

## ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 5 July 2018

Present: Councillor T Jones (Chair)

Councillors	S Foulkes	S Jones
	B Berry	B Kenny
	A Brame	C Muspratt
	K Cannon	T Smith
	T Cottier	A Sykes
	G Ellis	RL Abbey (In place of W Ward)
	A Hodson	M Jordan (In place of T Cox)

### 1 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

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

Members were reminded that they should also declare whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any items to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

No such declarations were made.

### 2 MINUTES

With reference to Minute No. 53 (paragraph relating to cash/card payments for Invigor8 membership) a Member highlighted that Councillor Tony Jones had been quoted, and that it had in fact been Councillor Tony Smith who initiated the comment.

Subject to the above correction, it was:

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 28 March, 2018 be approved and signed as a correct record.**

### **3 WIRRAL CORE STRATEGY LOCAL PLAN PROGRESS UPDATE**

Further to Minute 40(2) of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 December 2017, and Minute 46 of the meeting of the Committee held on 31 January, David Ball, Assistant Director Major Growth Projects and Housing Delivery provided a verbal update on progress related to the Wirral Local Plan. He informed the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that since his earlier reports the Council had invested additional staffing resource to aid the Plan preparation and process. He further informed that a report on the Wirral Core Strategy Local Plan had been scheduled for consideration at a Special Meeting of the Cabinet on 23 July, 2018.

The Assistant Director Major Growth Projects and Housing Delivery updated the Committee that the Cabinet Report would include information on the current position relating to land options for housing. He added that, contrary to recent press coverage on the subject of the Green Belt, no decisions had been, or would be made until Members had sight of and had been consulted on the full report.

The Assistant Director Major Growth Projects and Housing Delivery further informed that no decision had been forthcoming from the Secretary of State in respect of the need for intervention.

The Chair thanked Mr Ball for his attendance and his update regarding the current state of progress regarding the Wirral Core Strategy Local Plan.

**Resolved – that the verbal report be noted.**

### **4 WIRRAL VIEW**

Kevin MacCallum, Head of Communications provided a verbal update on the Council's 'Wirral View' publication, detailing work currently underway, its content and issues surrounding its distribution.

The Head of Communications informed the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that Wirral View had been launched in October 2016, and that the most recent edition was the Council's 17th. Members were apprised that Wirral View was not produced during the purdah periods associated with various elections in the past two years. The next edition of Wirral View was due in July.

Members were told that Wirral View was printed by one of the Council's main media partners in the borough, and distributed by a local company. Most photography and all design, writing, editing and subediting was done in-house by the Council's communications team.

The Head of Communications informed that Wirral View had been introduced alongside a new website and new approach to social media. The website 'Wirralview.com' had been successful and the Council's new approach to social media – using more video, more engaging content had been extremely successful e.g. the video announcing the reopening of the Tower Road Bridge had been viewed more than 90,000 times on Facebook within the first 48 hours of its initial posting.

Mr MacCallum explained that the Council had also launched an e-edition of 'Wirral View', which had already accumulated more than 13,000 subscribers from the first two editions.

On the subject of advertising, the Committee noted that Wirral View had never been a vehicle to generate income - that was not its primary purpose. The Communications Office had deliberately priced advertising space much higher than local newspapers, avoiding conflict or possible charges of unfair competition. The Head of Communication informed that given this approach, the Council does still accept advertising business, but does very little sales and marketing to promote ad space.

Mr MacCallum explained that the Council has launched digital advertising, and was also working on new outdoor advertising products, to mitigate the financial impact on the council of not promoting advertising within Wirral View.

Members were informed that that the Council was now on its second supplier distribution – and how this had been the biggest challenge for the project. The Head of Communications that this aspect of the project had not been good enough, and was overshadowing the product itself. He added that the Communications Team were presently developing a number of proposals which would change how this particular element of the Wirral View project would be managed.

The Committee was apprised that more information on this and other aspects of the project will be available in autumn of 2018. Members agreed that Partners and Community Groups had welcomed Wirral View, and valued it as a way of getting clear, important information to residents. Community organisations valued the publication, as a vehicle for promoting stories, events and information relating to their work. Mr MacCallum informed that the majority of this sort of information would not be covered by the local media – there simply wasn't the available space.

The Head of Communications summarised his report explaining that the delivery aspect of the Wirral View project had been incredibly difficult and frustrating. He concluded his report stating that further discussions would be held by the Cabinet, detailing new proposals to help improve the distribution performance.

Members questioned Mr MacCallum, and provided a variety of anecdotal evidence, on the subject of inconsistent or non-existent distribution issues in particular areas of the borough, but also commented on the positive feedback received regarding the content and quality of the publication from community organisations and residents.

The Chair thanked the Head of Communications for his presentation.

**Resolved – That the verbal report be noted.**

## **5 THE EXTENT AND IMPACTS OF FLY-TIPPING ON WIRRAL**

Rob Cain, Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer introduced his report that provided the Committee with an overview of fly-tipping on Wirral – its causes, impacts, prevalence and the work being done by the Council to reduce the number of incidents in the borough. The report also informed Members of the action the Council had and will be taking against offenders, including future developmental activity to combat fly-tipping.

The Senior Environmental Enforcement Officer apprised Members that Fly-tipping” was a term commonly used to refer to the illegal, unauthorised and wanton deposit of waste. “Fly-tipping” itself was not a legal definition however offences deemed as “fly-tipping” can be covered by a number of pieces of legislation, the most common being Section 33 Environmental Protection Act 1990 as the prohibition on unauthorised or harmful deposit, treatment or disposal etc. of waste onto any land where no waste management licence is in operation.

The report informed that, in reality, most fly-tipping on Wirral was committed by residents disposing of waste onto highways, open land or into rear passageways. At its most extreme level, fly-tipping was committed on industrial scales by organised criminal groups, often disposing of commercial or hazardous waste for the purposes of financial gain or tax avoidance. The control, investigation and ultimate eradication of fly-tipping on Wirral was important because it can have a devastating impact on the local environment and detrimentally affect the lives of Wirral’s residents. The report further informed that Wirral Council had made a commitment through the corporate pledges set out in the Wirral Plan, to create an attractive local environment for Wirral residents and visitors.

In response to Member questions, Mr Cain provided the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee with a detailed summary on key areas of the Council’s actions to combat fly-tipping, that included additional information on:

- The Council’s duty under Section 89 of The Environmental Protection Act 1990;

- Removal of waste following legal process, and actions to recover costs;
- Investigations of specific areas of fly-tipping / hot spots;
- Use of CCTV; and
- Information requests to the DVLA to help identify perpetrators when a vehicle had been used to carry out fly-tipping.

### **Resolved – That**

- 1) the report be noted; and**
- 2) the actions of the Council to address this issue be endorsed.**

## **6 DEVELOPING THE SINGLE USE PLASTIC FREE WIRRAL POLICY**

Michael Cockburn, Lead Commissioner – Environment Strategy and Partnerships introduced his report and provided a verbal presentation on the development of a Single Use Plastic (SUP) Free Policy for Wirral. The report informed that at its meeting of December 2017 the Council passed a resolution on single use plastic (SUP) and requested Cabinet to set in motion actions to develop a comprehensive policy on phasing out SUP and associated actions as recommended by Council to put Wirral in a leading position on ‘SUP Free’. Strategically, the policy supported the Wirral Plan pledge to create an attractive local environment for Wirral residents.

Mr Cockburn informed that in response to the Council resolution, officers had subsequently developed an approach to addressing SUP and formulating the SUP Free Wirral Policy, where it was proposed the following be included:

- The development of an SUP free communications and public awareness campaign - to include a briefing for all Council staff.
- Amendment of the Council’s ‘Managing our Waste Strategy’ to set out the Council’s commitment to becoming SUP free.
- Working with local groups and interested parties to support local schemes and audits of plastic accumulations.
- Specifying that Council services and events will operate SUP free.
- Specifying within the Council’s conditions of hire that third party events held in Council facilities or on Council land must operate SUP free.
- The Council’s procurement processes be developed to provide SUP alternatives.
- The development of a voluntary SUP code for Wirral businesses in conjunction with the Wirral Chamber of Commerce.

- Encourage strategic partners to adopt SUP free policies and work together to eradicate SUP.

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the proposed SUP Free Wirral policy will be developed to support the Council's long term objectives for carbon reduction, adaptation for unavoidable climate change and to help drive behavioural changes in the way people relate to their local environment via the Love Where You Live campaign.

The report further informed that the Council and its partners had already made progress in putting into place key aspects of the SUP Free Wirral policy.

Mr Cockburn apprised the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the BBC's Blue Planet series in late 2017, and the daily media coverage on SUP since, had exercised public opinion and concern, he added that the China crisis and resulting market collapse for disposal/recycling abroad had resulted in the local (UK) stockpiling of plastics.

Members noted that the Waste Disposal Authority's inability to receive hard plastics means that it wasn't being recycled across the City Region. This, in addition to feedback and concerns raised by local communities particularly those beach-combing on Wirral's beaches, was driving the implementation of SUP free policies.

Mr Cockburn's presentation highlighted the Government's 4 point plan due to be launched later this year, that aimed to:

- cut amount plastic in circulation;
- reduce the number of different plastics in use;
- address declining recycling performance; and
- make it easier for people to recycle.

Consultation was also underway on a proposed deposit / return scheme for plastic drinking bottles, and other considerations included a potential levy for SUP and a Supermarket directive regarding packaging.

Following this meeting, Mr Cockburn explained that it was hoped that following Council ratification of a SUP Free Wirral Policy, the Policy would be fully established during 2018/19. Council services were currently reviewing service provision to identify SUP products that can be removed/replaced across a wide variety of services i.e. education, licensing, procurement, event management and leisure services. He added that, for example, vending provision aimed to become SUP free, with further provision of water fountains in appropriate locations (leisure centres).

Members noted that most of Wirral's schools were part of the Eco Schools programme over 56 of which held Green Flag status. Eco Schools' interactive educational packages were to be updated to include SUP Free.

In response to Member questions, the Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny and the Lead Commissioner – Environment Strategy and Partnerships provided additional information on a number of key areas, these included:

- Primary Legislation;
- Plastic free aisles in supermarkets;
- Alternative road surfaces i.e. the use of recycled plastics;
- Progress on recycling arrangements for hard plastics to address stockpiling.

**Resolved – That the proposals for the Single Use Plastic Free Wirral Policy be noted, and recommended to the Cabinet Member Environment for implementation.**

## **7 2017/18 QUARTER 4 AND YEAR END WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE**

Carl Gurnell, Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny introduced a report of the Strategic Commissioner, Environment that provided the 2017/18 Quarter 4 (January - March 2018) performance report for the Wirral Plan pledges under the remit of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Quarter 4 report was included as Appendix 1 to the report, and provided a description of the progress in Quarter 4 that included available data in relation to a range of outcome indicators and supporting measures.

The Year End closedown report was included as Appendix 2 and provided a summary analysis of improvement of performance against measures and delivery of Pledge strategy actions as at year end.

The Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny informed that the detailed 2017/18 Action Plan has been included in the report with rationale for any redefined or withdrawn actions identified.

In response to Member questions, the Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny and the Strategic Commissioner: Environment provided additional information on a number of key areas, these included:

- Prevention of homelessness;
- Increasing the number of subscribers to the Council's Garden Waste Collection Service;
- Additional funding secured for local community groups and organisations;

- Waste recycling performance and the issues surrounding disposal of hard plastics;
- Issuance of Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of littering and dog fouling; and
- Kerbside recycling.

The Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny informed that a number of the indicators face a time lag caused by the availability of data, as they are national data sets requiring validation prior to release and that statistical analysis can be complex in some cases e.g. domestic violence, where a higher reporting figure is considered better in terms of a requirement to raise awareness and increase reporting, whereas more cases of such incidents is clearly worse. He added that in other areas of statistical reporting the Council has to use the best data available, which may in some cases be older data, in which case the report provided additional comment / clarification.

Members requested further detail on a number of areas, namely:

- Validation of data in respect of Homelessness – May 2018 figures;
- Recirculation of the information relating to Garden Waste Collection Service – presented at the recent Budget Option Workshops – and information regarding the Council's target figures for this service; and
- Expected date for a report to Members on the review into Wirral's Leisure Services and Leisure and Cultural Assets (currently under development).

The Strategic Commissioner Environment confirmed that a number of the indicators could be affected by a time lag caused by the availability of data, but advised that he would respond to the specific points raised by Members after the meeting.

Members thanked the Team Leader Performance and Scrutiny and the Strategic Commissioner: Environment for their contributions.

**Resolved – That the report be noted.**

## 8 **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME REPORT**

The Chair introduced his report that provided an update regarding progress made since the last Committee meeting held on 28 March, 2018. The report informed that the current work programme be formed of a combination of scrutiny reviews, workshops, standing items and requested officer reports. The Chair advised that the agenda report provided the Committee with the opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. A summary listing of topics for consideration in the current work programme for the Committee was attached as an appendix to the report.



The Chair suggested that Members of the Committee forward their preferences for priority work topics via email direct to him, or via the relevant Political Party Spokesperson.

**Resolved – That the content of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme be noted.**

This page is intentionally left blank