

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 June 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Whittingham (In place of KJ Williams) T Anderson A Brighthouse D McCubbin AR McLachlan	D Mitchell H Smith R Wilkins S Williams
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	G Gardiner - Cabinet Member (Environment) L Rennie - Cabinet Member (Streetscene & Transport Services)	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	(KJ Williams)	

53 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement. No such declarations were made.

54 MINUTES

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management submitted the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2010.

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

55 APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIR

The Committee was requested to appoint a Vice-Chair.

On a motion by the Chair seconded by Councillor McCubbin it was:

Resolved – That Councillor T Anderson be appointed Vice-Chair of this Committee for the current municipal year.

56 **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The terms of reference were submitted for Members' information.

Resolved – That the terms of reference be noted.

57 **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATIONS PANEL**

The Committee was requested to undertake a review of the Highways Representation Panel and to appoint members to serve on that panel if it was to be retained in 2010-2011.

Resolved – That the Committee:

(i) confirm that the Highways Representation Panel be re-appointed for 2010-2011 with the terms of reference identified.

(ii) appoint the following members to serve on the Highways Representation Panel in 2010-2011, including the appointment of the Chair and named deputies:

	Members	Deputies
1 Conservative	J Hale (Chair)	T Anderson D McCubbin P Johnson K Wood P Hayes G Ellis C Povall L Rowlands
1 Liberal Democrat	G D Mitchell	R Wilkins A Brighthouse
1 Labour Councillor	H Smith	J Williams A McLachlan

58 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2010-11**

The views of the Committee were requested concerning topics to be included in this year's scrutiny work programme.

A paper listing the reports from chief officers on key issues during the year was circulated separately.

The Forward Plan for the period July to October 2010 had now been published on the Council's intranet/website and Members were invited to review the Plan and indicate whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan.

Resolved –

(1) That the paper listing the reports from chief officers on key issues during the year form the basis of the committee's work programme for the current municipal year.

(2) That arrangements be made with the chair and party spokespersons for a programme of site visits to assist the scrutiny process.

59 **REDUCING THE COUNCIL'S CARBON FOOTPRINT' - PROGRESS REPORT NO 3**

The Director of Technical Services reported upon the progress of the various projects currently being undertaken by his department to 'Reduce the Council's Carbon Footprint', as set out in the Wirral Carbon Reduction Programme. The Wirral Carbon Reduction Programme project plan which was updated every six months enabled the Council to plan and monitor progress in achieving National Indicator 185, reducing the Council's CO2 emissions. This third six monthly progress update of the Project Plan was attached to the report (Appendix 1).

The Council's Carbon Budget provided each department with a CO2 allowance in which to operate and deliver their services thus enabling service managers to plan for CO2 reductions at a departmental and operational level. Each service's carbon budget was expected to decrease annually by its target figure which equated to a 5.25% reduction to enable the Council to achieve its target of a 60% reduction by 2025. The aim was that over time the Council would be able to continue to deliver services to the borough whilst decreasing its carbon emissions. Whilst the Council's CO2 emissions had significantly reduced since 2005, setting an annual carbon budget for each department would provide a clear picture of the environmental

impact of the Council's spending and would help to achieve both local and national carbon reduction targets.

The Director outlined progress on individual Council projects including: details of energy efficiency schemes; the awareness raising programme and promotional work; the launch and use of the CRed website; key educational projects; development of green specification designs for the Council's new and refurbished buildings; waste minimisation and recycling; Travel Plan initiatives and potential fuel savings.

He responded to a range of questions from members including:-

- awareness raising sessions for teachers, the appointment of school Energy Champions, and ongoing work in this area to increase "sign up" to CRed
- identification of potential savings from the Awareness Raising Programme based on research and case studies
- details of the staff travel survey
- the returns from the Boiler Scrappage Promotion
- attendance at the Annual Green Transport /Corporate Health Event
- the take up of the car share scheme
- monitoring of carbon budgets and the achievement of annual savings in energy costs
- the pilot scheme at the Cheshire Lines Building for renewable energy projects being integrated directly into building projects (also linked to the Green Building Specification Guide and Key Educational projects).
- Signage Energy Efficiency with Keep Left Bollards being converted to solar power.

Resolved – That the Committee note and endorse the performance and progress of the various Council 'Carbon Footprint Reduction' projects.

60 **REVIEW OF THE IMPACT OF SEVERE WEATHER IN JANUARY 2010 - PRESENTATION**

The Director of Technical Services submitted a background report, supplemented by a presentation, in response to a request by Cabinet (minute 250 – 14/1/2010) that this Committee undertake a formal review of winter maintenance arrangements across the Council. The review highlighted problems experienced during the periods of severe winter weather, the effects on council services, the response by some departments and employees to ensure business continuity and client welfare, and areas of good practice.

Wirral's history of maintaining a very efficient winter maintenance programme, as evidenced by continuing support through the winter maintenance budget (currently £269,700), was reviewed by Cabinet on an annual basis, to ensure the treatment (gritting) of pre-determined primary and secondary roads, the distribution and maintenance of grit bins and other winter maintenance activities. This equated to approximately 31 gritting operations per year across a road network of approximately

240 miles. It also paid for the provision and maintenance of some 86 grit bins. However, heavy snow followed by lengthy freezing temperatures had resulted in very difficult conditions to try and maintain safe roads.

Wirral's supply of rock salt had reached critically low levels due to the severity of the road conditions and increased number of gritting operations. Meetings had subsequently been held with suppliers to discuss steps that they were taking to improve the resilience of their supply network but there was no guarantee that supplies would not be affected again in future years. The estimated costs of increasing the capacity of the current storage barn facility (maximum 2500 tonnes) would be in the order of £300,000.

Other measures taken post the severe weather included:-

- A one off increase in the 2009/10 Highways Maintenance budget to facilitate a programme of road repairs following the severe weather.
- A payment of £5000 per Area Forum as part of the You Decide initiative to be spent of winter maintenance equipment – grit bins, snow clearing equipment, etc.

It was also noted that the current gritting fleet was part of the review of the Council's transport fleet currently being undertaken by the Director of Adult Social Services.

In an effort to capture as many comments as possible from the review chief officers had been asked to provide feedback on any issues posed by the severe weather and also to highlight any areas of good practice. These requests were followed up by a range of meetings with nominated departmental officers and a number of one to one meetings with the lead officer and various representatives from interest groups. The lessons learnt were that :-

- Severe weather affects all communities
- Each service must ensure their own resilience
- Communication was the key to ensuring public awareness and reassurance
- Severe weather had a deterioration affect on the road network
- Collaborative working with other agencies and 3rd sector (4 x 4 clubs, Community Payback, etc) and the encouragement of self-help (good neighbour schemes, etc) could be further developed

Both DASS and CYPD had undertaken their own respective de-briefs and drawn up action plans to improve their response arrangements should these occurrences be experienced again. These departments experienced a tremendous sense of community spirit shown by staff with some specific examples highlighted:

- DASS and CYPD transport staff worked late into the night on Tuesday 5th January to ensure that all children from special needs schools and clients from day care centres were able to get home safely.
- Some day care centres acted as refuges for those people from other services who had become stranded.
- Meals on Wheels were able to ensure that all clients continued to receive meals – to our knowledge none were missed.
- Several offers of assistance came from the community including the offer of 4 wheeled drive vehicles – this is something that is presently being actively pursued.

- Working with the Probationary Service on the “Community Payback” scheme, a number of people were put to clearing ice and snow from around GP surgeries, health, centres and other critical community amenities.

Work would continue to build on the many lessons learnt following this severe weather and where appropriate formalised plans would be written to ensure that the agreed methods of dealing with this type of occurrence were captured.

The Director responded to issues raised by members including:-

- comparisons with the performance of other local authorities
- collaborative working with partner agencies
- the use of brine footway sprayers in town centres
- the views of Merseytravel and the bus companies indicating that the highway network and traffic flows had been maintained during this difficult period
- the circulation of bulletins received from the Regional Metrological Advisor
- the temperature and monitoring system for the highway network
- the response of the Community and ways to encourage greater participation by local businesses in clearing footways outside their premises
- the storage and supply of rock salt

On a motion by the Chair seconded by Councillor Smith it was:-

Resolved – That Committee note the impact of the severe weather in January 2010, endorse the Council's response to this situation and recommend to Cabinet that the current winter maintenance provision be continued.

61 **HIGHWAY AND ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTRACT - FIRST ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report updating Members on the current Highway and Engineering Services Contract at the end of its first year of operation. He introduced the client officer team who were in attendance to provide an overview of the contract and answer questions from members. The contractor's senior management team had been invited to attend the September meeting of this committee.

The Director reported that the first year of the contract had required some settling in with both client and contractor making adjustments and accommodations to their ways of working. Further changes would inevitably be required and members' views were welcomed on potential areas for innovation or improvement to be included in the innovation Sub-group programme for the coming year. However it had been a

productive year with a variety of work jointly completed, particularly with planned works:

3 No.	Pedestrian crossing facilities (Toucan/Puffin)
5 No.	Cycling Strategy Schemes
12 No.	Local Safety Schemes
1 No.	Major safety Scheme
11 No.	Safer Route to School Schemes
4 No.	Pedestrian Facilities Schemes
11 No.	Street Lighting Improvement Schemes
60,000 No.	Road Gullies cleansed
37 No.	Carriageway Surfacing Schemes (HRA/DBM)
64 No.	Micro Asphalt Surface Treatment Schemes
101 No.	Footway Slurry Seal Schemes
18 No.	Carriageway Retread Schemes
11 No.	Footway Reconstruction Schemes
37 No.	Major patching locations
34 No.	Area Forum Improvements (pedestrian droppers, vehicle activated signs, refuges)

The Winter Maintenance operation proved relatively successful despite issues once again over salt deliveries. This was the subject of a separate report to the Committee detailing the areas of concern, lessons learnt and the mitigating actions to be put in place to improve the Council's response to adverse weather conditions (see minute 60 ante)

At contract commencement Colas had occupied part of the Council's Dock Road Depot previously taken by Operational Services but from the end of April they were now located in their own depot on the Prenton Way Industrial Estate.

The Director reported that the Gateway 5 contract review to be carried out on the 22-24 June, by the external Local Partnerships Organisation, would consider the operational arrangements and look to establish the extent to which the qualitative and quantitative benefits that were identified during the procurement exercise have been brought to fruition. The findings of the Gateway reviewers will be reported to Cabinet and a subsequent report would be presented to the September meeting of this committee detailing progress made against any recommended actions.

The Director responded to questions from members concerning the achievement of projected savings from the contract and additional Gershon efficiency savings over the period of the contract.

Resolved – That the Committee:

- (i) Note the progress of the contract during the past year;
- (ii) Note the invitation to provide views on potential areas for innovation or improvement to be included in the Innovation Sub-group programme for the coming year;
- (iii) Request officers to report to the next meeting on the outcome of the Gateway 5 Review and the progress made against any recommended actions.

62 2009/10 END OF YEAR PERFORMANCE REPORT

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report providing an overview of progress made against the performance indicators for 2009/2010 and key projects which are relevant to this Committee.

The report sets out overall performance against the 2009/10 project relevant to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee and corrective actions were detailed in section 3.3.

- Of the 40 projects relevant to this Committee there are 33 projects that are green (all milestones had been met)
- 6 of the 40 projects had amber status (some non-critical milestones had been missed or there was a danger of non-critical slippage). Corrective action to bring these projects back on track was provided.
- 1 project had been withdrawn.

In terms of achievements:

- 100% of the 455 Technical Service complaints resolved in the quarter were done so within the 15 day time limit. The service area experiencing highest volumes was the Refuse Collection Service with 377 complaints, representing a 1300% increase from the previous quarter, the sole contributing factor to this drastic increase was the adverse weather conditions experienced in early January and the consequent disruptions to key services such as domestic waste collections.
- A total of 1033 contacts were recorded from Councillors or MP's (compared to 899 in the previous quarter), Technical Services accounted for 78% (803) of all Councillor/MP contacts received (increase from 72.5% in previous quarter) and resolved 98% of the closed contacts within the 10 day time scale.
- In Dec 2009 Wirral Council, with its local NHS partners, launched 'CRed Wirral', an interactive website to help people cut pollution from energy use at home, work and through travel. The initiative will contribute to the Council's target to reduce carbon emissions 60% by 2025.
- Wirral Climate Change Group was leading on the Wirral Wide Carbon Reduction Action Plan (NI 186) with its LSP and other external partners. Activities and outcomes were monitored through the LSP's Living and Working Environment Partnership
- Ongoing Climate Change training and workshops, CLASP, PlanIT4Cast, held with LSP and external partners in support of NI 185, 186 and 188 activities
- Road safety partners in Wirral had made significant progress in reducing the number of traffic casualties in the borough across all ages, particularly children.
- At the end of 2009 – 2010 analysis showed that the crime rate was the lowest rate of recorded crime of any of the Merseyside authorities and had the eighth lowest rate of crime within the North West Region. The latest performance figures follow four years of significant crime reductions.
- 14125 anti-social behaviour incidents had been reported during 2009/10. This was lower than the target set and an improvement on performance at the same stage as last year.

- All indicators measuring youth alcohol referrals exceeded annual targets. The aim of these indicators was to prevent a recurrence of the inappropriate use of alcohol by young people by providing for the young person and their parents an intervention from trained alcohol workers following any event where the young person has abused alcohol and behaved inappropriately. This was due to the success of activities complementing this intervention, including initiatives such as 'Operation Stay Safe', in mobilising a well coordinated and targeted response to alcohol fuelled anti social behaviour.
- During 2009 – 2010 Wirral's Joint Community Safety Team a co-located multi agency team focused upon reducing levels of crime and anti social behaviour reduced the number of fires associated with anti social behaviour by 46% and reduced the number of cases of criminal damage reported to the Police by 52%.
- A stronger communities project had been developed and was now in operation based at The Lauries Centre. This multi agency operation to improve the quality of life of the residents within this area against a range of indicators which include crime, anti social behaviour, health, employment and appearance of the neighbourhood is an intelligence lead programme which followed analysis of a number of national indicators.
- Increased number of Green Flags for parks to 11.
- Percentage visits to museums and galleries in Wirral ranked third highest in England.
- Percentage use of public libraries in Wirral first for all metropolitan authorities.

In respect of the financial position, departmental monitoring focused on those areas of the budget that were identified as key risks, and projected variations were identified within the report (section 5 refers).

The Director responded to questions from member concerning:-

- the interpretation of data regarding contacts recorded and closed within the required timescale
- the deterioration in the indicators for levels litter and detritus (NIs 195a and 195b) and the monitoring of recovery plans to improve the situation
- the projected deficit of income levels against targets for the Regeneration Department

Resolved – That the Committee note the contents of this report.

63 DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

The Director of Technical Services reported, in accordance with the Scheme of Delegation, concerning his acceptance of a tender from Volkerlaser Ltd., for the Dell Underpass Bridge Refurbishment scheme, in the sum of £274,318.19.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

64 **SCOTTISH POWER - STREET LIGHTING**

Further to minute 52(8/3/10) the Director of Technical Services reported that arrangements had been made for representatives of Scottish Power to attend the September meeting of this committee. He also submitted a briefing note on progress made in securing the first tripartite agreement in Merseyside to change the way in which new street lighting connections to existing services are carried out.

The agreement between the Local Authority, electricity network operator and the street lighting contractor provided the opportunity to eradicate the inefficiencies inherent under the traditional approach.

- Schemes could be designed to maximize connections to existing service cable avoiding the necessity of new connections by a third party.
- The coordination required with a third party was avoided.
- The contractor could manage the connection process providing certain administrative criteria were met.
- Installations and transfers to new lighting units could be completed in the same day saving many weeks of ad hoc visits.
- In vulnerable positions permanent reinstatements could be carried out the same day providing a seamless one day operation compared with many weeks and frequent visits to the same location.
- The new approach could achieve significant efficiencies and Wirral had secured unit cost reductions for both the connections and the trenching providing both qualitative and quantitative savings.

This was a key success arising from a number of highway & lighting innovations groups set up by the Wirral Colas partnership during year 1 of the new Highways Maintenance contract.

Resolved – That the report be noted.