

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12 March 2024

Present:

Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes
P Jobson
V Wilson
M Booth
T Murphy

G Davies
N Graham
J Walsh
A Brame
K Stuart (In Place of
Cllr A Ainsworth)

73 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website for two years.

74 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Ann Ainsworth. Councillor Kaitlin Stuart was in attendance as substitute.

75 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interests.

76 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 be approved as an accurate record.

77 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that 11 public questions had been received in advance of the meeting.

Christine Brie asked if the condition of pavements in the borough could be addressed. As a mother of a disabled son in a wheelchair, Ms Brie stated that the conditions of pavements, paths and walkways, including the condition of dropped kerbs, were not safe to push a wheelchair, were dangerous and as a result in breach of the Equality Act.

In response, the Chair thanked Christine for highlighting the issue and appreciated the concerns raised. As a Committee the condition of pavements was being raised more frequently. Whilst the Chair disagreed that Wirral's pavements were all unsafe or in breach of statutory regulations, it was reported that trained and experienced highways inspectors carried out regular safety inspections on all pavements. Where required, reactive repairs were completed. It was noted that considerable grant funding was invested into planned maintenance of pavements.

Don Naylor asked a question relating to the Sussex Bay Project which aimed to restore a section of the coastline to its natural state through a 'bold collaboration' framework of civic, business and community groups. Mr Naylor asked whether in light of this, could the Council investigate the possibility of an inclusive range of parties, interested in the future of Hoylake Beach, liaising with Sussex Beach representatives in order to better understand how the framework was put in place?

In response, The Chair indicated that the Sussex Bay rewilding project would be investigated further, and that full details relating to the future Hoylake Beach Management Plan would be provided at the meeting of the Committee in April.

Anne Ardern asked a question relating to the Hoylake Beach Management Plan and why the needs of the disabled people's access had not been enshrined in either of the two beach management plan options?

In response, the Chair reported that one of the main objectives of the beach management options was to ensure the safety of users and access across the beach and that both options aligned with this objective. The report to the Committee in April to consider the outcomes of the consultation on the options would include an Equalities Impact Assessment.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Joanne Randles, who asked why individuals outside of Wirral were allowed to participate in consultations relating to Wirral specific issues?

In response, the Chair indicated that Hoylake Beach, as an outside space, was utilised by a range of people including not just those that reside in Wirral. As a result, non-residents may have an interest in providing their feedback. As it was an online public consultation open to all, then all interested parties were able to submit their feedback.

John Brace asked a question relating to appendix 1 of Agenda Item 7 - City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Combined Authority Transport Plan Programme 2024/25 which reported "16 sperate areas in Phase 3 and 6 separate areas in Phase 4 (various roads)" of the 20mph rollout. Mr Brace

asked which specific areas were currently planned in these areas and how and when they will be decided?

In response, the Chair reported that a report which was presented to Committee on 5 December 2023 contained an Appendix E indicating all the proposed areas for 20mph in map form and that the areas to be considered for phases 3 and 4 were indicated in that report. It was further reported that until phases 3 and 4 were approved there was not a list of specific roads prepared, but at that point the full list of roads would be available to the public.

Mr Brace asked a supplementary question asking how the public can suggest roads they feel strongly about for inclusion for future phases before a decision is made by committee?

In response the Chair indicated that a written response would be provided.

Gail Jenkinson asked a question regarding a Greasby resident who had 13 old paint pots to dispose of and had no means of travelling to the recycling centre in Bidston. It was stated that to use ERIC would require 3 collections for £96.00. Gail Jenkinson asked what plans there were for local collections of smaller specialised items to encourage those unable to travel to the recycling centre or who are reluctant to mitigate the positive contribution of recycling in combating climate change with a dedicated trip by car?

In response, the Chair provided technical advice relating to the disposal of paint pots and other smaller specialised items such as electrical items. It was noted that exploration of the possibility of a separate kerbside collection materials such as electrical items would be considered as part of the future waste collection service, following the end of the current contract in 2027.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question from Barbara Morris which asked the Council to reconsider the proposal of a single socket/single use policy in relation to festive displays.

In response, the Chair reported that the policy limiting the number of attachments plugged into a single lighting column was proposed was due to the expansion of displays by some groups meant many items were connected to one single supply source which could pose a real risk of short circuit and overload if any one transformer failed. It was noted that sockets had been provided in lighting columns for groups to use at certain locations and that the Festive Display policy included that additional sockets could requested at a cost and would be considered on a site by site basis.

Jane Turner, asking a question on behalf of David Parker, asked a question relating to the Hoylake Beach Management Options, and why the Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRAs) for both options failed to take into account two key Special Area of Conservation (SACs) features which were not listed

in the SAC designation: H2110 Embryonic Shifting Dunes and H1210 Annual Vegetation of Drift lines?

In response the Chair reported that this would be investigated fully and addressed at or before the meeting in April to discuss the beach management options.

Jane Turner asked a supplementary question asking whether, on the assumption this would require considerable changes to the options whether there would be a further consultation?

In response the Chair indicated that a written response would be provided.

Sean Murphy asked a question as a Hoylake resident since 1995 whose family had enjoyed the facilities in Hoylake including using the beach. Mr Murphy referenced the motion passed by Committee in November 2022 to progress two beach management options for consideration which indicated any options proposed for public consultation would need Natural England proposal. The Chair was asked when they and party spokespersons were consulted on the details of the consultation prior to its publication.

In response, The Chair reported that Chair and Spokes were informed that the current options were to be consulted on shortly before the consultation began and that the matters raised would be considered at the meeting in April.

Sean Murphy asked a supplementary question asking whether the Chair was satisfied with the level of consultation prior to the publication of the public consultation.

In response the Chair indicated that a written response would be provided.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Chris Stradling regarding the presence of Shore Dock (*Rumex rupestris*), a rare plant in the UK which was present on Hoylake Beach. Mr Stradling's question asked why Shore Dock was not mentioned in the HRAs for the beach management options as removal of the plants would appear in breach of the of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981?

In response the Chair indicated that this was an important issue that would be investigated fully before the meeting in April.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Keith Randles, asking, as Cabinet Member in 2019, whether the Chair was aware of the Hoylake Vision NDP advances to remove a Hoylake amenity beach from Wirral residents as part of their own agenda.

In response the Chair indicated that a written response would be provided.

The Assistant Director for Highways & Infrastructure presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out a consolidated policy for festive displays to streamline and standardise the process for community groups whilst minimising the potential liability and risks to the Council. It was reported that the policy provided a structured framework for the discretionary service, ensuring due diligence, adherence to relevant guidance and compliance with legislative safety requirements during the evaluation and approval of festive display permit applications.

Members queried how community groups would be engaged before the implementation of the policy whilst noting the importance of ensuring the policy was user friendly and did not discourage groups. The Assistant Director of Highways and Infrastructure confirmed that subject to approval the Council would ensure pre-implementation workshops were carried out with all groups providing festive displays to ensure the requirements were fully understood. It was further noted in response to queries that the policy formalised the permit system that had been in practice and included flexibility providing groups were compliant.

Members noted the importance of the groups work in providing a community service and their concerns which had been raised directly with Members. It was therefore moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Max Booth, that the officer recommendation as detailed in the report be approved with an additional recommendation outlining the Committee's appreciation of the work carried out by festive display groups and the importance on consultation with the groups going forward. It was therefore:

Resolved – That

- 1. The Festive Display Policy as set out at Appendix 1 of the report be approved; and**
- 2. The Committee recognises the tremendous effort, dedication, and countless hours local residents invest in ensuring the lights shine brilliantly year after year. The joy they bring to people of all ages and the sense of community they foster in our towns is truly an invaluable asset in Wirral. It is not just about flipping a switch in November; planning begins as early as the Summer for some groups. We commend all the volunteers who work tirelessly to make this endeavour a success. Having listened to feedback from various lights groups, we recognise the paramount importance of consulting and engaging with them whenever feasible. This approach helps establish working relationships that benefit all relevant stakeholders involved in the process.**

CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SETTLEMENT COMBINED AUTHORITY TRANSPORT PLAN PROGRAMME 2024-25

The Assistant Director for Highways & Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which requested Committee approval for City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Combined Authority Transport Plan (CATP) work programme for 2024/25, alongside the the indicative recommended CATP programme for the remaining years 2025-2027 of the CRSTS first term. It was reported that the programme covered works on the highway network to improve road safety and promote road safety, which included speed limits, school streets and junction improvements and pedestrian crossings.

Members discussed specific works identified in Appendix A of the report for the forthcoming year, including works to improve pavement conditions and road safety schemes around schools. The Senior Network Manager confirmed a list of improvements relating to road safety schemes surrounding schools could be shared with Members. In relation to queries relating to progress of projects included within the programme of works, the Assistant Director for Highways and Infrastructure confirmed engagement with ward members on proposals would be undertaken.

Resolved – That

- 1. the proposed City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (“CRSTS”) Combined Authority Transport programme for 2024/25 and the spending of the associated grant funding once accepted by the Council’s Section 151 Officer, as set out in Appendix A to the report, be approved;**
- 2. the indicative CRSTS Combined Authority Transport Plan programme for 2025/27 as set out in Appendix B to the report be approved; and**
- 3. the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to amend the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority for the 2024/25 CRSTS Combined Authority Transport Plan programme having regard for available resources and risk-based prioritisation of schemes, in consultation with the Chair and party Spokespersons of the Committee**
- 4. the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to execute any grant funding agreements associated with these recommendations.**

CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SETTLEMENT, HIGHWAY STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2024/25

The Assistant Director for Highways & Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which requested Committee approval for the disbursement of grant funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRCA) City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for 2024/25 into the Council's Capital Programme for Highways Structural Maintenance and Bridge Maintenance, alongside indicative highway condition matrix that will be used to inform future programme investment decisions. It was reported that the programme covered works on the highway network to maintain and improve the structural condition using various planned interventions which included resurfacing, surface treatments, footway reconstructions and bridge maintenance.

Members discussed the network condition matrix in Appendix C where the Assistant Director for Highways and Infrastructure reported that the most recent 2023 condition data was still being processed by officers, and once assessed the matrix would be revised and will help inform future programmes of work. In response to queries relating to the use of pavement condition data to inform future programmes of work and funding, the Assistant Director confirmed that data related to footway pavements would be included in future Committee performance management reports. The Highways, Maintenance and Street Lighting Manager reported that an independent survey of footway condition in the borough had been commissioned and completed which would form a substantial part of footway construction work in future.

Members also discussed the monitoring of the success of road treatments and resurfacing after works had been completed by contractors. The Assistant Director reported that in instances where work had failed suppliers were contractually obliged to replace the work and this was enforced.

Members further thanked officers for the substantial work undertaken to produce the programme of works for the forthcoming year.

Resolved – That

- 1. The proposed programme of works for Wirral's Carriageways, Footway Improvements and Bridge Maintenance for 2024/25, using any relevant grant funding allocated to the Council by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement - Highways Structural Maintenance allocation, and the spending of the associated grant funding on these works once accepted by the Council's Section 151 Officer, as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved;**

2. **The indicative Red, Amber, Green rated highway network condition matrix as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, to be used by the Director of Neighbourhood Services as one of the decision tools when developing the Council's highway structural maintenance programmes, be approved;**
3. **the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to revise or amend the delivery or implementation of the work programmes, as deemed necessary, having due regard for the available resources and applicable risk-based prioritisation of locations selected for intervention and treatment, in consultation with the Chair and Party Spokespersons of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee; and**
4. **the Director of Law and Corporate Services be authorised to negotiate and finalise any grant funding agreements on behalf of the council, amongst the relevant subject areas over the next 3 years, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and for any additional grant funding received during this period relevant to the subject area.**

81 **TRANSFER OF BUILDINGS ON HILBRE ISLAND**

The Assets and Surveying Manager presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought approval for the transfer of buildings on Hilbre Island to the Hilbre Community Land Trust on a 30-year lease at a peppercorn rent. It was reported that the Trust – comprised of the British Art and Design Association, Friends of Hilbre Island and the Hilbre Bird Observatory - had produced a joint business case to utilise the buildings to provide studios that would allow artists to stay on the island and produce work inspired by the island's unique location. The business plan included use of the Telegraph Station, Telegraph House, Fog Cottage and Day Room, Buoy Master's House, workshop and store, and the Trust would be responsible for maintenance of the buildings along with all outgoings.

As the business plan set out proposals to seek planning permission for necessary investment into Fog Cottage and Telegraph House, the following Members declared personal interests as Members of the Planning Committee and left the meeting during consideration of the item: Councillors Jason Walsh, Max Booth and Steve Foulkes.

Resolved – That the transfer of buildings on Hilbre Island as identified in this report to the Hilbre Community Land Trust for a 30-year lease at a peppercorn rent be approved.

82 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER THREE (THE PERIOD TO 31 DECEMBER 2023)**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Committee as at Quarter 3 (31 December) of 2023/24. The report provided an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances. It was reported that at the end of Quarter 3, there was a forecast adverse position £1.632m which related to shortfalls and adverse variance within car parks, tree maintenance and environmental enforcement.

Members queried the capital programme underspend in energy efficiency building work and whether it would be carried into the next financial year. building works. The Assistant Director reported that the underspend was being used to match fund the public sector decarbonisation scheme in partnership with the Liverpool City Region Local Authorities. Members also discussed work to be undertaken to deliver budget savings in the next financial year.

Resolved – That

- 1. the Directorate forecast adverse position of £1.632m presented at Quarter 3 be noted;**
- 2. the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 3 be noted;**
- 3. the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 3 be noted;
and**
- 4. the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 3 be noted.**

83 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance which advised Members that the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. It was noted that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.