

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL SOUTH

Wednesday, 26 February 2014

Present: Councillor P Gilchrist (in the Chair)

Councillors	T Harney	C Povall
	A Hodson	W Smith
	K Hodson	A Sykes
	C Muspratt	J Walsh
	S Niblock	I Williams
		KJ Williams

Apologies Councillors P Kearney L Rowlands
D Mitchell

16 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and informed that Councillors A Hodson and A Sykes had given him their apologies as they would not be able to stay for the whole meeting due to a prior engagement. If any member of the public had a question for either one of them, arrangements would be made to obtain a response(s) outside of the meeting.

17 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Niblock declared a non pecuniary interest in Item No. 6 on the agenda – Pavements and Grass Verge Parking – Update Report (Minute No. 22 refers) as the update to be reported included issues experienced in the road where he lived.

18 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 18 December 2013 be confirmed as a correct record.

19 CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE PRIORITIES AND SPEND UPDATE (COUNCILLOR PHIL GILCHRIST)

Further to Minute No. 12 of the last meeting of the Committee held on 18 December 2013, a report by the Wirral South Constituency Manager set out

the progress made in relation to priorities and processes regarding the Committee's budget for 2013/14.

The Constituency Manager reported that since the Committee's last meeting, the allocation of funding from Public Health had increased. On 10 December 2013 the Director of Public Health had presented a report to the Cabinet recommending a further £100,000 be "...administered through the Constituency Committees" aimed at supporting the voluntary sector in Wirral (Cabinet Minute No. 120 refers).

Consequently, the Committee was now responsible for administering the original £25,000 provided by Public Health and the further £25,000 'Voluntary Sector Support Fund' as well as the kick start grant of £50,000 provided by the Council. A full breakdown of the Committee's allocated budget of £100,000 was set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

Members were informed that the 'Priority Setting' Task and Finish Group had met for the second time on 30 January 2014 and had discussed the new allocation (Voluntary Sector Support Fund) at length. The criteria for the Fund stated that a transparent funding exercise be administered (by the Constituency Committees) to consider requests of up to £3,000 from the voluntary Sector only. The Group had proposed that the originally allocated £25,000 from Public Health could also be rolled into the allocation process outlined in the report. This £25,000 would not simply be available to the voluntary sector. It was also proposed that this element of the funding would also carry a cap of £3,000 to encourage a wide ranging cohort of applicants, covering as much of the Wirral South Constituency footprint as possible.

The Committee was informed that in depth documents detailing the mechanics of the £50,000 total grants programme would be presented to all Wirral South Members in March 2014 for approval (e.g. application form, terms and conditions). All successful applicants would need to clearly demonstrate how their project contributed towards the achievement of indicators from the Department of Health's Public Health outcomes framework which was set out at Appendix 2 to the report.

The 'Priority Setting' Task and Finish Group had highlighted the importance of mobilising interest in any such grants programme. It had been agreed that a drop in/workshops would be held in each ward throughout the application process. These sessions would not only offer practical help with completing application forms but would serve as a forum for any unanswered questions groups and individuals may have.

It was hoped that if recommendations set out in the report were agreed the grants programme could be released on 1 April 2014. Following the completion of a five week application window the requests received would then be assessed and decisions made on funding allocation. All Members

would be invited to the assessment session (mid May). Successful applicants could then be informed and proposed projects announced at the first Committee meeting of 2014/15 Municipal Year (25 June 2014).

Members noted that if all applicants were given nine months to spend their allocation then a full programme review could be presented to the final Constituency Committee of 2014/15. This review would clearly demonstrate the impact that the funded projects had on the objectives highlighted in Appendix 2.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress made in relation to the allocation and spend of the previously agreed £10,000 per ward be noted;**
- (2) the proposal of the 'Priority Setting' Task and Finish Group to carry out a grants programme, administering a total of £50,000 contributing towards the achievement of indicators from the Department of Health's Public Health Outcomes Framework at Appendix 2 to the report be agreed;**
- (3) the grants programme be launched on 1 April 2014 and the principles agreed by the Task and Finish Group, aimed at ensuring the broadest geographical and social spread of the funding, be approved; and**
- (4) following a five week application window the 'Priority Setting' Task and Finish Group be requested to meet again and invite all Wirral South Members to attend to assess all applications received.**

20 **COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE RECRUITMENT PROCESS - ORAL UPDATE (FERGUS ADAMS, CONSTITUENCY MANAGER)**

Further to Minute No. 11, the Constituency Manager provided the Committee with a progress to date report on the Community Representative Recruitment Process. At the last meeting on 18 December 2013 the Committee had agreed to carry out a review of the recruitment process in an attempt to make it more robust and to ensure the Committee co-opted people with appropriate skills and experience to assist its discussions. It was intended that the priorities would be established in April 2014 to allow recruitment to progress. It was anticipated that co-options could be made so that co-optees would attend their first meeting on 25 June 2014.

There could be a formal recruitment process put in place and the application form for those interested in being co-opted would reflect the Council's job

application form. Any decision to co-opt onto the Committee would be scrutinised.

A discussion ensued and a Member reminded the Committee that it had also been agreed that representatives from recognised organisations and charities who had an interest in the various matters the Committee was scrutinising would be invited to make nominations. Any co-optee would also be expected to report back to the organisation that had nominated them on the Committee's work.

Members considered that it was important that it co-opted people who represented the local community and that this be included in the Constituency Committee Handbook.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made on the Community Representative Process be noted.

21 **CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE HANDBOOK DEVELOPMENT TASK AND FINISH GROUP ORAL UPDATE (FERGUS ADAMS, CONSTITUENCY MANAGER)**

A Constituency Committee Handbook was being developed which would set out the role and remit of the Committee (Terms of Reference), arrangements for appointing community representatives etc. The aim was to have a working document of guidance available for reference. A Task and Finish Group was working on the detail and the second draft had been circulated to all Members and their comments sought. Comments received would be discussed at the next meeting of the Task and Finish Group.

The Constituency Manager informed the Committee that it was hoped that the Handbook would be ready by the first Committee meeting in the next Municipal Year (25 June 2014). It would be made available in hard copy, online and in One Stop Shops etc.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in respect of the Constituency Committee Handbook be noted and further progress on this document be reported to Members in advance of the next meeting.

22 **PAVEMENTS & GRASS VERGE PARKING - UPDATE REPORT (COUNCILLOR JERRY WILLIAMS)**

The Committee received a report in respect of pavement and grass verge parking which had been referred to it from the Regeneration and Environment

Policy and Performance Committee at its meeting on 27 January, 2014 (Minute No. 34 refers) where it had agreed that it should be considered by each of the Constituency Committee.

The Chair and Councillor J Williams explained the issues that had been raised at the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee. The high number of enquiries that were made to Streetscene indicated the extent of the problem across Wirral, particularly in areas with narrow streets and no off road parking.

Members were concerned over the number of complaints they received about motorists parking on pavements and grass verges. Parking on pavements was dangerous as people had to step into the road to get passed. This was particularly hazardous for the elderly and people pushing prams. Parking on pavements and grass verges affected the surfaces of the pavements and churned up the grass verges so that they looked unsightly. Consequently, maintenance work was required and it proved costly. However, it was noted that it was possible for the Council to invoice people for the repairs needed if it could prove who had caused the damage.

It was reported that there had been so many complaints received in Bebington about parking on pavements and grass verges that a scheme had been introduced in an attempt to try to reduce them.

It was noted that the police were able to take enforcement action if a vehicle was causing an obstruction.

RESOLVED:

That this Committee looks forward to working with Highway Officers to tackle the problem of parking on pavements and grass verges and they be invited to attend the next meeting to progress this.

23 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION (APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES)**

Members and members of the public in attendance raised the following questions/comments.

Question 1

A Member asked why updates on Police issues and activities and on Fire and Rescue Service issues and activities had not been included on the agenda. He informed that he considered that the Police and Fire and Rescue Service representatives should be sitting at the table with Members and not with the public.

Question 2

A representative of Wirral 3Ls (Leisure, Laughter & Learning for the (mainly) over-50s) who operated out of Bebington Civic Centre asked why his organisation had not been consulted on a proposal to take the Civic Suite out of use and convert it into office space for Council Offices attached to the Wirral South Constituency Committee. Wirral 3Ls used the facility six days a week. He now understood that this was now unlikely to happen but sought assurances that the Civic Suite was not now intended to be used for this purpose.

The Assistant Chief Executive was in attendance at the meeting and confirmed that the proposal would not be proceeding. He apologised for the way Wirral 3Ls had found out about the proposal and explained that it had been the result of a misunderstanding between officers which had now been rectified.

Eventually there would be a number of Neighbourhood staff working in the local community but for now they would remain at Wallasey Town Hall. The three buildings (Mayer Hall, Pennant House and the Clock Tower) at the centre of the Bebington conservation area would not be disposed of by the Council. It was noted that improvements to these buildings were needed.

A Member thanked Wirral 3Ls for the wonderful job it did in the Civic Centre. He also thanked the 'Friends' Group who looked after the three buildings mentioned above and informed that there may be funding available to access from English Heritage for improvement works. English Heritage had highlighted Wirral's Conservation Strategy as an example of good practice in its recent Newsletter.

Question 3

Mr Johnson asked why this meeting was being held on the same evening as the Police's 'Have Your Say' meeting which meant he had been denied the opportunity to attend both.

Ross Meredith, the Neighbourhood Inspector based at Bromborough, informed that in future there would not be any more meeting clashes. The Police and the Council would co-ordinate their meeting Calendars.

Inspector Meredith also informed that the Police meeting scheduled for this evening was not a 'Have Your Say' meeting but an opportunity to meet the local Police Constable at his Police Surgery.

Question 4

Mr Boyd was concerned about the possible Committee co-optees. He asked that careful consideration be given to how co-options were made. He considered that a too involved process could put people off applying.

Question 5

Mr Wright (Heswall Together) enquired about the progress of the 'Love Wirral Grants'.

The Constituency Manager reported that the Love Wirral grants were not administered by the Committee. The funding was a set amount administered by the Council. The funding had not yet been signed off by the Leader of the Council. Applicants who were successful would receive a letter from the Council's Communications Team, informing them of this and the date when they could expect the grant to be in their bank accounts. Also, a list of the successful applicants would be published on the Council's website in due course.

Question 6

£1.3m was being spent by the Council on roads, grass verges and pavements. Could some of it not be used to provide car parking spaces.

There were massive cost implications in respect of this as sometimes the drainage had to be altered. It was estimated that to put in a pull in would cost over £50,000.

Members noted that when streets had been built there had been no expectations that in the future people would have cars. They had not been designed for vehicle use. It was often difficult for emergency vehicles to gain access and people were put at risk as a consequence.

Question 7

Representations were made that ward Members had been invited to a meeting on 25 February 2014 to discuss issues relating to the bedroom tax. They had not attended and had not sent their apologies.

In January 2014 the Government had announced that bedroom tax cuts to housing benefit should not have been applied to some people. The loophole applied to people who had been claiming housing benefit continuously for the same home since 1 January 1996. All the money cut from their housing benefit from 1 April 2013 to 2 March 2014 should be refunded into their rent accounts. The Council would need to contact people about this if it

checked its records and agreed a mistake had been made. What progress had the Council made with this?

The issue related to people who may qualify for a refund. The Council was undertaking some research to identify people but it had incomplete records, it was a complex process and people were being encouraged to come forward and let Officers know if they considered that they were entitled to a refund. The Council was in the process of making refunds.

The Chair apologised for Members not attending the meeting on 25 February 2014. It had not been possible because they had been attending the Budget Council meeting which had been held on the same evening.

24 **FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE AND POLICE REPORTS**

Fire and Rescue Service

Alan Fletcher, the Station Manager for Heswall and Bromborough introduced himself and informed of the service actions he was putting in place to target vulnerable groups. He also informed that there would be an Open Day on Thursday, 24 April 2014 at Heswall Fire Station which would highlight home safety.

The Station Manager provided a progress report on the Princes Trust Programme. The Fire and Rescue Service was a delivery partner of the twelve weeks 'Team' Personal Development Programme for 16 -25 year olds. The current cohort of twelve was half way through the course and another course was due to commence in May 2014.

The Station Manager told the meeting that a Cadet course was planned. Wirral Fire Cadets was a long term comprehensive education and development scheme aimed at young people aged 14-18, allowing participants to take part in Fire and Rescue led activities at a local fire station one evening per week.

The Station Manager told the meeting that operational crews were now on a new shift pattern and were hoping to interact more with community groups.

The Station Manager reported that Safe Havens had been introduced at all community fire stations on Wirral, including Heswall. The initiative, approved by Wirral Community Safety Partnership, meant that community fire stations across Wirral were designated as Safe Havens.

Community fire stations, identified by an illuminated Safe Haven sign that could be seen at night, were accessible to members of the public who felt threatened, intimidated or at risk. They also provided those individuals with

the opportunity to report Hate Crime or Domestic Violence should they feel that this action was appropriate.

The Committee was also provided with an update on youth development and informed that land next to the Fire Station in Exmouth Street, Birkenhead was to be used for a Youth Hub. This would be a project very similar to the one in Toxteth providing excellent facilities for young people.

A Member had visited a Youth Hub in Wigan and reported on the superb facilities it had for youngsters. It was hoped that Merseytravel would introduce cheap rail tickets to and from the hub which would be open from early in the morning until late at night.

The Committee noted that all the works on the Youth Hub could not yet be completed as there was a funding shortfall. The Fire and Rescue Authority had provided the land but the cost of the building was reliant on a charity that had provided Youth Hubs elsewhere in the country. However, real efforts were being made to generate funding to build the Youth Hub.

Police

Inspector Ross Meredith informed that he would be available after the meeting to speak to anyone who had any policing issues they wished to raise with him. He reported that the Wirral South constituency footprint was the safest place to live and work in Wirral. There had been 248 fewer crimes than at this time last year.

Wirral was suffering a major spate of burglaries of all types. It was suspected that criminals were visiting from outside the area. Merseyside Police was working with Cheshire Police's Burglary Team and British Transport Police on this, as some of the burglaries matched the pattern of train lines. Burglaries tended to occur during the afternoon/early evening and the vast majority were opportunist in South Wirral.

Inspector Meredith provided the Committee with the detail of a number of recent crimes committed in the South Wirral area. These included:

- An incident with a knife at Bargain Booze in Hoylake.
- Thefts from vehicles in the Heswall area and a reminder not to leave SatNavs attached to the window when a vehicle was parked up.
- House burglaries and a reminder not to leave house keys close to doors.
- Thefts of vehicle number plates. The Police had anti-theft screws (funded by Halfords) available.
- Nuisance youth activity in New Ferry – harassing the public to buy them alcohol.

A Member reported on the 'Couple with a Copper' initiative underway in Cardiff where free tea/coffee was provided and the public encouraged talking to local Police Officers.

RESOLVED:

That the reports of the representatives of the Fire and Rescue Service and the Police be received.

25 **CLATTERBRIDGE HOSPITAL**

A Member raised the matter of oncology being moved to the Royal Liverpool University Hospital and enquired which healthcare services would be left at Clatterbridge Hospital.

Members agreed that this would be discussed when the Committee considered the Constituency Committee Handbook and drew up its Work Programme with dates for completing its various tasks and actions.

The Committee considered that if it invited representatives from the Police and Fire and Rescue Service to attend its meetings, perhaps it would be appropriate to also invite a representative from the Health Service.

26 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR THE NEXT MEETING**

A Member told the Committee that he did not think that the practice of having a rolling Committee Chair worked very well and perhaps a more permanent Chair was required for the Committee in future.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Political Groups be requested to discuss whether the Committee should have the same Chair for each meeting in the new Municipal Year or continue to elect a different Chair for each of its meeting, and try to reach a consensus on it; and in the meantime**
- (2) Councillor S Niblock be elected Chair and Councillor C Povall be elected Vice-Chair for the meeting of the Committee scheduled for 25 June 2014.**