

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 11 February 2016

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	JE Green (Chair)	
	Councillors	J Hale	M Patrick
		E Boulton	L Reece Jones
		P Brightmore	T Smith
		D Burgess-Joyce	M Sullivan
		W Clements	G Watt
		D Elderton	S Whittingham
		G Ellis	
<u>Also Present</u>		J Hall MBE	John Smith
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	T Anderson	

71 members of the public were in attendance. Percentage by ward of those who had signed in were as follows:

Greasby, Frankby & Irby - 8%
Hoylake & Meols – 23%
Pensby & Thingwall – 2%
West Kirby & Thurstaston – 32%
Upton – 15%

Moreton West & Saughall Massie – 6%
Oxton & Prenton – 2%
Bromborough & Eastham – 3%
Bidston & St James – 3%
New Brighton & Wallasey – 2%

Other Local Authority Area - 4%

26 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

No such declarations were made.

27 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2015 be approved

28 **ORDER OF BUSINESS**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business and opted to take public questions regarding Girtrell Court first.

29 **PUBLIC QUESTION TIME - BUDGET PROPOSAL: CLOSURE OF GIRTRELL COURT**

The Chair invited questions from Members of the public regarding matters in relation to the budget option to close Girtrell Court, a respite breaks facility located in Wallasey Constituency.

- A resident addressed the Committee to comment on the proposals that had been submitted to users and carers of Girtrell Court Service Users to outline alternative provisions available. He stated how he felt proposals to be wholly inappropriate to meet the needs of his 33 year old son who attends Girtrell Court on a regular basis. He informed Members of the Committee how he felt disheartened and ashamed by some of the proposed alternative provisions, particularly those located in old people's homes.
- A Unison representative then addressed the Committee to outline concerns in relation to levels of redundancies if the proposal were to be agreed. Members heard how there was the potential for 46 redundancies within the service, many of which are high skilled workers. He further commented about his additional concerns regarding the protection of vulnerable people, a top Council priority. He informed Members of the Committee how he felt the Council had taken priority financially, before people's lives. He urged Members of the Cabinet to reject this proposal on 22 February.
- A resident commented on the financial difficulties that the Council face and identified some expenses that he felt the Council had unnecessarily incurred, for example: redundancy packages, the use of consultants and increase in pay of the Chief Executive. He further commented that in light of these expenses, Girtrell Court should be kept open, and that every efforts should be made to protect the service.
- A resident and father of a Girtrell Court Service user came forward with his son to make the Committee aware of the benefits of Girtrell Court and the detrimental impact it would have upon his family if the service were to close. He explained how closing the service would severely affect the quality of life for both him and his son and informed the

Committee that the service is two edged in that it provides carers with a break and a safe and enjoyable environment for people who use the service. He stated that the proposed decision does not offer the level of comfort that is needed for both carers and service users. He urged Cabinet Members to vote against the decision.

- The brother of a regular user of Girtrell Court then passed comment on the excellent service Girtrell Court provides for his sister who is severely disabled. He explained how he felt how he felt the service to be safe and he is confident that his sister received the best care possible at the centre. He expressed grave concern over the proposed alternative provisions and queried whether such options would be safe or have the relevant facilities in place to specifically meet his sister's needs. He then passed comment on the inability of some service users to inform family members if they had been receiving ill treatment and re-emphasised the need for safety in any environment.

Graham Hodkinson, Director of Adult Social Services, In response to comments raised, informed residents and Members of the Committee how he is aware of specific needs of many of the service users and has met with many in the past to discuss particular care plans. He reassured residents and Members of the Committee that one to one needs assessment would be undertaken for every person affected by the proposal. He also acknowledged the impact it would have upon staff employed at Girtrell Court and agreed the situation is unsettling for all involved.

He informed the Committee how Girtrell Court is the only care home for adults owned by the Council and that the majority of this type of care across the country is now provided by the independent sector. He explained how the care currently being provided at this facility could be provided by an extensive range of independent providers across the Borough and in the Region. This would offer more choice to people that want different types of support.

Members and Residents then heard, from the Director, how the cost to the Council is £1,500 per week, for every bed occupied at Girtrell Court. He explained that he would still have the equivalent of an average of £1000 per week to spend on alternative types of care but that the Council provided service is relatively very high cost, so the plan is to use the money is available better.

Mr Hodkinson acknowledged that the list of alternative provision submitted to carers and service users did have some gaps and omissions and that not all appropriate services had been listed. He then assured all involved that the Council has a clear duty of care to identify specific needs and that he would not allow for users to be placed elsewhere without a detailed needs assessment.

The Chair then invited Cllrs Whittingham and Smith, Cabinet Members and members of the Constituency Committee to respond to comments raised.

Councillor Smith addressed the Committee to remind Members and residents that the matter is still out for consultation and that no decision would be made until such time whereby every person who uses facilities at Girtrell Court has had a one to one needs assessment.

A Member of the public then addressed the Committee to express concerns that no bookings were being taken at Girtrell Court from March onwards. He stated how he felt this to have meant the decision to be pre - determined.

In response to this comment, Councillor D Elderton a Member agreed that this is a real concern and urged the Committee to recommend to the Cabinet that bookings should continue to be taken

Members then passed comment following questions and subsequent responses and explained their own personal experiences with the work undertaken and services available at Girtrell Court. It was stated that the problem is with not knowing the outcome of the consultation and how a key priority for the Council is the protection of vulnerable people.

It was moved by Councillor Green and duly seconded and

Resolved (9:0:with 6 abstentions) –

(1) That the Wirral West Constituency Committee regard proposed saving options in respect of Girtrell Court to be over optimistic and express concern to the Cabinet regarding the lack of planning and uncertainty regarding alternative provisions to those offered at Girtrell Court; and

(2) the Wirral West Constituency Committee recommend that bookings continue to be taken at Girtrell Court from March onwards until such time that a formal decision has been made.

30 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S PROGRESS REPORT**

A report by the Wirral West Constituency Manager set out:

- Progress and recommendations in relation to activities which are being delivered using the Committee's budget for 2015 – 16;
- Progress in relation to other activities being undertaken by the Wirral West constituency team;
- Items for noting in respect of local issues/ consultations.

The report was presented and reported upon as follows:

Update on areas of expenditure carried over from previous years

The Constituency Manager reported upon the 'Special Places Project,' aimed at celebrating places in all parts of Wirral West which are special to people through the installation of benches. Members heard how responses had been excellent to date and over 30 suggestions had been put forward to the constituency team. The Committee was further informed that the closing date for local people to submit their suggestions as to possible locations for benches is the end of February 2016 and it was proposed that a Wirral West Special Places Panel is convened in March on the basis of one member per ward. The report sought approval for both the implementation of the Panel and for the Panel to be given delegated authority to agree which locations should be selected in conjunction with the Chair.

Members were reminded how the Committee had made £5,000 available for this project and that it was estimated at the outset of the project that this would fund about 10 benches in the constituency area. Members were informed that once the locations have been fully assessed, it may be the case that there is a shortfall in the funding required given installation requirements and the proposals for meeting the shortfall was to ring-fence a maximum of £2,000 from the Committee's environmental budget of £10,000 which had not been allocated to specific projects.

The Committee were then asked to note that the budget previously allocated to the Stay, Safe, Warm and Well Project had now been used in its entirety in support of ongoing multi-agency working and the delivery of Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's Emergency Heating Programme.

Anti – Social Behaviour (ASB) Budget

The Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Budget was then reported upon. Members heard how the ASB Panel, as established in September 2015, were involved in ongoing work with relevant officer, partner agencies and community stakeholders and a detailed report would be brought to the next meeting of the Committee.

The Committee were then asked to note how the ASB Panel had authorised an item of expenditure from the £10,000 allocated to Upton Ward (Woodchurch) at a cost of £1,200. Members were informed that this request was made as a result of ASB reports linked to the Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) at Woodchurch which appeared to be peaking on Friday and Saturday evenings. Members were then advised how, through the use of the Committee's funding, a targeted intervention had now been put in place to offer sports activities at the MUGA on alternative Fridays and Saturdays during the months of January and February.

Members then heard how a Dispersal Zone was authorised for the area of Hoole Road on 26 January to 27 January and again from 30 January to 31 January. The Dispersal Zone (which could only be authorised for a maximum of 48 hours) gave the police power to take young people home or order people who are causing problems to leave and not return for 48 hours. It was reported that during the period of 26 – 27 January, 9 individuals were given direction to leave the area and that of these 7 were of the target group of young people and the other 2 were street drinkers who had previously caused issues within the area.

Core Constituency Committee Budget (Community Fund)

Members heard how the Community Fund is currently open for applications and the deadline is Friday 26 February 2016. It was then reported how local people would be asked to show their support for eligible projects by participating in a voting survey which will be made available online and in hard copy from 7th – 18th March, and an event will take place on 17th March at West Kirby Library to allow groups to promote their activities and network.

It was proposed that delegated authority is given to Ward Councillors to review the outcomes of the community vote and agree which projects should receive funding within their ward. It was explained that a report on the projects funded would be presented to the next scheduled meeting of the Committee, alongside an evaluation of the projects which received Community Fund grants in early 2015 and an evaluation of the Your Wirral projects which received funding in October 2014.

Environmental Budget

The Wirral West Constituency Manager explained how it is proposed that a Wirral West Environmental Panel should be established (on the basis of one member per ward) and given delegated authority in conjunction with the Chair of the Committee to agree expenditure relating to action to address hotspots in the constituency and/or to encourage community involvement in environmental initiatives. It was further proposed that this Panel (when established) gives consideration to using the funding equitably across the five wards.

Members then heard how, in the interim, the constituency team is currently promoting the national anti-litter campaign, 'Clean for the Queen' that is scheduled to take place from 4 – 6 March. It was reported that the aim of the campaign is to acknowledge the Queen's 90th birthday by encouraging groups all over the country to clean up their local area. Details could be found online at www.cleanforthequeen.co.uk and groups can register on this website if they are planning community clean up events in conjunction with the campaign. It was reported that local groups who register would be able to access free clean up packs and advice and support from the Council.

Road Safety Budget

The Committee were asked to note that the overall road safety budget allocation was as follows:

2014 – 2015 Allocation	£77,750
2015 – 2016 Allocation	£25,000
Total Constituency Allocation	£102,750

A table of figures, outlined within the report, detailed how much of the road safety budget had been spent and how much could now be allocated to new schemes. The information was also presented to the Road Safety Panel at its meeting on 26th January 2016, along with an extensive list of possible schemes. It was explained that a ‘Shortlist’ of schemes had been identified by the Panel as requiring further investigation and costing before any final decision can be made as to the allocation of this budget and a Panel will reconvene at a future date with its subsequent recommendations to be reported to the next meeting of this Committee.

The Chair thanked the Constituency Manager and her team for all of the work that had been conducted. He expressed how the work added a large amount of value to this Constituency Committee, in particular the Stay, Safe, Warm and Well Project.

Resolved – That:

- (1) the Committee notes the progress and updates set out in the Constituency Manager’s report;**
- (2) the Committee establishes a Wirral West Special Places Panel on the basis of one member per ward which has delegated authority in conjunction with the Chair to agree locations for the installation of Special benches;**
- (3) the possible shortfall in the Special Places Benches budget is met by ring – fencing a maximum of £2,000 from the Committee’s 2015 – 2016 environmental budget of £10,000;**
- (4) the Committee establishes a Wirral West Environmental Panel on the basis of one member per ward which has delegated authority in conjunction with the Chair to agree expenditure from the remaining environmental budget allocation and that the Environmental Panel gives consideration to allocating this funding equitably across the five wards; and**

(5) the Committee gives delegated authority to ward councillors to agree which projects should be awarded a Community Fund grant following the community vote.

31 UPDATE ON WEST KIRBY FLOOD ALLEVIATION PROPOSALS

The Constituency Manager provided a verbal report to update Members on West Kirby Flood Alleviation Proposals.

The Committee heard how local engagement, so far, had been aimed at providing people with an understanding of:

- The risk of tidal flooding at West Kirby and how that risk might change in future
- The different ways that flood risk can be reduced
- The Council's proposals for reducing flood risk in West Kirby – and the preferred option of a defence structure on the promenade
- How the proposals will be taken forward by the Council, including how the proposals will be funded

It was reported that an information leaflet and feedback form had been produced that people could complete online or at one of three drop – in sessions where Council officers and other partners were able to answer questions. It was further reported that an exhibition had been held at Morrisons and West Kirby Library whereby the leaflet and feedback forms were available for residents. It was explained that residents directly affected by flood risk had been contacted.

The Committee were made aware that 400 responses had been received, largely in favour of the Council taking action to address flood risk and most respondents were in favour of a defence structure set back from the promenade. Some concerns were expressed by residents, as identified within the presentation, regarding a lack of support of a new structure and the need for more information on the matter. In addition, many identified concerns about the impact on the view and on parking.

Next steps were then explained including:

- Further work to finalise appraisal reports, including environmental assessment and an initial 'screening' by Planning;
- Further work with the Environment Agency to secure funding;
- Following this, work can begin on the necessary approvals, including detailed design and statutory planning process; and
- Ongoing work with community and residents – we are very grateful for the input and dialogue so far and we are building on this.

The Wirral West Constituency Manager expressed her thanks to all residents who had partaken in and supported the scheme.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

32 **UPDATES FROM COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES**

Prior to the verbal report by Community Representatives, the Chair took the opportunity to inform the Committee that John Smith had indicated that he would not be applying again for the position of community representative. He thanked John for the service he had provided to the Committee.

The Chair then invited the Community Representatives in attendance to provide a brief update in relation to local issues.

Hoylake and Meols Ward

Jackie Hall MBE informed the Committee that a residents meeting had taken place in November, with a further meeting scheduled for 21 March at Melrose Hall, Hoylake. It was explained that there is real concern with council cuts and how many previously key council roles had now been taken over by volunteers. It was felt that this has had a detrimental impact on the work of community groups as they are now finding they need to raise funds in order to complete tasks.

It was suggested that the 'Clean for the Queen' programme, as detailed earlier in the Constituency Manager's Report, should involve work alongside Network Rail to clean railway embankments.

Greasby, Frankby and Irby Ward

John Smith then addressed the Committee to inform Members of the positive work that is being undertaken in his ward that he described to have galvanised the community. He informed Members that a negative issue had been the uncertainty surrounding the future of the Library and Children's Centre and also that no information had yet been received in response to submitting an expression of interest with regards to the Library.

The Chair thanked Community Representatives for their comments and encouraged residents to consider applying for the position of Community Representative on the Committee.

Resolved – That the comments be noted.

33 **WIRRAL WEST RESIDENT FEEDBACK AND DEVELOPMENT OF CONSTITUENCY BUSINESS CASE**

Kevin MacCallum, Senior Manager: Marketing & Communications reported upon findings from the Council's Residents Survey, commissioned by IPSOS Mori in relation to Wirral West Constituency. It was explained how the survey had been conducted as a means to ask people what they need; what they feel about the place, about the council, their families aspirations and what they most feel needs improving in the Borough to make it a better place to live.

It was explained there had been responses from 5,650 resident addresses located in Wirral West Constituency, a 21% response rate. Members were then informed how the data within the survey had been benchmarked against two anonymous nearest neighbours (Council A and Council B), who had completed research during 2015, data was also benchmarked against Darlington and Southend – on –Sea, both of whom are in the top ten closest statistical neighbours to Wirral.

It was reported how the main priorities, for Wirral West Residents were identified as being:

- Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour
- Street cleanliness and road maintenance
- Encouraging job creation and skills
- Rubbish collection and recycling
- Support for the vulnerable

Lowest priorities, for Wirral West Residents were identified as follows:

- Housing services
- Sport and recreation facilities
- Parks and countryside
- Libraries, arts and museums
- Services for children & young people

In response to questions from Members, regarding findings of the presentation, the Wirral West Constituency Manager informed the Committee that there is currently work being undertaken on the development of a constituency business case as well as a constituency plan. The plan would be in line with priorities identified as being key for Wirral West residents

Resolved – That the report be noted.

34 **GOLF RESORT - FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

David Ball, Head of Regeneration and Planning, provided the Committee with an update on feedback received from the public consultation on the proposed Golf Resort.

It was reported that two drop in sessions were held in Hoylake and West Kirby for local residents in November and December 2015. Both sessions had a high turnout and 600 representations and comments were received as a result. It was explained how, 70% of respondents had either been in full support of the development, or supportive with some reservations, 29% of those consulted did not support the development at all. All comments were made available on the council's website.

The Committee heard how over coming months, the detailed technical phase of the planning would begin and would involve work alongside ecological and environmental services. It was then explained how, following this phase of the development the proposal would be shared and consulted upon with local residents. It would then be 16 – 18 months before the application, in its entirety, would formally go through the planning process and if approved by the Planning Committee, the matter would then need to be referred to the Secretary of State for a decision, as the proposed development is located in green belt land.

In a response to a question raised by a Member, the Head of Regeneration and Planning clarified that the process is anticipated to take around two years before any development would commence.

The Chair thanked the Head of Regeneration and Planning for his report and acknowledged how there remain to be many technical issues to resolve.

Resolved – that the presentation be noted.

35 COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME

The Chair invited questions from members of the public upon matters that were relevant to the Wirral West Constituency.

- A resident, referring to an earlier item, asked the Head of Regeneration and Planning how many responses had been received to the public consultation on the Golf Resort and commented how he had found this morning there had been 476 responses listed on the website. He further commented that it was his contention that the levels of support outlined by the Head of Regeneration and Planning were inaccurate and did not correspond to the responses as listed on the website.
 - The Head of Regeneration and Planning informed that to date there had been 600 responses received following the consultation drop in sessions. He explained that personal information had been redacted before published on the website and consultees had been asked to state whether they were a) in full support, b) supportive with some reservations or c) unsupportive. He commented how he

firmly believed that the figures presented to the committee were accurate and that information published on the website is fully transparent.

- A resident then asked the Head of Regeneration and Planning if local labour would be used to develop the Golf Resort.
 - The Chair commented that there is no guarantee that the development will go ahead
 - The Head of Regeneration and Planning then clarified, that, if the development were to be approved, then the Council would work with the Developer to aim to ensure that local labour is utilised.

- A resident passed comment about the location of Upton Ward and her perception that this ward is inappropriately placed in the Wirral West Constituency. She raised concerns, that due to the differing nature and demographic of this ward, residents needs are not being identified.
 - The Chair identified the excellent work undertaken by the three ward Councillors for the ward.
 - A Member explained how it is not in the remit of this Committee to decipher constituency boundaries, however, in the future these boundaries may be reviewed.

- A resident requested an update on an issue raised at a previous committee regarding the condition of Hoole Road resurfacing whereby it was stated that the current repair work was 'shoddy'.
 - The Constituency Manager stated that work in the car parking area is still to be completed and she will report back to a future meeting of the Constituency Committee.
 - The Ward Councillor assured the resident that, dependent on weather, the required works will be undertaken.

The Chair thanked all attendees and contributors to the meeting.

36 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Wirral West Constituency Committee is to be confirmed, dependent on the municipal calendar. The meeting scheduled for Thursday 21 April 2016 has been cancelled.