

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12 March 2013

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Williams (Vice-Chair in the Chair)	
	Councillors	J Crabtree L Fraser D Mitchell	C Muspratt J Stapleton KJ Williams
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillors	L Rowlands (In place of D Elderton) J Salter (In place of T Norbury)	
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	H Smith	Cabinet Member
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	M Sullivan	

70 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

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.

71 MINUTES

The Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management presented the minutes of the meetings held on 24 and 29 January and 14 February 2013.

Councillor Muspratt advised the Committee that she had been unable to attend the meeting held on 14 February 2013, as she had been required to attend another meeting. She had nominated a deputy to attend in her place but wished that her apologies be recorded.

Councillor Fraser referred to minute 69 (14 February 2013) insofar as it related to savings options associated with School Crossing Patrols. Her recollection of the debate was that, rather than expressing its strong concern, the Committee had totally objected to this savings option as it would likely have left some schools without a Crossing Patrol.

The Deputy Director of Technical Services commented that the strength of feeling expressed in relation to this matter was such that the savings option was not taken forward.

It was moved by Councillor Fraser and seconded by Councillor Rowlands –

“That minute 69 (14 February 2013) be amended to reflect the outcome of the debate in relation to the complete objection by the Committee to the savings option in respect of School Crossing Patrols.”

The motion was put and lost (3:4)

Resolved –

- (1) That the apologies of Councillor Muspratt for her non-attendance at the meeting held on 14 February 2013 be noted.**
- (2) That the minutes of the meetings held on 24 and 29 January and 14 February 2013, be approved.**

72 **DELIVERING VALUE FOR MONEY CULTURE AND LEISURE FACILITIES**

The Interim Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment provided a summary of progress in the provision of Leisure and Cultural Services which included the Floral Pavilion, The Museums Service and Leisure Centres. The report had been requested as part of the Committees work programme and he referred to the focus of the Corporate Plan to promote the Council’s leisure facilities to encourage greater take up of services and increase the number of Wirral residents participating in sport and physical activity. He reported that the number of Wirral residents participating in sport and physical activity was measured by Sport England’s Active People Survey which asked adults if they had undertaken at least 30 minutes of moderate intensity sport every week. He reported that Wirral’s participation levels had increased each year since the survey commenced in 2005 when it was measured at 32.6% of the population. It was 41.8% for 2011/2012, the date of the last survey, which made Wirral the highest performing authority in Merseyside and amongst the 10% top performing authorities in the country. In response to a comment from a Member, he indicated that the survey did not differentiate between the use of public or private facilities.

He commented also that although Leisure and Cultural venues were subject to reductions in income caused by economic conditions, competition and lack of investment in new facilities, works had recently been completed at Leasowe Recreation Centre and funding from the Health Service had enabled works to improve disabled changing facilities to be undertaken at Europa Pool and Beechwood Leisure Centre. However, the Director proposed to investigate concerns expressed by Members in relation to disabled changing facilities at The Oval Sports Centre.

In response to comments from Members related to the provision of catering and bar operations at the Floral Pavilion, the Head of Cultural Services indicated that he would raise any concerns with the Theatre Manager. The statement in his report that catering and bar operations were performing well related solely to income levels and he agreed to provide to Members a comparison analysis that had been undertaken as part of a benchmarking exercise.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

73 **PROVIDE AND MAINTAIN HIGH QUALITY PARKS AND OPEN SPACES IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES - UPDATE**

Further to minute 36 (21 November 2012), the Interim Strategic Director: Regeneration and Environment provided a summary of progress in the provision of the Parks and Countryside Service to provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local communities. The report had been requested as part of the Committees work programme and he referred to the goal included within the Corporate Plan to provide and maintain high quality parks and open spaces in partnership with the local communities with a specific focus on improving the Council's Parks and Countryside Service with the targets to increase the number of parks attaining an agreed quality standard from 12 to 13 by 2012/2013 and to deliver the Parks and Countryside Modernisation Programme 2012/2013.

The Parks and Countryside Service Manager commented that improved performance and value for money had resulted in the best quality standards achieved in Wirral, with 16 open spaces having received a national quality award and 14 the Green Flag Award, which could not have been achieved without partnership working with Friends groups, volunteers and other community organisations. She referred to key projects that were still to be completed in the modernisation programme, which were awaiting the capital programme decision and would be planned for implementation in 2013/2014, 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Agreement had been reached with trade union representatives to a range of new working practices and hours that had been introduced as part of a 12 month pilot, which had been in operation since May 2012. She outlined the advantages of new working patterns and commented that a number of staff consultation meetings had taken place to review the operation of the pilot.

Members commented upon the benefits of the excellent partnerships that now existed with local communities through the various Friends Groups and referred also to the positive impact on physical and mental health of high quality parks and open spaces. Members referred to the popularity of the outside exercise equipment at Central Park, Wallasey and the Parks and Countryside Service Manager indicated that this had been provided through an initiative with Wirral Health.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted.**
- (2) That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to all staff and volunteers associated with the improvements in Wirral's Parks and Open Spaces.**

74 **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

The Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported, in accordance with the Approved Scheme of Delegation, of instances where delegated authority had been used with respect to the appointment of Contractors pursuant to Contract Procedure Rule 14. Since the 21 November

2012, the following tenders had been accepted, all being the lowest/most economically advantageous received –

Project Title Wallasey Town Hall
Passenger Lift Refurbishment
Contract Sum: £55,743.00
Contractor: Knowsley Lift Services Ltd
Funded from Law, HR & Asset Management PPM 2012/13

Project Title: Birkenhead Town Hall
Fire Alarm Installation
Contract Sum: £55,268.00
Contractor: Atlas Fire & Security Ltd
Funded from: Law, HR & Asset Management PPM 2012/13

Project Title: Rock Ferry One Stop Shop / Library Alterations
Contract Sum: £499,630.00
Contractor: Thomas Barnes & Sons plc
Funded from: Law, HR & Asset Management - Capital Programme

Project Title: Schedule of Rates Contract 2013-2016 for
Asbestos Removal, Encapsulation and Associated Works
Contract Sum: 0% Increase/Reduction of the Base Rates
Contractor: Asbestos Control & Treatment Ltd
Funded from: Law, HR & AM Repairs & Maintenance Revenue

Project Title: Cheshire Lines Building
Facilities Management
Contract Sum: £2,395.45 per week - 14 month contract
Contractor: 1 Call Business Solutions Ltd
Funded from: Law, HR & AM Repairs & Maintenance Revenue

In response to questions from Members with regard to the Cheshire Lines Facilities Management contract, the Head of Environment and Regulation proposed to circulate a detailed briefing note to all Members of the Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

75 **WIRRAL APPROVED TRADER SCHEME**

The Council's Trading Standards Strategic Manager presented an update on the progress of the Wirral Trader Scheme (WTS), which was a non-statutory function of Trading Standards Service, but had a valuable role in preventing consumer detriment. It provided support and reassurance to vulnerable people and encouraged and assisted businesses to trade fairly and provide excellent goods and services. It had proved to be a success with over 103 approved members and Wirral consumers carrying out approximately 13,000 trader searches in the last 12 months.

He commented also that the Wirral Trader Scheme assisted in delivering key priorities of the Council, including promoting sustainable, economic, social, neighbourhood and environmental regeneration, improving the health and well

being of Wirral residents and providing opportunities for community and business development.

Members referred to concerns that had been expressed by members of the public regarding the provision, of an 0845 telephone number and suggested that a local number would encourage greater engagement with Trading Standards locally. The Strategic Manager commented that the 0845 number was linked to a national helpline. In response to Members comments, he proposed to investigate whether a local Wirral number could instead link to the national helpline and would present a report to a future meeting upon the operation of the national scheme.

In response to further comments, he provided information regarding the vetting process and outlined the checks and ongoing monitoring undertaken by Trading Standards.

Resolved –

- (1) That the improvements in and progress of the 'Wirral Trader Scheme' and the change of brand to 'Trading Standards Business Approval'; be noted.**
- (2) That the Committee recognises the importance of the Trading Standards Business Approval Scheme in supporting Wirral residents and businesses, specifically in respect of vulnerable people.**
- (3) That the options for the future development and sustainability of the Trading Standards Business Approval Scheme be noted.**
- (4) That a further update report be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.**

76 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Acting Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period March to June 2013 was published on the Council's intranet/website. Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Committee to consider, having regard to its work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.