

**REPORT TO:** Urban Renewal Policy & Performance Board

**DATE:** 18 June 2008

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Environment

**SUBJECT:** Astmoor Business Improvement District (BID) Petition

**WARDS:** Castlefields

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1.1 Report for the purpose of informing the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board that a petition has been received from a number of businesses concerning the Astmoor Industrial Estate Business Improvement District (BID).

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That**

**(1) the Board confirms its support for the implementation of the BID on the Astmoor Industrial Estate; and**

**(2) the petitioners be notified that the Board does not endorse the petition.**

## **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **Establishment of the Astmoor Business Improvement District (BID)**

3.1 The proposal to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) has been the subject of extensive consultation with all businesses on Astmoor Industrial Estate. The consultation process included invitations to quarterly meetings of the Astmoor Business Steering Group, distribution of a Business Improvement District Survey to gauge whether business on Astmoor wanted to consider a BID as a way forward and an invitation to attend a BID workshop in July 2007.

3.2 Companies were also invited to the presentation of the draft BID Business Plan that took place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007, which was used to develop the BID Business Plan. As part of the process, companies were sent a copy of the draft Business Plan for the BID and a formal invitation to the BID Launch on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

3.3 In addition, every company that was in residence on the estate at the time of the BID ballot were given the opportunity to have a one to one

meeting with a member of the team that was co-ordinating the ballot. Most companies on the estate took this offer up and used this as an opportunity to ask questions relating to the BID and the proposed services.

- 3.4 In order to establish the Astmoor BID, a statutory process was undertaken, which culminated in the BID ballot. All businesses in residence on the estate at the time of the ballot, or property owners where premises were vacant, were sent a ballot paper for each rateable property in their occupation / ownership on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2007. An independent scrutineer, the Electoral Reform Services, conducted the ballot in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 2443 The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. The ballot closed on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2007, with the result announced on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007.
- 3.5 The BID proposal could only proceed with a majority of those voting in favour of the proposal, both in terms of the numbers voting and the rateable value represented by those voting.
- 3.6 The Astmoor BID ballot results were as follows:-
- Turnout was 65% (101 votes)
  - Number of companies voting 'YES' was 72%
  - Percentage of Rateable Value voting 'YES' was 77%

### **Commencement of the Astmoor BID**

- 3.7 The Astmoor BID formally commenced on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 for a 5-year period. All businesses in occupation of premises within the Astmoor BID area on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008, or property owners where premises are vacant, are liable for the Astmoor BID Levy. All parties liable for the Astmoor BID Levy were sent a bill dated 28<sup>th</sup> March 2008, which was due for payment on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

### **The Petition**

- 3.8 A petition was received on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008 marked for the attention of the Business Parks Officer, which was signed by thirteen businesses located on Astmoor Industrial Estate. With the exception of three companies, all the businesses are located on Arkwright Court, the area of the estate containing some of the smallest units on the estate.
- 3.9 The petition stated:

*"We the undersigned tenants of Arkwright Court, Astmoor, Runcorn do not approve of the levy we are being charged for the Business Improvement District (BID)*

*We are all small business working on a very tight financial budget and we are unable to pay this levy that Halton Borough Council is imposing on us.*

*Eventually there will be no businesses left on Astmoor for Halton Borough Council to collect any monies from.*

*We all think it is unjust and unfair.”*

### **Response to the petition**

3.10 The Business Parks Officer wrote to all companies that signed the petition. See Appendix 1. The letter stated that the Astmoor BID is designed to benefit **all** businesses on Astmoor, regardless of the size of the business and the nature of the operations. All the new services and infrastructure that will be delivered through the Astmoor BID's three themes for improvement (safe & secure, image enhancements and co-ordinated estate) will be available to every business on the estate.

3.11 The Council is in the process of spending the £115,000 council contribution to the Astmoor BID. The cash is being used to purchase much of the capital equipment required by the BID, including the following:

- Auto Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) CCTV system covering all vehicle entrances and exits to the industrial estate (power connections installed with columns and street cabinet installation commencing on week starting 5<sup>th</sup> May)
- SmartWater DNA forensic property marking business kits for all firms on the estate (kits are currently being circulated to resident businesses)
- Crime prevention signage (SmartWater signs installed, further crime prevention signs to be installed to promote CCTV, mobile patrols, alarm response etc)
- Feature gateway signage at the entrances to Astmoor (installation completed).
- Automatic alarm diallers (installation where required is on a rolling basis)

3.19 Coupled with the above infrastructure, there will be a range of new security services introduced, including:-

- Two mobile security patrols to every business premise per day, 365 days per year
- Alarm / incident response service (365 days per year)
- Key holding services (365 days per year)

3.20 The mobile security patrols commenced during the week starting 5<sup>th</sup> May. The alarm / incident response and key holding service will be progressively established over the coming weeks.

3.21 The Council has no option, therefore, but to seek payment from all parties liable for the BID Levy as a contribution towards the cost of delivering the Astmoor BID Business Plan.

3.22 Appendix 2 illustrates the Smartwater, mobile patrols and new signage developments. Appendix 3 illustrates recent press coverage concerning the implementation of the Smartwater technology that is designed to deter crime.

## **4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The issues and priorities addressed through the implementation of the Astmoor BID Business Plan are directly aligned to the Community Strategy:

### **A Safer Halton**

- Reduce overall crime (in line with Halton's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership targets).
- The Astmoor BID Business Plan provides a package of crime prevention initiatives that are designed to deter crime from the estates, including plans to either enhance existing CCTV security systems, or install new systems which will assist in designing out crime on the estates, which will be backed up by a response to incidents.

### **Halton's Urban Renewal**

- Attract additional businesses to Astmoor
- Increase the number of jobs in Halton
- The Astmoor BID will attract a significant private sector contribution (more than £745,000 over 5 years) to contribute towards the economic regeneration of the estate and the borough.

### **Employment, learning and skills in Halton**

There are no implications arising from this report.

### **Children and Young People in Halton**

There are no implications arising from this report.

### **A Healthy Halton**

There are no implications arising from this report

## **5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no other implications arising from this report.

## **6.0 RISK ANALYSIS**

6.1 The Astmoor BID is designed to benefit all businesses and owners of premises on the estate. Acceding to the petition, will jeopardise the future of the BID and the benefits it will bring to the estate.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

7.1 There are no equality or diversity issues arising from this report.

## **Appendix 1 – Letter sent in response to the Petition**

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **ASTMOOR INDUSTRIAL ESTATE BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT**

I am writing to confirm receipt of the correspondence sent marked for my attention and concerning the Astmoor Business Improvement District (BID), which was dated 17<sup>th</sup> April 2008, although received on 24<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

I was disappointed to receive the petition and I am sorry that you feel this way about the Astmoor BID. I should, however, make it clear that in common with all petitions received by the Council, your petition will be submitted for information to one of the Council's Policy and Performance Boards (PPB). A PPB is a board made up of elected councillors. In this case, your petition will be submitted for information to the next Urban Renewal PPB, which is taking place on 18<sup>th</sup> June. I will be writing to you again after the meeting with an indication of the outcome.

In the meantime, I hope that you will find the following information helpful and this will form the basis of my report to the Urban Renewal PPB.

The Astmoor BID is designed to benefit **all** businesses on Astmoor, regardless of the size of the business and the nature of the operations. All the new services and infrastructure that will be delivered through the Astmoor BID's three themes for improvement (safe & secure, image enhancements and co-ordinated estate) will be available to every business on the estate.

The proposal to establish a Business Improvement District (BID) has been the subject of extensive consultation with all businesses on Astmoor Industrial Estate. The consultation has taken the form of invites to quarterly meetings of the Astmoor Business Steering Group, distribution of a Business Improvement District Survey to gauge whether business on Astmoor wanted to consider a BID as a way forward and an invitation to attend a BID workshop in July 2007.

Companies were also invited to the presentation of the draft BID Business Plan that took place on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007, which was used to develop the BID Business Plan.

During the process companies were sent a copy of the draft Business Plan for the BID and will have been sent a formal invitation to the BID Launch on 24<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

In addition, every company that was in residence on the estate at the time of the formal BID ballot was given the opportunity to have a one to one meeting to discuss the BID proposal either with myself or Barry Noon (Groundwork Trust). Most companies on the estate took this offer up and used this as an opportunity to ask questions relating to the BID and the proposed services.

As you are probably aware, in order to establish the Astmoor BID a formal statutory process had to be undertaken, which culminated in the BID ballot. All businesses in residence on the estate at the time of the formal BID ballot, or property owners where vacant, were sent a ballot paper for each rateable property in their occupation / ownership on 1<sup>st</sup> November. An independent scrutineer, the Electoral Reform Services, conducted the ballot in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2004 No. 2443 The Business Improvement Districts (England) Regulations 2004. The ballot closed on 6th December 2007, with the result being announced on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2007.

The BID proposal could only proceed with a majority of those voting in favour of the proposal, both in terms of the numbers voting and also the rateable value represented by those voting. The reason for these two safeguards in the voting process is to protect the interests of smaller businesses (so larger businesses cannot force a BID proposal on the smaller companies by a majority of rateable value voting 'yes') and to protect the interest of the larger companies (so a number of small businesses cannot force a BID proposal on the larger companies by a majority of businesses voting 'yes').

The Astmoor BID ballot results are broken down below:

- **Turnout was 65% (101 votes)**
- **Number of companies voting 'YES' was 72%**
- **Percentage of Rateable Value voting 'YES' was 77%**

As businesses voted in favour of the Astmoor BID proposal, the Council is in the process of spending the £115,000 committed to Astmoor Industrial Estate. This money is being used to purchase much of the capital equipment required by the BID, including the following:

- Auto Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) CCTV system covering all vehicle entrances and exits to the industrial estate (power connections installed with columns and street cabinet installation due to commence week starting 5<sup>th</sup> May)
- SmartWater DNA forensic property marking business kits for all firms on the estate (kits are currently being circulated to resident businesses)
- Crime prevention signage (SmartWater signs installed, further crime prevention signs to be installed to promote CCTV, mobile patrols, alarm response etc)
- Feature gateway signage at the entrances to Astmoor (installation due to commence week starting 5<sup>th</sup> May)
- Automatic alarm diallers (installation where required is on a rolling basis)

Coupled with the above infrastructure, there will be many new services that will be available to all business on Astmoor. Druants Support Services (located on Davy Road, Astmoor Industrial Estate) have been selected as the

provider of the security services for the Astmoor BID. The security services that will be available to all businesses include:

- Two mobile security patrols to every business premise per day, 365 days per year
- Alarm / incident response service (365 days per year)
- Key holding services (365 days per year)

It is anticipated that the mobile security patrols will commence during the week starting 5<sup>th</sup> May. The alarm / incident response and key holding service requires Druants to visit every company to enrol for the services, which is to complete paperwork and obtain work instruction, keys etc. Druants will visit companies over the coming weeks to enrol firms for these services.

However, in order for services to be procured for the benefit of businesses, there needs to be money in the Astmoor BID account. Without sufficient money in the BID account, services cannot be purchased, which is why the BID levy is requested in one payment as detailed in the BID proposal sent to all businesses before and during the ballot process.

Whilst you did not approve of the BID and oppose its outcome, the overwhelming view of the majority of the business community for your estate was that they supported the introduction of a BID to improve Astmoor. On this basis, the Council has no option but to seek payment from your company for your payment towards the Astmoor BID.

My aim and hope is that in time those companies that don't currently support the BID will see the benefits of the investment in infrastructure and services and become firm supporters of the BID.

Yours sincerely

Gareth Bennett  
**Business Parks Officer**



## Appendix 2 – Images of work to date

### DNA Forensic Property Marking for every company - SmartWater



**Mobile security patrols**

**Gateway signage**



### Appendix 3 – Recent press releases

Liquid can be linked to particular crime

# Burglars facing 'smart' deterrent

REVOLUTIONARY forensic technology has been handed out to some Halton businesses in an effort to deter crime.

State-of-the-art SmartWater kits have been distributed free to firms in Astmoor and Halebank industrial estates as part of a joint venture between Halton Borough Council and Cheshire police.

The liquid is designed to be left on surfaces to mark high-value property and can also be sprayed on to intruders.

It is virtually impossible to remove and shows up under UV light - allowing police to not only determine if an item has been stolen, but also track down where it was stolen from.

A council spokesman said: "Experts have said no two SmartWater systems have the same forensic code, meaning

every business on the estates will have property marked up and traceable back to their individual company.

"Criminals in possession of property marked with SmartWater or sprayed by the spray system can be linked to the scene of the crime through the DNA code."

Gareth Bennett, Halton's business parks officer, added that providing the kits would allow firms to better protect themselves and give would-be crooks pause for thought.

He said: "Providing every business on Astmoor and Halebank with SmartWater will act as a real deterrent, making the estates a much tougher target for committing crime.

"They are just one of many new security services and infrastructure that are coming on stream as a result of the creation of the Business Improvement Districts."



**SMART DETERRENT:** Criminals who target businesses at Astmoor or Halebank industrial parks will get more than they bargained for thanks to new SmartWater technology.

Geoff Caddick/PA Wire.

## NEWS



**ANTI-THEFT:** Sgt Fiona Murphy, of Widnes NPU, Derek Hughes of Halton Traveller Ltd, and PCSO Stephen Marnick with the new SmartWater system in use at Halebank Industrial Estate.



**FIGHTING CRIME:** Jill Naylor, of Kenay Ltd, a company based at Astmoor Industrial Estate in Runcorn, tries out the SmartWater system.

# Warm welcome for anti-theft system

FIRMS in Halton have hailed revolutionary anti-crime technology as “the greatest invention since fingerprinting”.

The *Weekly News* revealed recently how “SmartWater” systems were being brought in at Astmoor and Halebank industrial estates in an effort to collar crooks.

And staff at Halton Traveller Ltd in Widnes and Kenay Ltd

in Runcorn were the first to get their hands on the new equipment at the launch of the scheme last week.

The system incorporates an invisible liquid which shows up under UV light.

It is almost impossible to remove and experts reckon no two SmartWater systems have the same forensic code, meaning every business on the es-

tates will have property that is traceable back to them.

Derek Hughes, of Halton Traveller, said: “This is the greatest invention since fingerprinting.”

Sgt Fiona Murphy, of Widnes Neighbourhood Policing Unit, added: “This is an excellent crime prevention initiative and one of many being rolled out to firms in Halton”

## SmartWater ‘a real deterrent’

GARETH Bennett, Halton Council’s business parks officer, said providing the SmartWater systems to businesses on both estates was just one of the measures being taken to deter criminals.

He said: “Providing every business on Astmoor and Halebank with SmartWater will act as a real deterrent, making the estates a much tougher target to commit crime.

“They are just one of

many new security services and infrastructure that are coming on stream as a result of the creation of the Business Improvement Districts”.

■ For further information from Mr Bennett phone 01928 516123.



Sergeant Fiona Murphy and PCSO Stephen Marnick hand over a SmartWater kit to Derek Hughes, of Halton Traveller Ltd, in Halebank, with Halton Council's business parks officer Gareth Bennett PHOTO BY IAN PARK (IPQ30408)

# Be smart and stay secure

By STEVE KELLY

A NEW scheme to wipe out thefts from businesses has been launched.

SmartWater, which marks property using forensic DNA equipment, is being offered to companies in Astmoor and Halebank to protect expensive property from thieves.

Gareth Bennett, Halton Council's business parks officer, said: "Providing every business on Astmoor and Halebank with SmartWater will act as a real deterrent, making the estates a much tougher target to commit crime.

"They are just one of many new security services and infrastructure that are coming on stream."

The free service, which is a joint initiative between Halton Council and Cheshire Police, leaves SmartWater liquid on surfaces to mark high value property or can be sprayed on to intruders.

It is virtually impossible to remove and shows up under ultraviolet light.

For more information contact Mr Bennett on 01928 516123.

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