

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 12 December 2013

Present: Councillor J Hale (Vice Chair in the Chair)

Councillors J Hale M Johnston
E Boulton M Patrick
P Brightmore T Smith
W Clements M Sullivan
D Elderton G Watt
G Ellis S Whittingham
M Hornby

Apologies Councillor JE Green

Twenty members of the public were in attendance, with the percentage attendance by ward as follows:

- Greasby, Frankby and Irby 0%
- Hoylake and Meols 10%
- Pensby and Thingwall 15%
- Upton 55%
- West Kirby and Thurstaston 20%

11 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Vice-Chair (in the Chair) welcomed those local residents who were in attendance and, at his request, the Members of the Committee and officers introduced themselves.

12 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

13 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

14 CO-OPTION OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

Further to minute 5 (30 October 2013), the Constituency Manager provided an update in relation to the co-option of Community Representatives to the Committee, in accordance with authorisation conferred by the Council (minute 41 (14 October 2013) refers).

As part of the appointment process, applications from prospective Community Representatives had been evaluated and interviews had been undertaken on an informal basis by ward Councillors. The Chair informed Members of the

recommendations made by ward Councillors and sought approval to the appointments, in order for the Community Representatives to be able to take their seats on the Committee. He congratulated them on their appointments and offered the thanks of the Committee for their willingness to engage on behalf of local residents.

Resolved –

(1) That the following persons be appointed as Community Representatives to the Wirral West Constituency Committee –

- (a) Jackie Hall Hoylake and Meols Ward**
- (b) John Smith Greasby Frankby and Irby Ward**
- (c) Lynn Collier Pensby and Thingwall Ward**
- (d) Elise Wong Upton Ward**
- (e) David Wade West Kirby and Thurstaston Ward**

(2) That the officers be requested to organise a full induction session for the newly appointed Community Representatives in January 2014.

15 MERSEYSIDE POLICE ENGAGEMENT AND OPERATIONAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR WIRRAL WEST

Further to minute 9 (30 October 2013), the Constituency Manager reported that, as part of the new approach to neighbourhood working, the Council was working closely with partners to look at where operational boundaries could be aligned with the Constituency footprint. Merseyside Police had already reorganised their management and operation structure around the constituencies and the Wirral West Neighbourhood Policing team for Wirral West was based at Upton Police Station.

The Constituency Manager reported that it was the intention of the Police that their 'Have Your Say' public engagement meetings, previously held in each ward on a monthly basis, would in future be undertaken quarterly, on a Constituency basis. The views of Members were sought as to whether the Public Question Time element of the Constituency Committee should therefore incorporate 'Have Your Say', to cover policing priorities and issues and to enable a short update on crime and disorder in the constituency from the Neighbourhood Inspector. The Committee was asked to note that, as a Constituency Plan was developed, the need for joined up priority setting to address issues for Wirral West across partner agencies would be critical. Joined up engagement with the public at the Constituency Committee and through other mechanisms would support this.

Members expressed the view that the Constituency Committee seemed to be an appropriate meeting for updates from Merseyside Police to be considered and for the Committee and members of the public to be able to ask questions on policing priorities and crime and disorder. However, it was important that the focus of the Committee should be on Constituency matters and that the Question Time part of the meeting should be primarily for questions to be raised on local issues affecting the community. Members expected also that, as part of joined up community engagement, the Police would be able to attend ward meetings that became necessary to address local ward issues. Inspector Brian Griffiths (Neighbourhood Inspector for Wirral West) indicated

that the Police would be willing to attend ward meetings to address local issues, subject to the availability of officers in the Neighbourhood Team.

Consideration was given to problems associated with vehicles parking on pavements and Inspector Griffiths outlined the actions that could be taken to address the problem. Letters could be placed on windscreens in order to educate motorists of the dangers associated with parking on pavements or verges, although for clear cases of obstruction, a fixed penalty ticket would be more appropriate. Productive meetings had been held with the Council's Road Safety Team and targeted work had been carried out in the vicinity of schools. A member referred specifically to work undertaken with schools in Upton ward and he indicated that the focus of any policy to improve safety should be prevention.

Resolved –

- (1) That the policing operational arrangements be noted.**
- (2) That an update be presented to the next meeting upon the continued development of joined up mechanisms for community engagement and further consideration be given specifically to the format and structure of future meetings in relation to contributions from Merseyside Police**
- (3) That this Constituency Committee recommends that the existing policy in relation to vehicles parking on pavements and verges should be enforced.**

16 **WIRRAL WEST PUBLIC QUESTION TIME**

The Chair invited questions from members of the public upon matters that were relevant to the Wirral West Constituency –

- A member of the public circulated photocopies of pages of the Housing Act 1985 and Housing Act 2004 and drew the Committees attention to those parts of the legislation concerning the minimum size of bedrooms in the public rented sector. He sought the views of the Committee as to whether properties with bedrooms smaller than the size stipulated in the legislation should be reclassified accordingly.
 - The Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment indicated that the question of reclassification of property was a matter that should be addressed to the Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and was an issue over which the Constituency Committee had no control. However, the Council's legal advisor indicated that he would provide an update to Members in due course upon the requirements of the legislation.
- From Woodchurch T.R.U.S.T – Exactly why has the asset transfer of Woodchurch Community Centre been delayed by over 3 years now, when the business plan was passed and agreed by Cabinet. Magenta Living have supported the asset transfer for 2 years now and volunteers have spent a lot of time actually running the building for the Council as no Council employees have been employed since the Centre Manager retired. Surely by completing this asset transfer would have saved the

Council money from their budget, since there is funding for a badly needed refurbishment and revenue costs for the first 2 years operation "ring-fenced" under the Asset Transfer Scheme.

- In response, the Strategic Director: Regeneration and Environment indicated that the proposal was initially put forward in August 2011, but was not agreed until October 2012, when the transfer process commenced. He confirmed that the transfer of the Community Centre was to Magenta Living and that the legal documents had been submitted to Magenta in September 2013. The detail was being fine tuned to meet the requirements of the respective parties and it was hoped to complete the transfer very soon.
- From Woodchurch T.R.U.S.T – We are aware from various newspaper articles that representatives from the Tranmere Rovers Supporters club are making some "sweeping statements" regarding the Woodchurch Leisure Centre and land at Woodchurch, which Tranmere Rovers Football Club plan to develop for their new training ground. These people give the impression that they know what is best for Woodchurch. However we disagree with this since none of them live in our community.

We know that the Council are engaging with these representatives from Tranmere, so why are representatives from the community of Woodchurch not being asked to contribute to these discussions since they really do know what is best for Woodchurch. There also needs to be a genuine consultation with the community before anything is agreed.

- In response, the Strategic Director: Regeneration and Environment confirmed that officers had met separately with representatives of Tranmere Rovers Football Club, with local residents and ward Councillors. However, no agreement had been made with TRFC or the Football Trust in relation to the Ingleborough/Woodchurch Scheme. The proposal remained with the EU for their consideration and he confirmed that there would be community involvement in any future issues around the proposal.
- A resident advised that there had recently been a number of serious road traffic accidents in Woodchurch, which had caused major disruption in the local area. The questioner suggested that the proposed introduction of traffic lights at the Houghton Road junction would encourage more drivers to cut through the Woodchurch Estate, which could in turn lead to an increase in traffic accidents. The Committee was requested to seek a review of the impact of additional traffic lights.
 - In response, the Strategic Director: Regeneration and Environment indicated that colleagues were reviewing the site in question. Any similar applications would also be the subject of a traffic review.
- A further question was asked regarding the classification of bedrooms, under 70 sq ft and the impact on residents of the so-called 'bedroom tax' (sic)
 - In response, Members indicated that the properties in question were now owned by Housing Associations, who had previously indicated the significant financial difficulties they would face if their

properties were reclassified. Registered Social Landlords recognised the requirements of the legislation and this was a matter that tenants should raise with them. The Chair reiterated that the Council's legal officers had been requested to investigate this matter and would provide an update to the Committee.

The Chair thanked the public for their questions and asked that the officers take such action, as appropriate.

17 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Constituency Manager provided an update on progress in relation to the following matters that were raised at the meeting held on 30 October 2013 –

- **Wirral West Committee Handbook** (minute 4 refers)
Work was ongoing to develop the Wirral West Committee handbook, which would be circulated to Councillors and Community Representatives for consultation at the earliest opportunity. The Council's four Constituency Managers were working collectively to ensure that handbooks for each Committee were consistent where necessary and that they reflected best practice.
- **Community Asset Audit/Constituency Plan** (minute 7 refers)
The development of a Community Asset Audit for Wirral West would build upon the Council's exploration of how it could use Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) to support its vision for Wirral. Workshops had been held for key stakeholders to develop a practical understanding of the ABCD approach and it was proposed that further workshop sessions would now be held in each Constituency. Funding was being sought from Public Health for activities to take forward ABCD and to engage the wider community. In response to a question from a member of the public, the Constituency Manager provided an explanation of the assets being included in the audit not necessarily being owned by the Council. It was an audit of all the assets available to the Constituency, not solely of property.

It was proposed that the Constituency Plan would bring together the Community Asset Audit and Constituency Profile work being undertaken by Public Health (see minute 18 post) and would set out –

- The community assets already in place in Wirral West and the community's vision for the area (the Community Asset Audit)
 - An evidence-based assessment of local needs and priorities (the Constituency Profile)
 - How the community, the Council and public service partners in Wirral West would come together to address local needs and priorities by building on community assets (the Constituency Plan)
- **Love Wirral** (minute 8 refers)
The closing date for grant applications under the 'Love Wirral' campaign was 6 December 2013 and she indicated that 28 applications had been received for Wirral West. The next stage of the process was an assessment of the applications, followed by a two week online vote to commence on 13 January 2014. A breakdown of the applications on a ward by ward basis would be provided to Members and she confirmed

that the result of the vote for Wirral West projects would be subject to endorsement and approval by the Constituency Committee to enable funding to be awarded between 10 and 21 March 2014.

All of the concerns expressed by Members had been fed back to the officers responsible for administering the grant and clarification was provided upon a number of issues. In relation to a specific concern about digital exclusion, Members were advised that the use of online voting would now be complemented by a paper voting system and, in response to concerns expressed, she confirmed that steps would be in place to ensure that voting was not duplicated.

- **Website Development** (minute 6 refers)

To achieve greater participation, officers had investigated the feasibility of a dedicated website for the Constituency Committee. It had been recognised that there were a number of existing community websites, which were assets on which to build and the matter would be addressed as part of the Community Asset Audit. In the meantime, dedicated pages on the Council's website were being developed for each of the Constituency Committees to ensure that information was easily accessible.

In response to questions from Members, the Constituency Manager proposed to investigate whether links could be provided to other community websites. She highlighted issues associated with the provision of an interactive website and indicated that the use of social media was also being investigated. A further update would be provided to the next meeting.

- **Constituency Budget 2013/2014** (minute 7 refers)

Members had been consulted upon work that had been undertaken to develop an approach to allocate the Committee's budget, taking into consideration the wish of the Committee that it should be allocated equally between wards.

It was proposed that the criteria for the allocation of grants from the **Wirral West Community Fund** allocation (total £50k - £10k per ward) would be very simple – for community groups to improve the quality of life in Wirral West through projects to impact positively on local people and places. Applications would be welcomed from 20 December 2013 to 31 January 2014, prior to a large-scale event then being held in February 2014 at which the Wirral West community would be able to decide on whether or not the projects put forward should be funded. Further details would be widely communicated throughout the Constituency and measures would be put in place to ensure that applications met the necessary criteria, that the voting process at the event would be fair and transparent, and that applicants and the wider community would have a clear understanding about the process and be given every opportunity to be involved.

The criteria for the allocation of the **Wirral West Public Health Fund** (total £25k - £5k per ward) would be specifically aimed at improving public health and a targeted approach would be undertaken with organisations to develop applications. The approach would take into account existing programmes of activity and ensure that the specific

outcomes and indicators identified in connection with the allocation were addressed and that any projects funded would have a clear focus on sustainability. The recently published annual report of the Director of Public Health entitled [Social Isolation](#) provided useful context.

The Constituency Manager reported also upon the allocation of an additional £25k to each Constituency Committee from the Public Health Outcomes Fund, previously reported to the Cabinet (minute 120 (10 December 2013) refers).

In response to questions from Members, she indicated that the limits for grant allocations were up to £1000 from the Community Fund and up to £3000 from the Public Health Fund. Applicants could apply to both funds but not for the same project. An explanatory document had been developed for applicants, which would be circulated to Members for information and published on the Council's website.

- **Monitoring of Attendance** (minute 6 refers)
A robust system of attendance monitoring would be undertaken at all future meetings of the Committee to ensure that an accurate record was maintained as to where those in attendance had travelled from. To support the process, members of the public would be requested to sign in to help ensure that attendance was as representative as possible.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

18 **WIRRAL WEST CONSTITUENCY PROFILE - PRESENTATION**

Andrea Hutchinson, Senior Public Health Analyst, gave a brief presentation of the key messages that were contained within the Wirral West Constituency Profile. It highlighted some of the key issues that had been identified by the research undertaken and the information was presented on a ward by ward basis, with comparison data also provided for the other Wirral constituencies.

In relation to deprivation, the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2010 ranked Wirral as being in the most deprived 20% of local authorities nationally. The inequality in disability-free life expectancy was the largest in England in 2012 (20 years for men and 17 years for women). However, the vast majority of the LSAO's (small areas, populations around 1500 people) in Wirral West constituency fell within the 20% least deprived areas of Wirral.

In relation to Wirral West, the presentation highlighted key items of note in the comparison data in relation to age, ethnicity, life expectancy, early years and benefits claims. With regard to Young People, it indicated that a small proportion (4.5%) was not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET), that educational attainment (at key stage 2) was above the Wirral average for all subjects and that the rate of teenage conceptions was below the Wirral average. With regard to older people, the data indicated that although Wirral West had a large ageing population, it had the lowest rate of hospital admissions due to falls (for age 65+). A third of people aged 65+ lived alone and the Census 2011 indicated the lowest number of carers known to Social Services (1234) against approximately 40,000 in Wirral overall.

The Constituency Manager indicated that the information would feed into the Constituency Plan. Members noted that the data would be very useful in

helping the Committee come to a view as to where resources should be targeted and specifically, where public health funding should be allocated. Members commented that the data seemed to indicate that although there were pockets of deprivation across the Constituency, Upton Ward was in greater need of targeted public health spending than other areas.

However, Members commented also that if the allocation of resources was based solely on indicators of deprivation Wirral West would lose out to other constituencies. In addition, the allocation of resources based solely on deprivation might not address more complex issues of isolation and exclusion.

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the voting rights of Community Representatives, the Council's legal advisor indicated that only elected Members of the Council had the right in law to vote on financial matters and upon the allocation of funding.

It was moved by Councillor Patrick and seconded by Councillor Sullivan –

“That the additional £25k in the public health budget be allocated, on the basis of population, need and deprivation, as highlighted in the Constituency Profile report and presentation.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Hale and seconded by Councillor Ellis –

“(1) That the original allocation of £25k public health funding go forward, on the basis of £5k per ward, as previously agreed.

(2) That the additional £25k public health funding be held back, so as to allow the Committee to consider bids for funding received from across all five wards and for resources to be allocated based on the greatest need.”

The amendment was put and carried (7:6)

The substantive motion was then put to the vote and carried (7:6) and it was–

Resolved (7:6) –

(1) That the original allocation of £25k public health funding go forward, on the basis of £5k per ward, as previously agreed.

(2) That the additional £25k public health funding be held back, so as to allow the Committee to consider bids for funding received from across all five wards and for resources to be allocated based on the greatest need.

19 **DATE AND VENUE FOR NEXT MEETING**

The Chair advised that it had been necessary to rearrange the next meeting of the Committee, originally scheduled for 27 February 2014. It was now proposed that the meeting take place on 6 March 2014, to commence at 7.00pm. The venue was yet to be agreed and details would be published in due course.

Resolved – That the change of date be noted.