

ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 6 November 2012

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	M Johnston (Chair)	
	Councillors	J Stapleton A Hodson P Kearney	R Gregson M Sullivan S Whittingham
<u>Apologies:</u>	Councillors	T Cox D Realey J Williamson P Hackett	Cabinet Member

28 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had 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.

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.

29 CONSIDERATION OF FINDINGS - WHAT REALLY MATTERS CONSULTATION

The report of the Chief Executive on the stage one "What Really Matters" consultation findings, to be considered by the Cabinet on 8 November 2012 was presented to the Committee for its consideration. The report indicated that, at its meeting held on 10 July 2012, the Cabinet (minute 45 refers) had instructed officers to implement a comprehensive programme of consultation and engagement in order to inform the development of the Council's Corporate and Financial Plan for 2013-2016 and further to guide the development of significant budget savings.

The Director of Regeneration, Housing and Planning reported upon the results of the first stage of the consultation process, which ran from 10 September to 19 October 2012 and Members received a presentation, which provided a summary and analysis of the findings of the views expressed by residents, staff and other stakeholders. An extensive communications and engagement plan was implemented to ensure the consultation reached the widest possible audience. It involved a programme of over 150 events including scrutiny workshops, and speaking to over 13,000 residents. Over 37,500 paper questionnaires had been distributed, and 6921 responses received represented a return rate of around 18% – a higher response to any previous Wirral Council consultation and, according to published data, higher than any comparable exercise anywhere in the UK.

The Director commented that the second stage of the consultation would focus upon the specific options for savings to be published by officers on 9 November 2012 and it was hoped that levels of engagement would be increased. Further meetings of Overview and Scrutiny Committees would take place in early December and the findings of the stage two consultation would be presented to a special meeting of the Cabinet on 20 December 2012. Further scrutiny committees would then be held prior to the Budget Cabinet in February 2013.

Members noted that the results of the questionnaire agreed with the proposed top three priorities for the Council of, protecting vulnerable adults and children, tackling poverty and inequalities in health, and creating jobs and attracting investment. However, Members noted also that the results suggested that having access to a range of affordable housing should be a low priority. The Director accepted that the consultation was statistically valid, whilst also noting that responses tended to be from a personal point of view. Ultimately, budget decisions would be taken by Members who would have regard to the consultation outcome and draw from it what they considered to be most relevant.

At 6.50pm, the Committee stood adjourned for 10 minutes.

It was moved by Councillor Jean Stapleton and seconded by Councillor Stuart Whittingham –

“That the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanks everyone who contributed to the “What Really Matters” consultation and notes the priorities identified”.

The Motion was put and carried (7:0)

It was further moved by Councillor Mark Johnston and seconded by Councillor Andrew Hodson –

“That the Cabinet be asked to refer to paragraph 7.1 of the report of the Chief Executive, to note that the public’s response to this question is that ‘creating jobs and attracting investment’ is the second highest priority and that this should be reflected when options are being considered”.

The further Motion was put and carried (3:0) (Four abstentions)

Resolved –

- (1) That the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee thanks everyone who contributed to the “What Really Matters” consultation and notes the priorities identified.**
 - (2) That the Cabinet be asked to refer to paragraph 7.1 of the report of the Chief Executive, to note that the public’s response to this question is that ‘creating jobs and attracting investment’ is the second highest priority and that this should be reflected when options are being considered.**
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