

BUSINESS OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 29 March 2017

Present:

Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

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

Deputies:

Councillors B Berry (In place of C Blakeley)
P Stuart (In place of D Realey)
G Watt (In place of J Hale)
I Williams (In place of W Ward)

61 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that no further apologies had been received other than for Councillors Chris Blakeley, John Hale, Denise Realey and Warren Ward all of whom had deputies standing in for them.

62 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.

No such declarations were made.

63 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 24 January and 13 March, 2017.

Councillor Mitchell referred to minute 50, 'Budget Proposals Workshop' and the resolution that the Committee should receive a report to consider the impact of the introduction of parking charges.

The Assistant Chief Executive responded that some intensive research had been undertaken in this area nationally and there was not a great deal of evidence to suggest a link between car parking charges and the viability of town centres. Indeed there might be some evidence that parking charges increased footfall because of the greater turnover of parking spaces. He would need to establish what resources might be available for the Council to undertake a fuller report into the issue.

Another Member commented that there was already evidence of motorists parking on the road outside the country park at Thurstaston prior to the new charges coming into effect.

The Chair suggested that the issue could be looked into when the Chair and party spokespersons met to consider the Committee's work programme for the new municipal year.

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings of 24 January and 13 March, 2017, be approved.

64 **REPORT FOLLOWING EXPLOSION IN NEW FERRY ON SATURDAY 25 MARCH, 2017**

The Chair agreed to this item as a matter of urgent business in view of the very recent occurrence of the incident.

The Chair then invited the Assistant Chief Executive to give an update on the situation at New Ferry following an explosion at a detached block which had affected residential properties and commercial premises on the evening of Saturday, 25 March, 2017.

He expressed his thanks to all the emergency services who had responded so quickly to the incident, also to the Life Church in Bebington who had helped in accommodating people on the evening and had provided shelter. The site was in the control of the police whilst the investigation into the explosion continued and a crisis hub had been established at the New Ferry Village Hall. He expressed appreciation to the community and companies such as Unilever and Bookers who had donated supplies. One person remained critically ill in hospital; a number of people had been taken to hospital on the night of the explosion and a number of people had also made their own way to hospital.

Members also expressed their thanks and support to all the emergency services and officers and the Life Church, Bebington who had responded and to the Ward Councillors and local MP. A Member also referred to the offer of shelter and support from Tranmere Rovers Football Club.

The Chair referred to the long term effects on buildings and businesses and people being unable to access their homes, In the short-term there was a need for donations of toiletries and clothing and a need for people to know what items were required and where they could be dropped off.

The Assistant Chief Executive stated that once the police cordon was lifted then the Council's structural engineers would be able to assess the buildings affected and some people might be allowed back in to retrieve belongings.

Resolved - That the thanks of this Committee be accorded to all the emergency services, Council staff and ward councillors for all their hard work undertaken so far in connection with this incident.

65 COUNCIL'S COMMERCIAL APPROACH

The Committee received a presentation from Stuart Bellerby, Project Manager – Commercial Approach, on the Council's commercial approach. He outlined the background to developing strategy and the financial challenges which were driving this approach. The presentation gave examples of the Council's current commercial activity and the vision to further develop this which would take a customer focussed, innovative, commercial and entrepreneurial approach to secure the delivery of high quality and value for money services to support the Wirral Plan. He outlined a workflow for commercial ideas coming from Members, staff and the public and the overall expected benefits with initial financial expectations being a £1m surplus per year from the commercial approach for the next four years from 2017/18. He also outlined some examples of the commercial work being undertaken by other authorities and how the Council would develop its own commercial approach culture.

The Chair welcomed Nicola Butterworth, Assistant Director: Commissioning Support, to the meeting.

In response to questions from the Committee, Joe Blott, Managing Director of Delivery and Stuart Bellerby's comments, included the following:

- Some staff training had already taken place with e-learning modules and a second stage of training for managers would move this to the next level.
- The Council would be engaging with entrepreneurs and working in collaboration with the Chamber of Commerce.
- The idea of the Energy Company was to tackle fuel poverty and get the best value for customers.
- An intranet page had been set up so that all staff were able to share any commercial ideas that they might have.
- The Council would be mindful of any impact on small businesses and was engaged with the Chamber of Commerce.

- Last year the Council had created the Liverpool and Wirral Social Stock Exchange providing an alternative source of capital to support small businesses to enable them to grow.
- There were plans in place for the development of Woodside.
- The Pension fund had 117 different contributors and work was taking place with the fund to look at potential investment opportunities.
- The Floral Pavilion was currently not making a profit but should be considered as a part of the Council's broader leisure portfolio. The suggestion of looking at how commercially successful publicly owned theatres operated would be taken on board.
- Further information would be obtained on the possibility of council owned land being leased for housing and for commercial purposes.
- Connections had been made with other Councils over their approaches to commercialisation.

The Assistant Chief Executive gave some examples of the ways in which the Council currently supported small businesses through both the Schools Traded Service and through software support.

The Chair expressed his excitement at the presentation and all the work that was currently taking place on this initiative and on a motion by the Chair, duly seconded, it was –

Resolved – That the officers be thanked for their presentation and report back to the Committee in six months' time with an update.

66 ACCESS WIRRAL SERVICE DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Further to minute 6 (12/7/16), the Chair introduced a report relating to the involvement of scrutiny in reviewing new service models as they were developed. A workshop, led by Councillor Matthew Patrick, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Communications, had been held on 14 February 2017 for members of this Committee to scrutinise the service development proposals relating to Access Wirral in further detail. The outcomes from the workshop were detailed in the report which had been referred to Cabinet for consideration.

With the permission of the Chair, Councillor Matthew Patrick, addressed the Committee and reported that the report had been approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on Monday, 27 March. He stated that there would be a strong emphasis on the socially and digitally excluded and he would continue to report back to this Committee.

Members expressed their support for the proposals which were long overdue and thanked Councillor Patrick for the spotlight session. Appreciation of all the work the call centre staff did was also expressed.

Responding to comments, Councillor Patrick stated that the first stage of the Access Wirral roll out would involve Housing Benefit and Council Tax and this would streamline the service for a lot of people reducing the number of telephone calls and thereby freeing up staff resources to help those who were digitally excluded. It was hoped to roll out to further services in future phases and he would be happy to report back to the Committee.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

67 UPDATE ON LIVERPOOL CITY REGION DEVELOPMENTS

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 LCR Combined Authority Mayoral elections taking place on 4 May, 2017.
- The Single Investment Fund (SIF)
- Review of apprenticeships across the LCR

Responding to comments from Members, Rose Boylan elaborated on the SIF, it was very clear on the skills growth prospectus about linking to the skills required by employers.

The Assistant Chief Executive informed the Committee that a range of schemes had been submitted for SIF and four had made it through to the next stage, including the development of a Maritime Knowledge Hub. All would now be submitting their full business cases.

With regard to apprenticeships Rose Boylan explained that there was a mixed picture regarding awareness of the apprenticeship levy and the Council was leading a partnership approach to raising awareness and developing a strategic response with schools and businesses. She gave further details on the apprenticeship hub which was a single portal brokering service for businesses, schools, parents and prospective apprentices and agreed that the link to the website would be circulated to all the Committee.

The Chair referred to the lack of clarity from central government on the apprenticeship levy. He praised the work being carried out by Wirral Met College and the facilities available at the Wirral Waters site.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

68 **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY SCRUTINY PANEL - UPDATE**

The Chair reported that the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Scrutiny Panel had last met on 25 January when the final report on the Review into Apprenticeships in the Liverpool City Region (LCR) was considered. The final report (Appendix 1) was endorsed by the Scrutiny Panel and was subsequently referred to the Combined Authority for consideration of the recommendations made and for a report to be presented at a future meeting of the Scrutiny Panel. He commented upon the excellent standard of training available in the LCR.

The Committee had also received a report on the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Order which established the office of Mayor and on the arrangements for the election of a Liverpool City Region Mayor in May 2017.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

69 **2016/17 QUARTER 3 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE - BUSINESS THEME**

David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive, introduced a report which described performance at Quarter 3 (October to December 2016). A list of key performance highlights was provided in the report and he drew the Committee's attention to the fact that some of the indicators had annual targets so would not be complete until the end of quarter 4.

A Member commented on the need for the report to contain some narrative when indicators were 'red'.

In response to comments from Members the Chair stated that the issue of the Committee receiving more regular updates on performance could be looked at in a workshop meeting during the next municipal year, together with the issue of the colour coding of indicators.

Responding to a comment from a Member on the River of Light firework display on 5 November, David Armstrong stated that a joint study had been commissioned with Liverpool City Council on the views of the public who had attended the event and he would arrange for this report to be sent to Committee Members. He did not know whether there were plans to repeat the display in 2017.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

70 **FINANCIAL MONITORING 2016/17 QUARTER 3**

Jenny Spick, Senior Manager, Financial Planning and Policy, introduced a report which set out the projected revenue and capital monitoring position for 2016/17 as at the close of quarter 3 (31 December 2016).

The quarter three revenue forecast was for an overall underspend of £0.4 million for the year (£0.2 million overspend was forecast at quarter 2). People (the former Families and Wellbeing areas) had a significant forecast overspend which had been offset largely by one-off savings within Business Services treasury management.

The quarter three capital report updated the capital programme and reflected significant re-profiling of schemes between years to reduce the 2016/17 capital programme to £30.7 million. Expenditure after the third quarter concluded was £16.4 million.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

71 **POLICY INFORM: BUSINESS**

The Chair introduced a report on the March 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.

72 **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 24 January on the scrutiny work programme.

Resolved – That the report be noted.