

REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT POLICY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 3 February 2015

Present: Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

Councillors KJ Williams S Niblock
D Mitchell D Realey
S Williams J Stapleton
J Crabtree G Ellis
M Daniel J Hale
R Gregson T Pilgrim

Deputies: Councillors T Johnson (for A Leech)

39 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.

40 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3 December be approved.

41 STREET CLEANSING POST BUDGET OPTIONS

A report by the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment provided Members with an overview of significant changes made to Wirral Council's street cleaning programme in July 2013 in order to implement £1 million savings proposal.

Tara Dumas, Environmental & Waste Services Manager and Gary Robinson, Representative from Biffa presented the report. It was reported that Wirral Council had worked closely with Biffa to redesign street cleansing as a means to assist the Council to meet budgetary challenge as a result of reduction in government grants.

Members were informed that the majority of the savings had been achieved through a reduction in frontline operatives. Street cleansing frequencies in most areas had been significantly reduced, with areas that had formally had a weekly cleanse now being reduced to 4 weekly and areas formally scheduled for a monthly cleanse now only being cleansed once every 12 weeks. Members heard that in order to mitigate the risk that some areas may not meet standards, agreement had been granted to fund a joint monitoring post in order for other members of the team to focus on more proactive work.

It was reported that through monitoring of the volumes of waste deposited in the Borough's alleyways gave early indications that increasing the cleaning frequencies from 4 weekly to 12 weekly had reduced the amount of waste fly tipping by around 12%. It was suggested that through providing a more frequent waste cleansing service can inadvertently encourage some residents to dump their rubbish, in the knowledge that it will be dealt with.

Members then heard that the number of fly tips reported had reduced by 36% and there had been a number of prosecutions made against offenders.

It was reported that when the reduced cleansing facilities were first introduced, reports of overflowing litterbins significantly increased. Crews are now working closely with the Council to identify locations for additional or large litterbins and an ongoing installation programme is now underway.

It was explained that if Members were to endorse the recommendation contained in the report to use the remaining transitional funds (£124k) this would be spent upon behaviour changing initiatives. This would include the introduction of "environmental awareness workshops" for alleyway dumping and potentially littering offenders which will aim to provide Wirral with a better understanding of values and attitudes of offenders. Other initiatives were set out in section 7.2 of the report.

A Member queried the impact of the reduction in frontline operatives that had represented 41 staff and 39% of the workforce.

In response, Mr Robinson explained that the service had remained constant and to a high standard.

A Member then queried penalty charges and the possibility of introducing a scheme whereby offenders are instructed to pick up litter.

It was explained there has been a wide range of research had been conducted into suitable deterrents for perpetrators. There is already a pool of volunteers who litter pick, this can be difficult to risk assess and is resource intensive.

A Councillor enquired about “gateway areas” and queried how often these areas are reviewed

It was explained that gateway areas are generally around areas such as motorway joining points, train stations and other investment areas.

Comments were raised regarding the need to educate some residents on recycling and it was reported that there will be four Recycling Officers in place to target specific areas and a programme of door knocking will begin shortly.

A Member raised a concern regarding rubbish being placed on the highway behind litter bins and enquired as to whether this issue was being targeted. Members heard from the Environmental and Waste Services Manager that as and when these issues are reported then an Officer will investigate the matter. Members were then reminded that legislation states that if rubbish is placed upon the floor then this is considered to be a “fly tip.”

The Chair thanked Officers for the report and brought to the Committees attention that this meeting had been the last for Tara Dumas, Environment and Waste Services Manager at Wirral Council. The Chair and Spokespersons commended Tara for all her excellent work within the Department and wished her well in her new position in her new authority.

Resolved: That the Committee:-

- (1) note the information provided in the report, including the recasting of the Waste Provisions budget as detailed in Section 7.1;**
- (2) endorse the inclusion of the Annual Litter Reduction programme in the Waste and Environmental Service Plan and;**
- (3) endorse the proposals to use the remaining transitional funds (£124k) to fund behaviour change initiatives over the next two years until March 2017.**

A Report by the Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment set out the Directorate's response to the request by the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee on the 3rd December with regard to monitoring of the Highways Contract. The report provided details of the management arrangements and expected outcomes for the new contract and its mobilisation from 1 April 2014, following completion of the previous contract.

It was explained that a decision had been made by Colas Limited not to consider an extension to their existing contract and in October 2013 Colas had submitted a demobilisation plan and worked closely with Officers to ensure that all operational risks were managed. Members were reminded that BAM Nuttall were awarded the contract as detailed in the Cabinet report of 7th November 2013.

Members heard that meetings had taken place between BAM Nuttall and Colas with regard to which staff would transfer, their working conditions and pension arrangements. Members were then informed that there had been a delay in the contract award to BAM, therefore Colas had an extension to their depot to the 30th April 2014.

Representatives from Bam Nuttall including Matt Stacey, Business Unit Manager and Steve Addison, Project Manager attended the Committee and delivered a presentation. Members were informed about the Governance of the organisation, performance monitoring, supply chain partners and provided information about health and safety.

Officer and representatives from Bam Nuttall responded to questions from Members including queries about whether there were any extra costs to the Authority following the extension of the Colas contract and compatibility of IT systems

Members were informed that there no additional costs for the Authority. In terms of consideration of IT systems, Members heard that Bam Nuttall can integrate with Council systems.

A Member enquired about the time scales involved for replacing street lights.

Members were informed that there had been a spike in street lighting replacements recently, however, there is a significant back log that is currently being dealt with.

Resolved: That the Committee:-

- (1) note the contents of the report and eth successful mobilisation of the new Highways Service Contract;**

(2) note the successful demobilisation of the Colas' contract and;

(3) endorse the objectives of the new contract outlined in Section 7.4 of the report.

43 DIRECTORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT

A Report by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment updated Members in relation to performance as at 30th November 2014 against the delivery of the Regeneration and Environment Directorate Plan 2014/15.

A Member enquired into the reasoning behind lower levels of affordable housing in comparison to previous years.

Members were informed that the grant that had previously been available had been significantly reduced, therefore resources available had been diminished.

A Member then enquired about numbers of empty properties within the Borough and was informed that a recent audit demonstrated that there are around 6,000.

The Committee were informed by the Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment that a recent report had indicated that Wirral had increased its Gross Value Added (GVA) by 7%, a higher level than anywhere else in the country.

Resolved – That the Committee use the information contained within the report to inform its future work programme.

44 BUDGET MONITOR REPORT INCLUDING REVENUE, SAVINGS AND CAPITAL

A Report by the Acting Section 151 Officer set out the financial monitoring information. The Report was written with the aim to give Members sufficient detail to scrutinise budget performance for the Directorate. Appended to the Report was the Revised Capital Programme for 2014/15.

Resolved – That the Financial Monitoring Report be noted.

45 LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY - SCRUTINY ARRANGEMENTS

The Chair of the Committee reported that the Liverpool City Region Scrutiny Panel meeting due to be held on 21st January had been cancelled and replaced with a briefing session and an initial scoping meeting to discuss European Funding

Members were informed that the briefing session was attended by Alan Welby, Executive Director for Key Growth Sectors at the Local Enterprise Partnership and Martin Eyres, Head of European Affairs at Liverpool City Council.

It was reported that the briefing session had included a presentation setting out the current context in relation to European Funding in the Liverpool City Region. The Panel had considered two areas to be looked at. These being:

- (i) the commissioning/ bidding framework being developed to underpin the local delivery of the European Programme 2014-2020 and;
- (ii) the governance arrangements in place to shape and oversee the local operation of this programme.

Members heard that it was proposed that this review would be conducted during the period from February to March 2015, with a view to submitting a report/ recommendations to the formal meeting of the Panel on 8 April 2015. It was also proposed that the review will comprise two evidence sessions, one for each topic followed up by a wrap- up session to consider the content of the final report and recommendations.

46 **SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

A Report by the Chair of the Committee updated Members on the current position regarding the work programme for the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee.

It was reported that at the agenda setting meeting held on 6 January 2015, the Chair and Party Spokespersons for this Committee agreed for two items to be added to the Work Programme including:

- A Task and Finish Review on the Council's Coastal Strategy
- A Task and Finish Review on homelessness within Wirral.

Members heard that the task and finish review on the Councils Coastal Strategy would commence this year whilst the review on homelessness would begin in the new municipal year. Members were advised that membership of the Council's Coastal Strategy Task and Finish Group would be Councillors Sullivan, Hale and Mitchell.

A Member requested that the issue of utility companies that had been causing damage to areas of the Borough be considered as an item of the Committee's Work Programme. The Member was informed that Wirral Council are moving towards becoming a Permit Authority, however, this matter may be considered at a later date.

A Member then requested that levels of under occupancy be reviewed in the future.

Resolved – That Members approve the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee work programme for 2014/15.

47 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR**

The Chair highlighted that as the next meeting of the Committee scheduled for 20 April 2015 was due to be held during purdah, he proposed that the next meeting be brought forward and proposed that this meeting would now be held on 23 March 2015 at 6:00pm.

Resolved - that the next meeting of the Committee takes place on Monday 23 March 2015 at 6:00pm.