

Urban Renewal Specialist Strategic Partnership (UR SSP) Meeting Minutes

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

3.00 pm, Tuesday, 22nd July, 2008.

Present:

Cllr Ron Hignett	(RH) Chair	HBC/Member;
Cllr Marie Wright	(MW)	HBC/Member;
Suzanne Carr	(SC)	Groundwork Merseyside;
Claire Bunter	(CB)	Environment Agency;
Lynn Smith	(LS)	Norton Priory Museum Trust;
Chris Koral	(CK)	North West Development Agency;
Jane Trevor	(JT)	Job Centre Plus;
Sasha Deepwell	(SD)	PLUS Housing 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;
Gary Collins	(GC)	HBC/Operational Director/Economic Regeneration;
Mark Grady	(MG)	HBC/LSP Officer, Performance & Management;
Jenny Carr	(JC)	HBC/Widnes Waterfront EDZ Prog. Officer;
Pat Audoire	(PA) Minutes	HBC/Urban Renewal SSP Co-ordinator

Apologies:

Andy Sharp	Daresbury Labs.,
Janitha Redmond	English Partnerships,
Claire McDade	Norton Priory Museum Trust,
Phil Watts	HBC/Operational Director – Environment & Reg. Svcs;

				<u>Actions</u>
1.	Apologies, Minutes & Matters Arising	1.1	The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting and asked for introductions around the table as there were a number of new faces this meeting. Apologies had been received from Andy Sharp, Janitha Redmond and Phil Watts. In addition, Claire McDade from Norton Priory, who was due to give a presentation, had been taken ill and sent her apologies via Lynn Smith. The Minutes of the meeting of 22 nd April, 2008 were accepted as a true record.	
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		1.3		
2.	Declaration of Interest	2.1	This item was brought to the attention of the Partnership at the request of the NWDA, who	

		2.2	wished for it to be tabled at every meeting. It was agreed that there were few occasions, due to the nature of the Partnership, where this would be relevant - except when the Partnership was acting as Management Board to the EDZ, in which case it would be raised as an item on the Agenda.	
		2.3	This was the case at this meeting and members were asked, where relevant, to declare any interest in business covered, as per the agreed D of I protocol, which had been circulated prior to the meeting for information.	
3.	Presentation: NWDA Update – Chris Koral, Policy & Partnerships Manager	3.1	CK started his presentation by giving everyone some background into the Sub-National Review and the issues around this. He had been used to working with the agenda for Cheshire and absorbing Merseyside issues into that role had been a steep learning curve.	
		3.2.1	CK explained the new role for RDAs, overseeing the regional spatial strategy, housing strategy and economic strategy into a single integrated Regional Strategy to ensure the region's economic development	
		3.2.2	The NWDA will also become the Regional Planning Body (although this has not yet been confirmed), a role currently performed by the Regional Assembly (now the Leaders' Forum).	
		3.2.3	There will be a revised tasking framework, which will focus on economic outcomes, and the RDA will have a far more strategic and commissioning role.	
		3.2.4	RDAs will also be responsible for responding to economic shocks such as local flooding, foot & mouth outbreaks, etc., that can have a heavy and adverse effect on local, regional and national economies.	
		3.3.1	It has already been determined that the agreed Leaders' Forum will determine the Regional Strategy, but this will need to provide common goals to drive the region economically.	
		3.3.2	Partnership-working between RDA, local authorities, Government Offices and wider stakeholders will be key, in order that the process is fit for purpose for shaping plans and delivery.	
		3.3.3	The Northwest Regional Strategy will set out the	
		3.3.4		

		<p>3.4.1</p> <p>3.4.2</p> <p>3.4.3</p> <p>3.4.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7.1</p> <p>3.7.2</p> <p>3.8</p> <p>3.9.1</p> <p>3.9.2</p> <p>3.10</p> <p>3.11</p>	<p>vision and key principles on strategic issues; it will refresh and revise economic development priorities and it will integrate spatial and housing priorities with actions to achieve sustainable economic growth.</p> <p>Local authorities, and through them Partnerships, will have a strong role and voice via the Leaders' Forum and a Regional Strategy Advisory Group will guide the day-to-day development.</p> <p>The new NWDA Corporate Plan 2008-11 will align with all Sub-national Review objectives and reflect the current Regional Economic Strategy priorities, taking account of the changing policy and role of the NWDA. There will be a single GVA per head growth objective.</p> <p>More will be delegated and there will be a move to programme management.</p> <p>Programme funding has been reduced and efficiency savings will need to be made. There are 11 Corporate Objectives across Competitive Business, People and Places. Daresbury developments will figure prominently in the business objectives, leadership and management, skills and workforce development in the people objectives and bringing forward sites and premises in order to support businesses as they grow in the places objectives.</p> <p>The Budget for this year is £390m, £1,087.3m up to 2011, with the main focus being on conditions for private sector investment, growth sectors and enterprise support. ERDF support is time limited. Merseyside has a phasing in allocation of £212m, which is ringfenced, with underspends going back to Europe.</p> <p>Local priorities are the Widnes Waterfront EDZ, 3MG and Daresbury.</p> <p>The Business Support Simplification initiative has been introduced to make life easier and simpler for businesses, reducing 3,000 'products' down to 100, in order to avoid confusion, overlap and achieve VFM. The NWDA remains committed to economic development in Halton, guided by the RES and</p>	
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		3.12	<p>Merseyside Action Plan.</p> <p>The NWDA will assist in maximising the potential benefits to Halton through partnership working and the Business Plan 2008/09 is available to Partners who wish to receive a copy.</p> <p>SD asked CK to expand on 'Economic Shocks'. Chris responded that these related to major impacts on the economy. There are no problems currently, but NWDA is in negotiation with one employer. Others, as mentioned above would be such incidents as Foot & Mouth, flooding, etc. These are a big problem that cannot be planned for.</p> <p>GC asked about the Agency's role in negotiating ERDF, citing a couple of projects that are not part of the phasing-in process. Applications were recently made through The Mersey Partnership (TMP) (Liverpool and the old Objective 1 area), but HBC were recently asked to submit through Cheshire (which is not Halton's destination management organisation). As Halton is no longer part of Cheshire for these purposes, it is proving very problematic to get through the system. GC asked CK if he could expedite a resolution, as TMPs narrow interpretation of the new rules is causing significant delays whereby match-funding benefit could be lost.</p> <p>DJS commented that Halton seemed to be on the periphery, with minimal consultation and benefit and CK said he would raise this as an issue at the appropriate fora.</p>	<p>CK</p> <p>CK</p>
4.	<p>Widnes Waterfront EDZ projects for approval – Jenny Carr</p>	<p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3.1</p>	<p>CK declared an interest in this item in that the project is seeking NWDA funding support and he is an NWDA officer.</p> <p>JC explained that, as requested at an earlier Partnership meeting and to minimise paper useage, two projects had been incorporated into one report and that she was seeking the EDZ Management Board's recommendation for approval of these projects by the NWDA for funding.</p> <p>JC gave an overview of the Landmark Art Project, which comprises a unique physical piece of public art, designed by renowned artist/architectural practice Tonkin Liu, which can be viewed by visitors to the EDZ area. The</p>	

		<p>aim of this artwork is to create a sense of place and character for the Widnes Waterfront and is just one in a programme of intended art related works on that site.</p> <p>4.3.2</p> <p>Tonkin Liu are developing the Future Flower proposal utilising £30k of pre-approval funding secured from the NWDA. This funding allows development of the final design and</p> <p>4.3.3</p> <p>production of the tender documentation.</p> <p>4.3.4</p> <p>HBC are currently working on a funding application to secure further NWDA funding to cover fabrication and erection costs.</p> <p>Two locations have been identified as possible location sites, these being adjacent to the Boardwalk and Trans-Pennine Trail on Widnes Warth and Site B1 (a parcel of land between Earle Road and the new access road, Carter House Way)</p> <p>4.4.1</p> <p>The second project overview presented referred to the Gateway Landscaping (Phase 2) project, relating to the new gyratory at the junction of Fiddlers Ferry Road, Earl Road and</p> <p>4.4.2</p> <p>Watkinson Way, Widnes.</p> <p>The plan for this scheme was rather complex and Jenny talked members through the various</p> <p>4.4.3</p> <p>elements while relating to a graphic.</p> <p>The aim is to create a formal gateway feature in keeping with the Waterfront, which also lends itself as an entrance to the town centre and a vital pedestrian link between the town</p> <p>4.4.4</p> <p>centre and the leisure development due for completion in 2009.</p> <p>4.4.5</p> <p>Work will begin on site following the completion of the highways works and formal approval of the NWDA funding.</p> <p>The funding application for this project is currently being reappraised, in preparation for submission to the NWDA for approval, and this is anticipated imminently.</p> <p>4.4.6</p> <p>JC referred to the appendices to the report, which detailed graphics related to the two projects and the various funding breakdowns and other ancillary information.</p> <p>4.4.7</p> <p>In addition, it was noted that private sector investment had been achieved to provide new signage for the gyratory, which would set the context of the whole development.</p>	
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		4.5	The Partners confirmed their approval that these projects be recommended to the NWDA for funding support.	JC
5.	Urban Renewal Update – Dick Tregea	5.1	DT started his update by referring to the general downturn of the economy, which had recently been highlighted through the closure of local house-builders' offices and staff layoffs, together with a reduction in the number of planning applications received. The overall impact of this locally is a reduction in planning income.	
		5.2.1	However, there is good news to report:	
		5.2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mersey Gateway is pushing forward effectively and the Development Control Committee are to consider a number of associated orders next week. This development is not expected to go to the Secretary of State before the start of the 2009 calendar year and should be completed by 2114. DT reported the tremendous support by DfT who have been pleased with the information provided by the Mersey Gateway team. Value for Money for the whole scheme remains positive and within Government guidelines and, despite recent press criticism about costs, this doesn't take account of cost increases over time, i.e., 2007 costs were quoted. 	
		5.2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the end of last summer, along with St. Helens and Warrington, Halton submitted our focus for Housing Growth Point support at Runcorn Docks. This proposed development by Peel Holdings, the major landowner of the site, received planning approval, winning £150k towards planning. This forms Peel's Runcorn element for the Atlantic Gateway, plans for which are stunning. 	
		5.2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Government has recently announced £65m of support for Daresbury. Andy Sharp's presentation at the last meeting touched on this, but funding will go towards <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the Hartree Centre for computer modelling and - the Detector Systems Centre. 	

This is in addition to Vanguard House and further confirms the importance of Daresbury. Work continues on the Science & Innovation Centre masterplanning exercise and the masterplan will be brought before this Partnership in due course.

- 5.2.5
- HBC is currently processing a planning application for 3MG. The planned 600,000 ft² warehousing and distribution facility on the former Tessenderlo site aims to create 1,500 jobs.

5.3.1 SD made the comment that there was no mention of the Castlefields development this time, but that the Village Square progresses. There has been a hitch in that the PCT, quiet until recently, has now said they wish to invest in the development. The downside to this is that there is a discussion over where the local pharmacy will be situated. However, SD is confident that this will be resolved and that contractors will be on site this year, subject to the necessary demolitions proceeding.

5.3.2 DT reported on land at the old busway access in Castlefields, which has latterly been used by Travellers. The new Travellers site is almost ready and should be available for use in 3 months time, subject to electricity connection and a few other elements to be completed. Following that, the busway site should be cleared.

5.4.1 MW asked about the Runcorn Docks development by Peel Holdings, expressing concern that there is a surplus of apartments in the borough and that Halton needs more starter homes. DT reported that Peel intend to develop approx. 4,000 apartments in the same vein as The Deck development, but that he did recognise the need for affordable housing.

5.4.2 SD reported that they are looking at a series of opportunities for shared ownership housing developments and have bought some of Barratt's stock at Halebank.

5.4.3 RH queried the potential to sell or let the existing apartment developments lying empty in the borough, but DT suggested that the developers are looking to the future.

		5.4.4.	DT said that he would like to open discussions with SD/PLUS Housing with regard to 'Rent to Purchase', in order to discuss eligibility and the national criteria.	DT
6.	Norton Priory update – Lynn Smith, Head Keeper, Norton Priory	6.1	LS apologised that Claire McDade, Director of Norton Priory, who had intended to give a presentation at this meeting, had been taken ill and could not attend. In her absence, she would try to give a flavour of the development, which could be followed up in the next meeting when a full presentation would be given.	
		6.2	LS reported that in 2005 HLF funding was secured for a Conservation Management Plan to review Norton Priory's needs. Consultants, Jura, have now been appointed to review and address the problems there. It is intended that a striking new building will be developed, with green credentials, developing the museum into a worldclass, quality tourist destination, worthy of the wonderful artefacts at Norton Priory.	
7.	LSP Update – Mark Grady	7.1	MG attended to give the Partnership an update on the recent Working Neighbourhoods Fund Commissioning Debate.	
		7.2	40 LSP Partners attended to progress the distribution of the £5.4m WNF Commissioning Pot over the next three years, with the aim of addressing worklessness, youth nuisance and alcohol abuse. There were three presentations covering each of these themes, before the delegates broke into three groups in order to put forward ideas and suggestions to meet each of the priorities. These were detailed in the Appendices to the report MG was talking to.	
		7.3	It was recommended that the report be noted and comments be sent to the HSPB team to be considered by the leads in each priority.	MG
		7.4	PA reported that, on the day, she was able to put forward the suggestion that the Pheonix Centre in Castlefields was ripe for expansion to house community initiatives. This could also address both the alcohol and youth nuisance issues in one focus through diversionary opportunities. It would offer partnership working across these two objectives and	

			<p>reduce cost. In addition, the need for a new enterprise centre was raised on the worklessness agenda, in order to capture entrepreneurs in the borough and those 'working on the black'.</p> <p>7.5.1 DJS was concerned that Urban Renewal did not figure in the commissioning process and he could not explain why this should be. The commissioning group had not recognised the urban renewal fit with the three objectives, although urban renewal had been identified in a couple of the few commissioning bids originally made. Despite this, allocations had subsequently been made to areas where proposals were not forthcoming.</p> <p>7.5.2 Castlefields has long had a need for the development of skills in the area and this had originally been touched upon in a failed bid for NWDA funding. However, the recent Castlefields proposal drawn up and submitted as part of the commissioning process did fit with the workless agenda through ELS SSP.</p> <p>7.5.3 With the recent announcements, it was difficult to draw out how urban renewal will benefit from the Commissioning Pot.</p> <p>7.6 SD said it was very disappointing there wasn't a more strategic link.</p> <p>7.7 DT was concerned that the issues of transport, access and connectivity had not been addressed as the borough needed a good means of getting people to work.</p> <p>7.8 It was identified that the Worklessness group will hold a meeting on 1st August to which delegates would be invited. Post meeting note: PA and SC intend attending.</p>	PA/SC
8.	Members' Agenda Items	8.1	None.	
9.	Any Other Business	9.1	None.	

10 .	Next Meeting	9.	<p>The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 18th November, 2008 and Norton Priory Museum have kindly offered to host the meeting.</p> <p>Future meeting dates beyond that:</p> <p>Tuesday, 18th November, 2008; Tuesday, 20th January, 2009 (Please note change) Tuesday, 21st April, 2009; Tuesday, 21st July, 2009; Tuesday, 17th November, 2009.</p> <p>Partners are asked to update their business diaries accordingly.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 4.20 pm.</p>	
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