

REPORT TO: Environment and Urban Renewal
Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 22 June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Policy, Planning &
Transportation

SUBJECT: Draft Annual Report 2021-22

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Board with an annual summary of its work for the period 2021-22.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

That the Draft Annual Report contained in Appendix 1 is endorsed.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The primary function of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board (EUR PPB) is to focus on the work of the Council (and its partners) in securing environmental improvements and urban regeneration.
- 3.2 During the 2021/22 Municipal Year, the Board met on four occasions and considered a number of reports, covering a diverse range of subjects pertinent to the Board's remit.
- 3.3 The PPB also received regular updates on service performance targets.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Board has reviewed and recommended a substantial amount of policy changes across a range of topics in 2021/22. These policy areas are set out in Appendix 1.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the Annual Report...

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

The work of the PPB supports future generations in Halton by ensuring a clean and safe environment.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

This PPB supports the infrastructure in Halton that helps with job creation and sustainable transport links to employment.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The work of the PPB contributes towards a less polluted environment and helps to create a green infrastructure.

6.4 A Safer Halton

The PPB supports designing out crime and developing safer communities.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

This PPB scrutinised the work undertaken in bringing forward regeneration projects.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

N/A

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

N/A

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
N/A		

FOREWORD

“The role and remit of the PPB is wide ranging and covers topics that affect everyone across the Borough every day, for example road safety, waste management, housing, and green spaces, to name just a few. The Board has covered a variety of specialist themes and topics during the last 12 months. I hope that the short summary outlined in this annual report adequately reflects this.

I am grateful, as always, to PPB Members for their enthusiasm and valuable contributions at our meetings. The quality of the discussions is always impressive, giving the PPB a vital role in informing and improving the Council’s policies and procedures, and ensuring value for money in the delivery of the services provided to Halton’s residents and businesses.

This last year has seen the recovery from the Covid pandemic take place. Halton has been on the front foot with the opening of Runcorn Station Quarter to welcome visitors, connect business, and enhance sustainable travel choices. There has been plenty of progress toward tackling climate change for example the rollout of on-street electrical vehicle charge points, 70km of new active travel routes, solar initiatives to power Council buildings, electric fleet vehicles, and over 15,000 street lamps replaced with energy efficient LEDs. The new Delivery and Allocations Local Plan was adopted in March 2022, setting out a new 15-year vision for protecting Halton’s environment and accommodating the growth that our communities need. I am proud the Board continues to shape and champion project such as these.

Sadly, this year the Board lost the sharp eye and quick mind of Councillor Harry Howard, who passed on and will be missed by all of us.”

Councillor Bill Woolfall
Chair, Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

ANNUAL REPORT 2021 - 2022

MEMBERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Board comprised eleven Councillors:-

Councillor Bill Woolfall (Chairman)

Councillor Mike Fry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor Angela Ball

Councillor Dave Cargill

Councillor Andrew Dyer

Councillor Robert Gilligan

Councillor Stan Hill

Councillor Harry Howard

Councillor Geoffrey Logan

Councillor Tony McDermott

Councillor Tom Stretch

Councillor Sharon Thornton

The primary function of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board (EUR PPB) is to focus on enhancing the local environment and championing the urban renewal / regeneration of Halton. The Board reviews Executive Board decisions relevant to its remit, and monitors the general activities and performance of Council departments against service plans.

The Board scrutinises performance and formulates policy in relation to the following areas:

- Highways, Transportation and Logistics (including road maintenance, street, lighting, road safety, traffic management, supported bus services and flood risk management)
- Landscape Services, Parks & Countryside, Cemeteries & Crematoria
- Environmental and Regulatory Services
- Major Projects
- Economic Regeneration and Business Development
- Waste Management and Waste Strategy
- Derelict and Contaminated Land
- Housing Strategic Policy
- Sustainability, Climate Change and Biodiversity
- Physical Environment and Planning policies

REVIEW OF THE YEAR

The Board met 4 times during the Municipal Year 2021/22:

- 23 June 2021
- 22 September 2021
- 17 November 2021
- 16 February 2022

Some of the main activities and issues that have come before the Board during the year are set out below.

ENVIRONMENT

- Mersey Tidal Project

The Board received a presentation from Martin Land, Liverpool City Region (LCR), on the Mersey Tidal Project. The project complemented the aspirations of the Council's environmental plans and is expected to provide the LCR with a clean source of energy generation. The presentation outlined the project parameters which included details on how much power (electricity) could be generated and the benefits of the project to the Merseyside region. The Board was advised on how the project would engage and listen with stakeholders and also the next steps to secure Government funding for the project.

- Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) – Vehicle Access Policy

The Board endorsed the proposed changes to the current HWRC Vehicle Access Policy and associated Vehicle Permit Scheme. It was noted that since 13 July 2020, the Vehicle Permit Scheme had been suspended and a HWRC booking system had been developed and put in place to control visits to the sites for a certain vehicle type. An outline of the booking system, which could be made over the phone or by completing an online form via the Council's website, was presented to Members. Under the current policy, residents could make unlimited visits in a large van or with a trailer to deposit general waste and recyclable materials. However, since May 2020, visits had been restricted to a maximum of one per week. It was considered that this was sufficient to meet a householders requirements, and along with the HWRC booking system, should be formally adopted as part of a replacement for the Vehicle Permit Scheme.

- Pavement Café Licences

The purpose of the Policy was to support the legislative changes brought about by the Business and Planning Act 2020. The Policy would be temporary until 30 September 2022 or such other date defined in legislation. Members were advised that the Policy document introduced a streamlined route for businesses such as cafes, restaurants and bars to secure a licence to place furniture on the highway until 30 September 2022. This would support them to operate safely whilst social distancing measures remained in place and would improve the viability of hospitality businesses and protect as many hospitality jobs as possible.

URBAN RENEWAL

- Runcorn Town Deal

The Board received an update on the proposed projects contained within the Runcorn Town Investment Plan and the next steps in delivering the Plan. The presentation included the timeline for the next stages required to develop business cases for each of the following individual projects as well as emerging work on programme management and communications:

- Runcorn Station Quarter;
- Residential development;
- High street connectivity;
- Digital and creative;
- Brindley development;
- Unlock the locks; and
- Health and education hub

- Industrial Odours and Amenity Impacts

The Board invited a number of industrial operators and their regulatory body to an informal meeting of the Board to discuss how off-site impacts from processes could be reduced, together with any planned investments operators were making in their sites. The Board underlined their concerns to the operators about potential environment impacts.

TRANSPORT

A key statutory duty of the Council is ensuring that the local transport network is well maintained, safe, and efficient for all users and is adapting to respond to the climate emergency.

- Alternative fuelled Vehicles and Infrastructure

The Board was advised that in Autumn 2019, The Office of Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) invited applications for the Residential On-Street Charging Point Fund. The focus of this particular fund was to reduce the barriers to electric vehicle ownership due to the lack of personal parking spaces. A number of areas where car ownership was high and access to driveways was low were identified. The Council then submitted a successful application and received £74,250.00 from the OZEV. The funding supported 29 on-street residential Electric Charging Points (ECP). The Board also reviewed a proposal to expand the existing residential on-street electric vehicle charging network by adding up to 120 additional charging points across Halton. Details of the proposed location of these was outlined in the report. The next stage of the proposal was to consult with the communities identified and if community support for the proposal was obtained, an application would be prepared and submitted to OZEV as opportunities arose.

Later in the year, following an extensive consultation with a number of communities, the Board was informed of plans to make a further bid to The Office of Zero Emissions (OZEV) for a further six electric charging points in each of the following locations:

- Mersey Road, Runcorn;
- Brindley Street Car Park, Runcorn;
- Catalyst Museum Car Park, Widnes;
- Sharp Street, Widnes;
- Crow Wood Place Car Park, Widnes;
- Bechers Hough Green, Widnes; and
- Wharford Lane, Sandymoor.

The Board was advised that following feedback from phase one (delivered during 2020) that it was proposed that a limited number of the bays (1-2) would be marked for EV use only and this would be followed up with a supporting Traffic Order to allow enforcement. Additionally, an EV Taxi awareness day was held at the Halton Stadium in September 2021. A dozen vehicles were on display and approximately 70 drivers attended the event. It was noted that feedback showed that most found the event very useful and informative. It was proposed that subject to funding being identified, an incentive scheme would be developed to encourage taxi drivers to convert to electric vehicles. The scheme would be presented to a future Board meeting.

- Bus Service Improvement Plan

An overview was provided on the recent publication of the Bus Back Better Bus Strategy for England (the Strategy), the associated funding from the Department for Transport (DfT), and the requirement for Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). It was noted that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority was the Local Transport Authority for Halton. A BSIP covering the City Region area would be submitted to the DfT by the Combined Authority in October 2021. The report set out Halton's 'ask' of Government in relation to bus service improvement in Halton that would feature in the CA BSIP.

- Annual Road Traffic Collision and Accident Report

The Board considered a report that set out full details of the numbers of road traffic collision and casualty numbers in the year 2020, and recommended a continuance of road safety programme for 2022. The Board welcomed the reduction in casualty numbers in recent years, with Halton recognised as one of the best performing, both regionally and nationally.

- Problem Pavement Parking

Prompted by the DfT consultation on nuisance parking, the Board considered it timely to look again at pavement parking in the Halton. A Working Party was established to review the current position and issues associated with pavement parking in Halton. The Working Party met virtually on 3rd February and

considered the legislative framework for parking enforcement and tackling highway obstruction. The WP also debated the merits and likely consequences of the DfT consultation, before moving on to discuss the areas of the Borough where pavement parking problems have been reported. The Board also considered an update on the progress of the Problem Pavement Parking Working Party. The Working Party had agreed an action plan, of which one specific action was to draft a letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner requesting their continued support in taking targeted enforcement action where pavement parking presented an ongoing problem.

- Petition for Change Speed Limit at Moore

A petition had been received by electronic delivery requesting alteration of the speed limit on a section of Runcorn Road, Moore from 40 mph to 30 mph. It was noted that this section of Runcorn Road was relatively flat and had open fields to the southern side; the northern side comprised low-density housing, set well back; pedestrian movements across the carriageway were minimal; the road was generally in good repair, well lit and subject to an environmental 7.5 tonne weight restriction; there was low-level of on street parking within the 40mph zone, especially at the eastern end. However no evidence or complaints of vehicles mounting the kerb and obstructing the footway; the Cheshire Road Safety Group, Cheshire Police and external consultants undertook a speed limit review in Halton in 2009. No changes were recommended for Runcorn Road; since 2009, automatic traffic counters had been installed on two occasions. Average speeds had reduced in this time, which was probably due to the increase in traffic using the route; and there had been one recorded injury collision within the relevant section of road since 2009. At the request of the Council, Cheshire Police had undertaken a site assessment and provided an opinion that, whilst they understood the desire of residents for a lower speed limit, they were concerned that the removal of the change in speed limit would not reflect the character of the road. It was the opinion of the Constabulary that the 40mph section felt open in nature and as such, 40mph was an appropriate speed limit. Therefore based on the advice from Cheshire Police, traffic specialists and the Council's road safety engineer, it was felt that retaining the existing 40mph speed limit was appropriate for this section of road.

- Petition to Amalgamate Bus Stops in Hale Bank

The two bus stops provide a stopping place in both directions for the service 82a which operates on a 30 minute frequency between Runcorn and Liverpool via Widnes. The petition suggested that by removing the bus stops on Hale Road and the 82a calling at the alternative bus stop at Pickerings Road terminus will be more beneficial for passengers and also improve traffic flow in the area. However, the withdrawal of the bus stops would increase left and right turn manoeuvres for the bus service and also increase carriageway crossings for passengers. Additionally, given that the operator is opposed to the removal of the bus stops, there is a risk that the alternative may not be observed and preference would be to observe the next bus stops on Hale Rd at Foundry Lane, thus potentially further increasing the distance to bus stops for passengers.

Given the recent Government announcement promoting bus use, reducing the number of bus stops could be seen as a negative move. The Board therefore did not endorse the proposal.

TOWN PLANNING

The focus of the year was the updating of the Borough's Development Plan. The Delivery and Allocations Local Plan replaced the Unitary Development Plan and Core Strategy as the key statutory planning document for Halton. As a result, the Board received reports covering:

- **Halton Local Development Scheme**
Councils are required to prepare and keep up to date Local Development Schemes that set out the timetable for production of their Local Plan(s). They identify and describe the Planning Policy documents that the Council intends to prepare and gives target dates for key stages in their production. This update covered the remaining stages in the preparation of the Delivery and Allocations Local Plan.
- **Halton Local Plan – post Submission Changes**
The Board received an update on the Halton Delivery and Allocations Local Plan (DALP). The Plan was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 5 March 2020. The examination process had taken place between March – June 2021 and a number of issues had been identified and needed to be resolved by 'Main Modifications to the Plan and subsequent changes to the Policies Map. The report updated Members on the expected changes needed to make the Local Plan 'sound' and capable of adoption by the Council.
- **Local List – Heritage Assets**
The Board was advised that Halton, in partnership with Cheshire West, had received £70,000 funding from the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) towards creating a unified Cheshire Local List of built heritage assets. The register would play a key role in local and community identity and gave an understanding and appreciation of Cheshire's past. In addition, a Local List approach was considered as a community-driven dataset and it was hoped that engagement with the development of a local list would enable local communities to define local heritage significance on their own terms. Over the next six months, officers would be working with consultants – Headland Design Associates (HDA) on five target areas in Halton: Appleton, Daresbury, Farnworth, Hale and New Town. In these areas, HDA would work with local volunteers to identify locally significant heritage assets and develop them as proposals for the local list using the online Exegesis Local Heritage List Platform.

DURING 2022/23 THE BOARD PLANS TO FOCUS ON:

- Supporting recovery plans in response to Covid-19
- Responding to Climate Change

- Assessing the impacts of Houses of Multiple Occupation on communities
- Improving performance indicators with negative trends.

Contact Officer for the Board

Members of the public are welcome at the meetings of the Board. If you would like to know where and when meetings are to be held or if you would like any more information about the Board or its work please contact Tim Gibbs, Operational Director 0151 511 7664.