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## **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Monday, 21 September 2009

Present:

Councillor H Smith (Chair)

Councillors	T Anderson	M Redfern
	G Ellis (deputy)	P Reisdorf
	J Hale	S Taylor
	B Kenny	J Williams
	D Mitchell	

### **COUNCILLOR SUZANNE MOSELEY**

The Chair referred to the recent sudden and tragic death of Councillor Suzanne Moseley.

Councillor Sue Taylor, on behalf of the Conservative Group, said that they had lost a valuable friend and colleague and thanked all parties for their messages of condolence. She paid tribute to Suzanne's contribution to the work of the Council, and her particular interest in environmental issues.

Members stood in silent tribute to Suzanne's memory.

### 10 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Councillor P Reisdorf declared a personal interest in respect of minute 12 (Arrowe Park Hospital Travel Plan) and minute 17 (Road Safety – Reducing Death and Serious Injury on the Road) by virtue his recent road traffic accident and his attendance at the hospital as a patient.

Councillor D Mitchell declared a personal interest in respect of minute 12 (Arrowe Park Hospital Travel Plan) by virtue of his membership of Merseytravel.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement. No such declarations were made.

## 11 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meetings of the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 1 June, 2009.

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

## 12 ARROWE PARK HOSPITAL TRAVEL PLAN

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report summarising the aims of the Annual Review of the Wirral Hospitals Travel Plan which was completed by the consultants, Mott MacDonald MIS (Appendix 2), together with the main actions for the coming year.

At a meeting held with the Trust and attended by Sustainable Transport Co-ordinator, revised short term and medium/long term targets were agreed, as detailed in Appendix 2., and subsequently agreed by Merseyside TravelWise.

Key short term targets included;

- Increase membership of 'liftshare' (Car Share database) and develop car share policy, including promotional campaigns;
- Hold promotional events such as Car Free Day and Travel Plan promotion event, as well as ongoing travel plan publicity;
- Continue feedback with local bus operators through Wirral Bus Liaison Group;
- Promote the Salary Sacrifice Scheme for cycle purchases and establish Bus Season ticket loan scheme;
- Continue work of Transport Strategy Group, Cycle User Group, and Car Park Policy Group;
- Review transport information given to patients with appointment letters;
- Provide information to be given to new staff at inductions; and
- Undertake surveys for staff, patients and visitors.

Following the submission of the second Annual Review in September 2008, Members raised several issues;

- The take up and costs of the car parking charges reimbursement scheme
- Car park charges for Blue Badge holders
- High levels of Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV)
- Decrease in bus use
- The promotion of cycling
- High levels of staff living within 15mins public transport ride away
- Bus stop location

The report updated Members on these issues.

Mr E Mellor from Mott Macdonald, attended the meeting to present the third annual update and answer questions from members covering a range of issues relating to: promotion of the liftshare scheme; improved publicity for the parking charges reimbursement scheme; relocation of the existing bus stops closer to the main hospital entrance; improved signage for the drop off facility at both the front and rear

of the hospital; timescales for achieving the short/long term targets, and costs associated with the implementation of the Plan.

The Director of Technical Services reported that the Plan was work in progress and amendments would be made to reflect the specific points raised by members following the presentation of the report and Action Plan

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Kenny that:

“The Committee note and endorse the third annual review of the Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust’s Travel Plan.”

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Hayes and seconded by Councillor Ellis that:

“This committee duly notes the report. However this Committee believes that there should no longer be any car parking charges for visitors and patients of Wirral Hospitals and calls upon the Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust to withdraw all car parking charges as soon as is reasonably practicable.”

The amendment was put and lost (4:6).

The motion was put and carried (6:5) (by virtue of the Chair’s casting vote)

Resolved (6:5) - That the Committee note and endorse the third annual review of the Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust’s Travel Plan.

## 13 **ALLOTMENT PROVISION AND DEVELOPMENT**

The Director of Regeneration reported upon the work of the Allotment Development Officer and other issues related to allotments provision and development. The report also included a petition requesting the provision of an allotment site on land near Gilroy Road, West Kirby.

The Allotment Development Officer made progress in a number of areas. Approximately 15 sites had been visited and assessed as potential new allotment sites and at the present time 5 of these were being considered:

- (i) The Warrens, Thingwall
- (ii) Sandringham Avenue, Hoylake
- (iii) Broadway, Greasby
- (iv) Gilroy Road, West Kirby
- (v) Mosslands Drive, Wallasey

The majority of the sites were currently used as public open space and would need planning approval for change of use. Wirral’s Local Development Framework which was currently being drawn up by the Council’s Strategic Planning Section would involve an assessment of allotment provision in the borough in accordance with

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) 17. Any new sites would need significant capital investment for the provision of water, access roads, toilets and security.

A petition, containing 52 signatures, requesting the lease of a site near Gilroy Road, West Kirby, had recently been received. A spokesperson for the petitioners addressed the meeting.

The Director outlined the Council's policy for self managed sites and reported upon an approach by the Sandringham Avenue Allotments Society asking if the Council would be willing to lease the site to the Society for a peppercorn rent in recognition of the fact that there were no cost implications for the Council in them running the site. They currently paid £750 per annum which they suggested could be used for improvements to the site. It was suggested that a different arrangement for leasing of allotment sites may encourage other allotment societies to consider self management and provide access to sources of external funding.

A spokesperson for the Sandringham Avenue Allotment Society addressed the meeting. She presented a petition, containing 50 signatures, drawing attention to the unmet demand for allotments in the Hoylake area, and the Council's duty under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act to make sufficient provision for allotments and to let them to local residents.

Mr David Jones, Chair of the Wirral Federation of Allotment Societies addressed the meeting. He referred to the development of the Allotment Strategy and other positive initiatives including additional funding for working allotments and the appointment of an allotment development officer, but emphasised the need for further additional funding to be made available for improvements in the important areas of site security, maintaining and improving the infrastructure, bringing derelict plots back into use, and developing new allotment sites.

Mr David Morris, former Council Allotment Development Officer, and current North West Representative for the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardens, addressed the meeting. He referred to the early successes in his role as Allotment Development Officer in terms of identifying areas where additional allotment sites are required but emphasised that a more innovative approach was needed to the setting of budgets for the council to meet its statutory responsibilities under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act. He also referred his initial discussions with the PCT regarding sources of funding for allotments in line with its responsibilities for the promotion healthier lifestyles and reported upon the potential use of land adjacent to the new health centre at The Warrens which had recently been granted planning permission.

The Director reported that allotment budget for 2009/10 was £70,000 with an income of £29,900. The financial implications associated with the request to lease the self managed sites at Wingate Avenue, Eastham and Sandringham Avenue, Hoylake, on a peppercorn rent were that there would be a loss of income of £120 and £750 respectively per annum.

The Director responded to questions from members regarding the interpretation of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act, the demand for allotments and current waiting list, the possibility of bringing the potential five new sites into operation

through the use of asset transfer, and the financial, legal and planning issues associated with the development of any new allotment sites.

It was moved by Councillor Reisdorf and seconded by Councillor Redfern that :

“(1) That the work of the Allotments Development Officer be noted.

(2) That further reports be submitted to this Committee on possible allotment sites and any financial implications, and subject to further work by officers, endorses the development of the five sites currently being considered.

(3) That officers look into the possible transfer of Sandringham Avenue and Wingate Allotments to the respective allotment societies as a community asset transfer. “

It was moved as an amendment by Councillor Anderson and seconded by Councillor Taylor that:

“This Committee recognises the demand for allotments and calls on Cabinet to renew its commitment to the Allotment Strategy. It further recommends that:

(1) Peppercorn rents be granted to self managed sites;

(2) Funding for the provision of allotments be increased so that the demand can be met in accordance with the Council’s statutory obligations under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act;

(3) Where there is a demand for allotments to be self managed, the Council transfer the asset to the established allotment society. “

The amendment was put and lost (4:6)

The motion was put and carried (8:2)

Resolved (8:2) –

(1) That the work of the Allotments Development Officer be noted.

(2) That further reports be submitted to this Committee on possible allotment sites and any financial implications, and subject to further work by officers, endorses the development of the five sites currently being considered.

(3) That officers look into the possible transfer of Sandringham Avenue and Wingate Allotments to the respective allotment societies as a community asset transfer.

14 **EASTHAM AREA - CONSIDERATION OF AN AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREA**

The Director of Regeneration submitted a report detailing the results of assessments to determine whether an Air Quality Management Area could be established in the Eastham area, having regard to the available data and to the Policy Guidance (PG09) issued by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in February 2009. He reported that before an LAQMA could be considered it was necessary to establish that an Air Quality Objective was breached and based on the results of current assessments only 2 (W29 &2) of 6 sites in the Eastham would meet that criteria. Therefore, until further monitoring results were available, it was too early to conclude that a LAQMA was appropriate for this area.

Resolved –

(1) That Members note the conclusions of this report that so far there is insufficient evidence that the Eastham Area fails to meet the criteria set by the Policy Guidance issued by Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and therefore, currently, there is no requirement that an Air Quality Management Area be declared at this stage.

(2) That Members receive a further report of the monitoring results for Eastham when the “bias adjusted” results are available in early 2010.

15 **'REDUCING THE COUNCIL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT' - SIX MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT NO 2**

The Director of Technical Services presented a report which updated Members on the various projects currently being undertaken by Technical Services to achieve the Corporate Objective to 'Reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint', as set out in the Council's Corporate Plan.

Members were asked to note the progress made to date on the Project Plan (Appendix 1) and to endorse the further initiatives proposed.

Resolved –

(1) That the Committee note and endorse the performance and progress of the various Council 'Carbon Footprint Reduction' projects to date undertaken by the Technical Services Department.

(2) That the Committee supports the proposal to take advantage of the national climate change campaign “Act on CO2” detailed in section 4.2.2

(3) That the Committee supports the proposals detailed in section 4.4.2 with regards to phase 4 of the IEEP

## WIRRAL FLOOD GROUP - PROGRESS REPORT

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report providing an update on the progress made to date by the Wirral Flood Group and seeking the views of members regarding the constitution and future direction of the work of this group.

The Wirral Flood Group comprised the Elected Members Steering Group, relevant Council officers from those service areas with responsibility for addressing the recommendations set out in Sir Michael Pitt's report, plus representatives from the Environment Agency, United Utilities, and Wirral NHS. Its work to date included:

- The agreement of Terms of Reference for the Group (Appendix 1)
- The establishment of the collaborative cross-departmental and agency working on matters related to flooding.
- The opportunity for each agency and organisations responsible for flood prevention and for the management of water in general to bring to a multi-agency audience their individual roles and responsibilities and current work plans
- The compilation of a specific list of Wirral's flooding "hot spots". This list is in its early stages and will remain a "live" document. It is intended for this document to be available to officers and Elected Members, and allow them up to date information on each identified "hot spot" and the current status of work to alleviate or prevent flooding in that location.
- The establishment of a Council, Environment Agency and United Utilities Operational Group which seeks to identify the cause of flooding at each hot spot, who is responsible and more importantly what is being done to reduce the risk of flooding at those locations.

The new Flood and Water Management Bill which was due to come into force in early 2010 would place a statutory responsibility on local authorities to lead on local flood risk management. County and unitary authorities would also be responsible for local flood risk assessment, mapping and planning in relation to ordinary watercourses, surface run-off and groundwater. They would also lead the production of local surface water management plans and the agreement of the associated programmes of work with all stakeholders.

As a result of these new responsibilities, there was a need to recruit some expertise in the area of flood management to fully understand the root cause of flooding and be in a position to carry out a Surface Water Management Plan for Wirral, which was a recommendation of Pitt report and also a statutory responsibility for local authorities in the new Flood and Water Bill. It was envisaged that with this expertise and the ongoing dialogue at both operational and Elected Member level all identified "hot spots" of flooding on Wirral would be addressed.

Through the development of a database capturing the causation of flooding at these "hot spots", the Group would be in a position to engage in a more meaningful manner with the residents and property owners who have been affected by these floods. In addition to this, the Health, Safety & Resilience Team was currently preparing a specific guidance document for property owners on advice they can take both proactively (purchasing sand bags, fitting air brick covers, ensuring road gullies are free from detritus, etc) and also containing the relevant contact emergency details of the agencies with a responsibility for a flooding response.

The Director reported that the alleviation of flooding was a complicated issue, with a range of European, Central Government and Regional directives and strategies requiring actions from most departments of the council and many external agencies. The establishment of the Wirral Flood Group had provided an opportunity for improved co-ordination to ensure that the various agencies were working together to alleviate flooding on Wirral. To date the Wirral Flood Group had been successfully chaired by the Health, Safety & Resilience Operations Manager, but as the work of the Group evolved and having regard to the joint Elected Member and officer representation from a constitutional perspective, Members' views were particularly welcomed on the future Chairperson arrangements for the Group.

There was a general discussion regarding the working arrangements for the Group and it was suggested that the membership should be extended to include community groups from the Greasby and Leasowe areas and other "hot spots" for flooding on Wirral.

Resolved – That the Committee:

- (1) Note the progress to date of the Wirral Flood Group;
- (2) Endorse the proposal to recruit additional flood management expertise as part of the existing Technical Services' staffing establishment;
- (3) That the Health, Safety and Resilience Operations Manager, continue to chair the Group and that the committee agree in principle to the involvement of community groups, subject to a further report to the next meeting on this issue.

## 17 **ROAD SAFETY - REDUCING DEATH AND SERIOUS INJURY ON THE ROAD**

The Director of Technical services submitted a report detailing the progress made in improving road safety and reducing the number of people injured on Wirral's roads, and the comprehensive programme of ongoing and proposed actions by the Council and its partners in respect of road safety, which aim to achieve the road safety objectives set out in the Council's Corporate Plan and Wirral Local Area Agreement.

Resolved –

- (1) That the Committee note the progress in improving road safety performance and analysis of casualty data outlined in this report;
- (2) That the Committee endorse the proposed Road Safety Action Plan for 2009/10.



18 **GOLF COURSE SECURITY**

The Director of Regeneration submitted a report outlining the current arrangements for security on golf courses.

He reported that a major review of the Parks and Countryside Service, including golf, was currently being undertaken in the form of the Parks and Countryside Service Procurement Exercise (PACSPE) to explore service delivery options and developing a business case for undertaking a procurement exercise for the service. This would be the subject a further report to Cabinet, and could result in changes to the management of the municipal golf courses.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

19 **PLAYBUILDER PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Director of Regeneration submitted a report outlining the current arrangements for the Playbuilder Programme, approved by Cabinet at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2009.

The Play Pathfinder and Playbuilder Programme was developed from the Children and Young People Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) consultation on the national play strategy, and was a key commitment in the Governments "Children's Plan", launched in December 2007. This programme would invest £235m nationally in children's play for three years from 2008 to 2011. A variety of freely accessible play facilities would be developed targeting the 8-13 year age range specifically. The programme was intended to develop public play spaces close to where children live, make them safe, but also interesting, exciting and stimulating, whilst available to all.

The Director reported that the initial Playbuilder Programme application was prepared by officers from the Children and Young People's Department and the Regeneration Department and a project plan submitted to the DCSF listing the 22 sites to be developed (Appendix 1). No new play areas were currently being proposed, the sites were existing facilities currently maintained by the Parks and Countryside Service, and would continue to be covered under existing maintenance resources. He reported that regular reports on progress were provided by the Project Manager to the Wirral Play Partnership the key mechanism for cross-service and departmental working in the development and promotion of play in Wirral, and to the Youth and Play Service Advisory Committee.

The initial phase of public consultation was being carried out by the Youth & Play Service through local schools and at play sessions near to proposed sites.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

20 **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION PANEL - 17 SEPTEMBER - MINUTES**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, submitted the minutes of the panel meeting held on 17 September, 2009 when it was resolved:-

(i) That the panel note the objections received and the officers' responses and recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the "Cycling Strategy" scheme at the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and Mount Road, Wallasey, as shown on Plan No. Beng/59/09/a, be approved for implementation.

(ii) That the panel note the objections received and the officers' responses and recommend to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that the "Local Safety" scheme, as shown on Plan Beng/54/09a, be approved for implementation in Higher Bebington Road and Pulford Road, Bebington.

(iii) That the panel note the objectors' concerns and recommend to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the traffic regulation order for the introduction of Residents' Parking Scheme Visitor Permits at Silverburn Avenue, Moreton, be made as advertised, subject to the issue of permits being restricted to one household and one visitor.

(iv) That the panel note the objection received and the Officers' response and recommend to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee that waiting restrictions, as shown on Plan 62/09, be approved for implementation in Holm Lane and Holm View Close, Oxtun.

Resolved –

(1) That the minutes of the panel be received.

(2) That the committee recommend to the Cabinet Member that the following schemes be approved:

(a) "Cycling Strategy" scheme at the junction of Mount Pleasant Road and Mount Road, Wallasey, as shown on Plan No. Beng/59/09/a.

(b) "Local Safety" scheme at Higher Bebington Road and Pulford Road, Bebington, as shown on Plan Beng/54/09a.

(c) Residents' Parking Scheme Visitor Permits at Silverburn Avenue, Moreton, subject to the issue of permits being restricted to one household and one visitor.

(d) Waiting restrictions in Holm Lane and Holm View Close, Oxtun., as shown on Plan 62/09.

21 **FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT 2009/10**

The Directors of Technical Services and of Regeneration presented a report providing an overview of progress made against the indicators for 2009/2010 and key projects which are relevant to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee, together with a performance indicator summary (Appendix 1).

Resolved – That the Committee note the contents of this report.

22 **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The Director of Technical Services advised the Committee that no decisions had been taken under delegated powers since the last meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

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