

# TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 17 October 2024

Present:

Councillor I Lewis (Chair)

Councillors	A Ainsworth	KJ Williams
	P Jobson	K Stuart
	G McManus	R Molyneux
	J Johnson	M Redfern
	C Cooke	

Apologies

Councillors G Bennett

30 **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.

31 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Gary Bennett.

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

Members are asked to consider whether they have any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

No interests were declared.

33 **MINUTES**

Members raised an issue about the previous minutes not making reference to the Director's assurance in relation to financing health and safety risks in Birkenhead Park and that the Director had told Members that there were no critical health and safety risks at the moment. However, this would become a risk in the future if no action was taken. Officers would aim to cover this through other maintenance budgets and capital investments, and would find a way to mitigate these risks through other projects if this project could not

**Resolved – That subject to the amendments above, the minutes of the meeting held on 19 September 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record.**

34 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

35 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair confirmed that one public question had been received in advance of the meeting. He explained that the question had originally been intended for the meeting of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, however following discussions it had been agreed for the question to be addressed to this committee.

Charlotte Smith attended the committee meeting to ask a question on the fireworks display event that had been scheduled to be held on Hoylake Beach. She asked why this event had been cancelled and that she had had confirmation from the Chief Executive of Natural England that the management of Hoylake beach was the responsibility of the Council.

The Chair asked the Head of Legal Services to address the committee. She explained that as the question referenced fireworks, this fell under the terms of reference of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee. It was officers within the Neighbourhoods directorate who advised members of the public wishing to hold events on public land. The fireworks display event was not an event organised by the Council, and officers had provided advice to the Hoylake Sailing Club, and the organisers had decided not to proceed. The Council was disappointed that this event would not be going ahead.

However, anything relating to Hoylake beach or beach management in general fell under the remit of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.

The Director of Neighbourhoods added that Natural England was right to say that the management of the beach was the responsibility of the Council. However, the beach was a site of specific scientific interest (SSSI) and the management of it had to comply with the relevant regulations and legislation. The officers were continuing discussions with the fireworks display event organisers to try and support the event going ahead, in a way that would be compliant with the requirements from Natural England.

Following comments in regard to the raking of West Kirby beach and whether this set a precedent for Hoylake, the Director explained that Natural England had given consent for limited raking on West Kirby beach, and that members of the ECET Committee continued to press for as much raking as possible.

Charlotte Smith asked a supplementary question, seeking clarification on the raking of slipways and stressed that the Council should ensure access to the beach under the Equalities Act 2010. She asked whether the council would apologise to residents, RNLI Hoylake and Hoylake Sailing Club in relation to the fireworks display event and the access issues.

The Chair apologised in relation to the fireworks display event, and asked officers in attendance for next steps.

The Director said that he was happy for colleagues to continue discussions with the sailing club to accommodate the fireworks event going ahead. However, in terms of beach management, he would not do anything without consent from Natural England, who had only allowed minimal raking on West Kirby beach. He agreed to take away the point on access to slipways to Natural England and see if they could get consent to clear the slipways but could not guarantee that they would consent.

Members and officers noted that the question was more appropriate under the terms of reference for the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the substantive and supplementary question be referred to the next meeting of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.

### **35.1 Statements and Petitions**

The Chair reported that one petition had been submitted to the committee.

Geoff Dale presented a petition, on behalf of the Thornton Hough Community Trust, regarding the public toilets in Village Green and asked that these be re-opened. He explained that both local residents as well as visitors to the village had signed the petition. People visiting and local residents were used to having public toilets there for their use. Residents felt embarrassed when having to tell visitors that there were no public toilets in the area. He also noted that local school children were amongst the users of the facilities, and that Sports England had installed a defibrillator on the site, highlighting the village green's use as a sports field. He told members that people had taken to relieving themselves behind the site, which backed onto a residential property, which was causing issues to the owners.

The Chair thanked Mr Dale and the Community trust for the petition and for their work in the community.

Members raised questions over cost implications, the importance of facilities in relation to healthy lives and disability access, and the impact on the local economy.

Members noted that there was an item on the work programme in relation to public conveniences and changing places. They agreed that this be scheduled as an urgent item at the next meeting, and asked for details in relation to the number of public conveniences, opening times, locations and costs. Mr Dale offered to provide some statistics to members.

### 36 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

There had been no Questions by Members submitted to this meeting.

### 37 **LIVERPOOL AND WIRRAL CORONER AREA ANNUAL REPORT 2023**

The Senior Coroner presented his report. The Coroner was an independent judicial office holder, appointed by the local authority. They investigated deaths reported to them if it appeared that the death was: violent or unnatural; the cause of death unknown; or the person died in prison, police custody or another type of state detention. The report was the full annual report of the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area for the period of 2023.

The Senior Coroner informed the committee that from the 9 September 2024, there was a reform in the death certification system, which implemented the statutory medical examiner system. Natural deaths would now be scrutinised by the medical examiner service, however this change would take time to bed in. Every death would now be scrutinised, whether by a medical examiner or the coroner. The Liverpool and Wirral area saw a high number of inquests held for the number of deaths reported. He hoped that with the new management system, this would reduce.

Members raised the following questions:

- The proportion of self-inflicted deaths in comparison to natural deaths in state detention
- Why bereaved families may be less trusting of doctors and carers
- Why there was an increase in the number of deaths caused by natural causes, and accidents and misadventure as reported
- How the rate of self-inflicted deaths compared to national statistics
- How the new medical examiner system may prevent future instances of homicidal medical practitioners
- Whether causes of death registered by a medical professional were tracked to spot trends in reporting
- Whether families would still be given the option for a post-mortem and an inquest under the new system
- Queries regarding Regulation 28 – reports to prevent future deaths

The Senior Coroner further explained that if a death is determined to be of natural causes, then that would be a matter for the medical examiner, who would have no duty to order a post-mortem. If a family did not accept the cause of death, or there was a dispute between the attending practitioner and

the medical examiner, or if the death was of natural causes but the causes were unknown, then this would be referred to the coroner. Officers would speak to the families in every case. Whilst families could choose to pay for a post-mortem, if a death were examined by the medical examiner, there would not be this option.

Members queried whether they could receive a report from the Medical Examiner, and this was clarified that this would be under the Department of Health and Social Care.

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

38 **COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2024-25 THEME: SAFE, RESILIENT AND ENGAGED COMMUNITIES**

The Director of Neighbourhoods presented the report on the quarterly performance report in relation to the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023 – 2027 for the theme of Safe, Resilient and Engaged communities. He highlighted to the committee that this performance report was specific to the Council Plan. He noted that the report did not indicate any areas requiring improvement, and noted that some of the statistics shown in the report did not go up to the end of Quarter 1 2024-25. He assured members that he would circulate further information on this.

Members queried why data on active travel had been included for this committee, and raised the following questions:

- Whether only 1% of respondents used other means of active travel
- How participation in active travel was measured
- If more recent statistics for hospital admissions could be circulated
- What were previous targets

The Director assured members that information would be circulated following the meeting.

**Resolved – That the contents of the report be noted and referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.**

39 **MEMBER CHAMPION FOR HERITAGE - UPDATE REPORT**

The Member Champion for Heritage had submitted a report for this meeting, updating members on recent heritage events such as the Heritage Open Days Programme, progress on blue plaques for the Mallory and Irvine buildings and meetings with Big Heritage.

Members asked the Member Champion for Heritage whether there were any developments he wished to update members on.

Councillor Williams explained to the committee that it was a very busy time for heritage. He discussed the items mentioned within his report, and would update members in his next report to committee. He gave a special thank you to volunteers and heritage groups working with the Council.

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

#### 40 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the report which presented the Work Programme for the Committee. He asked if any members had amendments or additions to present.

The following was raised and was agreed to be added/amended on the Work Programme:

- Queries around grounds maintenance and pitches charges
- Whether the libraries performance reports included those libraries which had been subject to community asset transfers
- Public Conveniences and Changing Places as an urgent item to a future meeting (as mentioned at minute item 35a)

Members also extended an invitation to the Regional Director of the Community Libraries Network, to attend a future meeting and discuss the asset transfers of libraries.

The Director of Neighbourhoods agreed to circulate information in regards to grounds maintenance and pitches charges.

**Resolved – That, subject to the amendment of the items noted at the meeting, the work programme be noted.**