefields Survey for future housing and neighbourhood regeneration programmes are considered.

Strategic Director
Children and
Enterprise

EUR49 HALTON HOMELESSNESS STRATEGY 2013 - 2018

The Board considered a report of the Strategic

Director, Communities, which presented Halton's Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018. The Board was advised that in accordance with the Homelessness Act 2002, the local authority had conducted a full Strategic Review of Homelessness within the area and formulated a Homelessness Strategy for the next five-year period.

The Homelessness Strategy 2013-2018 was based upon the findings and recommendations of two other documents, one being a comprehensive review of the current homelessness services which was conducted over a five month period during 2012/2013. The other being the previous Homelessness Strategy 2009-2013, which involved active engagement with service users, service providers and Members. It was reported that the Strategic Review of Homelessness had involved active engagement with service users, service providers, all partner agencies and Elected Members. The draft findings had also been discussed and agreed with all key stakeholders prior to the report being finalised.

The Board noted that Halton was experiencing a gradual increase in homelessness presentations and statutory homelessness acceptances. The Board also noted that there were a number of client groups that did not meet the statutory homelessness criteria but had a pressing housing need. However, it was reported that concerted efforts were being made by the Housing Solutions Team to assist these client groups, offering temporary accommodation for a limited period and facilitating a more efficient and accessible move on process.

Furthermore, it was reported that the Localism Act 2011 had introduced many changes to homelessness and allocations legislation. The Act had brought into force provisions that allowed local authorities to end the main housing duty to a homeless applicant by means of a private rented sector offer, i.e. a fixed term assured short held tenancy for a minimum of 12 months. The Authority should consider the new allocated powers, which would impact upon future homelessness and service delivery.

The Act had also determined that the Council would be able to reduce the length of stay for households in temporary accommodation and the associated costs. Additionally, it would help the Council to avoid future use of B & B accommodation.

Members also noted that the Action Plan had identified a task to develop a Private Rented Sector Offer

(PRSO) policy to ensure the Authority was fully compliant with its statutory housing duty. It was recommended that future consideration be given to develop a PRSO and implement the option to adopt the power to end the homelessness duty within the private rented sector.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR50 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE

The Board considered a presentation from Alasdair Cross, which provided an update on affordable housing development across the Borough and current Council policy concerning the delivery of affordable housing. It was noted that there were two main methods of providing affordable housing; firstly through Registered Providers developing 100% affordable housing schemes funded through their own resources or more usually utilising Homes and Communities Agency Grants; or secondly through the planning system using Section 106 Agreements.

It was noted that the National Planning Policy Framework required Councils to plan to meet the full objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing in their areas. Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA) were used to assess the housing needs arising in an area and inform the development of housing and planning policy for affordable housing which considered the balance between supply and demand for affordable housing.

The Halton SHMA (2011) had been undertaken in conjunction with neighbouring authorities in the Mid Mersey Housing Market Area. The SHMA identified that in 2010 2,053 households were falling into housing need per annum. The study forecast an annual supply of 1,162 units to meet these needs, leaving a predicted unmet need across the Borough for an additional 891 affordable dwellings per annum for the following five years 2010-2015. A sub regional SHMA (including Halton) was proposed to be undertaken in 2015-16 to reassess the level of affordable housing need in Halton.

The Board was advised that the annual unmet need for affordable housing was far in excess of the proposed total housing delivery targets as set out in the Halton Core Strategy Plan 2013, which stated 552 dwellings per annum. It was, however, acknowledged that the SHMA was an evidence-based document that was used to inform policy, the affordable housing needs identified were not a defined

target that must be met. Additionally it was noted that there were no policy consequence of not meeting the 891 affordable dwellings per annum.

The presentation detailed the cost, in Widnes and Runcorn, of renting both in the private and social landlord sectors and of buying properties. It also contained information on household incomes in Halton in 2010. Members were also provided with information on the number of affordable houses provided in Halton from 2010-2013. Since 2010, in total, there had been 1,011 affordable housing dwellings completed or in the pipeline which went some way to meeting Halton's affordable housing need. However, this figure was greatly under the 891 dwellings per annum unmet affordable need identified in SHMA.

Following the adoption of the Core Strategy Local Plan and the introduction of affordable housing policy, applications for housing in qualifying sites were subject to the policy requirement. However, to date 5 applications had been assessed, but unfortunately the viability of each development would have been compromised by the inclusion of an affordable requirement and, as such, no units had yet been secured.

It was acknowledged that the investment in affordable housing through the Affordable Homes Programme had also been reduced. The investment for the period 2011-2015 was expected to be £4.5bn over 4 years, whilst the investment for the period 2015 to 2018 was expected to be only £2.9bn.

It was also recognised that the private rented sector through housing benefit, did make a significant contribution to filling the gap between need and supply of affordable housing. The Halton SMHA stated that in relation to meeting housing need and given the levels of affordable housing need shown in the study, the private rented sector was likely to continue to be used to some degree to make up for the shortfall of genuine affordable housing for the foreseeable future. It was also noted that the private rented sector was not a form of affordable housing and that it did not provide secure tenancies.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR51 CONTAMINATED LAND CAPITAL PROJECTS
PROGRAMME - FUNDING WITHDRAWAL

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director, Policy and Resources, which advised Members of

the decision by DEFRA to withdraw funding available to Local Authorities through the Contaminated Land Capital Projects Programme and the potential implications for Halton.

It was noted that in a letter from the Under Secretary, Lord de Mauley, it was stated that DEFRA believed that the vast majority of contaminated land would continue to be remediated through redevelopment. Whilst this was correct in some ways, and the regime had been a driver for land contamination to be fully considered and addressed through development, it failed to take account of:-

- Part 2A was designed to tackle those problems where there were no other solutions, so inherently those areas of land for which there were no plans for redevelopment or regeneration; and
- assuming that redevelopment was the main or only route, there was the issue of introducing a bias towards the southeast in terms of ability for land contamination to be re-assessed and remediated. High land values in the south east allowed for greater expenditure on contaminated land to be absorbed in the overall cost of development.

Members were advised that Halton had relied upon, and been very successful in applying for and being awarded contaminated land funding. Since 2002 Halton had received approximately £3.4m across six projects. It was noted that there was no consultation by DEFRA on its decision to withdraw funding, therefore officers had written to Government asking it to consider reinstating the grant scheme, particularly when considering that the original proposed fund for 2013/14 of £2m was a small sum for all the English Local Authorities and the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

Meeting ended at 8.00 p.m.