

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 March 2016

Present: Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

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

Cabinet Member: Councillor S Whittingham
In attendance:

40 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.

Councillor Steve Niblock expressed a non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 6 – 2105/16 Quarter 3 Directorate Plan Performance Management (Minute No. 45 refers) – by virtue of his position on the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, a partner organisation involved with road traffic safety management.

Order of Business

The Chair informed the Committee that he would take the Report Item 5 – Street Lighting Update, as the first item of formal business in view of the presence of Cabinet Member Councillor Stuart Whittingham and officers specifically for this item.

41 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January be approved.

42 **STREET LIGHTING UPDATE**

The Head of Environment at Regulation introduced his report that updated the Committee on the current situation regarding the street lighting maintenance and the progress of the Invest to Save LED street lighting replacement scheme.

Mr Rob Clifford, Service Manager Highway Maintenance Division provided the Committee with a verbal update informing that the Council's contractor had been asked to undertake approximately 300 repairs each week and the repair of the faulty lighting was to be completed before the end of April 2016. The repairs will be completed in line with the order of the night-time survey enabling the contractor to concentrate their resources in a specific area, rather than in various locations spread across the Borough.

Mr Clifford further informed that there were a number of street lights that were unlit due to underground mains cable faults and these locations would require the attendance of Scottish Power to complete the repair. Members were informed that although these repairs had been issued to Scottish Power, it was unlikely that the repairs would be completed within the same timescale, since Scottish Power cable repairs times are governed by different targets, outside of the Council's direct control.

Members expressed great concern with regard to the lack of controls over the targets and deadlines for those street light outages falling to the responsibility of Scottish Power, noting the difficulties faced as a result of the Council's sub-contractors not being fully qualified to undertake the works associated with such outages. A Member requested a further report, dealing specifically with longstanding outages and works falling under the remit of Scottish Power. He requested that a representative of Scottish Power be asked to attend the meeting to explain the reasons for the delays in addressing the matters at hand.

In addition to the outages that were known to result from outstanding Scottish Power works, Members questioned Mr Clifford on a number of specific long term outages. Mr Clifford requested that Members contact him direct and provide the locations of the failed lighting and he would investigate the specific reasons for any delays in dealing with the locations identified.

A number of questions were raised with regard to the administration of complaints and possible involvement of the government regulator for the gas and electric markets (OFGEM) to tackle the failures associated with Scottish Power's (as provider to the network) handling of outages. Members also

made reference to the quality of work undertaken by Scottish Power with regard to the re-constitution of road surfaces and grass verges after works had eventually been completed.

Mr Clifford apprised the Committee on the progress that had been made to date regarding the LED street lighting scheme that had been put into place to replace 7,557 existing high energy consuming lanterns with new LED luminaires. He informed that the project had commenced on 24 August 2015 and was due to be completed on 31 March 2016. By the end of January 2016, 4,117 new lanterns had been installed and the Contractors projected installation figures for February and March 2016 were 1,820 and 1,620 respectively. On completion of the project, the Council's street lighting was expected to use over 3.6 million kilowatt-hours less electricity each year.

Members thanked the Officer for his report, and noted the general improvement regarding the performance of the borough's street lighting services compared to 9 months ago, and were looking forward to seeing the results of the current inspection, LED replacement and rectification works.

It was noted that the reporting of failed street lighting relied on local residents, businesses and elected members. Mr Clifford reported that a further survey had been scheduled to commence later in the month, with another expected in the summer – providing a sound basis for the scheduling of future repair / upgrade works.

Resolved – That

- 1) the progress of the LED replacement scheme and contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) a representative of Scottish Power be requested to attend the next meeting of the Committee to provide a full report on the current outstanding works in the borough.**

43 DEVOLUTION UPDATE

The Policy and Performance Committee Regeneration and Environment received a verbal update on the current position of Devolution in the Liverpool City Region from Ms. Rose Boylan, Policy & Strategy Manager.

The Policy & Strategy Manager reminded Members that the devolution of powers was set to provide an investment fund worth £900m over 30 years, and increased powers and resources for – economic development and energy; transport infrastructure; housing development and planning for growth; and employment and skills.

Ms. Boylan informed the Committee that discussions were also underway with Government to scope out those areas in the Agreement that were less detailed, namely:

- Vocational Education (skills for business);
- Business rate reform and redistribution;
- Multi-year settlement and the “Single Pot”;
- Total Household Approach for employment programmes.

The Committee noted that concerns still remain regarding involvement of the public through consultation and that although the broad ideas relating to devolution had been laid down, a number of unknowns remained.

The Chair informed that the Liverpool City Region Scrutiny Committee had already undertaken a piece of work with regards to public transport and was now looking into the subject of housing across the region.

A Member pointed out that he had little confidence that there would be substantial change in respect of the housing market, informing that the River Mersey continued to be a substantial barrier to such cross region projects. Another Member questioned whether Wirral Borough Council was at a disadvantage by not having its own Local Plan in place at this time.

Another Member past comment that the subject of devolution still remained an abstract concept to many ‘people in the street’.

Ms. Boylan concluded the report stating that Wirral continues ongoing involvement in developing the devolution ‘asks’ as well as wider City Region activity e.g. the Growth Deal, and that detailed consideration of the linkages between the Wirral Plan and Pledges and the devolution agenda i.e. to deliver growth aspirations and a footprint for future deliver.

Ms. Boylan confirmed that ongoing updates on the subject would be reported to the Committee.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

44 **HOMELESSNESS AND THE IMPACT OF WELFARE BENEFIT REFORM**

The Senior Manager – Supported Housing and Homelessness introduced her report that provided Members with an update on the issue of homelessness in Wirral, and outlined the progress made in terms of its prevention and reduction. The report also advised Members of the consequential impact of welfare reforms on levels of homelessness in the borough, and how homelessness has the potential to affect all Wards within the Borough.

The Committee heard how the delivery of an effective homeless response directly contributed to a principal theme of the 'Wirral Council Plan: A 2020 Vision' of protecting the most vulnerable of Wirral's residents. It also assisted with the achievement of a number of the pledges set out in the Council's vision, namely:

- *"Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents"*
- *"Children are ready for school"*
- *"Wirral residents live healthier lives"*
- *"Vulnerable children reach their full potential"*
- *"Reduce child and family poverty"*
- *"Zero tolerance to Domestic Violence"*
- *"Community Services are joined-up and accessible"*
- *"People with disabilities live independently"*
- *"Older People Live Well"*
- *"Wirral's neighbourhoods are safe"*

The report concluded that people were now facing real difficulties in managing their income and housing as a result of the downturn in the economy and how it impacted on the housing market. In addition to the changes taking place around the future of social housing and changes to welfare benefits homelessness was increasing across the country, and there were fears it would continue to increase.

Members noted that the Homelessness and Housing Options Team would continue to review existing service delivery and homeless prevention tools to meet the changing needs of Wirral residents in housing need - in line with Wirral's Homeless Strategy - and that the Supported Housing and Homelessness Division would undertake a strategic review of all supported accommodation services and continue to monitor the impacts of welfare reform.

Members commented that although a most informative and detailed report its content provided sober reading and it was 'disgusting' that such marginalisation was occurring as a result of government policy.

The Committee requested that the topic of homelessness be included in its work programme, and that a Task and Finish Group be appointed in the new Municipal Year.

Resolved - That the report be noted.

The Head of Environment and Regulation presented a report of the Assistant Chief Executive that set out Quarter 3 (October to December 2015) performance against delivery of the Regeneration and Environment Directorate Plan (as reported to the Committee on 23 March 2015).

A performance report attached as Appendix 1 to the main report set out progress against a suite of agreed key performance indicators.

The report informed that for each performance measure, a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating had been assigned, setting out a performance level against a target, and showed the direction of travel for each measure to illustrate whether performance was improving, deteriorating or sustained.

Of the 17 reportable indicators, 12 (71%) were rated Green, and 4 (23%) were rated Amber. For indicators rated Amber, the responsible officer had indicated the corrective action being put in place to get performance back on track.

Following discussion on the content of the directorate performance plan, Members noted that although much work was underway, the target to reduce the number of people killed and seriously injured in road traffic accidents is still not being met. The Committee requested that they be provided with copies of the detailed data regarding the particular locations, time of day, age profiles and types of accident that comprised this particular indicator.

The Committee further requested that Road Safety be added to its Work Programme.

Resolved: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) the topic of Road Safety be added to the Committee's Work Programme.**

Councillor Steve Niblock previously expressed a non-prejudicial interest in this item by virtue of his position on the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority, a partner organisation involved with road traffic safety management.

46 FINANCIAL MONITORING 2015/16

The Head of Environment and Regulation presented a report of the Head of Financial Services and Acting Section 151 Officer that set out the financial monitoring information for this Committee. The report provided a basis for Members to scrutinise budget performance for the Directorate and provided financial information for Quarter 3 (October -December 2015) as reported to Cabinet on 22 February 2015.

The report informed of the following key points:

There had been a further underspend of £1.08 million this quarter.

Within Waste & Environment there was a forecast underspend of £0.2 million. The annual inflation rate applied to the Biffa contract was less than originally budgeted for resulting in a small underspend. There was also some additional income from litter enforcement fines and which was reflected within the above underspend position.

Due to EDRF funding for the salaries within Business Support being extended until November 2015, there was to be an underspend of approximately £0.1 million on employee budgets. There were also further potential underspends of £0.3 million from budgets set aside to match funding future grant delivery programmes. As yet these monies had not been committed.

In Housing there was also additional income from DFG fees and underspends from employee vacancies during the year. A further £0.26 million had been added to this underspend by removing a budget allocated as a 'revenue contribution to capital' and using in its place other available capital programme resources.

Members noted the summary figures as below:

Capital Programme 2015/16 at end of Quarter 3 (31 December)

	Capital Strategy	Revisions Since Budget Cabinet	Revised Capital Programme	Actual Spend December 2015
	£000	£000	£000	£000
R&E Environment & Regulation	12,633	-1,089	11,544	7,256
R&E Housing & Community Safety	6,412	-984	5,428	2,319
R& E Regeneration	1,808	4,694	6,502	5,344
Total expenditure	20,853	-2,621	23,474	14,919

Resolved: That

- 1) That the forecast year end underspend of £1.81 million in the Regeneration and Environment 2015/16 Revenue Budget position and actions taken during quarter 3 be noted.
- 2) That the capital expenditure position at the close of quarter 3 totalling £14.9 million against a revised Capital Programme of £23.5 million be noted
- 3) Members are requested to review the information presented to determine if they have any specific questions relating to the budget for the Regeneration and Environment Directorate.

47 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

The Policy and Performance Regeneration and Environment Committee noted the report of the Chair that updated members on the current position regarding the Committee's work programme as agreed for the 2015/16 Municipal Year.

An update on the implementation of the recommendations made from the Car Parking scrutiny review is attached as Appendix 2 to the report.

A Member requested that consideration be given to the inclusion of a report on Resident's Parking on the next meeting's agenda.

Resolved: That

- 1) the Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee work programme for 2015/16 as detailed in the report appendix be noted; and
- 2) an additional report into the matter of Residents' Parking be presented to the next meeting of the Committee.

48 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR (PART 1)**

The Chair thanked those Members of the Committee who had attended a recent 'Spotlight Session' provided by the Head of Regeneration and Planning and encouraged attendance at another such session scheduled for 6 months time.