

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 15 July 2024

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors M Booth J Williamson
G Jenkinson R Pitt
A Brame V Wilson
S Foulkes N Graham
G Wood A Hodson

Apologies Councillors G Davies

1 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.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Graham Davies who was deputised by Councillor Andrew Hodson.

3 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.

Councillor Naomi Graham declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of her husband's employment.

4 MINUTES

Members highlighted actions from April's Committee that had not been captured in the minutes and wished for them to be included, particularly that the Director of Neighbourhood Services had agreed to circulate the MEAS discretionary advice on Hoylake Beach with Members and that the former

Assistant Chief Executive had agreed to query with RNLI whether grass could be mown rather than vegetation be cleared on the beach.

The Chair requested that officers ensure that all actions from previous meetings had been followed up by the next meeting in September.

With these additions it was:

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 12 March 2024 and 15 April 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

5.1 Public Questions

Three public questions had been received prior to the meeting.

The Head of Legal Services read the first question from Philip Ellwand which concerned the removal of healthy trees in the centre of Birkenhead as part of the regeneration developments.

There was a second question from Lou Stothard which was also about mature trees being removed from Grange Road and Estuary Boulevard without prior consultation and with no legal precedent to do so.

The Chair thanked the public for submitting questions on such an important issue and gave assurance that Members had worked with officers to investigate this and had received confirmation from the Directors of Regeneration and Place and Neighbourhood Services that the tree team would always be consulted at the earliest planning stages if there might be works that involved tree loss. The Chair gave assurance that the Tree strategy would always apply to regeneration schemes.

The Head of Legal Services read the third question from Simon Scropton which queried how the Council and the residents can work together to increase tree planting in the Croft Lane area and to protect the area from future flooding.

The Chair responded that she had spoken with the tree team who were happy to contact Mr Scropton directly to discuss a planting scheme.

6 TREE MAINTENANCE CONTRACT TENDER

The Senior Trees and Woodland Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which recommended the termination of the current Corporate Tree Maintenance Contract and endorsement of a tender for a new contract. The proposed new contract would run from October

2024 until March 2026, with an option for a conditional extension of three twelve-month periods.

In response to concerns raised by Members, the Senior Trees and Woodland Manager outlined that the termination of the current contract would only be completed once a new contract had been awarded and was in place to ensure that any trees that were identified as a risk to the public could be removed.

Members highlighted the unexpected increase in annual tree work volumes and queried whether this could be attributed to climate change, in response, it was reported that there had been more frequent storms and wetter conditions lead to bacterial infections in trees and that this was certainly a result of climate change. The Senior Trees and Woodland Manager reported that officers looked to mitigate this by planting more trees in vulnerable woodlands to provide barriers and shelters to minimise the impact of a storm and considered species that would thrive in wetter conditions when planting.

Members congratulated the Tree Risk Management Team for their work in contributing to Wirral being granted the accolade “Tree City of the World” with only 26 places in the United Kingdom being granted this status.

Resolved – That

- (1) the existing Tree Maintenance Contract (1 April 2021- 31 March 2026) be terminated.**
- (2) the commencement of the tender process for the procurement of a new Wirral Arboricultural Services Contract be approved; and**
- (3) delegated authority be granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to award the contract within the approved budget and to the highest scoring tender within approved budget and in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria.**

7 BIRKENHEAD TO LISCARD ACTIVE TRAVEL SCHEME

The Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which provided Members with an update on the outcome of the recent public consultation on the Birkenhead to Liscard Active Travel Scheme and sought approval of the next steps for the project.

The report also sought approval, subject to funding being secured, to work in partnership with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to progress the project to detailed design and development of a business case.

Members praised the level of consultation that had been undertaken with officers giving reassurance that the Royal National Institute of Blind People had been consulted along with Merseyside Police, Merseytravel in relation to floating bus stops on the route.

Members noted that Liscard had the worst air pollution statistics on the borough and welcomed the scheme which would provide a cleaner and safer active travel route.

In response to a Member query on lost car parking revenue, the Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology confirmed that discussions had been held with the parking management team and they were confident that there was capacity elsewhere and so the spaces were being moved rather than removed in terms of income.

Members requested that future reports include any biodiversity net gain statistics.

Resolved (8:3) – That

(1) the outcome of the Birkenhead to Liscard Active Travel Scheme Public and Stakeholder Consultation and associated officer comments which are included with Appendices 3 – 8 of this report be noted.

(2) the Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to secure funding:

1. to undertake the detailed design of the Birkenhead to Liscard Active Travel Scheme (RIBA Stages 3 and 4) and undertake public and stakeholder consultation (including statutory consultation) on the detailed design, duly informed by the public and stakeholder consultation process.

2. to progress the development of the Business Case for the Birkenhead to Liscard Active Travel Scheme in accordance with the requirements of the LCRCA City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement Gateway Process.

The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Emergency introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided members of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee with recommendations for the future service delivery of waste collection and street cleansing services for Wirral.

It was reported that a contract was in place for delivery of waste collection and street cleansing services, which expired in August 2027 with no further option to extend. As such, the Council commissioned Eunomia Research and Consulting Ltd (Eunomia) to support a review of its waste collection and street cleansing contract, to thoroughly assess the options for waste collection and street cleansing service provision from August 2027.

The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Emergency reported that subterranean bins were being piloted in Liverpool and that new builds and multi occupancy properties would be most suitable for this. There was a solar bin pilot being undertaken in Wirral, the solar bins could take 3 times as much waste as a regular litter bin and could communicate with officers when it was becoming full.

In response to a Member query on possible change of legislation under the new Government, the Assistant Director: Climate Change and Emergency confirmed that all options explored would be in line with any new legislation but that the Environment Act and food collections would be mandated.

Members requested further information on the communications about reducing waste and for renewed communications to be shared with residents to increase awareness. The Chair highlighted that there had been 4 vehicle fires over the previous year as a result of batteries and vapes being discarded improperly and requested that there be communications on how to safely dispose of such items.

Resolved – That

- (1) the attached Outline Business Case be noted.**
- (2) the Director of Neighbourhoods be instructed to prepare a Full Business Case with focus on exploring a fully outsourced provision, a full LATCo provision and outsourced waste collection with in-house street cleansing provision, to be presented to Committee later this year.**

9 CARBON BUDGET PERFORMANCE REPORT 2023-24

The Energy Conservation Engineer introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which provided Members with details on actual

emissions compared against the 2023/24 Carbon Budget Target. It was reported that there had been a plateau in progress with net emissions above the target by 1,269 tonnes CO₂e.

The Energy Conservation Engineer outlined that the reduced usage of fossil fuels in buildings was the most successful way to reduce emissions with buildings accounting for 71.5% of gross emissions.

Members noted that the new Council office, Mallory, was a carbon neutral building and suggested that more functions could be moved here to support the target of reaching net zero by 2030 as well as whether cloud storage rather than physical servers in various buildings would be more efficient.

Resolved – That the Council’s performance and progress towards its target of carbon net zero by 2030 be noted.

10 **ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN PROGRESS REPORT 2023-24**

The Climate Emergency Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided an update on the Council’s response to the declared environment and climate emergency and progress on the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan, covering the 2023-24 financial year.

The report looked ahead to priority actions over the next 12 months to ensure that the Council endeavoured to deliver its environmental commitments and carbon budget targets.

The Climate Emergency Manager detailed the development of an electric vehicle charging strategy and that a fleet review had been conducted, emphasising that there had been a wide variety of actions taken focussing on more than just decarbonisation. It was reported there had been 16,000 trees planted and that green flag status had been obtained for 33 of the borough’s parks.

Members praised the Eco School Programme with 53 green flag schools on the borough, making this scheme one of the most successful in the country.

The Chair reminded Members and officers that carbon literacy training was available to everyone.

**Resolved – That
(1) the progress of the Environment & Climate Emergency actions undertaken in 2023-24 be noted; and**

(2) the priority actions for 2024-25 contained within section 6 of Appendix 1 be endorsed.

11 ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided a performance report in relation to Environment and Climate Emergency, and Highways and Infrastructure. The report was designed based on discussion with Members through working group activity in 2021.

Assurance was given to Members that the performance report supported the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-7 and that the committee were able to request performance data on areas of concern. The Assistant Director: Highways and Infrastructure agreed to include pavement condition in future performance reports and to share the data for the percentage of road casualties that resulted in serious or fatal injuries for 2023 with Members following the meeting and clarified that this data had only recently become available and would be included in future reports.

The Chair highlighted the importance of carbon literacy training and requested that a list of members who were carbon literate be circulated and agreed to speak to Group Leaders to encourage all members to participate in the training.

Resolved – That the content of the reports be noted.

12 2023/24 REVENUE OUTTURN

The Head of Finance – Place introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided a summary of the year-end revenue and capital position for the 2023/24 financial year as at the end of March 2024. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances.

In response to a query from the Chair on the figures relating to the Capital Programme Outturn, the Director of Neighbourhood Services agreed to confirm the correct figure and circulate to Members following the meeting.

Resolved – That

- (1) the draft, unaudited 2023/24 outturn adverse variance of £2.948m, which has been managed corporately by utilising the contingency budget, savings from reduced energy costs and use of flexible use of capital receipts be noted.**
- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme be noted.**
- (3) the transfer to and use of earmarked reserves, as detailed in Appendix 1 to this report be noted.**
- (4) the draft, unaudited 2023/24 capital outturn position of £17.697m, as detailed in Appendix 2 to this report be noted.**

13 2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE

The Head of Finance – Place introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee as at Quarter 1 (30 June) of 2024/25. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances. It was emphasised to members that although there was an adverse position of £0.400m for Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, the overall Council's position was an adverse position on £12m.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services outlined that there were budgetary pressures in other directorates where there were demand led services which were unable to control spend and therefore there was a responsibility from Neighbourhoods directorate to come in on budget to support the Council and gave reassurance that officers were looking at income sources such as car parking to mitigate this and that a report would be brought to committee to consider how to best deploy resources and provide a sustainable method to meet budget commitments.

Resolved – That

- (1) the adverse position presented at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (2) the 2024/25 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (3) the forecast level of reserves at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- (4) the capital position at the end of Quarter 1 be noted.**

14 **BUDGET MONITORING AND BUDGET SETTING**

The Head of Finance – Place introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out how the 2024/25 budget would be monitored through the Committee system, which would facilitate the Policy and Services Committees (the Committees) to take ownership of their specific budgets and present appropriate challenge and scrutiny of Officers on the management and performance of those budgets.

The 2025/2026 budget setting process involved workshops with Members where savings options would be proposed along with proposals to generate income to close the forecast budget gap of £3.2m.

Resolved – That

(1) the process for in-year monitoring of the 2024/25 budget be noted.

(2) the proposed approach to 2025/26 budget setting and the key assumptions that will be used be noted.

15 **APPOINTMENT OF PANELS, STATUTORY/ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which enabled the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to review the continuing need for various panels, statutory/ advisory Committees and working parties, and to appoint Members and named deputies to serve on those (including the statutory committees and panels) that are to be retained in 2023/24. The report also enabled the Committee to appoint members and possibly named deputies to the Wirral Flood and Water Partnership for 2024/25.

The report referred to policy development work undertaken by Committees to achieve positive outcomes for local people by carrying out thorough, targeted examinations of the Council's service provision and procedures. Members were advised this work could be undertaken through workshops for the whole committee or a task and finish group. Members discussed the options and expressed that there should be political proportionality in any policy development work.

In response to concerns raised by Members, the Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that the Committee was able to determine which areas of policy development it wished to explore within its terms of reference.

The Chair requested that a calendar of meetings for the existing Sub-Committees be shared as well as agendas in advance of the meeting and that the minutes be shared with the Chair and Spokespersons.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Monitoring Officer be authorised as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Active Travel Forum, the Wirral Climate Change Group, the Wirral Flood and Water Partnership, and the Hilbre Island Management Committee to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.**
- (2) a politically proportionate task and finish group be appointed to conduct a policy development review in accordance with the approach outlined at appendix 1 of the report.**

16 **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee which enabled Members of the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

Members requested that the Road Safety Plan and analysis on school street requests be brought to committee as well as a briefing note on pavement parking.

In response to a query about Phase 3 and 4 of 20mph zones, the Assistant Director: Highways and Infrastructure clarified that the first five zones were due to go out to consultation the following week and once all remaining zones had been consulted on, the report would come back to committee.

Resolved – That the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee work programme be noted.