

CABINET

Thursday, 27 November 2014

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| <u>Present:</u> | Councillor | P Davies (Chair) | Leader of the Council |
| | Councillors | AR McLachlan | Governance, Commissioning and Improvement |
| | | G Davies | Neighbourhoods, Housing and Engagement |
| | | AER Jones | Support Services |
| | | C Jones | Adult Social Care and Public Health |
| | | C Meaden | Leisure, Sport and Culture |
| | | P Hackett | Economy |
| | | Tony Smith | Children and Family Services |
| | | B Mooney | Environment and Sustainability |
| | | S Whittingham | Highways and Transport |

98 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

99 CORPORATE PLAN

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Chief Executive which included a refreshed Corporate Plan for the period 2015-2016 (Appendix 1) for the Cabinet's consideration and referral to the Council meeting scheduled for 8 December 2014.

The Corporate Plan for 2013-2016 had been agreed by the Council at its meeting on 5 March 2013, following extensive consultation with residents, partners and other stakeholders. It provided the Council with a clear vision, a set of priorities and was the basis upon which a performance framework would be developed to monitor progress made on defined objectives. The Chief Executive's report also contained the Council's current financial position for the same time (Appendix2).

The Corporate Plan was the Council's key policy document and provided a robust approach to its' business planning; ensuring that its' vision, priorities and spending decisions were based on sound evidence, thorough analysis and understanding of community needs.

Councillor Phil Davies informed the Cabinet that the Council's overwhelming challenge was to deal with a hugely reducing budget. It would need to come up with innovative ways to approach this, be able to work in partnership and

make very difficult decisions. The Council was focusing on collecting debts and had £70m to save over the next two years. The Corporate Plan was a road map for how this would be achieved.

Councillor Phil Davies told the Cabinet that there was no need to alter the Council's overall corporate priorities as they were still relevant and appropriate. The Council Tax had been frozen and plans were in place to achieve three overarching priorities and the Council's vision. The Council had invest £1.5m in new housing, £1.5m in cleaning entries and substantial resources to help unemployed people to get back into work.

In terms of economic development, Councillor Phil Davies informed that he had received a very positive report on the holding of the Open Golf Championship on the Wirral. The Council was one of the first Councils to become a Living Wage Council and it was now working with businesses to achieve Living Wage Borough status. Councillor Phil Davies was also working towards persuading the Government to devolve funding to the City Region.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that areas with the largest levels of deprivation e.g. Merseyside had received the most funding cuts and he was worried about another five years of austerity and what would be left of local government at the end of it. He asked each Cabinet Members to set out his or her priorities in respect of their respective portfolios.

Councillor Ann McLachlan informed that there was a section in the Corporate Plan on how to deliver things differently e.g. Strategic Commissioning. She emphasised the need to streamline services and become outcome focused and more efficient and told Members that the development of the Compliance Unit would drive out duplication and deliver up efficiencies.

Councillor George Davies informed that house building would continue and £1.5m had been put into affordable housing schemes in the last year (Church Road in Tranmere and Seven Oaks in Rock Ferry). The Rock Ferry School site, Manor Drive and Acre Lane all presented opportunities for the Council. The Council needed to manage housing stock by working closely with Registered Social Landlords.

Council George Davies informed that he considered that community safety could be improved by devolving decision-making to the Council's four Constituency Committees and by working with partners in respect of anti-social behaviour, incidents of which, were currently on the increase.

Councillor Pat Hackett informed that he considered it to be an exciting time for the Wirral as the Council was forging ahead with schemes e.g. Wirral Waters, Tower Wharf and Wirral Metropolitan College which would lead to prosperity. There were big plans proposed for Birkenhead, to transform its retail centre by

attracting major stores and to link the Town Centre to Woodside and Hamilton Square. Massive consultation on the proposals was planned in the New Year.

Councillor Pat Hackett also referred to the recent New Brighton development and informed the Cabinet that numerous jobs had been created as a result of it and in a time of recession, bringing investment and prosperity to the Borough.

Councillor Adrian Jones informed Cabinet Members that it was important to remind themselves why the Council was in the position it had found itself in. Central Government was the result of Conservative and Liberal Democrat co-operation. The Conservative Party had not won a General Election since 1992. The Council was managing the consequences of the cuts imposed on it by the Coalition Government.

Councillor Adrian Jones made reference to propaganda that had been put out and in particular to the installation of a new staircase and lift at Wallasey Town Hall. He informed that the Council was selling a lot of its land and buildings and that Asset Management had done its best to identify every parcel of land that was surplus to the Council's requirements and could be sold to realise funding e.g. Acre Lane. Staff were being moved into Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls to work and some of the funding being realised was being used to address health and safety concerns and ensure that the working environment was fit for purpose e.g. the new staircase and lift.

Councillor Adrian Jones informed that the Council was doing all that it could to protect its staff. It was working closely with the Trade Unions to protect conditions of service and minimise redundancies with a 1.4 Multiplier. Also, the Council was exploring the opportunity to amalgamate the Wirral and Liverpool Coroners to achieve savings.

Councillor Chris Jones informed that Public Health moving within the Council had been a good boost for it. She told Members that they were living through exciting and challenging times. It was a time to be innovative and to think outside of the box and carers and service users were all on board with this. Budgets were integrated with Health and the aim was to stretch the 'Wirral Pound' to prevent duplication. The Council was trying to ensure that the quality of care it provided was better than it had ever been before.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham informed that it was vital that the Council improved its highways network and maintain it at the highest possible standards possible. The Dock Bridges Scheme – Twelve Quays was in the process of being progressed and was at the heart of the Wirral Waters Scheme. The Council was also investing in a more efficient, environmentally friendly Street Lighting System.

Councillor Tony Smith informed that the Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of Cheshire West and Chester Council had agreed a mandate to develop School Trading Services which was progressing very well. The aim was for the two local authorities to work together to develop high quality services which provide value for money, the creation of 'a single front door' where schools could access services. This was an innovative approach and other services were now being included e.g. Education Psychologist Service.

Councillor Tony Smith also informed that a review of the early year's provision had begun 18 months to two years ago. Prior to that, this area had not been the subject of review since 2002. It was now opportune to consider redesigning the service. The proposal had been out to consultation for a twelve week period. The Cabinet's decision was the subject of a call-in for scrutiny and a further six week consultation exercise was also planned. The Council had 16 Children's Centres but needed a more targeted Service. It was important to get it right for the 0 to 5 year olds so that when they started school the children were 'school ready'.

Councillor Bernie Mooney informed that there were problems with floods and water issues on the Wirral. A major project was ongoing with the Environment Agency to improve flood defences in West Kirby. Also, there was a traffic management project under way in New Brighton. Some very interesting and exciting work was being undertaken.

Councillor Bernie Mooney also informed that other challenges were anti-social behaviour, fly tipping and dog fouling etc. Waste Management and Enforcement Teams were working together on these problems and to educate the public and particularly children, to be more responsible and keep their communities clean.

Councillor Bernie Mooney reported that in areas of deprivation, private landlords caused a number of problems that needed to be addressed.

Councillor Chris Meaden informed that the Wirral was very lucky to have so many public parks, gardens and open spaces. The Parks and Gardens Section had been streamlined with less staff now employed therein. It was working very closely with the Constituency Committees. Parks were important facilities because they cost people nothing to walk around them.

Councillor Chris Meaden reported that the Council's parks and green spaces had obtained 17 Green Flag Awards this year, a sign to visitors that they were well-maintained, well-managed and had excellent facilities. This achievement had been gained with the help of Friends Groups.

Councillor Chris Meaden also reported that the Council had invested in two of its Leisure Centres, West Kirby and Guinea Gap. This was good for health and for the local economy.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that the Council had a busy year ahead. It had a clear vision and would continue its improvement journey. Overall, he was determined, as far as he could be, that the Council would deliver quality services for the residents of Wirral.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the Corporate Plan and Financial Provision Statement as provided as appendices to the report be referred to the Council meeting scheduled for 8 December 2014.

100 **PROPOSED MERGER OF THE WIRRAL AND LIVERPOOL CORONER AREAS AND CORONER SERVICES**

Councillor Adrian Jones introduced a report by the Head of Legal and Member Services which provided details of the proposed merger of the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Services which had arisen from the retirement of HM Coroner for Wirral, Mr Christopher Johnson, on 31 December 2013.

From 1 January 2014, both Wirral and Liverpool Councils had agreed to operate a joint coroner service on an interim basis, pending a decision being taken in relation to the merger of both the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas. The interim arrangements had been duly endorsed by the Chief Coroner and Lord Chancellor/Ministry of Justice, and had ensured that both Councils, but in particular Wirral Council had in place effective coronial arrangements that were adequately resourced to meet all legal duties and obligations.

Attached to the report at Appendix 1 was the business case for the proposed merger of both coroner areas which created a single "Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area" and the "Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Service".

The Head of Legal and Member Services sought the Cabinet's approval and agreement in respect of the business case and the proposal that Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas and Services merge to create the Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area and Service, subject to formal targeted consultation to be undertaken by the Ministry of Justice and Parliamentary approval.

Councillor Adrian Jones informed that the proposals were in line with Government policy and the report set out the details of what the merger would mean, including the anticipated savings. The result would be a more efficient and strengthened Service. Councillor Jones also informed that other mergers had been considered and the details had been included in the report.

Councillor Phil Davies informed that this proposal was a good example of sharing a service with a neighbouring local authority.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the business case set out in Appendix 1 be approved and agreed;**
- (2) the business case be the subject to consultation by the Ministry of Justice;**
- (3) any recommendations of the Chief Coroner for England and Wales and any decision by the Lord Chancellor regarding a merging of the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas be endorsed;**
- (4) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised to undertake any necessary actions, if permission is formally granted, to implement the requirement of any statutory instrument or Order to combine the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas;**
- (5) following formal guidance issued by the Chief Coroner regarding the appointment of Coroners, and subject to the outcome of consultation and the Lord Chancellor making the Order, it be recommended that the current Senior Coroner for the Liverpool Coroner Area (and the current Assistant Coroner for Wirral), Andre Rebello, be appointed as Senior Coroner for the new single jurisdiction to be known as the “Liverpool and Wirral Coroner Area”;**
- (6) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised, in consultation with both relevant Cabinet Members for Wirral and Liverpool Councils and the City Solicitor for Liverpool City Council, to undertake a joint recruitment exercise (in accordance with the requirements of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and Ministry of Justice) to appoint a full-time Area Coroner, if permission is formally granted to combine the Wirral and Liverpool Coroner Areas;**
- (7) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised, in consultation with both relevant Cabinet Members for Wirral and Liverpool Councils and the City Solicitor for Liverpool City Council, to undertake a joint recruitment exercise (in accordance with the requirements of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and Ministry of Justice) to appoint two further assistant coroners, if both Wirral and Liverpool Councils agree the business case set out at Appendix 1;**
- (8) it be agreed that the current interim arrangements approved and operated since 1 January 2014 continue until such time that the Council addresses the issues of amalgamation of the Wirral**

Coroner Area and a permanent Senior Coroner is appointed to cover Wirral;

- (9) the Head of Legal and Member Services be authorised to take all necessary steps required to progress the amalgamation of the Wirral Coroner Area, in accordance with the directions of the Chief Coroner, Lord Chancellor and/or Ministry of Justice; and**
- (10) the Council be recommended to endorse the business case as set out in Appendix 1 to the report and the actions detailed above.**

101 **TRANSITIONAL PAY POLICY**

Councillor Adrian Jones introduced a report by the Strategic Director - Transformation and Resources that recommended a change to the Council's Transitional Pay Policy.

The policy had been designed to support employees through the financial impact of a reduction in their pay arising from the impact of organisational change or from the impact of other changes to their terms and conditions and pay.

The changes were being recommended following a review of the policy in the context of significant organisational change and the consequent financial impact for some employees.

Councillor Phil Davies informed the Cabinet that he was pleased that the Council had set up a remodelling reserve which it could use to fund this change in policy and to manage the situation in a humane way.

RESOLVED:

That the Council be recommended, at its meeting scheduled for 8 December 2014, to amend the terms of its Transitional Pay Policy from the current level of a maximum of £2,000 of loss of contractual pay for 12 months to £4,000 or 75% of the contractual pay loss, whichever is the greater, for a period of 12 months (applied on a pro-rata basis).

102 **GOLF PROCUREMENT EXERCISE**

Councillor Chris Meaden introduced a report of the Strategic Director – Families and Wellbeing following a golf 'soft market testing' exercise carried out in May 2014. The report informed that there was interest from specialist golf operators in taking over the management and operation (including the grounds maintenance) of the Municipal Golf Courses on the Wirral (excluding the Hoylake Municipal Golf Course).

The Cabinet was reminded that it had agreed, at its meeting on 7 July 2014 that officers would proceed to the next stage of a more formal procurement exercise. (Minute No. 38 refers.)

Wirral Council had agreed to a joint procurement exercise with Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) to make the contract more appealing for bidders and potentially increase the level of saving for each Authority. The Strategic Director's report informed the Cabinet of the progress to date in terms of the joint golf procurement exercise with CWaC. It was noted that the Legal and Procurement advice, following the evaluation exercise, was that where there was only one bidder it was very difficult to prove 'value for money'. The Government Guidance ('OGC/HMT 2008 Guidance on Competitive Dialogue') indicated that in the absence of two or more bidders the exercise should be abandoned.

The Council's partners in the exercise, CWaC had sought a quick decision regarding the Council's approach to a single bidder scenario. The Cabinet was informed that following discussion with the Cabinet Member – Leisure, Sport and Culture and the Leader of the Council, it had been decided to notify CWaC of the Council's intention to withdraw from the procurement procedure due to the value for money principle.

The Strategic Director's report sought the Cabinet's support for the decision to withdraw from the procurement exercise with CWaC and for the management and operation of the golf courses to remain with the Council, at this point in time.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) It be agreed that the Council formally withdraws from the Golf procurement exercise with Cheshire West and Chester; and**
- (2) a further report be provided for consideration at a future Cabinet meeting on the future provision of golf on the Wirral.**