

# ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 January 2025

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	EA Grey (Chair)	
	Councillors	M Booth G Jenkinson A Brame S Foulkes G Wood	R Pitt V Wilson J Johnson (In place of G Davies) H Gorman Cooper (In place of J Williamson)
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	G Davies J Williamson	

## 50 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.

The Chair advised that it was Holocaust Memorial Day, and this year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The Chair led the Committee in a moment of silence to remember those lost and bereaved in the Holocaust and in more recent genocides.

## 51 APOLOGIES

Councillor Graham Davies and Councillor Janette Williamson sent their apologies and were deputised by Councillor Jenny Johnson and Councillor Graeme Cooper respectively.

Apologies for absence were received from the Director of Neighbourhood Services.

## 52 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 Steve Foulkes declared a personal non prejudicial interest by virtue of his role as Chair on the Liverpool City Region Transport Committee.

## 53 **MINUTES**

The Chair drew Members attention to minute 42 which stated that “The Chair noted the adverse financial position and that at P&R members agreed that the Council would no longer subsidise non -statutory services from the general fund, and that Members would look for all opportunities to balance the accounts and raise revenue at every legal opportunity.”

**Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

## 54 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

### 54.1 **Public Questions**

The Chair reported that 4 public questions had been received.

A question was submitted by Roger Smith requesting information on the options for recycling plastic waste in Wirral. The Chair responded that Wirral Council was responsible for the collection of domestic refuse whereas the responsibility for processing and treating the waste lay with the Disposal Authority which did not have provision for some recyclable material. The Chair advised that the provision of recycling would expand over the coming years in line with changing legislation.

Jackie Gray attended the meeting to ask about the responsibility for enforcement of bicycles on pavements. The Chair reported that the Council worked closely with Merseyside Police to improve road safety with the adoption of the Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy. Merseyside Police regularly deal with anti-social riding to address the safety concerns for all road users and details on the levels of enforcement would need to be directed to them.

A supplementary question was asked about why enforcement was currently so lax and the Chair advised that this question should also be directed to Merseyside Police.

Steph Pennington submitted a question about the results of the Active Travel survey not being publicly available and whether Members could make a decision given they had not had chance to reflect on the consultation or

engage with local communities. The Chair responded that the results of the Core Active Travel Network survey were included in the public consultation pack which was made available to the public and elected members 10 days in advance of the Committee. The report included detailed appendices which provided a summary of responses as well as comments of respondents and officer comments. The Chair advised that local residents were welcome to engage with any members of the Committee at any time to discuss agenda items and contact details were available on the Council website.

Paul Carr attended the meeting to ask for an update on the potential endorsement of the Plant Based Treaty. The Chair advised that the process to endorse the treaty had been investigated by the Climate Emergency Team and would involve support for a motion from a majority of Members. The Chair stated that this was something that she would support and would query whether the treaty aligned with the Council Plan and if it would have positive budgetary outcomes.

#### **54.2 Statements and petitions**

Fred Newton presented a statement to the Committee in relation to the Core Active Travel Network. Dr Newton was a GP at a practice on Grove Road and shared concerns about a proposed cycle lane. Concerns from colleagues and patients were conveyed about lack of access for emergency survivors as well as access for patients, many of which are elderly. Dr Newton told Committee that restricting parking close to the surgery and putting bollards in the road increased the risk of falls and injuries and there was concern that this could give residents a reason not to visit the surgery. Dr Newton outlined other services that would be affected such as deliveries from the pathology lab and confidential waste management.

Emma Gold presented a statement to the Committee in relation to the Core Active Travel Network. The Committee were advised that as the report recommended introducing a cycle lane network on and around already congested roads, it was important that local residents made their voices heard and the majority of residents categorically opposed the idea of replacing essential parking and access to NHS services. Potential permanent removal of parking and unrealistic placement of cycles lanes would impact local businesses negatively and that decisions were being made by Members who would not be affected by these proposals.

Chris Pennington presented a petition requesting Committee reconsider the proposed cycle lanes in the Wallasey area citing safety concerns, financial implications, traffic congestion and Electric Vehicle charging challenges.

### 54.3 Questions by Members

There were no questions by Members.

## 55 WIRRAL CORE ACTIVE TRAVEL NETWORK

The Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided Members with an update on the outcome of the recent public consultation on the proposed Wirral Core Active Travel Network (CATN) and sought approval for the revised CATN, which had been amended in response to the consultation. The CATN set out a core network which would improve the existing highway asset by improving and delivering new infrastructure and public realm enhancements in order to reduce social exclusion by improving connectivity and accessibility, enabling safer active and sustainable travel and supporting the wider regeneration and public health programmes.

The proposed CATN, was developed through a number of key stages. These stages followed the Department for Transport (DfT) Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Guidance but reflected local knowledge and data including the consideration of existing travel patterns, regeneration plans and funding windows.

In response to queries from Members about the concerns raised by local residents, the Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology reported that the report set out the process to agree a strategic planning approach for active travel and that there would be a long, high level design process with community engagement at various stages throughout delivery of the CATN. The Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology outlined the various methods of consultation which included media releases, social media posts, emails to residents on the circulation lists and there were eight locations across the borough where the information was available in print.

Members sought assurance about the financial implications of the CATN and were advised that if any of the proposals were to come forward at a detailed design stage for delivery, they would be capital funded and would be specific bids to the Liverpool City Region for funding which they have available to deliver active travel measures. Members were given assurance that any funding secured would be ringfenced. The Lead Commissioner: Transport and Technology advised Members that having an approved CATN in place would support Wirral's bids when applying for funding.

A debate ensued with some Members stating there was no evidence of a demand for an active travel network and that there would be a negative impact on local businesses as well as the timescale for delivery which may be unrealistic given that some of the suggested routes would require significant work prior to implementation. The Lead Commissioner: Transport and

Technology referred Members to the Places for People Strategy which was approved in January 2024. The strategy set out a case study for the economic benefits of active travel and the Chair notes that where footfall increases, spend increases.

**Resolved (8:3) – that the revised Core Active Travel Network as set out in Appendix 6 be approved.**

**At the request of the Chair, the order of business was altered to move item 12 2025-26 Budget Report Update to the second item on the agenda.**

## 56 **2025-26 BUDGET REPORT UPDATE**

The Head of Finance – Place introduced the report of the Director of Finance which provided an update on the budgets within the remit of the Committee in respect of forthcoming pressures and proposed savings that are being considered within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

The report requested the Committee consider feedback and outcomes from the Budget Oversight Panels (BOPs) which have been held in recent months. The Panels enabled officer and member liaison on proposed budget options, to facilitate discussion and allow direction to be obtained on further analysis required. The Panels also provided an opportunity for alternative proposals to be considered.

The Council was required to set a balanced budget each year and set a Medium-Term Financial Plan which considered the future pressures and savings options that would be taken forward to result in a balanced budget position.

The Council faced a severe budget challenge to identify savings required to set a balanced budget for next financial year, largely due to increased demand and costs for social care services, compounded by the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. Unless significant, deliverable cost reductions were identified and approved, the Council would not meet its statutory obligation to set a legal and balanced budget without a significant increase in funding.

The Chair noted that Members wished to discuss the content of the exempt appendices relating to the report. Therefore, on a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes, it was –

**Resolved: That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraphs 3 and 4 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test had been applied and favoured exclusion.**

During the discussion of exempt appendix three, Members also discussed a risk matrix that had been shared with Committee which detailed some amendments to the proposals brought to the Budget Oversight Panel on 20 January 2025. Members raised concerns about the effects that savings proposal 1 on the risk matrix may have on service delivery and resident safety but received assurances from the Assistant Director.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) The indicative pressures and proposed savings detailed in Appendices 1 and 2 be noted; and**
- (2) the budget oversight panel feedback and outcomes as detailed in the risk matrix and amended at Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 27 January 2025 be agreed.**

57 **REFUSE COLLECTION & STREET CLEANSING SERVICE REVIEW - FULL BUSINESS CASE**

The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided Committee with recommendations for the future service delivery of the Council's refuse collection and street cleansing services for Wirral.

There was a legal duty on the Council to collect household recycling, waste and to carry out street cleansing activity. 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 the Council's full review of its refuse collection and street cleansing contract, to assess the options for waste collection and street cleansing service provision from August 2027.

In response to Member queries about a potential corporate depot on the Dock Road, the Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment gave assurance that waste would not be stored at this facility and would purely be for vehicle storage and that there would need to be engagement with the local community ahead of any progression on this site.

Members discussed the new burden funding for food collections and how the separation of waste would be undertaken. Members were advised that there

was an Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) which was a tax on packaging and that the Council would receive an amount of money. The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Emergency explained that there was a once in a generation opportunity to change the system, transform performance and drive behaviour change. Members noted that the decision regarding how waste was separated would require different amounts of money for example, separating at a depot would require more staff whereas if it was done at home, more bin collections would be necessary.

Members noted that behaviour change was a key issue and requested that measures such as stickers be provided for bins to advise residents what could go in each bin.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) the Full Business Case for outsourcing of refuse and recycling collection and street cleansing services under a new contract as attached at Appendix 1 be approved; and**
- (2) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to:**
  - a. commence a competitive tendering exercise for the new contract for the provision of refuse and recycling collection and street cleansing services to commence in Spring 2025; and**
  - b. bring a report back to this Committee with full costs and further information following the completion of the tender exercise, to seek approval to award the contract.**

58 **COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS - B2 ROADLINES, TRAFFIC STUDS AND MINOR WORKS CONTRACT**

The Senior Highway Maintenance Street Light Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought approval to commence with the procurement process for B2 Roadlines Traffic Studs and Minor Works Contract to enable the Council to carry out essential highway maintenance.

In 2018 the Council brought highway service delivery back in-house using a small direct workforce supported by a number of tendered contracts. The continued delivery of the Council's highway service via an in-house plus top-up model, was approved by Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 16 March 2021. It was report that this was one of several contracts, which the Council needed to procure in order to maintain the Council's highway service delivery provision.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) a procurement exercise to appoint a contractor to deliver the B2 contract for Roadlines, Traffic Studs and Minor Works Contract be undertaken.**
- (2) authority be delegated to the director to make an appointment following tendering process.**

59 **COMMENCEMENT OF THE PROCUREMENT PROCESS FOR - B4 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY AND MISCELLANEOUS WORKS CONTRACT**

The Senior Highway Maintenance Street Light Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought approval to commence with the procurement process for B4 Public Rights of Way and Miscellaneous Works Contract. This would enable the Council to carry out essential works for the repair and improvement of public rights of way, bridleways or other footpaths and provision of labour, associated plant and equipment to assist the Council's highway operational services in undertaking works on and off the adopted highway.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) a procurement exercise to appoint a contractor to deliver the B4 Public Rights of Way and Miscellaneous Works Contract be undertaken.**
- (2) authority be delegated to the director to make an appointment following tendering process.**

60 **REVOCAION OF BYELAW NO.20 AND CREATION OF PUBLIC BRIDLEWAY ALONG THE NORTH WIRRAL COAST SEA DEFENCE ACCESS ROAD**

The Design and Commissioning Senior Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought agreement to the revocation of the Byelaws of 1935, details of which were provided within the report. This would enable the Council to implement a Public Path Creation Order, thereby giving the North Wirral Coast Sea Defence Access Road ("the Access Road") Public Bridleway status, thereby formalising the use of the Access Road by cyclists, pedestrians and horse riders.

Members noted that this route included a new section of the King Charles III coastal path and that this work formalised the route and made it safer for all users.

Members placed on record their thanks to officers for their work on this matter.



**Resolved – That authority be delegated to the Director of Law and Corporate Services (in consultation with the Director of Neighbourhood Services) to:**

- (1) finalise the Regulatory Assessment for revoking the 1935 Byelaws made by Wallasey County Borough Council with regard to the promenades within the said Borough (as amended) (“the 1935 Byelaws”) substantially in accordance with the draft appended as Appendix 4**
- (2) undertake the formal process to revoke the 1935 Byelaws and the results to be presented to Full Council (preceded by a report to this Committee) for a final decision to be made; and**
- (3) create a Public Path Creation Order to formalise the entire route from the end of Bennets Lane, Meols, to King’s Parade, Wallasey as a Public Bridleway (as described in paragraphs 3.8 of this report) in the event of the revocation of the 1935 Byelaws (as amended) proceeding.**

## **61 NATURAL FLOOD MANAGEMENT SCHEME, HOYLAKE CARRS**

The Engagement and Modernisation Officer introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which presented a proposal to deliver a Natural Flood Management (NFM) scheme on Council owned land known as Hoylake Carrs. The scheme was designed to provide flood mitigation benefits to the ‘Meols Community at Risk’ as defined by the Environment Agency.

The scheme included the development of wetland features across approximately 24.7Ha of existing Coastal Floodplain Grazing Marsh, which was largely a flat expanse of improved grassland. It was reported that Cheshire Wildlife Trust would deliver the scheme in partnership with the Council whilst developing a long-term sustainable strategy for ongoing management.

In response to queries from Members, the Engagement and Modernisation Officer confirmed that hydrological modelling had taken place and had considered the Newton Brook and Arrowe Brook, particularly where they met with the Birkett. The proposal would provide an additional 46,000 cubic metres of holding capacity which would have both upstream and downstream impacts.

A discussion ensued with some Members advocating a cross-silo approach noting that there was a flat run off on the land which posed a flood risk to downstream communities. Members debated whether woodland planting would be an effective solution however it was noted that this proposal was most in keeping with what was currently in place and would not impact on biodiversity.

Members noted that consultation with the local community was imperative to ensure they had all the necessary information about the proposals and requested that officers explore consultation options.

Councillor Max Booth proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson.

The alternative motion was:

**The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee:**

- (1) note the acceptance by the Director of Finance of £430,000 in funding from the Environment Agency for the Natural Flood Management scheme at Hoylake Carrs.**
- (2) authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to negotiate and progress with all necessary legal agreements, permits and permissions to implement the scheme once the following have recommendations have been undertaken.**
- (3) that woodland planting is incorporated as a key element of the Natural Flood Management (NFM) strategy, targeting corridors along the Birket and other identified low-priority land-use areas. This would improve water absorption, reduce runoff, and enhance local biodiversity.**
- (4) that a Birket clearance approach integrates with natural flood management techniques. This hybrid strategy will address both flood risk and ecological goals while minimising long-term maintenance requirements.**
- (5) that a detailed consultation process with local residents and stakeholders is initiated, focusing on the design, prioritisation, and implementation of any NFM measures, including woodland planting and alternative methods. This will ensure community buy-in, and awareness.**
- (6) the Director of Neighbourhood services is to assess funding opportunities to support these integrated measures, demonstrating their alignment with Cheshire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.**

Members voted on the motion with 3 voting for and 8 voting against with no abstentions so the motion was lost.

Councillor Liz Grey moved the officer recommendations, seconded by Councillor Harry Gorman.

Members then voted on the motion moving the officer recommendations with 8 voting for and 3 voting against with no abstentions and so the motion was carried.

**Resolved – That**

- (1) the acceptance by the Director of Finance of £430,000 in funding from the Environment Agency for the Natural Flood Management scheme at Hoylake Carrs (the scheme) be noted; and**
- (2) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to negotiate and progress with all necessary legal agreements, permits and permissions to implement the scheme.**

62 **WORK PROGRAMME**

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

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