

URBAN RENEWAL POLICY AND PERFORMANCE BOARD

At a meeting of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board held on Wednesday, 19 November 2008 at Civic Suite, Town Hall, Runcorn

Present: Councillors Hignett (Chairman), Morley (Vice-Chairman), Balmer, P. Blackmore, E. Cargill, Hodgkinson, Leadbetter, Murray, Nolan, Rowe and Thompson

Apologies for Absence: None

Absence declared on Council business: None

Officers present: H. Cockcroft, H. Coen, G. Collins, S. McDonald, A. McNamara, M. Noone, M. Simpson, D. Sutton, J. Sutton and P. Watts

Also in attendance: 2 members of public and Mr Steve O'Connor

ITEMS DEALT WITH UNDER DUTIES EXERCISABLE BY THE BOARD

Action

URB71 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 17th September 2008, having been printed and circulated were signed as a correct record.

URB72 PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

It was confirmed that no public questions had been received.

URB73 EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES

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

RESOLVED: That the Minutes be received.

URB74 SSP MINUTES

The minutes from the meeting of the Urban Renewal

Specialist Strategic Partnership Board on 22nd July 2008 were submitted for information.

The following points arose from discussion of the minutes:

- In relation to Halton being on the periphery, in terms of gaining funding, it was noted that the North West Development Agency (NWDA) was aware of Halton and its needs;
- Whether affordable housing could be encouraged due to the amount of empty properties in various areas of the Borough. It was reported that the change in situation had been recognised and would be taken into account when developing the replacement Local Development Framework (LDF).

RESOLVED: That the minutes be received.

URB75 QUARTERLY MONITORING REPORTS

The Board considered a report regarding the second Quarter Monitoring Reports for the Highways & Transportation and Logistics, Environment & Regulatory Services, Cultural & Leisure, Major Projects, Economic Regeneration and Health and Partnerships Services.

Arising from the discussion the following issues were raised:

- Clarity was sought regarding the predicted financial outturn for this financial year for the Mersey Gateway Development for end of year and where funds would come from. In response it was noted that this information would be circulated to Members;
- Staff transfers between departments had taken place therefore the LDF Team was now fully complimented; and
- Transport proposals would be investigated for schools involved in the Building Schools for the Future Initiative would be investigated in detail during the Options Appraisal stage of the process.

RESOLVED: That the second quarter monitoring reports be received.

Chief Executive

URB76 STOBART GROUP'S ACTIVITIES IN HALTON

Mr Steve O'Connor provided a verbal report on the activities of the Stobart Group in Halton, which outlined the following:

- A planning application had recently been approved for the distribution centre and the first lease holder for the two buildings would be announced within the next two to three days;
- The Weston side of the operations were continuing well in relation to freight carried by water. Stobart Group had looked at some of the UK's largest port operators in order to determine best practice used; and
- At the beginning of 2010, employment opportunities would be increased providing an estimated 1000 jobs in the first phase.

Strategic Director
- Environment

Members queried whether many vehicles would use the Silver Jubilee Bridge once the Mersey Gateway was completed. In response it was noted that there wouldn't be high volumes of Stobart traffic passing between the two sites as the rail port on the Widnes side and would compliment the water port on the Runcorn side of the river.

It was reported that the project would provide an opportunity to improve accessibility to services and employment in the Borough.

The Chairman thanked Mr Steve O'Connor for an informative update.

RESOLVED: That the update be received.

NB: Councillor Morley declared a personal interest in the following item due to being a Member of the SCARS Board.

URB77 SERVICE PLANS 2009-12

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director, Corporate and Policy, which offered Members the opportunity to contribute to the development of Service Plans at the beginning of the planning process for 2009/10 Financial year.

It was noted that the 3-year departmental service plans were reviewed and rolled forward on an annual basis and that the plans would be developed in parallel with the budget.

Tabled at the meeting were updates for each service

area, which detailed initial proposals covering areas within the remit of the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board.

The Board heard representation from Mr Derek Sutton – Operational Director, Major Projects, Mr Phil Watts – Operational Director – Environmental and Regulatory Services, Mr Mick Noone, Operational Director - Highways, Transportation and Logistics and Mr Gary Collins, Operational Director – Economic Regeneration.

Arising from the information provided it was reported that an economic assessment of the Borough would be brought back to a future meeting.

Members were invited to contact the Operational Directors should they wish to identify any priority areas over the next year.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the information be received; and
- (2) Members contact the Operational Directors should wish to identify any priority areas.

URB78 PUBLIC ART

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community which detailed the draft Public Art Strategy.

It was reported that a presentation had been delivered to the Employment Learning and Skills Policy and Performance Board by consultants employed by the Council, funded by the Arts Council to develop an approach to public art in Halton.

It was advised that the value of public art was discussed during the presentation and it was recognised that Halton had no overall approach to public art and tended to be re-active to opportunities. This could have resulted in missing funding opportunities to develop public art.

The brief of the consultants was to produce a practical, working document which considered planning and funding issues and was included in the report for consideration. The Strategy contained three stands as follows; planning guidance, strategy and funding.

The Board was informed that a half-time post for a

Public Arts Co-ordinator had been funded for two years by the Arts Council which would help implement the strategy. It was noted that this new post would be best to sit within the Planning Department.

Members were requested to comment and endorse the strategy in order to be referred to Executive Board for approval.

RESOLVED: That the Strategy be endorsed and referred to Executive Board for approval.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

URB79 UPDATE REPORT ON TRAVEL POLICY & PROCEDURES RELATING TO SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director Health and Community which provided an update on the impact of revisions to the Travel Policy and Procedure for the Health and Community Directorate.

It was reported that on 25th July 2008, Executive Board Sub Committee approved amendments to the Travel Policy and Procedure in various areas, which was outlined in the report for consideration.

The report outlined the following:

- Transport satisfaction surveys;
- Set charges for transport;
- Initiatives across the Borough which sought to promote independence and the range of travel options available to adults;
- Analysis of service users by team, receiving a transport service;
- Number of passenger trips by referring team;
- Analysis of service users weekly journeys within the maximum transport charging thresholds depending on DLA Mobility Benefit being claimed; and
- The approved eligibility quick practice guide;

Members noted that this policy had greatly benefited the community as service users were now able to travel independently as they could not in the past. The Board noted the work that had been associated with this report and thanked the officers involved.

RESOLVED: That the update to the Travel Policy and Procedure be noted.

NB: Councillor Murray declared a personal interest in the following item due to his wife being an employee for the RARS Team for HBC.

URB80 COMMISSIONING STRATEGY FOR "EXTRA CARE" HOUSING

The Board considered a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community which sought approval of the draft Extra Care Strategy.

It was reported the strategy was to provide the Council with a plan for the commissioning of extra care service. The aim was to meet the changing and growing needs of Halton's older population through a strategy that would achieve good quality, cost effective extra care services making a maximum use of available capital and revenue sources to achieve its implementation.

The Board was advised of Halton's one current extra care scheme – Dorset Gardens. It was noted there was a shortage of 166 units and the Council had to address meeting this need. As each site would have 40/50 units a substantial amount of land would need to be acquired and a cost would be involved.

Members considered the option of using housing associations in terms of adaptations of current facilities. In response it was noted that the Council was working with partners to locate land and a more detailed report would be brought back to a future meeting. The Board was advised of housing associations that had shown interest so far.

The Board also discussed the opportunity for people to stay in care homes should their condition deteriorate. In response it was noted that this would be possible as people could go out of choice or from a referral. Work was being carried out at all times with partnerships and registered social land lords.

Members welcomed the document and strategy and noted that Dorset Gardens was a great achievement and many more units would be encouraged in the Borough.

RESOLVED: That

- 1) The Board approve the Extra Care Strategy; and
- 2) A more detailed report regarding the acquisition of land, be brought back to a future meeting.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

URB81 DRAFT HOUSING STRATEGY 2008-2011

The Board received a report of the Strategic Director – Health and Community, which sought views on the draft Housing Strategy 2008-2011.

The Board considered the draft housing strategy which had been the subject of consultation with a wide range of stakeholders which were detailed within the report. The Strategy outlined key objectives as follows:

- Homelessness;
- Increase in affordable housing;
- Increase in supported housing;
- Delivery of decent home standard;
- Choice based lettings; and
- Worklessness;

Members discussed difficulties in housing offenders and the problems that face people obtaining choice based lettings, the issue of empty homes and if there was anything that could be done to prevent the high charges for private rented accommodation.

RESOLVED: That the draft Housing Strategy 2008-2011 be received.

Strategic Director
- Health and
Community

Meeting ended at 8.45 p.m.