

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 6 October 2016

Present:

Councillor	JE Green (Chair)	
Councillors	J Hale	G Ellis
	T Anderson	M Patrick
	E Boulton	L Reecejones
	P Brightmore	T Smith
	D Burgess-Joyce	M Sullivan
	W Clements	G Watt
	D Elderton	S Whittingham

Community
Representative Jackie Hall MBE

11 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.

Councillor W Clements declared a personal interest in item 8 – Wirral West Community Fund, by virtue of being Chair of the Greasby Community Association and involvement with various community groups within Wirral West Constituency.

Councillor G Watt declared a personal interest in item 8 – Wirral West Community Fund, by virtue of being President of Newton Village Hall and involvement with various community groups within Wirral West Constituency.

Councillor M Sullivan declared a personal interest in item 8 – Wirral West Community Fund, by virtue of being a friend of Pensby Library and involvement with various community groups within Wirral West Constituency.

Councillors D Elderton, Phil Brightmore and E Boulton declared a personal interest in item 6 - Golf Resort Update, by virtue of their membership on the Council's Planning Committee, which would, at some stage in the future, be considering the planning application.

In all cases the Members remained in the room, but did not comment on the items.

12 **MINUTES**

Prior to consideration of the minutes of the last meeting, the Chair asked the Constituency Manager to provide a brief update on matters arising from the item 'Community Question Time'.

The Constituency Manager informed on the following matters:

Heron Road issues – dealt with under minute item 17 (post).

Promoting local arts activities and groups – a meeting had taken place with Susan Brown from the Wirral Arts Society, resulting in a number of actions and local networking.

Issues relating to parking on grass verges, sale of vehicles on the highway and roadside advertising – the Constituency Manager, working with the appropriate Council services, proposed coordinating an 'open morning' for residents to meet with officers who respond to these and other local issues in Wirral West.

Woodchurch ICT project – the Assistant Chief Executive provided a brief update on the use of the Neighbourhood Management Fund in respect of the project. The Assistant Chief Executive confirmed that the funding is being used in line with the intention of the project to increase the range of learning opportunities and reduce barriers to accessing work for Woodchurch residents.

Weeds – it was reported that as at the end of July, the summer herbicide spraying operation was 29 working days behind schedule. This was due to adverse weather conditions and not resource constraints. The Constituency Manager had requested a further update, but had no information at present relating to the scheduled spray for the October – November period.

Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2016 be approved

13 **OFSTED REPORT - CHILDREN'S SERVICES**

Ms Julia Hassall, Director for Children's Services introduced a verbal update report on the findings of the recent Ofsted Inspection Report.

Ms Hassall informed that she welcomed the opportunity to speak on the findings and that two aspects of the report highlighted the need for improvement. She explained her deep sorrow at the result, but informed that she and all those involved in the Children's Services teams were absolutely committed to making the recommended and appropriate improvements to turn the service around.

She highlighted that the report had identified that a number of children had been living with unacceptable risk and that this had been brought about by a number of factors, namely:

- High demand on the service;
- Increased number of referrals – from the Police, Health Service and Voluntary Sector;
- Higher than average turnover of Social Work staff; and
- Long Term Vacancy in senior management.

Ms Hassall informed that as part of the programme to reverse the trend a number of key procedures were already being actioned that included compliance with good industry practice, extra management within the safeguarding 'hub', additional oversight of and support to workers, and recruitment to the existing vacant manager post.

The Chair questioned the Director for Children's Services whether it was possible to provide an assurance as to the safety and security of those children in the Wirral West Constituency. The Director informed that by the very nature of child placements there was no specific breakdown by geographical area, but the focus remained on individual child care protection, the capacity to scrutinise plans and the sharing of information with partners, and as such everything possible was being done to ensure safety and security for all children falling under the care of the Council.

The Cabinet Member Children and Family Services, also a Member of the Constituency Committee, informed that actions had been taken to prioritise the front-line / caseworker levels and that this would continue. He further informed that the Council had struggled over a number of years to recruit to the senior management post. He added that the existing Scrutiny arrangements allowed for high levels of assurance with regard to Elected Member scrutiny of the Children's Services.

The Assistant Chief Executive joined the Director for Children's Services and Cabinet Member in expressing his commitment to ensuring that the Council's corporate responsibilities, and actions in addressing the failings identified in the report, would be a priority.

Resolved -

That Members note the verbal update.

14 **S19 FLOOD INVESTIGATION REPORT**

The Committee considered a presentation introduced by Mr Neil Thomas, Team Leader - Highway Assets, led by Mr Richard James, Flood Risk Consultant AECOM, and supported by Mr Jamie Ball, AECOM. The presentation updated Members on the findings of the Flood and Water Management Act, Section 19 Flood investigation which covered the flood events from 22 August 2015 to 2 September 2015.

Members were advised that a significant amount of data had been collected through consultation with multiple organisations, stakeholders and members of the public. Members were then informed that the data was used to identify 'hotspots', where clusters of reports could indicate a common problem or flooding mechanism for example: main river flooding, sewer blockages or capacity issues, surface water ponding; and, combined flooding mechanisms. Maps were provided to demonstrate hotspots in Wirral.

The Flood Risk Consultant set out key these identified as follows:

- Limited warning
- Rapid onset of flooding over a very large area
- Information about the scale and severity of the flooding was slow to reach key decision makers
- Lines of communication with the public were challenged
- The authority response was impacted by the gradual exchange of information and limited resources.

Members were informed that the Section 19 Flood Investigation made multiple recommendations, including:

- Developing a Multi- Agency Severe Weather Plan for Wirral
- Developing integrated catchment models
- Developing information capture and rapid sharing capability
- Promoting and fostering community resilience to repeat events through the provision of resources and partnership working with local communities.

The importance of community resilience was then explained to the Committee and the details of a flood survey was demonstrated to Members.

In Summary, Mr James concluded to Members that the Section 19 Flood Investigation had made recommendations to improve communications and resilience of the communities at risk. He also informed Members that a full report is available on the Wirral Council website.

Mr John Kinsella, Environment Agency, Mr Barry Cropper and Mr Peter Talboys from United Utilities as representatives of the other Risk Management Authorities referred to in the report were in attendance at the meeting and answered a series of questions from members of the public.

Members of the audience expressed concerns surrounding the potential for the River Birkett and Fender to overflow. A question was asked about the effectiveness of the associated pumping stations and it was explained that as part of the Section 19 report this would be investigated.

Members of the audience also questioned the speakers on the subjects of building on flood plains, housing infill, preventative maintenance, gully and drain clearance schedules difficulties arising from grass cuttings and sand collecting in highway drains, and potential impact on flood management arising from the proposed Hoylake Golf Resort.

Resolved -

That Members note the contents of the report.

15 **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR UPDATE**

The Chair informed that this item had been brought before the Constituency Committee at the request of Councillor Brightmore.

The Chair then asked that the Constituency Manager and other partners provide an update on the recent multi-agency response to particular issues in Arrowe Park and Ridgewood Park.

The following representatives from the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Team, Merseyside Police and Merseyside Fire and Rescue were in attendance:

- Mike O'Brien, Wirral Council ASB Team
- Inspector Brian Griffiths, Merseyside Police
- Steve Gadsdon, Merseyside Fire and Rescue

The Constituency Committee heard that a Problem Solving Group (PSG) had been established to address the problems that were being caused by youths in Arrowe Park and the surrounding area. The PSG had been attended by representatives from Merseyside Police, Wirral Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Wirral Community Patrol, Wirral Sports Development Unit, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service, Constituency Manager, Parks Team Leader based at Ivy Farm, Catch 22 and local residents.

Members noted that as a result, the following actions had been undertaken which assisted in reducing the problems in the area, namely:

- Additional resources deployed to the area by Merseyside Police;
- The majority of youths involved in causing the problems were identified following the sharing of intelligence between agencies;
- Letters had been sent to parents of youth identified as being part of the group, with further action taken against those identified as ringleaders of the group;
- Additional funding put in place for sports development / youth support in order for them to provide additional diversional activities for young people in this and the wider area – funded by the Constituency Committee;
- Ongoing discussions with Asset Management as to the bowling pavilions / Ivy Farm buildings.

It was reported that residents residing within the Ivy Farm had reported 100% improvement in the area since the PSG had taken place.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their report, also thanking Councillor Brightmore for raising the matter.

Resolved -

That Members note the contents of the verbal update.

16 **GOLF RESORT UPDATE**

Mr David Ball, Head of Regeneration presented an update on the proposed £190million investment proposal for a Jack Nicklaus Golf Course, Hotel and Spa development in Hoylake. The update provided a summary of the current stages now underway, following the outcome of the public consultation exercise held in November – December 2015.

The Head of Regeneration informed that the development agreement had now reached the signing stage, and would shortly be presented to the Council's Cabinet for consideration. He further informed that a funding / viability assessment would also shortly be undertaken in the next few months, and that should the outcome not be acceptable the Council has the power to call a halt to the project.

The Head of Regeneration explained that if the outcome of the funding assessment was satisfactory, the next step would be for a more detailed assessment to be undertaken by the developer, followed by more public consultation.

A Member informed that the subject had been due for consideration by Cabinet at its meeting on 3 October, but had been deferred. The Head of Regeneration explained that the deferral was purely to allow additional

information regarding consultation on 'Section 237' (change of use from arable land) to be included in the report at Cabinet's request.

A member of the public questioned the Head of Regeneration on the sums spent so far by the Council on the project. Mr Ball explained that a figure of £237k had been spent, and that the next stages of the project would bring this figure closer to £600k in total – with approximately £200k set aside for site investigations, legal advice and consultancy fees. This would amount to in the region of 0.3% of the total project cost, and that the developer / Nicklaus Joint Venture Group, would be spending in the region of £1million just to get their proposal to the planning stage.

Mr Ball provided an explanation that the feasibility, technical and legal procedures undertaken so far do not pre-determine the project, and that Councillor's had absolute discretion to walk away from, or stop the project at any time. He stated that it was still however the Council's belief that the project would bring considerable benefits to Wirral in terms of inward investment and employment.

Resolved -

That Members note the contents of the report.

17 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S PROGRESS AND BUDGET REPORT**

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) presented her report that provided an update on current projects and activities funded using the Committee's 2015-16 budget allocations and budgets carried over from previous years.

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) provided a verbal summary and update on progress for each item of report, that included:

- Special Places Project (2014-15 Love Wirral budget allocation) – summary listing of locations being taken forward (paragraph 2.1 of the report) for the siting of a 'special places' bench.
- Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour (2015-16 ASB allocation)
- Environmental Budget (2015-16 allocation)
- Road Safety Budget – including a summary list of completed projects, remaining budget allocations, and prioritised schemes, with estimated costings where known.

Resolved – That

- 1) **the progress and updates set out in the Constituency Manager's report be noted; and**

2) the priority schemes as recommended by the Road Safety Panel set out at Paragraph 2.19 of the report, be endorsed.

18 WIRRAL WEST COMMUNITY FUND 2016 UPDATE

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) presented a short verbal report in respect of taking forward the Committee's core budget for 2016-17 (Community Fund) to date.

The update informed that there had been a good response to the opportunity to apply for a grant, and that an open event scheduled for the following week at Hilbury High School on 13 October would provide an excellent opportunity for networking and making connections as well as for people to take part in the public vote.

Resolved – That the comments be noted.

19 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES UPDATE

The Chair requested that the Constituency Manager update on developments with regards to community representatives. Ms Morgan informed that Ms Alisha Butler-Ward had indicated that she would like to work on behalf of the Constituency Committee in West Kirby and Thurstaston and that she was observing this meeting in the first instance.

The Chair then asked Ms Jackie Hall MBE for an update on local issues in the Hoylake area.

Jackie Hall MBE informed the Constituency Committee of her engagement with local residents and shop keepers in Hoylake on the subject of the efforts to retain businesses and a vibrant shopping area. Ms Hall highlighted her ongoing concerns regarding the apparent disconnect between the Licensing and Planning Departments, and the difficulties arising when it comes to enforcement of such matters.

Ms Hall further informed the Committee of a straw-poll study of 116 residents / local businesses that had been undertaken, with one specific question: '*Do you want to see the Hoylake Golf Resort?*'

The result of her poll was as follows:

- 77 – Yes, can't wait
- 20 – No
- 15 – When we get more information, we'll decide
- 8 – Don't care

The Chair thanked Ms Hall for her, as always, frank contribution.

Resolved – That the verbal updates be noted.

20 **COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME**

The Chair invited questions from members of the public upon matters that were relevant to the Wirral West Constituency. No questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

- A member of the public directed a question to the attending Merseyside Fire and Rescue (MFRS) representative, whether it was true that if the New Fire Station proposed for Saughall Massie was not built, would there be a risk to the residents of West Kirby due to the extended response times for Fire Tenders coming from their current base in Upton?
 - The MFRS representative, confirmed that response times would be affected whatever the cause.
- Mr David Bevington raised concerns about expenditure relating to the Woodchurch ICT project, stating that the response to his initial enquiry hadn't provided the information he required.
 - The Constituency Manager requested that, as the matter was closed as far as the committee was concerned, Mr Bevington could clarify his concerns in writing to her.
- A member of the public, Mr Mountney, asked a question in relation to Page 27 of the Public Interest Report referred to at the Audit and Risk Management Committee meeting held on 26 September 2016, as to 'what level of disclosure was required?'
 - The Assistant Chief Executive replied, stating that the report related to a specific period of audit undertaken by the Council's independent auditors, Grant Thornton, and that he would take up the question and a copy of the response would be provided to the Committee.
- A member of the public directed a question to the attending Police representative on the impact of budget cuts to local policing in West Kirby. The Chair followed up the question, asking the Police Officer if he felt the area was adequately served at the moment, and whether a 'wish list' existed.
 - The Police representative informed that ongoing cuts to various budgets had a definite impact on the levels of Police resources in the area. He advised that there were currently 3 police

constables allocated to the Wirral West area (24 hour shift pattern), and further changes were expected in January 2017. All changes would be dependent upon a) budget, and b) strategies decided by senior officers.

The Chair thanked all speakers, members of the public, Officers and Elected Members for their attendance.

21 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

No urgent business.

22 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Wirral West Constituency Committee was scheduled for 9 February 2017 at St Mary's Church, Upton, CH49 6JZ.