

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - BIRKENHEAD

Thursday, 3 November 2016

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	G Davies (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Brighthouse P Cleary A Davies P Doughty S Foulkes S Kelly	B Kenny AR McLachlan C Meaden D Realey D Roberts
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	P Davies WJ Davies M McLaughlin	T Norbury J Stapleton

10 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT- DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Steve Foulkes, declared a personal interest in all items contained within the agenda by virtue of any reference being made to Magenta Living, of which he is a Board Member.

11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor P Davies
Councillor B Davies
Councillor M McLaughlin
Councillor J McManus
Councillor T Norbury
Councillor J Stapleton

12 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 July 2016 be agreed as a correct record.

13 WEED CONTROL

The Committee considered an update from representatives from Wirral Council's Environmental Team on the recent concerns raised by Members and members of the public in relation to the increasing problem of weeds in and around the Upton bypass area.

Ms M Worrall, Senior Manager Parks and Countryside addressed the concerns and explained that legislation was passed in 2011 in relation to killing of weeds, whereby local councils were no longer authorised to use residual weed killer due to potential dangers to streams and rivers. Following this a decision was taken nationally to cease the use of such products.

Mr S Henderson, Manager, Grounds Maintenance & Technical Support explained that the residual weed killer previously would kill weeds for approximately a 12 week period.

He highlighted the current procedure and explained that spraying could not take place during certain weather conditions such as heavy wind and rain as it was too dangerous; this year alone there were 90 days where spraying could not be undertaken. Due to the heavy rain which affected the products effectiveness. He reiterated that the effectiveness of the spraying could not be evidenced straight away and may take up to 3-4 weeks to show.

He indicated that he had sourced further products that could possibly be used but he was awaiting further information from the manufacturer as to its suitability for use.

He commented on the on-going intelligence received from Members which had proved invaluable and assisted officers in identifying problem areas and hotspots. The department was currently in the process of splitting up Wards into constituency areas and compiling a list of those areas sprayed this was then to be placed on the Council website for public consumption giving them access to what had been done so far and if not done reasons as to why. A Member suggested that this information be advertised within the Council's publication newspaper.

In response to a Member, Mr Henderson confirmed that spraying had been undertaken in Oxton, with the first and second sprays now completed. There was a bit of slippage in the programme and that was due to the weather so had lost days.

RESOLVED:

Ms Worrall and Mr Henderson be thanked for their attendance and informative update.

14 PRESENTATION - FLOOD INVESTIGATION REPORT

The Committee considered a presentation introduced by Mr M Camborne, Head of Corporate & Community Safety, led by Ms R Goodhall, AECOM.

Mr M Camborne indicated that in relation to incidents reported, Birkenhead had not suffered as much as other areas and the majority of incidents were primarily surface water/road flooding. He highlighted the excellent response received from the Environment Agency and the Fire & Rescue Service. He reported that since the latest bout of flooding, officers had worked alongside Sefton Council to jointly procure a large quantity of 'Flood Sacks' (modern sandbags) which would be distributed to flood affected properties with a stock kept by the Council for future use.

The Council had applied to the Environment Agency for funding via its Local Flood Levy Fund; if successful this funding would be used to deploy specialist surveyors out to flood affected properties to see what could be done to protect them and provide additional advice and guidance to residents as appropriate.

In response to a Member, Neil Thomas, Team leader, Highways Assets indicated that the flooding that had occurred in the area of the North Cheshire Trading Estate had been caused by the amount of water in the Prenton Brook and the surface water.

A Member suggested that a designated floodline be set up, staffed with immediate effect upon any reports of such incidents, Mr Camborne in response indicated that it was evident that given the amount of calls previously received the Council's call centre could not cope with the amount of the calls received in the event of an incident of this scale. He explained that in conjunction with the Environment Agency and in the event of further flooding incidents; all calls received would be diverted to the Environment Agency via the Council's own phone lines.

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.

Ms Goodhall stressed the importance of community resilience and highlighted the details of the flood survey.

Ms Goodhall concluded, indicating that the Section 19 Flood Investigation had made recommendations to improve communications and resilience of the communities at risk. She also informed that a full report is available on the Wirral Council website.

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 expressed concerns surrounding the River Fender and Prenton Brook. It was explained that United Utilities had looked into this and in relation to Prenton Brook this would be maintained in future.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of the report be noted and officers be thanked for their attendance.

15 **PRESENTATION - BIRKENHEAD STREET DRINKERS PROJECT**

The Committee considered a verbal update from Gary Rickwood, Senior Public Health Manager updating on the Street Drinkers Project.

Mr Rickwood referred to the Town Centre Forum which had been established and included the as part of its membership, the Birkenhead Constituency Manager, representatives from Merseyside Police, Business Improvement District, Licensing and Trading Standards, ARCH, the Council's Homeless team.

He explained the catalyst behind the Forum's Street Drinkers project which was largely complaints received from Shopmobility, Birkenhead, particularly during the summer months where they had experienced a high number of street drinkers outside of their property causing anti-social behaviour and generally making staff and shoppers feel uneasy.

The Forum gave all services the opportunity to come together to share experiences, information and knowledge and as a result appropriate action had been taken, which had resulted in reduction in reported incidents received from Shopmobility.

The group had met four times and had had widened its remit to involve representatives support and treatment services and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) team.

As a result of action taken by the ASB Team, one male had been prosecuted and brought before the Courts and has now subsequently engaged with treatment services which has had a positive effect on other street drinkers in the area.

Mr Rickwood highlighted the great work undertaken by the project encouraging retailers to sign up to the reduced strength alcohol campaign with most retailers within the Birkenhead area now signed up to this. It was hoped that this could be applied in other areas of Wirral.

He further gave details of a custodian scheme whereby retailers if appropriate could refer customers to drug and alcohol services.

Arrangements had also been made for identified hot spots to be cleared of drug use paraphernalia and alcohol litter to be undertaken by local agencies, retailers and Police and He would be looking into the installation of alleygates for these areas.

Mr Rickwood indicated that due to the increasing number of reported on-street beggars within the town centre, the Forum members were working alongside outreach teams to raise public awareness so as not to give them money but encourage them to engage with treatment services available to them. A similar project of this nature was currently running in Liverpool.

In response to a Members question, Mr Rickwood indicated that those retailers that had not signed up to the reduced strength alcohol sales had

been challenged and the majority of them had signed up to the scheme. Further work would continue to encourage the smaller retailers to sign up also.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Rickwood be thanked for his informative presentation.

16 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Constituency Manager provided an update on progress of projects funded by budgets devolved to the Birkenhead Constituency Committee. A finance summary sheet for the Birkenhead Constituency Committee budget and expenditure was attached to the report as an appendix.

Also attached to the report were appendices which the Constituency Manager presented to the Committee in relation to updates on Clean-ups, the Food hubs, improving life chances strategy community pilots and the Birkenhead Neighbourhood Engagement.

The Constituency Manager provided further information to the Committee on the following:

Keeping Birkenhead Clean

Birkenhead in Bloom

The Constituency Manager reported that this had been a very successful day with 42 community members, partners and Councillors attending the ceremony; planning would now start for next year's competition. In total 16 awards were given to Birkenhead with Oxton receiving a trophy.

An in Bloom judge from the competition would be returning to provide feedback and giving communities advice on improvements that could be made in readiness for next year's competition.

Members praised the work undertaken for the competition and commented that money should be allocated to fund next year's event to allow for further improvement and keep it going.

Skip Funds

The Constituency Manager advised that over £8,000 had been used to hire 67 skips for clean ups in a number of areas throughout Birkenhead and that an estimated 70,000 tonnes of rubbish had been removed as a result of the clean-up days.

The Constituency Manager advised that the 'Community Pay Back' team had done a lot of work involving cleaning, weeding and painting and that this work would continue in the future.

Skips days had been undertaken following intelligence received from the Fire and Rescue Service and officers were currently reviewing whether to do a further day prior to Bonfire Night.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the awards that had been won for Birkenhead in Bloom be noted and all those involved be congratulated on their achievements and thanked for all their hard work;**
- (2) the partnership work for clean-up days for the skip fund and the contribution of probation to Birkenhead clean ups and the Committees thanks to all involved be noted.**

Bonfire Night

The Constituency Manager indicated that two coaches to the River of Light Festival had been arranged from Beechwood and St James and Gautby Road Community Centres and spaces were still available for any young person wishing to attend.

RESOLVED:

That the update on activities to tackle ASB in the area be noted.

Feeding Birkenhead

Food Hubs

The Constituency Manager reported on the activities undertaken at the Beechwood and Beaconsfield Food Hubs.

The Constituency Manager reported on the Christmas Hamper project with 3000 families receiving hampers following referrals to the food hubs. Fareshare and His Church provided the food and Park group provided boxes and cellophane. She asked that if Members or the public present knew of any families in need to inform the Constituency Team who would forward the information on to the appropriate food hub.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the progress of the Birkenhead food hubs; and**

(2) the Christmas hamper update be noted.

Improving Life Chances

the Committee were updated on a project undertaken in relation to those children in receipt of free school meals and the activities he had undertaken during the school holidays he had put a bid in for further funding to operate during the Easter holiday period. He had been using a sports mobile unit for the activities but he explained that he would like a van to enable him to provide food to those children in attendance during the activities.

RESOLVED:

That the updates on Improving Life Chances pilot projects be noted.

17 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Constituency Manager informed Members that no questions had been received by the public prior to the meeting.

18 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair indicated that he had agreed for the following two items of urgent business to be raised as follows:

- Request from NCS
- Request from the Viking Centre

19 NCS SCHEME

Julie Smith, NCS addressed the Committee and asked if it would agree to young people being given a regular slot on the agenda giving them the opportunity to ask questions and be part of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the request.

20 VIKING CENTRE

A representative from the Viking Centre addressed the Committee and asked if the Committee could assist in funding the centre to avoid potential closure in 2017.

He commented that he would be applying for funding through the Birkenhead Community Fund.

RESOLVED:

The Committee noted the request.

21 **RENEWAL WORK TO THE MERSEYRAIL WIRRAL LOOP LINE**

Councillor Foulkes informed the Committee of the major track renewal work Network Rail was carrying out to the Merseyrail Wirral loop line and under river track. This work was to be undertaken between 3 January and June 2017, in three phases.

During this time, the biggest changes would be to cross river services but there would also be temporary changes to all Wirral line services. Anyone travelling in the city region, either by train, bus, ferry or in a car, were encouraged to bear in mind what was happening and the potential impact the works may have on their journeys so they could plan ahead.

Lots of information and travel options were available

visit [Merseyrail](#), follow #trackrenewal on Twitter or pick up a booklet from any Merseyrail station.