

BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24 January 2017

Present: Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

Councillors C Spriggs S Williams
RL Abbey W Ward
A Leech C Blakeley
J McManus G Ellis
D Realey T Pilgrim
J Stapleton D Mitchell
KJ Williams

Deputy: Councillors T Anderson (In place of J Hale)

46 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that no further apologies had been received other than for Councillor John Hale who had a deputy standing in for him.

47 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 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 Blakeley declared that he had attended the workshop meeting earlier that month at which he and other Members had made their opposition known to proposals for parking charges.

48 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 29 November and 7 December, 2016.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings of 29 November and 7 December, 2016, be approved.

49 **UPDATE ON LIVERPOOL CITY REGION DEVELOPMENTS**

The Chair agreed to vary the order of business and to take this item next.

Rose Boylan, Policy and Strategy Manager, introduced a report and gave a presentation setting out a brief overview of latest developments at the Liverpool City Region (LCR), including the outcome of the recent Governance review and activity underway to implement the City Region devolution deal.

A review of the LCR CA constitution was underway, and a revised constitution would be circulated imminently to fully reflect the powers and functions contained within the LCR Order and other generic Orders applicable to the CA, together with how they would be implemented. Details and timescales for the Mayoral Elections were currently being finalised and would be circulated to Members shortly. The report also gave examples of an extensive range of activity on delivering projects, including: Business Rates Pilot; Single Investment Fund; Skills and Transport.

Responding to comments from Members Rose Boylan stated that ongoing discussions were being held with the Government on the Business Rates Pilot so no further details were available yet.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

50 **BUDGET PROPOSALS WORKSHOP**

In view of the presence of a large number of public, the Chair agreed to vary the order of business and take this item next.

A report from the Chair presented the work of Business Overview & Scrutiny Committee in relation to scrutinising the 2017/18 budget proposals. A workshop had been held on 9 January for Members to explore in more detail the various budget proposals being put forward that fell under the remit of this committee. A report on the workshop was included as an appendix to the report. The Committee was requested to acknowledge this report as its response to the 2017/18 budget proposals to be referred on to Cabinet as part of its considerations in developing any budget recommendation to Council.

The Chair reiterated for the benefit of the public present that this Committee would only be discussing these proposals put forward by officers and no decisions were being taken.

Rob Clifford, Senior Manager – Commissioning, gave a presentation to the Committee on the details of the budget savings proposals for car parking charges. This included the proposals:

- To increase parking charges by 50p on all existing tariffs.

- To introduce a flat rate daily tariff of £4 for parking at Country Parks – Arrowe Country Park, Eastham Country Park, Royden Country Park, Wirral Country Park with charges at Birkenhead Park being introduced in 2018/19.
- To introduce charging at locations where parking was currently free including some locations in New Brighton, West Kirby, Hoylake, Heswall, Liscard, Bromborough, Bebington, Irby, Upton and Moreton.

The total savings generated by these proposals would amount to £1.3m over 2017/18 and 2018/19.

The Chair then opened the matter up for debate by the Committee.

Councillor Blakeley expressed his disappointment that Members didn't have the details on the proposals until last Wednesday, whereas it was made available to the press on the Friday before that. He suggested that officers had been secretive with the information. He remarked that the presentation had referred to the factoring in of drops in usage of car parks but had any assessment been made of the impact on side streets if parking charges were introduced in shopping areas and commented that it would do nothing to enhance the shopping experience.

The Chair stated that what was happening now was pre-decision scrutiny and it was ludicrous to suggest any secretiveness on the part of officers. No decisions had been made whatsoever and the proposals were out for public consultation.

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the meeting that the proposals formed part of a £33m package of measures put forward to go towards savings of £42m which were needed for 2017/18. He elaborated on the issue of information appearing in the press and stated that two entirely separate processes had been followed, one in which at the closed workshop Members had asked for a presentation to this Committee and secondly an enquiry made to the press office which the press officer was able to answer using information from the Statutory Notice which was being prepared for publication in the local press.

Responding to comments, Rob Clifford stated that an estimate had been made of a 30 per cent reduction in the use of the country parks' car parks if the proposals were introduced but no detailed assessment had been made with regard to side streets around shopping centres. The proposals were purely about addressing the budget gap.

Councillor Ellis commented that Cabinet had made a serious error and that there would be very serious repercussions for shopping centres within the borough with many smaller shops having to close down.

The Chair stated that the Council was losing a further £42m from its 2017/18 budget and because of Government cuts the Council would cease to exist as it was known now by 2020. The Council had been forced into a corner since 2010.

Councillor Mitchell as well as raising the issue of Section 55 of the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 and the issue of local authorities raising revenue through car parking, also referred to the impact on surrounding areas to where parking charges could be introduced and the fact that two country parks, Eastham and Wirral, had two of the longest cul-de-sacs on Wirral.

In response Rob Clifford stated that there were two streams of parking income, one from off-street parking (Section 32 and 33) which could be used for any traffic related budgetary purposes and the other from on street parking (Section 55) in which the income was restricted to the costs incurred by the Council in policing or the provision or maintenance of off-street parking.

Councillor Abbey reminded the Committee that officers were the authors of this document and that they were proposals with no decisions having yet been taken. There was a need for more evidence as to the impacts these proposals could have.

Responding to further comments from Members, Rob Clifford stated that there was no other consultation proposed other than through the Traffic Regulation Order notices in the press and the consultation with this Committee. The proposals had been copied to the four Constituency Managers who would have greater awareness of groups within their respective areas to consult with. All parking revenue data was published each year and enforcement of parking charges was not used as a revenue raising tool.

The Chair commented that no pay and display machines had been procured but that officers had been given authority to find out the costs if it was needed. He agreed that the matter should be looked at by the Committee from a public health point of view.

Councillor Ward referred to the huge cuts in funding from the Government which had led to officers having to put forward unpalatable proposals such as this. The report, however, was seriously lacking in vital information to enable the Committee to scrutinise the positive and negative impacts of the proposals.

Responding to further comments the Assistant Chief Executive commented that procurement processes had commenced and officers did carry out preliminary discussions as they had to plan as if the proposals were adopted to ensure a full year's income from the proposals. Rob Clifford confirmed that the Cabinet Member had signed off the commencement of a procurement process and the Chair stated that this was due process.

The Chair, in response to a suggestion from Councillor Blakeley, stated that he would not allow any members of the public to speak.

It was then moved by Councillor Ward, and seconded by Councillor Abbey –

“That this Committee requests officers to develop a full report which considers the impact on small businesses, traffic and the wider community to enable Councillors to fully scrutinise all aspects of the affects which may occur in an increase or implementation of parking charges.”

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Steve Williams, that –

- “1. Committee notes the numerous petitions of objection, totalling over 15,000 signatures to date.
2. Committee notes the level of public anger and opposition to these proposals.
3. Committee recognises the potential damage the introduction of car parking charges will do to the already struggling town centre shopping areas.
4. Committee also recognises that charging for parking in Country Parks, with an estimated drop in usage of 30% of users will have a detrimental effect on public health.”

It was then moved as a further amendment by Councillor Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Blakeley, that –

“The option not be taken up by Cabinet.”

The amendment moved by Councillor Mitchell was put and lost (6:9).

The amendment moved by Councillor Blakeley was put and lost (6:9)

The motion was then put and carried (10:5).

Resolved (10:5) - That this Committee requests officers to develop a full report which considers the impact on small businesses, traffic and the wider community to enable Councillors to fully scrutinise all aspects of the affects which may occur in an increase or implementation of parking charges.

The Chair then adjourned the meeting for 5 minutes at 7.20pm whilst the majority of the public left the room.

The meeting reconvened at 7.30pm.

51 **NOTICE OF MOTION: INWARD INVESTMENT**

Further to minute 35 (29/11/16), the Committee were requested to consider the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Phil Davies and seconded by Councillor Ann McLachlan which had been referred by the Mayor at the Council meeting on 17 October, 2016 (minute 67 (3) refers) to this Committee for consideration –

INWARD INVESTMENT

“This council recognises economic growth is key to realising the Wirral Plan and delivering a better life for Wirral’s residents.

Council also notes, despite the government’s lack of enthusiasm for their former Chancellor’s flagship regeneration policy The Northern Powerhouse, this authority remains committed to working closely with other authorities in the region to drive economic success.

Council acknowledges the success to date of the Liverpool City Region in growing the economy – currently worth nearly £29billion with output increasing by 8.4% in the five years up to 2014 - and recognises Wirral’s economic future is tied to the continued success of the City region.

Council further notes the benefit of having Wirral Council’s Leader serve as the portfolio holder for Economic Development across the City Region and the added profile and opportunity this brings forward for Wirral.

Council is proud of the work being done by Liverpool City Region firms who have secured the 2nd highest incidence of high-growth firms in the UK, and by trade and business networks supported by this authority to attract new investment to the Wirral, including Wirral Chamber of Commerce, Liverpool Local Enterprise Partnership and the Council’s Economic Development and Growth unit.

Council supports any opportunity to continue to develop Wirral and the City Region’s maturing relationship with China and Chinese businesses, especially in the key strategic growth industries of Advanced Manufacturing, Marine and Logistics and Clean Energy and Civil Nuclear Engineering.

Council welcomes the decision to partner with Liverpool Vision, Invest Liverpool, Wirral-based businesses and the local Chambers of Commerce to promote the borough and the wider City Region during a forthcoming joint trade mission to Kunming, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shanghai and Wirral’s twin city, Tianjin.

Council supports every effort to drive economic growth, foster stronger relationships with investors, and promote Wirral and the wider City Region as the most attractive investment partners for Chinese and South East Asian investors.”

In accordance with Standing Order 7 (6), Councillor Davies had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to be given an opportunity to explain the Motion.

Councillor Davies elaborated on the content of the motion and the work being undertaken to increase inward investment. He had now been a number of times to China, including previously with the Leader of the Conservative Group and former leader of the Liberal Democrat Group. The latest delegation last October, of which he was a part, was the largest yet as it was undertaken as a Liverpool City Region visit, with other Leaders, nine or ten businesses, three from the Wirral, the local Chamber of Commerce and Liverpool Vision.

The delegation had visited six cities in China, Kunming, Guiyang, Qingdao, Shanghai, Beijing and Wirral’s twin city Tianjin. The scale of these cities was enormous, all with populations in the millions. Presentations were made by the LCR in all six cities and ‘match making’ sessions were also held with a variety of businesses. About 102 leads were being proactively followed up with a high proportion of interest in Wirral particularly in low carbon and offshore wind businesses.

Specific companies, such as a cable manufacturing company had expressed an interest in the opportunities regarding offshore wind and were in fact sending a delegation to Wirral in April / May as they were keen to set up a manufacturing operation. The government in Qingdao were keen to develop direct flights to Liverpool and were in discussions with the Operations Director of Liverpool John Lennon Airport. The three Wirral businesses had thought the visit had been a very useful investment of their time and twelve additional businesses had signed up to participate in a future delegation.

The Leader commented on the fact that the delegation had been a City Region wide one which had raised the profile of Wirral and the British Consulate had received good feedback following the visit.

In response to questions from the Committee, Councillor Davies’ comments included the following:

- With regard to timescales for investment, this varied with one company hopeful of investing in the next year and others which would take longer.
- Whilst acknowledging that the City Region had some of the best talent in the creative industries he was not aware of any proposed investment on this side but the delegation had visited an interesting creative industries

quarter in Beijing. With regard to tourism the Liverpool John Lennon airport was exploring the possibility of a direct air route.

- Given the scale and size of the cities in China there was a need to promote Wirral as a part of the LCR as it needed to be seen in the context of a wider conurbation.
- With regard to recent funding announcements he welcomed any additional funding from the Government for the LCR but commented on the pace of devolution which the Government needed to speed up. There was a need to lobby for more power to the LCR and he found it frustrating that the Government did not appear to be giving it a higher priority. He had himself met Andrew Percy MP, Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, twice and also with Sajid David, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government on his recent visit to the Wirral.
- There was a need for more ‘big ticket’ items such as HS2 into Liverpool and a HS3 from Liverpool to Hull.

Committee Members thanked the Leader for his comprehensive report and for all the work he was doing to try and bring investment into the borough.

It was moved by Councillor Mitchell and seconded by Councillor Abbey, that –

“The motion be supported.”

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Anderson, that –

“Paragraph 2 of the motion be amended to read:

‘Council also welcomes the Government’s commitment to its flagship regeneration policy, the Northern Powerhouse and would encourage the Council, along with all other authorities in the region to meet with the Minister for the Northern Powerhouse, Andrew Percy MP in order to explore all options to drive economic success.’”

The amendment was put and lost (5:10).

The motion was put and carried (10:5).

Resolved (10:5) – That the motion be supported.

52 THE ROLE OF COUNCILLORS IN WIRRAL'S ASSET STRATEGY

Further to minute 38 (29/11/16), Jeanette Royle, Senior Manager, Asset Management, submitted a report with proposals to support the recognition that Members act to ensure that any new developments deliver the greatest benefits for their communities and help to shape major schemes.

The Assets and Capital Group provided the forum for early discussions on any asset proposals and a representative from each Council department was present. This membership allowed a thorough discussion to take place on any issues which could arise out of a proposed disposal, change of use, co-location opportunities and future service needs which had asset implications including housing and extra care needs.

A template was used at these meetings to assess any proposals brought forward and referred to as the Asset Challenge document; this allowed the officers to assess the proposal to achieve the best outcome for the asset. Considerations were based around delivering the Wirral Plan, financial, service requirements, growth etc. It was proposed that this was shared more widely with ward members, portfolio holders and specific member interest groups prior to a Cabinet or delegated report being written. This would provide members with the background information to the assets under consideration.

The report went on to describe the different means of approval for an asset disposal. There were also a number of existing arrangements by which Members were informed of changes to assets within their constituency areas. It was proposed that some additional information sharing stages were introduced which would better inform Members of the suggested changes.

Responding to a comment from a Member, the Assistant Chief Executive stated that the minutes of the Wirral Property Board, Growth and Property Board, Assets Transformation Programme Board and Assets and Capital Group could be made available to Members although sometimes proposals were put forward which, for commercial purposes, needed to remain confidential and these minutes could be made available in a redacted form.

The Chair, on behalf of the Committee thanked Jeanette Royle for her thorough report.

Resolved - That the proposed new arrangements for Member engagement when considering proposed asset changes, be agreed and Jeanette Royle be thanked for her thorough report.

53 **TOURISM TASK AND FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW**

The Chair asked Councillor Jerry Williams to introduce the report on the findings and recommendations of the Tourism Scrutiny Review completed in November 2016, which he had chaired. The Review was commissioned as part of the former Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee's 2015/16 work programme and had been undertaken by four members of that former Committee, Councillors Chris Spriggs, Jean Stapleton and Adam Sykes.

The review was conducted over a number of question and answer evidence sessions with Council officers and external stakeholders. The Panel had evaluated Wirral's marketing activity and how it worked with the Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership for support in marketing Wirral's offer and a number of recommendations had been made as a result of the review.

Councillor Spriggs referred to the significant increase in visitor numbers and overnight stays in New Brighton which had also meant a large increase in the visitor economy, now the fastest growing visitor economy in the Liverpool city region. She asked that these statistics and supporting information be included in the Scrutiny Review document. The Chair agreed that the amended Scrutiny Review document be circulated to the Committee prior to its consideration by the Cabinet.

Members also expressed concerns regarding the excellent facility, the Floral Pavilion and the need for it to generate more income. Councillor Jerry Williams commented that one of the recommendations within the Scrutiny Review referred to 'the importance of Wirral's cultural offer' and he fully supported the idea that more promotion was needed for the Floral Pavilion. Members expressed support for the tourism team, which with just a small number of employees and through working closely with the private sector, generated a lot of income for the Wirral.

Resolved –

- (1) That the findings and recommendations of the review, be endorsed with the addition of the wording regarding New Brighton being incorporated into the report.**
- (2) That the report and recommendations be referred to Cabinet for its endorsement.**
- (3) That the thanks of this Committee be accorded to the Council's Visitor Economy Team for the fantastic work they did for Wirral.**

54 **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY SCRUTINY PANEL - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Chair reported that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Scrutiny Panel was next due to meet the following day (25 January) at which the apprenticeships review would be completed and he would update the Committee on this important piece of work at the next meeting.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

55 **POLICY INFORM: BUSINESS**

The Chair introduced a report on the January Policy Inform Briefing paper which provided an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament and emerging policies.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

56 **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION PANEL MINUTES**

Councillor Steve Williams introduced the minutes of the Highways and Traffic Representation Panel meeting held on 17 January, 2017, and it was –

Resolved –

(1) That the recommendations of the Highways and Traffic Representation Panel as detailed in the minutes of the meeting held on 17 January, 2017, be endorsed; and

(2) The Cabinet Member for Transport and Infrastructure be recommended to take appropriate action in respect of a proposal to provide off-road / on-road cycleway facilities and signalised crossing improvements along Duke Street, Birkenhead between Park Road North and Duke Street Bridge as shown on plans DC/0247/100 and DC/0248/100.

57 **BUSINESS OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee considered a report from the Chair which provided an update regarding progress made since the last Committee on 29 November on the scrutiny work programme.

The Chair referred to the Customer Contact update report to the Committee on 13 September 2016 (minute 22 refers), the timescales for the Access Wirral project had been expedited to support the savings required by the Council. The service development proposals for Access Wirral would go to Cabinet for approval on the 27 March 2017.

In line with the pre-decision scrutiny approach agreed by Committee on 12 July, 2016 (minute 6 refers) it was proposed that the Committee convened a bespoke session in early February to review proposals for the Access Wirral Project prior to Cabinet taking a decision on 27 March. The session would be open to all Members of the Committee. With the next scheduled Committee meeting being on 29 March, it was therefore also proposed that Committee gives delegated authority for the Chair and Party Spokespersons to approve and refer any report arising from the session directly to Cabinet.

Resolved -

- (1) That the proposed Committee Work Programme for 2016/17, be approved.**
- (2) That the proposal to convene a dedicated session in February to review the service development proposals for Access Wirral be approved and delegated authority be given to the Chair and Party Spokespersons to approve and refer any report arising from this session directly to Cabinet.**