

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub

DATE: 24th September 2009

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health and Community

SUBJECT: Review of Warrington Road Transit Site

WARD(S): Daresbury

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides details of operational information and costs incurred during the six months following the opening of the site on 10 February 2009.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: that the Board reviews the current charging arrangements in respect of the transit site.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 When setting the £11 per day charge in October 2008 the Board, conscious that many elements of the forecast operational budget were estimates, decided to review the charge after 6 months of operational experience. Appendix 1 sets out the original budget forecast (based on an assumption of achieving 90% occupancy levels), actual costs incurred during the first 6 months of operations, and a revised budget forecast.
- 3.2 Appendix 2 details actual occupancy levels achieved for the first half year, and the revised budget forecast in the final column of Appendix 1 is based on achieving an occupancy level of 60%, which is more in keeping with experience to date. Some of the costs are still estimated in the absence of bills having been received for certain services (most notably water charges), and assumptions have had to be made about charges over the full year for electricity as winter consumption is likely to be higher than the first half year. Nevertheless this budget forecast represents the best estimate that can be made at this stage.
- 3.3 Given the stated assumptions, the site is forecast to produce a deficit of just £1,723 over a full year, but this should be set in the context of the wider savings achieved in not having to deal with the usual level of unlawful encampments. Police records show that during 2005, the year before a managed approach was started with Haddocks Wood, there were 83 encampments in Halton. During 2006, 2007 and 2008, the period of the Haddocks Wood managed encampment, there were 66, 21 and 10 encampments respectively. There have been just 2 since the transit site opened, one of these being a family waiting over night to move on to the transit site, and the other was moved within 48 hours by the Police using powers available only due to the existence of the

transit site. There have been no further encampments in the intervening period.

- 3.4 Financial provision for dealing with unlawful encampments has never appeared as an explicit item in Directorate budgets, but in May 2007 an exercise was undertaken to try to quantify the cost for the period 2005/06 and 2006/07. The combined results from the relevant sections in each Directorate were as follows –

Staff time	£94,053
Facilities (bins, toilets etc.)	£13,490
Clear up costs	£42,600
Private Bailiffs	£69,100
Land protection measures	<u>£38,470</u>
TOTAL	£257,713

or £128,856 per year.

This excludes the substantial Police costs involved as well.

- 3.5 The site has clearly been a success in terms of meeting its original aim of reducing the costly and time consuming problem of unauthorised encampments in Halton. Halton's new approach to managing Traveller issues has been applauded by Traveller organisations, the Police and neighbouring Councils, and the reduction in encampments has also been welcomed by local businesses. It also means that Halton has already met its target for the provision of transit site accommodation proposed in recent draft figures set out under the partial review of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 3.6 A report was presented to the Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board on the 17 June 2009 outlining how the site had been operating since it opened on the 10 February 2009 including similar (but not as up to date) information to that included in this report. The recommendations were noted at the Executive Board Sub Committee on 10 September 2009. The Sub Committee requested that its original resolution on 16th October 2008, that a report be submitted after 6 months to review income against costs, be presented on 24 September 2009. This report should give the actual financial information for 6 months as well as the occupancy information. The Committee also requested the latest forecast information so that an informed view on charging could be taken.
- 3.7 Feedback was requested on the number of illegal encampments that have occurred in the Borough since the opening of the transit site and comparative information from neighbouring local authorities.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no policy implications arising from the report.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Although some households using the site stay for only a few days, those staying longer are being provided with advice and support to get their children into school.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None identified.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Travellers have a reduced life expectancy compared to average national rates. Stays at the transit site are affording Travellers the opportunity to access health and social care services more readily, and to benefit from a decent level of sanitation.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Roadside encampments are inherently unsafe, and reducing their occurrence through the provision of the transit site has reduced those risks.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Proactively managing the problem of unlawful Traveller encampments has lessened the concerns of businesses in the area, particularly those on the industrial estates that historically have seen most encampments, and should help to persuade them to remain and develop in Halton.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

7.1 The provision of a well managed, safe, fully serviced site to accommodate transient Travellers is consistent with the Councils equality and diversity policy.

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

<u>Document</u>	<u>Place of inspection</u>	<u>Contact Officer</u>
Report to Exec Board Sub 16/10/08	Runcorn Town Hall	S Williams
Report to UR PPB 17 th June 2009	Runcorn Town Hall	S Williams

Report to Exec Board Runcorn Town Hall
Sub 10/09/09

S Williams

APPENDIX 1

	<u>Original budget estimate*</u>	<u>Expenditure 10/2/09 to 10/8/09</u>	<u>Forecast Full Year Budget**</u>
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Warden	13,000	6,500	13,000
Telephone	250	33	100
Water	4,266	0	2,844
Cleaning materials	450	112	250
Septic Tank Emptying	9,000	2,100	4,900
Electricity	9,362	2,817	6,963
Refuse collection	8,000	0	3,076
Maintenance	5,000	550	1,000
Annual electrical safety check	500	0	500
Insurance	500	0	71
None domestic rates	2,500	2,595	2,595
Sink fund for cyclical maintenance.	2,000	0	0
	<u>54,828</u>	<u>14,707</u>	<u>35,299</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Rent (13 pitches X 52 weeks X £77 (£11 per day))	46,847	15,818	31,636
Sale of elec. prepayment cards	7,362	862	1,940
	<u>54,209</u>	<u>16,680</u>	<u>33,576</u>
<u>Net Expenditure</u>	<u>619</u>	<u>-1,973</u>	<u>1,723</u>

Notes

* based on 90% occupancy rate

** based on 60% occupancy rate

Water rates pro rata Riverview site as no bill yet received on which to refine estimate.

