

CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Ian Maher	Cabinet Member Regeneration	September – October 2011

1. **Housing Market Renewal – CPO**

Compulsory Purchase Orders issued for Bedford/Queens Phase 3 and Klondyke Phase 1B have now been confirmed by the Secretary of State. A 6 week 'Challenge Period' has passed without appeals. Following the 'Challenge Period' the vesting process can begin. There have been recent discussions with the 4 remaining owner-occupiers at Bedford-Queens about their housing options. Early indications are that 2 will actively seek re-housing. A public meeting was held with Klondyke residents on 13th September.

2. **Housing Market Renewal Transition Fund**

A bid for £3.457m has been submitted to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for the Transition Fund. This £30m pot was offered to five of the former pathfinder areas in order to purchase the interests of residents still remaining in HMR Intervention Areas. As expected the fund is oversubscribed, by approximately 50%, and the HCA asked for further information not requested in the original bid. The deadlines set for the submission of this information was mid-September and we expect to hear about our allocation any time soon.

3. **Housing Options Service**

The new Service Level Agreement with Light for Life has been agreed and signed, which protects the Southport Housing Advice service until March 2013. The Council is committed to entering into a sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme. The scheme will be operated on our behalf by One Vision Housing, similar to that currently provided as the 'Homesearch' service. We have entered into contract with the other Local Authority partners and the IT System supplier, Abritas. It is hoped the new system and approved by Choice Based Letting Policy, will come into effect circa March 2012. Negotiations have begun to agree a new Service Level Agreement between the Council and One Vision Housing, for this revised service.

4. **Private Sector Housing Standards Service**

The (2009) Private Sector Housing Strategy includes an objective to set up a (voluntary) Landlord Accreditation scheme in Sefton. Due to declining budgets and staff reductions, this has never been progressed. To support the Council's Strategic Housing aims, OVH have agreed to fund a feasibility study to investigate the possibility of establishing a scheme. In collaboration with Council staff, they have appointed Wirral Council to carry out this work (Wirral have a well regarded and established scheme). The study will include consultations with landlords and letting agencies and other stakeholder services. A key issue will be to consider ways any scheme could be funded - to meet both set up and ongoing running costs. There is continued focus on dealing with empty homes. Officers are continuing to look at carrying out a more proactive project, focussed on Southport.

Earlier this year we completed our first enforced sale of an empty property, which has now been brought back into use. A further 5 cases are being considered for a similar course of action.

5. Home Improvements Team and DFGs

The Council have approved a capital budget of circa £2.5m for 11-12, which is less than the circa £3m spent in recent years, to meet demand. Part of the service is provided via an Agency agreement with Mears Ltd [who took over Anchor Trust last year]. As part of the Transformation and budget review we are looking at options for how this service may be delivered in future years, including bringing the service in house. As well as budget savings we need to consider impacts on Supporting People services, and Older People services, as it is currently combined with complimentary services they fund.

Housing Strategy

The Localism Bill will require the Council to introduce a new Tenancy Strategy. This will require us to provide policy guidance to Registered Social Landlords (RSLs), covering;

- the types of tenancies they grant, including fixed term/flexible tenancies
- the circumstances under which fixed term tenancies should be used
- the term of fixed term tenancies
- circumstances to extend or end fixed term tenancies

As most RSLs operate across a number of Local Authority Boundaries on Merseyside, officers are meeting with counterparts from the Liverpool City Region, to explore the option of a joint Strategy, or at least one with some level of commonality.

6. Kew Housing Development Site

The preferred developer David Wilson Homes have now completed the necessary ground and contamination investigations of the land at Kew which has allowed them to complete their cost profile of the development of the site. An appraisal of the development costs has been completed by consultants acting for the council which will identify the point at which the scheme is viable with particular regard to the amount of affordable housing.

A report will be presented to Cabinet in the near future. This report will outline the position and will also seek authority to enter into a contract with David Wilson Homes and enable them to make their planning application for the development. Should Cabinet grant authority to enter into contract, the planning application is expected now to be submitted by mid-December.

The Extra Care Housing scheme is to be included as part of the joint planning application and is expected to include 30% affordable housing within this element.

7. Bootle Town Centre & Office Quarter

Update on the four pieces of research agreed by Stakeholder group.

A request to Bootle Stakeholders representing the office sector is about to be made that will help confirm total amount of office floor space and current vacancy rates. The survey work (as regards to the parking review) will be completed in mid November. A staff perception questionnaire of office employees in the town will be circulated by the end of October to understand more about the characteristics of the workforce but also understand the workforce perceptions on how they value and use the town, to support future marketing of the town's offer.

A retail strategy review of the borough is on track for completion in November.

Bootle TC and the work of the stakeholder group is likely to feature at the next Economic Forum meeting 24th November, at St Hugh's House, Bootle. Bruntwood's have confirmed sponsorship for the event.

8. StepClever Property Project

The property project is now coming to a conclusion but there still remain a number of projects to start on site these in particular are the Liverpool Film Academy the Rotunda and St Mary's Walton all of which sit very close to the Sefton - Linacre and Derby ward boundaries. Works have recently completed at Boundary Street off Derby Road Liverpool where the StepClever funding contributed to a project that now includes music recording and rehearsal rooms a micro brewery and a number of offices for new or growing businesses.

Works have also recently been completed to the Bedford Road Community Centre in Bootle and it is expected that they will very soon have businesses in occupation. Finally, elsewhere in Bootle, there are works ongoing at premises on Irlam Road which will eventually produce both workshop and office space for small businesses.

9. Southport Market Refurbishment

Works are progressing on Phase 1 of the project. The roof, ceiling and windows have been treated and much of the high level electrical work has been completed. The heating system is installed as is the mechanical extract plant for the food stalls. Works in the basement are also nearing completion

The external building works are progressing following the development of an approach to overcome the structural weaknesses resulting from the discovery of the light wells. A piling approach had been adopted.

The installation of the frames for the new stalls is underway. Consultation has been undertaken with all the traders, both existing and new, in order to firm up their requirements for each stall.

A safe pedestrian route had been established through consultation with the highways team.

Lockwoods, the Contractor, have reported a delay to the original programme, mainly as a result of the light wells. Nevertheless the project team are confident that some of the time can be recovered and that the Contractor will handover the facility in sufficient time for the launch of the refurbished facility to coincide with the Southport Food Festival (8th - 11th June 2012)

Quarterbridge are continuing to liaise with the remaining tenants to ensure that trading conditions are as favourable as can be in the important lead up to Christmas. The Considerate Constructor's team have assessed the site and awarded a score to Lockwoods that defines the site as 'Very good'

The marketing and letting activity is progressing well with heads of terms being agreed with a number of high quality food and non food retailers. The food stalls are nearly all taken with a range of different stalls. Negotiations are also progressing with a suitable café operator. At present, the Market consultants Quarterbridge are still advising that the lettings are on track with the anticipated level of occupancy shown in the Business Plan.

A process to secure a new operator for two of years following opening is currently progressing with the relevant Expression of interest document being produced. It is anticipated that the selection process will be completed in November.

A tender process is also underway to secure a provider of specialist equipment for new traders. This allows traders to lease equipment from the provider which costs recharged through the rent.

Broadbents are currently progressing options for the signage/ gateway features scheme appropriate to the future image of the building.

10. Southport Cultural Centre

The Works are progressing well, with the building now close to being watertight. Works have progressed on the re-roofing and the restoration of stonework features at high level and repairs to the clock tower (including the clock face). Much of the plant has been installed and works are beginning on the internal partitioning to form the new rooms.

The scaffolding within Cambridge Arcade, which was necessary to enable cladding work to the studio extension, has been removed. This has improved the appearance of the Arcade although the traders have complained of loss of trade during the works. The Council is working to ensure, as far as possible, that the Arcade retains its traders, and any longer term loss of trade due to traders vacating units is reduced. A trial is currently ongoing to deter pigeons from roosting within the Culture centre works and within Cambridge Arcade itself. This trial involves the targeted flying of birds of prey after dark. This has proven successful so far.

The final payments from NWDA and Sea Change (now managed by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)) are still awaited. The DCMS have completed a review of all the information forwarded and have raised some concerns. The principle concern is the immediate future of the facility post handover from the Contractor. DCMS and other funders have been kept informed that the Council is seeking Expressions of Interest from potential operators in order to determine whether the facility is operated by the existing in house management team, a Third Sector organisation or mutual, an arms length operation such as a Trust or whether it's outsourced to the private sector. Expression of Interest should be returned by the end of October. The funders will need to approve any decision related to the future operation proposals and will need some assurance on how the outputs will be met.

Despite the best efforts to reduce costs where possible, the project has encountered a range of issues including some structural weakness in the support structure to the stage, poor condition of the external stonework, high level drainage problems contributing to a ceiling collapse in Bank Buildings and asbestos discovered in ducts under the library. In spite of these difficulties, Lend Lease, the Contractor is maintaining a good level of workmanship and is recording high scores in the Considerate constructor's assessment.