

SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 6 November 2012

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

27 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with the item 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 the item to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

No such declarations were made.

28 CONSIDERATION OF FINDINGS: WHAT REALLY MATTERS CONSULTATION

The Committee considered a report of the Chief Executive which was to be presented to Cabinet on 8 November with the results of the first stage of the consultation process. The consultation results contained within the report were intended to provide a good understanding of residents', partners' and employees' views on the Council's future priorities and appropriate methods in which savings should be delivered. All of the comments provided through the consultation had been analysed and summarised within the report, and all comments would be published on the Council website during November 2012.

Subject to Cabinet approval, the report would be followed by a second stage of consultation which would begin in November 2012. This second stage

would involve consultation with residents, employees and other stakeholders to gather views on a range of detailed options for achieving the necessary budget savings for 2013/14.

The Committee received a presentation from Lucy Barrow, Corporate Performance Manager, in the Chief Executive's Department, on the process and findings of the consultation. Over the period of six weeks the team had spoken to just over 13,000 residents. There had been 6,921 responses to the questionnaire, of which 1,133 were staff responses. Responses were broadly geographically and demographically representative.

There was broad approval for each of the four main themes:

- Increasing income
- Alternative delivery
- Shaping Community Services
- Stopping or reducing

Charges for some services should be raised but not to disadvantage people and being careful not to create a domino effect of an overall loss of income. People were very strongly in favour of shared services, although with any service which was outsourced there was a need to retain control. The results also showed that the Council should look at consolidating services into a smaller number of buildings but without leaving any community isolated. Officer options for savings would be published at the end of week to be followed by a further period of consultation through to January and Overview and Scrutiny Committees would be meeting again in December to consider these options.

The three top priorities were ranked in order as:

- Protecting our vulnerable adults and children
- Creating jobs and attracting investment
- Tackling poverty and inequalities in health

Responding to comments from Members, Lucy Barrow stated that she would be happy to circulate to all Members consultation results broken down on a ward by ward basis.

A member commented that the response rate for the whole of the Borough was less than 3% and with 15% of the respondees being employees, the response from the public was 2.4%. Lucy Barrow indicated that initial research had shown that the response rate was higher than any other comparable exercise in the UK; the team had also engaged with thousands more people to raise awareness of the consultation. It was acknowledged that work would continue to encourage as many people as possible to take part in

the next stage of the consultation. The Council now had a 7000 distribution base which could be built upon to continue to the next stage.

Members thanked all the officers involved in the consultation process.

The Committee considered the recommendations that were due to go to Cabinet. The Chair suggested that in respect of paragraph 18.2, bullet point 3:

- “Ensure that the Council retains overall responsibility for the quality of the services delivered to Wirral residents in the event of outsourcing”

this should be elaborated on to take account of the established management principle that you cannot expect any person or organisation, or the Council, to take responsibility for actions over which it did not have authority, or could not give direction.

The Committee then debated a suggested amendment to this bullet point and on a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jerry Williams, it was –

Resolved (9:0) – That the report and presentation be noted and Cabinet be asked to incorporate additional wording at the end of bullet point 3 (paragraph 18.2) of its recommendations, to read as follows:

- **Ensure that the Council retains overall responsibility for the quality of the services delivered to Wirral residents in the event of outsourcing by directing activities as appropriate.**