Appendix 2

Interim Report of
Poulton Area Renewal
Task Group

- a report of the Overview and
Scrutiny Committee

Lancaster City Council       March 2005
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Foreword

“It is clear from this interim report that there have been problems in completing the work of the Task Group. Progress has been made however in highlighting issues concerned with renewal and regeneration, wherever in the District these activities may take place, now or in the future, and I support the case that is made for the Task Group to continue to meet until it has gathered the evidence it needs for its final report.”

Cllr Emily Heath
Vice-Chairman
Overview & Scrutiny Committee
(1) **Introduction**

“Renewal and regeneration activities are necessary and valuable components of Council policy. Nevertheless they are discriminatory between one area of the district and another. Discrimination, whether positive or negative, that becomes institutionalised is divisive. The potential for divisiveness arises because renewal and regeneration necessarily involves selective intervention in a specific area – such intervention is discriminatory against adjacent areas and unsustainable if it cannot be justified on the basis of the success of the selected intervention method in achieving its specified objectives. This report takes the view that the positive discrimination associated with renewal and regeneration needs careful and sensitive management if it is to rebuild communities successfully. The Task Group has sought to make recommendations that enhance the effectiveness of renewal and regeneration activity, based on evidence from Poulton Area Renewal, so that it carries the support and confidence of those affected by it.

In particular, it is argued in this interim report that objectives need to be set out clearly by the Council for renewal and regeneration activity in the district. Public accountability requires it to be demonstrated that expenditure of public money from whatever source is meeting these objectives. To provide this evidence requires that achievable targets are set for indicators that are relevant to the underlying purpose for which the money is spent, and that performance measurement monitors progress towards these targets. It is intended that the final report from the Task Group will include examples of such indicators.

Our understanding is that renewal and regeneration is designed to produce sustainable communities in areas that on some agreed measure are considered to be deprived. We understand sustainability to be a broad based concept that includes social, economic and environmental sustainability. Renewal and regeneration that continues indefinitely in one area of the district is not being - and has not been - effective in producing a sustainable community. In short, there needs to be a clearly specified purpose for public expenditure on renewal and regeneration, a beginning and a definable end for such expenditure in a particular area of the district, and periodic monitoring that the expenditure is succeeding in moving the measured indicators towards target levels that indicate characteristics consistent with areas of the district that are not considered to be deprived.

This report is an interim one, rather than a final one, because for reasons beyond our control, as explained in more detail within the report, it has been impossible to fulfil our terms of reference within the original timescale.”

Councillor J. Roger Mace
Chairman
Poulton Area Renewal Task Group
(2) Summary and Recommendations

On the basis of evidence received by the Task Group to date about renewal and regeneration in Poulton this report focuses on improving the effectiveness of renewal and regeneration and makes the following recommendations …

Recommendation 1

a) That future housing regeneration work, such as that carried out in Poulton, particularly where delivered through a local delivery mechanism (such as Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board) be integrated with the Council’s economic development plans and strategies in order to deliver a holistic solution to sustainability which respects existing businesses and considers social and economic sustainability alongside environmental sustainability in ways that can positively affect perceptions of the process by local residents and others.

b) That increased promotion of a corporate council view be undertaken to increase perception of the need for joined-up thinking in policy areas like those of renewal and regeneration where existing job descriptions and responsibilities may encourage service-centred thinking, at the expense of the holistic approach that is needed.

Recommendation 2

a) That resources be made available for an evaluative review to take place of the Poulton Area Renewal against the issues raised in and objectives of the Poulton Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (June 2000) including issues as described in Terms of Reference 3.1.2 and 3.1.3, namely:

To ascertain the objectives of Council policy relating to Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone, the assessment of criteria and the performance indicators for measuring the success of this area of activity, and to assess the objectives of Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone by performing an impact assessment involving selected themes and criteria based on the district's strategy for sustainable development.

b) That Council have a policy for periodic reviews or reality checks of this kind to be resourced at the outset of future renewal and regeneration projects, in order to improve public accountability.

Recommendation 3

That the Task Group continue to meet for three months after completion of the Internal Audit Investigation, or for such period as may be necessary to complete its terms of reference.

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed Recommendation 3 on 9 March 2005.
**Recommendation 4**

That Members be kept better informed of changes to boundaries of renewal areas and to funding streams during future renewal processes and that future large regeneration activities contain a section on member communication in the communication strategy that accompanies such schemes.

**Recommendation 5**

That the Council reviews how information on the activities and policies of the Council is transmitted to elected Members.

**Recommendation 6**

a) That Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board be congratulated on their assessment in the recent review by the ODPM.

b) That the Council notes the apparent value and focus that a manager can provide and considers the use of similar managers in future regeneration schemes, where appropriate, subject to ensuring that managers are involved in setting measurable targets at the outset, which closely tie the progress of renewal to the policy objectives of the Council, as set by the democratic process.

**Recommendation 7**

a) That Cabinet liases with Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board with a view to including recent changes in parking restrictions, traffic management and residents’ parking in Poulton as issues within their satisfaction survey, and considers the results when available.

b) That notwithstanding the discretionary nature of Council spending on public toilets, the Cabinet reviews the provision of public toilets in Morecambe, such review to take place at the earliest available opportunity following completion of the feasibility study on public conveniences currently being undertaken by Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board.

**Recommendation 8**

That the Head of Paid Service be asked:

(a) to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the reasons for delay in providing resources to the Task Group to carry out a sustainability audit of aspects of the Poulton Area Renewal; and

(b) to put in place measures to prevent future delays to the work of Overview and Scrutiny.
**Recommendation 9**

a) That the Council widens its use of sustainability principles and in particular where appropriate includes in reports and projects measurable indicators and targets relating to social, economic and environmental sustainability.

b) That the Council includes provision at the scoping stage to carry out a broadly based Sustainability Audit on all major projects (such as the Poulton Area Renewal) and makes greater use of available checklists and existing documentation on measurable variables linked to sustainability.
(3) The role of the Poulton Area Renewal Task Group

3.1 Terms of Reference

The Task Group worked to the following terms of reference:

3.1.1 To review progress in implementing area renewal in Poulton, including the activities associated with the innovative Poulton Homezone Project.

3.1.2 To ascertain the objectives of Council policy relating to Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone, the assessment of criteria and the performance indicators for measuring the success of this area of activity.

3.1.3 To assess the objectives of Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone by performing an impact assessment involving selected themes and criteria based on the district’s strategy for sustainable development.

3.1.4 To receive financial analysis of the project and a breakdown of the component parts.

3.1.5 To discuss with the cabinet portfolio holder what progress has been made and what performance has been achieved with regard to the Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone since May 2003 and what are the plans for the future development and implementation of this area of activity.

3.1.6 To assess the effectiveness of public consultation and communication.

3.1.7 To ascertain that the Council has procedures in place to ensure that dealings in properties by the Council offer a fair deal to all, and are in accordance with best practice.

3.2 Membership of the Group

The Task Group comprised Councillors Roger Mace, Susan Bray, John Gilbert and Peter Robinson, with administrative support from the Principal Democratic Support Officer, James Doble, and Democratic Support Officer, Georgina Atkinson. Ward Councillors for Poulton Ward were initially members of the Task Group, but subsequently withdrew and were later excluded from membership because of the potential for conflict of interest.

The Task Group reported to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is constituted with nine members based on proportional representation, but the Green Group declined to appoint a member, the Independents chose not to take up the two places to which they were entitled, and the Labour Group has only one appointee instead of three.

The Group gratefully acknowledges the contributions and evidence given by:

- Steve Matthews, Strategic Housing Manager
- Peter Sandford, Head of Economic Development and Tourism Service
• John Deacon, Neighbourhood Manager, Poulton Neighbourhood Management
• Simon Raffaelli, Principal Accountant, Financial Services
• Peter Loker, Corporate Director (Community Services)
• Jim Robson, Head of Engineering Services
• Gill Noall, Head of Administration Services
• Julie Raffaelli, Principal Accountant, Financial Services
• Brian Moore, Project Leader, BEST Centres
• Mark Davies, Head of City Contract Services
• Derek Whiteway, Head of Internal Audit
• Andy Mason, Business Advisor, The BEST Centre and Members of the Poulton Business Forum who attended their meeting on 23 February 2005.
• Councillors Pritchard and Bryning
• Julian Inman, Senior Planner

3.3 Timetable of Meetings

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<th>Date of Meeting</th>
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<td>14/10/04</td>
<td>Suzanne Lodge</td>
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<td>Derek Whiteway</td>
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<td>Cllr Janice Hanson</td>
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<td>16/12/04</td>
<td>John Deacon</td>
<td>The work of Poulton Neighbourhood Management Partnership</td>
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<td>Simon Raffaelli</td>
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<td>Cllr Abbott Bryning</td>
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<td>Cllr Joyce Pritchard</td>
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3.4 Documentary Evidence Considered
• Schedules of Financing and Expenditure of Poulton Neighbourhood Management 2002/03 – 2005/06
• Private Sector Housing Renewal Assistance Policy
• Poulton Spatial Strategy (Supplementary Planning Guidance Note 15) – January 2005
• Cabinet Member Briefing – Broadband in Lancaster District – January 2005
• Business Support in Poulton Area
• Arson Reduction Initiative Quarterly Report
• Best Value Review – Regeneration and Jobs – July 2003
• Audit Inspection Report – Regeneration and Jobs – May 2004
• Poulton Neighbourhood Management – Evidence & Targets; Improvement Plan; Performance Management Report and Improvement Plan
• Groundworks Rossendale – Homezone Brief – July 2002

(4) Status of this Report

This report is the work of the Poulton Area Renewal Task Group, on behalf of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee, and where opinions are expressed, they are those of
the originators. Unless they state otherwise, they are not the views or opinions of the Council.

Whilst we have sought to draw on this review to make recommendations and suggestions that are helpful to the Council, our work has been designed solely for the purpose of discharging our terms of reference agreed by the Overview & Scrutiny Committee. Accordingly, our work cannot be relied upon to identify every area of strength, weakness or opportunity for improvement.

This report is addressed to the Cabinet of Lancaster City Council for whom it has been prepared. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee take no responsibility for any Member or Officer acting in their individual capacities or to other third parties acting on it.
(5) **Background and Context**

The Task Group was established by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 14 July 2004. At this meeting a number of residents of the Poulton Area expressed concerns that there had been changes to the Area Renewal which had affected the boundary of the scheme. Additionally Councillors present expressed concern over their own lack of information regarding the scheme and concerns over the property purchasing elements of the scheme.

The Committee resolved to establish the Poulton Area Renewal Task Group and terms of reference for the Group were negotiated by Councillors Roger Mace and Peter Robinson, with the Principal Democratic Support Officer and later with the Director (Corporate Services). The Group met for the first time following the summer recess in October 2004. At the first meeting it was agreed that the Task Group required a briefing on Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone in order to place the issue in context.

A briefing of Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone was provided for the Task Group by Steve Matthews (Strategic Housing Manager) and Jim Robson (Head of Engineering Services) at the meeting on 25th November 2004. It was reported that the renewal work looked at the profile of the Poulton area, and whilst renewal was primarily based on improving housing stock and conditions, environmental, economic and social regeneration. In broad terms the regeneration scheme aimed to improve people’s lives through improving the environment in which they lived. Poor quality housing was removed from the housing stock or renovated, and 25 flats were created into seven large family houses with gardens. Grants were also awarded in order to help residents enhance their homes.

In terms of success factors it was noted that 39 per cent of people now felt that area was improving which constituted a huge shift compared to the base line data. Property value in the area had increased from 58 per cent of the district value to 78 per cent. Unfit property was now down to 5 per cent.

At the first meeting of the Task Group, on the advice of the Head of Internal Audit, it was noted that an internal audit investigation was taking place into aspects of the Poulton Area Renewal which would necessitate the deferral of work on terms of reference 3.1.6 and 3.1.7 until after the outcome of the audit investigation was known. On the advice of the Head of Internal Audit, the Task Group agreed that they would not explore Terms of Reference 3.1.6 and 3.1.7 until the investigation was over. Additionally the Task Group agreed they would not formally visit the Poulton Area or take evidence from the public in relation to communication (Term of Reference 3.1.6) until the investigation was completed.

The investigation was still continuing at the time of writing, and as a result this report is only interim and does not cover all the issues in the terms of reference. It is the Task Group’s intention to complete its own work and produce its own final report as soon as possible.
(6) Findings

6.1 Scope of Renewal

The Task Group received a presentation from Stephen Matthews on the scope and objectives of the Poulton Area Renewal. There was a wide variety of regeneration activity that had taken place and the Group found the enthusiasm and commitment displayed by the Officer inspiring. Members received a brief outline of the different strands that had been brought together to create the renewal and the different attached funding streams. There was concern over the complexity of this information and due to this the Group were concerned how members of the public would be able to understand changes in the project boundaries or available funding that might need to take place. Members agreed that they would look at this issue further when they considered communication.

There was a feeling from the Group that whilst there was support for the housing renewal, there remained concern that this was not accompanied by economic renewal of the same intensity, particularly as it was felt that there needed to be provision in Poulton for convenience stores as well as more specialist shops.

It was also noted that the links in to the Councils economic development activity was not as strong as it could be, with the result that people were being attracted to the area through good quality housing but needed corresponding jobs across the district. The Group noted the paradox in that economic development work within Poulton had been delegated to the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board, yet the Group were informed that the provision of economic development and employment was considered on a district wide basis. This view was borne out in the inspection by the Audit Commission of the Council’s regeneration activity.

It may also be noted that this is consistent with the majority view of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 2 February 2005, expressed in a different context, “that integration with economic development within the district was an important element of regeneration such that improving housing alone was not enough to create the sustainable community that was the goal of all the renewal efforts”, and with the recommendation passed at the same meeting, “that specific work to integrate employment creation with housing renewal in the district be included in the Business Plan for the Economic Development Service in 2005-6 and future years.”

Recommendation 1

a) That future housing regeneration work, such as that carried out in Poulton, particularly where delivered through a local delivery mechanism (such as Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board) be integrated with the Council’s economic development plans and strategies in order to deliver a holistic solution to sustainability which respects existing businesses and considers social and economic sustainability alongside environmental sustainability in ways that can positively affect perceptions of the process by local residents and others.

b) That increased promotion of a corporate council view be undertaken to increase perception of the need for joined-up thinking in policy areas like those of renewal and regeneration where existing job descriptions and responsibilities may encourage service-centred thinking, at the expense of the holistic approach that is needed.
6.2 Council Policy

As part of the investigation into Poulton Area Renewal, the Chairman met with the Corporate Director (Community Services), to discuss the policy basis for the Poulton Area Renewal. It was outlined that the origins of the renewal predated the arrival of the current Corporate Director (Community Services), in December 2000. It was queried whether any review had taken place of how the renewal had met the needs as set out in the Poulton Renewal assessment and the original objectives of the Area renewal. It was confirmed that this had not taken place and that the project had not been assessed against transparent milestones. In part this was due to changes in the scope of the renewal due to changes in the available funding. The Corporate Director had noted that when he took post the renewal appeared ‘very ambitious’.

Recommendation 2

a) That resources be made available for an evaluative review to take place of the Poulton Area Renewal against the issues raised in and objectives of the Poulton Neighbourhood Renewal Assessment (June 2000) including issues as described in Terms of Reference 3.1.2 and 3.1.3, namely:

To ascertain the objectives of Council policy relating to Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone, the assessment of criteria and the performance indicators for measuring the success of this area of activity, and to assess the objectives of Poulton Area Renewal and Homezone by performing an impact assessment involving selected themes and criteria based on the district's strategy for sustainable development.

b) That Council have a policy for periodic reviews or reality checks of this kind to be resourced at the outset of future renewal and regeneration projects, in order to improve public accountability.

6.3 Communication

a) With the public

The Task Group are aware from both Members of the public and Officers that there are issues of concern with communication and this issue led in part to the establishment of the Task Group. Unfortunately it has not proved possible to investigate this area of activity until Internal Audit has completed their work and as a result the Panel recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee:
**Recommendation 3**

That the Task Group continue to meet for three months after completion of the Internal Audit Investigation, or for such period as may be necessary to complete its terms of reference.

_The Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed Recommendation 3 on 9 March 2005._

b) With Councillors

There was concern that at different stages throughout the renewal process changes were made to the boundaries of the renewal project and yet there was only limited communication of this to members. The group whilst understanding the need for these changes felt that it would be helpful if Members had been informed of these developments.

**Recommendation 4**

That Members be kept better informed of changes to boundaries of renewal areas and to funding streams during future renewal processes and that future large regeneration activities contain a section on member communication in the communication strategy that accompanies such schemes.

Additionally, there was concern that it was not clear to all Members that there were separate objectives to the Poulton Area Renewal other than housing renewal such as economic and environmental and that the Homezone initiative whilst viewed as part of the renewal was in fact separate. Members were of the view that the reason for a lack of knowledge about this issue was in fact partly due to the changes brought in under the Local Government Act 2000. Members believed that since the changes were brought in there has been a reduction in the flow of information to Councillors (a role which the service committees used to fulfil). The group believes that the Council needs to give further consideration to how Councillors are kept informed of the work of the Council and recommends

**Recommendation 5**

That the Council reviews how information on the activities and policies of the Council is transmitted to elected Members.

**Property Purchasing**

The Task Group have a number of queries with regard to property purchasing procedures. It has not proved possible to investigate this area of activity until Internal Audit has completed their work and as a result the Panel recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the Task Group continues in existence until such a time as it is possible to complete this part of its work.

(See Recommendation 3 above)
Performance Management

The Group heard evidence from John Deacon of Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board on how the renewal was managed in terms of performance and received evidence of how targets had been met. The Group was impressed with the performance against the targets but it was unclear how these compared to the original targets for the area renewal. The Task Group reviewed the relationship between the City Council and the Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board, and considered that problems could arise when the City Council is the accounting body, but not the body accountable for performance. The group were pleased that the Neighbourhood Management had received a positive assessment from the Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and accepted that the focus provided by a central co-ordinating force such as John Deacon is important to the achievements of a renewal process and that funding of an equivalent pivotal role needs to be considered in future renewal work.

Recommendation 6

a) That Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board be congratulated on their assessment in the recent review by the ODPM.

b) That the Council notes the apparent value and focus that a manager can provide and considers the use of similar managers in future regeneration schemes, where appropriate, subject to ensuring that managers are involved in setting measurable targets at the outset, which closely tie the progress of renewal to the policy objectives of the Council, as set by the democratic process.

Homezone

The Group received evidence from the Head of Engineering Services regarding the Homezone project. After hearing the evidence it was agreed that the Homezone issue was not central to the concerns which had been raised and had led to the creation of the Task Group. Members expressed frustration that despite the presence of a significant number of Officers it had not been possible to clarify the issue set out in Terms of Reference 3.1.2 at their meeting on the 25 November 2004 and there had then been a significant delay in clarifying what was felt to be a relatively simple issue.

Members of the Poulton Business Forum made it clear at their meeting on 23 February 2005 that a number of detailed issues relating to the impact of newly introduced parking restrictions and residents’ parking permits were having an adverse effect on local businesses and leisure activities in respect of customer and supplier access and consequently upon business turnover and profitability. Concern was also raised at the meeting that the provision of public toilet facilities in Poulton was inadequate, especially in the principal shopping streets and along the Promenade, given that Morecambe had no large retail stores as some other towns did, which might be providing facilities in substitution for those that a local authority might otherwise be providing. The Task Group were interested in these issues and agreed that they would consult the members of the Business Forum when looking at the issues of consultation and communication.
Recommendation 7

a) That Cabinet liaises with Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board with a view to including recent changes in parking restrictions, traffic management and residents’ parking in Poulton as issues within their satisfaction survey, and considers the results when available.

b) That notwithstanding the discretionary nature of Council spending on public toilets, the Cabinet reviews the provision of public toilets in Morecambe, such review to take place at the earliest available opportunity following completion of the feasibility study on public conveniences currently being undertaken by Poulton Neighbourhood Management Board.

Sustainability

Early in the investigation by the Task Group there was agreement that in any renewal process it is important that the effort (both in terms of time, money and resources) leads to an improvement which can be sustained in to the future and works to wards the objective of building a sustainable community which does not require state intervention over and above that provided to other communities. As a result of this the Panel took the view that as an acid check on the health of the project was required to consider if as a result of the renewal Poulton would be closer to becoming a sustainable community and also to consider to what degree the improvements which had been made were sustainable and would continue to increase the amenity of the area in perpetuity.

The Chairman (as a member of the LA 21 Steering Group) held discussions regarding sustainability with the Cabinet Portfolio holder Councillor Dowding and the Council’s Environmental Co-ordinator over what type of sustainability audit might be appropriate. It was felt that aspects of the Council’s own sustainability check list were pertinent to assessing the renewal and also that some of the elements from the Housing Corporations Sustainability Toolkit would help to give the panel a view of the achievements of the project.

The Corporate Director (Community Services) is currently obtaining data in order to provide answers to the group’s enquiries. He confirmed that a review of the kind suggested by the Task Group had not been undertaken, was needed, and would be timely.

In accordance with the constitution the group requested officer assistance to carry out this work, but were disappointed that there was a significant delay in resources being identified from services, which was not experienced under the previous Review Board system despite there being more Committees and Task Groups. The group are aware that in Service Business plans for 2005/06 services have been asked to identify a day a week to support Overview and Scrutiny, which will go some way to addressing this issue but feel that if the Council is to have an effective overview and scrutiny system (an integral part of the CPA process) the Council needs to address this problem.
Recommendation 8

That the Head of Paid Service be asked
(a) to report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the reasons for delay in providing resources to the Task Group to carry out a sustainability audit of aspects of the Poulton Area Renewal and
(b) to put in place measures to prevent future delays to the work of Overview and Scrutiny.

The Group are also concerned that there appears to be a general lack of awareness and use of the Council's sustainability checklist particularly in the production of Committee reports. The Group believes that it is important that this document is used widely by the Council particularly as its scope goes much further than purely environmental considerations. The Group is aware that it appears that many Cabinet reports do not demonstrate that a sustainability review has taken place, even when it is clear from casual observation that broad issues of sustainability do arise. It was agreed that a sustainability audit needed to be contained in all major council projects at the scoping stage.

Recommendation 9

a) That the Council widens its use of sustainability principles and in particular where appropriate includes in reports and projects measurable indicators and targets relating to social, economic and environmental sustainability.

b) That the Council includes provision at the scoping stage to carry out a broadly based Sustainability Audit on all major projects (such as the Poulton Area Renewal) and makes greater use of available checklists and existing documentation on measurable variables linked to sustainability.
7) Conclusion

It is clear from the foregoing that the work of the Task Group is not yet complete, and that a conclusion and final report must await additional evidence including that which has been requested and/or promised.