

ENVIRONMENT AND URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on Wednesday, 15 February 2023 at the Council Chamber - Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Woolfall (Chair), Fry (Vice-Chair), Ball, D. Cargill, Davidson, Gilligan, S. Hill, Logan, McDermott, Stretch and Thornton

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: S. Burrows, K. Butler, T. Gibbs, W. Rourke and J. Unsworth

Also in attendance: Councillor Thompson

ITEM DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

EUR26 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2022 having been circulated were signed as a correct record.

EUR27 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

EUR28 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

The Board considered the Minutes of the meetings of the Executive Board relevant to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be noted.

EUR29 PRESTON BROOK PETITION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation, which provided information on the petition received from Preston Brook Parish Council, containing 52 signatures. The petition requested the reduction of the speed limit on both Windmill

Lane and Chester Road from 30mph to 20 mph and the removal of the section of Chester Road that was 40mph and the removal of unnecessary industrial signage.

Members were reminded that in respect of petitions, their role was to receive a report on any petitions received by the Council relating to their respective area and/or any action taken or proposed to be taken by the Executive (or Portfolio Holder, or an Officer acting under delegated powers).

The Board noted that Cheshire Police had stated that they would not support any speed reductions on the A56 Chester Road and they would only support a speed reduction on Windmill Lane alongside a full traffic calming intervention. There has not been an injury accident on the road in question in the past 5 years, and therefore in line with the criteria in the Council's Traffic Calming Assessment Policy, this location does not meet the criteria for intervention.

The report set out the position in the Department for Transport Circular 01/2013 (Setting Local Speed Limits) which states "*it is government policy that a 30 mph speed limit should be the norm in villages*" and that the Council's approach was also consistent with the policies in Local Transport Plan 3 on 20mph Zones. The Board was reminded that they received the Annual Road Safety Report in November 2022 and this analysis did not highlight this location for intervention. Based on these reasons, there was no recommended action.

The Board also noted the reasons for retaining the industrial signage, as outlined in the report.

RESOLVED: That the requests set out in the petition not be supported for the reasons given in the report.

EUR30 WORKING PARTY REVIEW OF COPPICING WORKS

The Board received a report from the Operational Director – Community and Greenspace, which provided an update on the outcome of the Working Party Review of the Council's Coppicing Works Programme.

The report outlined that coppicing was a pruning technique where a tree or shrub was cut to ground level which resulted in regeneration of new stems from the base. Coppicing was a popular conservation practice that was an

excellent way to stimulate and increase the life of the tree, amongst other benefits including those to wildlife.

In March 2022, a Working Party was established to undertake a review of the Council's coppicing works programme. In September 2022, Members attended a field visit and visited sites to observe structure planting works that had been carried out at a number of locations across the Borough that had been subject to previous enquiries from members of the public following coppicing works.

In order to improve communication and understanding, it was a recommendation of the Working Party that a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would provide general information and regular updates on the coppicing works.

RESOLVED: That:

- 1) the report be noted;
- 2) a dedicated page be established on the Council's website that would display:
 - i) General information on the principles of coppicing and the Council's coppicing work programme;
 - ii) Timeline photographs of plantations subject to coppicing works by Council operatives; and
 - iii) Information on plantations that would be subject to up and coming coppicing works by Council operatives.

Operational
Director -
Community &
Green Space

EUR31 UPDATE ON MERSEY GATEWAY REGENERATION

The Board considered a report of the Operational Director – Economy, Enterprise and Property which provided an update on how the construction of the Mersey Gateway had contributed to the development and delivery of the Borough's regeneration priorities.

The report outlined that a number of strategic benefits had emerged post Mersey Gateway construction including the improvements to the Silver Jubilee Bridge, funding for the regeneration of Runcorn and the Runcorn Station Quarter.

Positive feedback had also been received from businesses, for example, improvements in nimble and rapid

movement within and beyond Halton, which subsequently improved economic activity. There had also been reports of positive impacts on individuals and the labour market, particularly by supporting attracting highly skilled individuals to highly skilled vacancies and reinforcing workforce resilience with retaining those individuals in the post.

It was noted that work was ongoing to deliver the following Key Impact Areas:

- West Runcorn Employment Growth Area;
- Astmoor;
- Halton Lea;
- West Bank;
- Widnes Waterfront;
- 3MG Ditton Corridor;
- Runcorn Old Town; and
- Southern Widnes.

The report demonstrated that the Council's main policy objective was to ensure that the Mersey Gateway project was more than the construction of a bridge. Whilst there had been undoubted productivity gains and improved journey times that had resulted from the new bridge, it had served as the catalyst for wider regeneration and investment in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted.

EUR32 REVOCATION OF HALTON'S AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS IN WIDNES TOWN CENTRE

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Health which provided an update on proposals to revoke the current air quality management areas in Widnes Town Centre.

Halton's Air Quality Management Areas were declared in 2011 when routine monitoring identified exceedances of the Nitrogen Dioxide limits. This was a result of town centre congestion in Widnes and emissions from road vehicles. Since then, there had been notable improvements in traffic flows through the town centre as a result of the Mersey Gateway Bridge and the re-opening of the Silver Jubilee Bridge. Further actions included changes to sequencing of traffic lights to reduce congestion as well as improvements in vehicle emission technology which had also contributed to the reduced levels.

The Board noted the information outlined in the report

which demonstrated the improvement in air quality between 2011 to date and also the sustained improvement in air quality over the last 5 years.

Given the improvements to air quality, it was proposed to revoke the air quality management areas and approval would be sought from Executive Board. It was also suggested that a 4 week public consultation be carried out in March 2023 where the public would be invited to submit comments to a dedicated air quality mailbox. Further information would be made available on the Council's website and consultation would be publicised via media channels.

The Board would receive a further report on the outcome of the public consultation in due course.

RESOLVED: That the proposal to proceed with a public consultation be endorsed.

Director of Public Health

EUR33 HMO WORKING PARTY UPDATE

The Board received a report which provided Members with an update on the progress of the Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO) Working Party. The last meeting took place on 14 February 2023 where the Police were in attendance.

RESOLVED: That the updated action plan, presented in Appendix 1, be endorsed.

Meeting ended at 7.10 p.m.