

CABINET

Monday, 29 June 2015

<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
		B Mooney	Environment and Sustainability
		S Whittingham	Highways and Transport
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	Tony Smith,	Children and Family Services

12 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Phil Davies informed that there were two pieces of good news to report.

(a) **Municipal Journal Awards 2015 - Trading Standards and Environmental Health' category**

Councillor Bernie Mooney reported that the success of pioneering efforts to help promote healthy eating among families living in some of Wirral's most disadvantaged areas had helped the Council's Trading Standards Team to scoop a major national award.

Wirral Council had unanimously won the support of the three judges over seven other finalists in the 'Trading Standards and Environmental Health' category at the Municipal Journal Awards, which were presented at a glittering awards ceremony in London on 18 June 2015.

The honour was a fitting reward for those behind the 'Takeaway for a Change' and 'Eat Well Wirral' campaigns which were part of the Council's commitment to reducing the health inequalities between the most deprived and most affluent areas of the borough.

Eat Well Wirral and Takeaway for a Change had been growing hand in hand over the last couple of years. Thanks to funding from Public

Health, officers initially had run a pilot of the schemes in Rock Ferry, which involved engaging with a primary school, children's centre and takeaways located in the heart of the community.

Officers, supported by nutritionists and health care professionals, provided educational and support sessions for families and children; advising, supporting and guiding them to make healthy meal choices and opt for healthier options when in the supermarket or eating fast food.

Local takeaway owners had been given grants and supported to change cooking practices and ingredients to make their offer healthier; the new meals were then tried and enjoyed by the local community thanks to vouchers offering them 'free healthier meals'.

The pilot had been a great success and the Council had been invited to share their work at the Annual Public Health Conference in 2014. An application for further grant funding had been approved earlier in the year which enabled the projects to expand to more schools across the borough over the next two years.

Councillor Bernie Mooney praised the hard work carried out by the Team who delivered the projects, particularly Nicola Pulford who was the lead officer who designed and implemented the original pilot work. It had been a marvellous achievement and well deserved in recognition of all the hard work. The success of the pilot project would be the platform to roll these initiatives out to other areas of the borough where child and adult obesity was a community issue the Council was concerned about. Investing in long term projects like this to deliver sustainable long term health benefits for our most deprived communities was the way forward for the Council.

Councillor Phil Davies congratulated the Team on its fantastic achievement and the national recognition it had received as a result.

(b) 2015 ALARM Risk Awards

Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that Simon Hutchinson the Deputy Risk and Insurance Officer had won the Professional of the Year award. He had been presented with this award at the ALARM Risk Awards Dinner on 22 June 2015 at Aston University in Birmingham. Simon had been instrumental in shaping recent government policy. Councillor Ann McLachlan congratulated the Team on their achievements.

Councillor Phil Davies added his own congratulations to Simon and the Corporate Risk Team he informed the Cabinet that it was excellent that

Wirral was receiving national recognition for its risk management and that other Councils were now adopting Wirral's best practice. He informed that corporate risk was difficult to get right and that the Team did an excellent job.

13 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Stuart Whittingham declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 7 – Approval for Council Nominated Officer to Vote at AGM on proposal for BBCHA to Merge with Liverpool Housing Trust (Minute No. 19 refers.) by virtue of his Board membership of Magenta and by virtue of him living in the locality. He informed that he would be leaving the meeting whilst this item of business was under discussion.

Councillor Phil Davies declared a personal and prejudicial interest in Item No. 3 – Local Welfare Assistance Scheme (Minute No. 14 refers) as Wirral Food Bank was explicitly referred to in the report and he was one of its Trustees. He informed that he would be leaving the meeting whilst this item of business was under discussion.

Councillor Phil Davies left the meeting.

Councillor Ann McLachlan in the Chair.

14 **LOCAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE SCHEME**

The Cabinet considered a report by the Head of Business Processes, referred to it for further consideration. Attached to the report was:

- Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Scrutiny Review (Appendix 1); and
- Wirral Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Policy 2015/16 (Appendix 2).

The report recommended that the Cabinet agree to the future Local Welfare Assistance Scheme.

The Cabinet noted that the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme was, up until March 2015, directly funded by central government grant. This had now been withdrawn by the Government with the recommendation that Local Authorities should consider funding future schemes from their general fund.

The Cabinet was reminded that at its meeting on 10 February 2015, it had agreed, as part of its budget resolutions, that £900,000 would be held in a reserve for this fund following the Government's decision to withdraw direct funding from 1 April 2015. (Minute No. 136 refers.)

The Cabinet was informed that the current scheme was in place until 31 July 2015 and the Task and Finish Scrutiny Review Panel (Councillors Janette

Williams, Tom Anderson, Phil Gilchrist, Paul Doughty, Mathew Patrick and Joe Walsh) had reviewed the position and its findings and recommendations were set out in Appendix 1 of the report and Appendix 2 set out how the scheme could be taken forward from 1 August 2015.

Councillor Janette Williamson, Chair of the Policy and Performance – Transformation and Resources Committee was in attendance at the meeting to make a presentation on the Local Welfare Assistance Scrutiny Review, an evidence day held on 9 April 2015 the Task and Finish Review Panel's findings.

Councillor Janette Williamson informed that the Review Panel had met with a range of witnesses, including Council Officers and representatives from a number of third sector organisations. Appropriate information had also been requested by the Review Panel to help develop the recommendations made in its final report.

It was noted that it was not possible for some working people to make their money last and as a result they were using the Foodbank. Wirral Foodbank had 14 outlets and currently people found out about it by word of mouth it was not widely publicised but the Citizen's Advice Bureau was now telling people about it.

Following her presentation Councillor Janette Williamson was asked a number of questions by Cabinet Members which she duly answered.

Cabinet Members agreed that this report was about people in desperate need and it was the result of some very good cross party working that would make a huge difference to the people of Wirral. New ways of working had been adopted, the Council was building on the relationships it had made and had earmarked funding to help those in most need. However, it was regrettable that a Council had to initiate such a project. It had done so to offset the damage caused by the present Government.

The Cabinet agreed that this was an excellent example of the work that a Task and Finish Group could carry out. It was hoped that the possibility of developing the Wirral Scheme could be considered in 2016. This would help the Council to spread the money it had a lot further. There may be a Welfare Summit meeting with all of the agencies involved.

The outcome of the review was the six recommendations set out in the report.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents and recommendations of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme Task & Finish Scrutiny Review at Appendix 1 to the report be supported;**

- (2) the policy as outlined in Appendix 2 to the report as the Council's Local Welfare Assistance Scheme for 2015/16 effective from 1 August 2015 which has the following amendments over the scheme in place to 31 July 2015 be approved:**
- (a) Items of essential need will now exclude washing machines as an award provided from the scheme directly, except in exceptional circumstances, and referring these applications to Energy Projects Plus;**
 - (b) Referring applications for white goods which have been assessed as not meeting the Council's criteria and where a potential fuel debt issue has been identified to Energy Projects Plus; and**
 - (c) The Emergency Utility Credit which is payable to British Gas customers who have fallen into debt and are on prepayment meters should be effectively promoted by the Council. Applicants identified through the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme as being eligible should be signposted to Energy Projects Plus for an assessment and application to be made.**
- (3) further consideration be given to amending the scheme by reviewing and redefining other items that currently constitute an essential need with a view to excluding them from the scheme or reducing the circumstances in which they are provided;**
- (4) officers be requested to explore the feasibility of referring successful applications for essential food to Wirral Foodbank, or any identified food bank that can service all of Wirral, with an appropriate donation being made from the remaining budget to help cover some operational costs. Officers will determine how this is achieved to ensure that actual benefits can be identified and delivered and to ensure that the Council's Contract Procedure Rules are complied with;**
- (5) publicity and communication plans be reviewed to ensure there is take up and understanding of the scheme from all those who need it. This should include a broadcast to partner agencies to provide an update on the key aspects of the scheme from 1st August 2015;**
- (6) a further review of the Local Welfare Assistance Scheme be supported as part of the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee's work programme for the 2016/17 Municipal Year. The objective of the review will be to identify any**

strategies for providing local welfare assistance once the budget set aside for local welfare assistance has been depleted;

- (7) the Cabinet agrees to lobby Central Government against the withdrawal of Local Welfare Assistance Funding from April 2015 and the impact that this has on local communities;**
- (8) the Scheme and its take up be reviewed after six months; and**
- (9) the Leader be requested to make written representations to the Government, again, over the loss of the crisis loans.**

Councillor Phil Davies returned to the meeting and to the Chair.

15 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 4 June 2015 be confirmed as a correct record.

16 NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES EXTENSION OF TRANSITIONAL RELIEF POLICY FOR SMALL AND MEDIUM PROPERTIES AND ADOPTION OF A LIVING WAGE DISCOUNT POLICY

Councillor Phil Davies introduced a report by the Head of Business Processes that sought formal approval to extend the National Non Domestic Rates Transitional Relief Scheme that was due to expire on 31 March 2015 until 31 March 2017. This was in line with the Chancellor's autumn statement of 3 December 2014 which also required the Council to amend its own policy on Retail Rate Relief increasing the maximum award from £1000 to £1500 from 1 April 2015. The report also sought approval to introduce the Council's own Living Wage local discount for businesses that signed up and gained licensed accreditation for paying the Living Wage, which was part of the Council's adopted Budget proposal for 2015-16.

Councillor Phil Davies made reference to Wirral being the first 'Living Wage Council' and informed the Cabinet that he was keen for the business community to also adopt the 'Living Wage' model. The Council could offer a discount on business rates of up to £5000 as an incentive. He had asked for a detailed scheme to be drawn up and he was pleased with the end result.

Councillor Bernie Mooney informed that she totally agreed with what Councillor Phil Davies had said but was concerned about the knock on effect of the policies and proposed that the Cabinet should campaign nationally in relation to people and particularly carers who earned just under £110 as tax credits took them over the limit. Councillor Phil Davies informed that he was

attending the Local Government Association's Conference the following day and he would take this matter up there.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the transitional rate relief policy (Appendix 1 to the report) be approved as the authority policy from 2015/17 for current relief recipients;**
- (2) the retail relief policy (Appendix 2 to the report) be amended to increase the maximum amount of relief granted from £1,000 to £1,500 for 2015-16; and**
- (3) the Living Wage discount policy (Appendix 3 to the report) be approved for 2015-16.**

17 CORPORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT

Councillor Ann McLachlan introduced a report by the Strategic Director of Transformation and Resources that set out the current performance of the Council against the delivery of the Corporate Plan as at Year End 2014/15. The Cabinet was requested to consider the details of the report and highlight any issues.

The Corporate Plan Performance Report (Appendix 1) set out the final year position against 20 outcome measures from across the Council. 14 (70%) of the measures had been rated green, 4 (20%) had been rated amber and 2 (10%) had been rated red. For the 2 measures rated red, action plans had been provided and included as follows:

- Performance appraisals completed – Appendix 2.
- Sickness Absence: The number of working days/shifts lost due to sickness (cumulative) – Appendix 3.

Councillor Ann McLachlan informed that the Council had missed its target in respect of Performance appraisals partly because of the remodelling project and its delivery. The target on Sickness Absence had been missed but only by a 'whisker'. She had been provided with on Sickness Absence benchmarking information from other Local Authorities in the North West and Wirral was in the lower quartile.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that the Council needed Performance Indicators going forward that monitored how it was performing against the Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 Vision.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted.

Councillor Chris Jones introduced a report by the Director of Public Health that informed that local government had long been involved in promoting health taking action to reduce harm from the things that created poor health. Council Members, as the democratically accountable stewards' of their population's wellbeing, understood the importance of 'place' in promoting wellbeing. The role of the Director of Public Health was to support the strategic thinking on how to drive reductions in health inequalities, both through the things that local authorities could directly influence, and through effective, local, partnership working.

One of the responsibilities of a Director of Public Health was to produce an annual report on the health of the local population, and the Council had a duty to publish that report. The intention of the report was that it was an important vehicle by which Directors of Public Health could identify key issues, flag up problems, report progress and, thereby, serve their local populations. It would also be a key resource to inform local inter-agency action and would contribute to improving the health and well-being of local populations and reducing health inequalities.

The Director of Public Health reported that one of the important questions often asked was how we could maximise our efforts and impact on the health of people in Wirral. This year's Public Health Annual Report had been based on a practical, evidence based report produced by the King's Fund in 2013 that set out what could be done, how it affected health, and the associated business case for action.

Councillor Phil Davies added his support to the content of the Director's report. It very much reflected the Administration's priorities. He thanked the Director of Public Health, Fiona Johnstone and her Team for the excellent document and work that they did.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Cabinet receives, notes and approves for publication, the content of the Public Health Annual report for 2014; and**
- (2) the Cabinet will consider the recommendations of the Report and reflect on how they can be incorporated into Council policy.**

Councillor Stuart Whittingham left the meeting.

APPROVAL FOR COUNCIL NOMINATED OFFICER TO VOTE AT AGM ON PROPOSAL FOR BBCHA TO MERGE WITH LIVERPOOL HOUSING TRUST

Councillor George Davies introduced a report by the Strategic Director – Regeneration and Environment that informed that the Council, as a member of Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association (BBCHA), of proposed changes to undertake a Transfer of Engagements (ToE) of BBCHA to the Liverpool Housing Trust (LHT). The report also set out the ongoing dialogue which had been undertaken with tenants and the lead petitioners following a petition being presented to the Cabinet Member at a meeting with lead petitioners on 18 June 2015. Appended to the Strategic Director’s report was

- Appendix 1 – BBCHA Board Consultation Final Paper; and
- Appendix 2 – Key Issues Raised at the Meetings held concerning the proposed BBCHA Transfer of Engagement to LHT.

The Cabinet noted that BBCHA had been undertaking a review of its current arrangements since May 2014. In particular BBCHA had been considering how best to mitigate the key risks it was exposed to, and ensure the long term protection of services and investment in the Beechwood and Ballantyne neighbourhoods in an increasingly hostile environment.

The BBCHA Board had considered a range of possible options for its future and agreed in October 2014 that the best option was to enter into formal negotiations with LHT for a possible transfer. The BBCHA Board presented a detailed ‘ask’ to LHT, focussed on improving services and homes in Beechwood and Ballantyne, and during negotiations a detailed business case was developed.

Formal consultation was undertaken with BBCHA tenants from 26 March 2015 for a period of six weeks. The resulting feedback showed that the majority of tenants were supportive of the ToE on the understanding that services they receive were not compromised.

Consultation with other key stakeholders including the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) and funders had been completed with no barriers to progressing the transfer being raised. The BBCHA Board had undertaken a due diligence exercised and no areas of concern in terms of LHT had been reported. The BBCHA Board had also received independent legal advice and support from Trowers and Hamlins and they had confirmed that due process had been followed.

After on-going discussions with Officers, BBCHA and LHT, a report had been provided for the Cabinet meeting held on 4 June 2015 setting out the rationale of why BBCHA had proposed to undertake a ToE to LHT, a business case which had set out the potential benefits of BBCHA transferring to LHT

compared to staying as it was now, along with a report on the consultation undertaken, responses received by local tenants affected and the response to these issues raised.

Immediately prior to the Cabinet Meeting, the Cabinet Member had been presented with a petition of 271 signatories from tenants and residents from Beechwood and Ballantyne. The petition had been dated 23 February 2015. In the light of this petition the Cabinet had agreed to defer the decision on the report until the Council had been given the opportunity to review the petition further and undertake discussions with tenants and BBCHA and report those discussions back to this meeting of the Cabinet to inform any decisions to be made.

At a subsequent meeting with the lead petitioners, another petition had been presented which was different to the first and had 428 signatories.

A meeting had also arranged by BBCHA in the Community to discuss concerns in response to both the petitions.

The report dealt with both petitions presented and set out the questions raised at the Community meeting.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reminded the Cabinet that she represented the area in question as she was a ward Councillor for Bidston and St James and that she had sat on the BBCHA Board previously for a period of nine years. She had been on the Board in 2005 when the Estate had voted no re Wirral Partnership Homes. Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that the Beechwood Estate had in recent years seen significant redevelopment and was now totally transformed.

Councillor Ann McLachlan reported that she had attended a meeting on the Estate on 2 June 2015 where concerns had been raised about the public buildings, no guarantees had been received and the residents considered that they had not been engaged or consulted on the proposals.

Since that meeting the Leader had received written guarantees and it was noted that the public buildings would be transferred with peppercorn rents.

RESOLVED: That:

- (1) the Transfer of Engagements of the Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association to the Liverpool Housing Trust be supported;**
- (2) the relevant Council officers be authorised to vote on the proposal (and associated matters) proposed and detailed in the report at**

the forthcoming Beechwood and Ballantyne Housing Association Special General Meeting; and

- (3) the report be referred to the meeting of the Council scheduled for 6 July 2015.**