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CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 15 March 2018

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	W Clements (in the Chair)	
	Councillors	E Boulton P Brightmore D Burgess-Joyce W Clements D Elderton	G Ellis M Patrick T Smith M Sullivan G Watt
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	JE Green L Reecejones	S Whittingham

24 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Jeff Green having proffered his apologies for the meeting and in the absence of a Vice-Chair, nominations were requested for the appointment a Chair for this meeting. It was,

Proposed: by Councillor David Elderton

Seconded: by Mike Sullivan

That Councillor Wendy Clements be appointed as Chair for this meeting of the Wirral West Constituency Committee.

No other nominations were put forward.

Resolved (unanimously) –

That Councillor Wendy Clements be appointed as Chair for this meeting of the Wirral West Constituency Committee.

25 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

In addition to apologies for absence from Councillor Jeff Green (see minute 24 ante), apologies for absence were also received from Councillors Louise Reecejones and Stuart Whittingham.

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 declarations were made.

26 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 5 October 2017 be approved as a correct record.

27 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER UPDATE**

Prior to the Constituency Manager Update, the Chair invited Acting Sergeant Neil Bradley to give a verbal update on the issue of burglaries and thefts that had occurred in recent months.

Acting Sergeant Bradley informed that the geographical area for Wirral West Constituency fell under the remit of the Community Police Team – ‘Hub One’ area team. He informed that, in general, Wirral West had relatively low levels of reported crime but issues of concern remained with regard to burglaries. He informed that the standard advice of keeping items of value out of sight, and locking doors and windows did help in preventing crimes of this nature. He added that members of the public should also be wary of ‘cold-callers’ who in some cases were fraudulently knocking on the doors of vulnerable persons with a view to assessing the security and value of possible target properties. Sergeant Bradley explained that burglaries were often aimed at those homes with high value vehicles – with vehicle keys being the primary (but not only) target.

Acting Sergeant Bradley provided a detailed summary of actions taken by the Merseyside Police to combat crime in the area and provided extensive explanation in respect of successful arrests and prosecutions for a range of recent criminal activity that included anti-social behaviour, vehicle theft, suspicious behaviour, distraction-based crimes, drugs etc.

Members questioned Acting Sergeant Bradley on some specific matters relevant to certain locations and recent meetings attended by residents. The questions also included a request for ongoing communication / feedback and whether the Police Force was coping, or would benefit from additional Police Officers. Acting Sergeant Bradley responded stating that he was confident in the ability of the Officers working in the ‘Hub One’ area team, but additional staffing would always be welcomed. He added that in all cases, response to crime was prioritised on risk-based assessments.

The Chair and Members of the Committee thanked Acting Sergeant Bradley for his update.

Nicola Jones, Senior Public Health Manager delivered a verbal update on behalf of the Wirral West Constituency Manager that provided an update on key achievements in respect of projects funded by the Constituency

Committee since the last meeting in October 2017. The update included information on the following:

- Completion of work on the 2nd Memorial Garden on Hoole Road by 'Flourish at Ford Way' using Community Fund underspend in Upton ward - the garden will be officially opened at 1pm on Monday 19th March to mark the improvements that have taken place. The Princes Trust will be presented with certificates of achievement by Flourish for all their help with the project.
- The Little Brothers project, funded by the Constituency Committee through its ASB budget, had been awarded the High Sheriff of Merseyside Award in recognition of great and valuable services to the community. The initiative had also been awarded a certificate from National Crimebeat commending their outstanding contribution to helping reduce crime and creating a safer community. Little Brothers and Little Sisters had been set up to provide activities for pupils in Years 5 and 6 in an attempt to reduce the chances of the children becoming involved in ASB and early criminal activity. It started 2 years ago and was led by young men and women who were excellent role models due to their involvement in sport and coaching. The clubs were overseen by the school Home/School Link Worker who lived on the estate and knew the families and the barriers and risks facing the pupils. The clubs took place two nights per week. Pupils had designed a logo for both clubs, made rules and a promise, completed homework tasks and been involved in healthy living and making choices sessions. They were also given guidance, academic support and were able to access 1 to 1 sessions with the coaches to discuss worries or fears which may arise in their lives.

The report also included information on a number of projects funded in Pensby and Thingwall Ward using the remaining Community Fund allocation for this area, these included:

- Holidays at Home - a group who support people within the community aged 60+ who may be socially isolated while other groups closed for the summer holidays. The group provided company and support and aimed to help individuals to meet other liked minded people in the community.
- Kylemore Luncheon Club – the club provided a meeting place 1 day a week, 50 weeks a year for elderly people to socialise, enjoy a hot meal and to have a much needed change of environment. The funding paid for singers, speakers and musicians to come along and entertain the members once a month.
- Pensby Library Volunteers – to promote enjoyment of reading and easy access to books as well as enhance the use of Pensby Library within the community. The funding would help towards an ongoing project to

light up Pensby from Christmas 2018 and in following years, with the installation of streetlamp Christmas lights.

The report summarised that 42 Community Fund projects had been completed from the last round of funding (2016/17), and that a number of projects had been given extensions:

- Greasby Community Association, Traffic and Heritage Team – The funding helped towards the Installation of a series of new boundary place-name signs. The signs proclaim that the township of Greasby contained information that it was the earliest dated settlement in Western Britain, and one of the oldest in the country – remains having been found and dated from around 8,500BC.
- Wirral Festival of Firsts – the 2017 Festival focused on celebrating Hoylake old and new, community participation and inclusion of disability groups such as Hoylake Wild Cats Basketball team were both very strong features of the Parade – 335 people were a part of the event and approximately 2,500 people came to watch. The funding helped towards the traffic management for the event.
- Carers Get Together – the group held monthly meetings for carers and former carers in the Pensby & Thingwall Ward who provided a better quality of life for those they love, who through a wide range of disabilities, cannot provide for themselves. The group offered mutual support and friendship and in doing so helped to improve wellbeing and reduce social isolation. The funding paid for two short trips out for the carers.
- HYPE (Helping Young People Everywhere) – a youth organisation working with young people aged 9-24 that aimed to improve health, social and educational skills and enhance opportunity for employment. The group delivered workshops, events and projects. Funding helped towards developing an area of land in Woodchurch into a multi-purpose community space, carried out by the young people. The space is to include an exercise area, gardening, relaxation and child friendly area.
- Friends of Grange Community Park – Funding was used to re-vamp equipment in Grange Community Park. The Friends had now transformed the equipment with help from a group of young people carrying out their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

Members noted two underspend items within the Constituency Committee area, as follows:

Upton: Flourish at Ford Way – a local community gardening group, 'Flourish at Ford Way' with help from Wirral Met College's Princes Trust team and support from the Wirral West Constituency Team had worked to bring the 2nd Memorial Garden on Hoole in Woodchurch back into use after it fell into

disrepair many years ago. The gardens were established to provide a place of reflection for people who have lost loved ones on the estate.

West Kirby & Thurstaston and Hoylake & Meols: West Kirby Drop-In – the group was set up to help those with any degree of mental health, providing somewhere to go to be with other people, to be accepted and through interaction with others, be understood. Funding support to help towards running costs for the group.

In conclusion the report informed that the Constituency Engagement Officer had also worked hard to support the Love Where You Live initiative, with local hubs now having equipment on hand for use by litter picking groups. In addition the West Kirby group 'The High Tidiers' were reported as going from strength to strength, working closely with the Council to shape future approaches to assist with local clear ups, e.g. actions to aid the reduction of single use plastics.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

28 **UPDATE ON NEIGHBOURHOOD REVIEW**

The Chair invited Ms Rachel Musgrave, Consultant in Public Health and Councillor Matthew Patrick, Cabinet Member Localism and Engagement to deliver their joint presentation entitled Wirral Together – working with our local communities.

A review considering the effectiveness of current neighbourhood working arrangements had been undertaken. The Constituency Committees were part of the current approach, the Committees being formed several years ago to replace Area Forums to provide an opportunity for residents to hear updates on local services and to raise issues. Reference was made to a study indicating that 97% of people felt that local communities would improve if people had an input, but that around 51% of Wirral residents felt they had no influence; this suggested that things had to change if the Council wished to increase participation. This was important as 75% of the actions related to the 2020 Vision and Pledges required local working and resident involvement.

The review into Constituency Committee effectiveness had considered what other models there were for neighbourhood working in use elsewhere; what value could be placed on investment to date; and what were the views of partners, residents and councillors.

Rachael Musgrave advised that a review of approaches elsewhere revealed a variety of approaches but none that had been formally evaluated. While there were some success factors, such as in differing ways of engagement and in ensuring ownership and transparency, there was no particular answer but to find the best way forward for Wirral. Looking at social value and return on the Committees' budget expenditure since 2013, while acknowledging that individual Committee's adopted their own priorities and approaches the review

had shown an average £2.68 return for every £1 Committee grant. In seeking the views of others, there was a consensus that work with partners and the community had both to be done and be valued, and that community action made a difference.

It was concluded that one size would not fit all, and that existing networks should be used to engage with agencies and with communities, as opposed to expecting them to come to the Council. It was felt that a Committee meeting was not necessarily the best way to approach this. Other considerations from consultation were that small grants and seed funding was really useful; that the dedicated officer support for Councillors benefited the process in tackling issues and making connections; there was a need for a 'community builder' to better connect local groups; but there was a feeling of apathy with the political system.

Councillor Matthew Patrick informed that the next steps in the review process would take the form of a written report to Wirral Council's Cabinet.

A number of questions we put to Councillor Matthew Patrick on the use of volunteers and engagement with young people, by including them as youth members on various organisational bodies. Councillor Patrick informed of work that had recently been completed in respect of the Council's Volunteering Strategy that enabled council staff 2 days paid leave to engage in voluntary work in the borough. He added that such arrangements would expand the council's network and provide additional opportunities to engage with the community.

The Chair thanked Ms Musgrave and Councillor Patrick for their presentation.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

29 **UPDATE FROM COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE**

The Chair invited Jackie Hall, community representative for Hoylake and Meols to deliver her update.

Ms Hall's report informed that community and voluntary work continued to keep going with various projects and activities being undertaken by as many as 45 different groups within the Hoylake and Meols community. The report further informed that a recent community event was attended by 22 of the voluntary / charitable groups.

Ms Hall informed the Constituency Committee that by far the biggest feedback on any issue received to date had been the number of complaints put forward from many independent sources regarding the Council's proposal to introduce parking meters on Wirral's coastal promenades. She added that the feedback related to the effect on visitor numbers to the area and attractions such as the Marine Lake, in addition to access to the local community centre and other facilities. Ms Hall pointed out that many residents were of the opinion that the

introduction of parking fees could be offset by discontinuing the Council's publication 'Wirral View'.

Ms Hall's report included information regarding the ongoing success of Market Street, Hoylake made up of 100 businesses. She reported that 4 new businesses had recently been added to this number.

Councillor Matthew Patrick replied to the points raised in Ms Hall's report informing that parking fees were being introduced as a result of cuts to local government budgets, and the need to provide sufficient funding in other areas of the Council that had been placed under severe pressures e.g. Children in Care. In response to the suggestion that Wirral View was an increased burden on the Council budget, he informed that the publication had resulted in less money being spent on communications in the past, and was designed to provide information across the borough, particularly those that had not been well served by the local media in the past.

Resolved - That Ms Jackie Hall's report be noted.

30 **PRESENTATION FROM THE HIVE**

The Chair invited Mr Stuart Barnes, HIVE – Wirral Youth Zone General Manager and Tony Lewis, Chief Executive Barnet Youth Zone (OnSide) to deliver their joint presentation.

Mr Barnes informed that the establishment of the HIVE – Wirral Zone had demonstrated a significant investment in Young People, and that the state of the art building had been open less than a year. He explained that the HIVE concept was founded in 2008, replicating the successful model of Bolton Lads & Girls Club in disadvantaged areas of the UK. He added that Wirral was the 8th Youth Zone to be established in the OnSide network and had a target of 20 live projects by 2020, aiming for 100 projects by 2030.

Mr Tony Lewis, Chief Executive Barnet Youth Zone informed that he had been seconded to the Wirral project for a period of 6 months to observe and engage in what was OnSide charity's flagship project. He added that the charity supported existing Youth Zones in operating effectively, as well as introducing new Youth Zones to towns and cities across the country.

The presentation informed that Wirral Youth Zone provided 46 hours per week of open access, covering 7 days a week, delivering 20 activities per night. Supported by staff and other organisations such as an employment and enterprise team, the Wirral Youth Zone provided a safe, quality and inspirational environment for young people at a cost of 50p per visit with a one off annual joining fee of £5.

Members noted that the HIVE opening hours were currently 4:00pm to 10:00pm every day, with additional 'Holiday Club' access during school holidays (8:00am to 6:00pm) at a cost of £10.

Mr Barnes and Mr Lewis further informed that the Wirral Youth Zone had a growing membership of 7,000 young people with 80,000 visits and had created 75 jobs, full-time & sessional, recruiting over 100 volunteers since its inception.

The Committee noted that outreach work was ongoing to encourage young people from across the borough to join the HIVE, it being a facility for all Wirral youth not just those living in close proximity to its Birkenhead location. Mr Lewis provided additional information regarding the outreach work and detailed how attendance at the HIVE had been recorded and attendance statistics for the Wirral West Constituency were as follows:

Ward	Target	Members	%
Greasby, Frankby & Irby	113	108	93
Hoylake & Meols	117	89	76
Pensby & Thingwall	105	136	130
Upton	153	350	229
West Kirby & Thurstaston	113	64	57
Total	601	747	124

He informed that work continued to encourage young people to try out the facilities, by engaging schools, parents and working with local transport companies to allay fears and make it as easy as possible to access the HIVE.

Members of the Committee questioned Mr Barnes and Mr Lewis on a number of matters, particularly regarding outreach work, accessibility of transport and affordability for locations some distance from the Hive, and work to encourage ongoing visits / membership for those affected.

Questions were asked regarding safety and management of behaviour. Members were informed of the measures in place, and were informed that the HIVE concept and working practices meant that the HIVE had been remarkably successful in delivering a safe, enjoyable and stimulating environment for young people.

The Chair thanked Mr Barnes and Mr Lewis for their presentation.

Resolved – That the presentation be noted.

31 **COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME**

Prior to consideration of Community Questions, the Chair informed that a request had been made from Ms Susan Brown of the Wirral Arts Society to address the Constituency Committee in order to promote a project where Wirral Libraries were joining forces with Wirral Festival of Firsts this summer to launch the borough's first ever 'Troll Trail' featuring trolls created by residents, families and individuals. Its aim - to increase footfall at Wirral Libraries and promote the excellent work and services provided.

Ms Brown informed that once created, the handmade trolls may be taken to any Wirral library between 15 February and 1 June 2018, to be displayed as part of a Wirral Troll Trail from between 30 June and 14 July 2018, to coincide with workshops and talks about trolls, Vikings and Norse mythology. The project also aimed to help highlight libraries as valuable community assets, and by encouraging visitors, to also raise awareness of volunteering opportunities, opening hours and access to computer equipment (currently available at two thirds on Wirral Libraries). Leaflets providing information on the Troll Trail were distributed.

The Chair thanked Ms Brown for her contribution, and then invited questions from members of the public upon other matters that were relevant to the Wirral West Constituency.

The Chair informed that a large number of written questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting, but given the restricted time available, priority would be given to questions from members of the public in attendance. She informed that many of the questions submitted related to the Hoylake Golf Resort, and that a document '*Common questions relating to the Hoylake Golf Resort*' had been prepared and published on the Council Website, and that a printed copy had also been circulated at this meeting of the Constituency Committee. Information may be found on the Council website here:

<https://www.wirral.gov.uk/planning-and-building/local-plans-and-planning-policy/hoylake-golf-resort/common-questions-about>

A resident of Heron Road, Meols re-asserted an earlier request presented to the Constituency Committee that road safety improvements be made to Heron Road, namely the introduction of a speed camera halfway along the road, introduction of a sight mirror opposite Acres Road, Meols and installation of a 'No Entry' sign at the Birkenhead Road junction roundabout.

Mr David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive informed that the road safety officer had been unable to attend this evening's meeting, but he was aware that discussions had taken place with the police and that the locating of a fixed speed camera would not work at this location. He added that mobile traffic enforcement was a possible option and that road markings had been repainted at the Birkenhead Road Junction, but that the request for road signage would cost in the region of £3-4k and there was no funding available in the Constituency Committee's budget.

The Constituency Committee was informed by the questioner that there had been 2 accidents on Heron Road in the past 2 weeks and 7 road closures in the last year.

A resident commented on the subject of Hoylake Golf Course and the building of Band H properties and stated that it seemed that Members were being

prevented from talking on the subjects. Councillor Matthew Patrick informed that Councillors were not 'gagged' and that the document '*Common questions relating to the Hoylake Golf Resort*' would help.

Another resident commented that Councillor Matthew Patrick had refused to meet with their 'Defend the Greenbelt' group, and stated the claim that the Council would be borrowing £26m to re-lend to the developer. Councillor Patrick stated that he had not refused any direct requests for meetings, and had answered questions on the topic and engaged with residents at many meetings.

A question was directed to the Committee regarding whether the 160 properties would be developed before the Golf Course was built, and could residents have a guarantee that this was not the case.

A number of Councillors replied, explaining that the Planning Committee would be the final decision maker in respect of the development, to either approve (with conditions) or to refuse basing its decision purely on planning grounds and planning law. If refused and appealed, the decision would fall to the Secretary of State. Members also commented that those Councillors who sat on the Planning Committee could not express an opinion on the proposed development until the application was before them, with all the facts, and to do so could give claim to pre-determination and give cause for challenge in law.

A resident of Heron Road raised the matter of a local market gardener who regularly burnt rubbish at their site. Although challenged, it was clear that claims that timber only was being burnt, this was not the case and photographic evidence was circulated to the Constituency Committee showing domestic rubbish (carpets/soft furnishings/plastic) was being disposed of. Councillor Gerry Ellis informed that a visit from the Council's Environmental Health Team had been arranged for the following week.

A West Kirby resident raised the issue of the 'temporary' closure of West Kirby rail bridge two years ago. He requested that some action be taken to arrange for the bridge to be re-opened to two-way traffic, with a weight restriction to expedite access for local residents. Mr David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive informed that he would take the matter to Officers to see if a solution could be found. It was noted that the bridge was under the management of Network Rail, and options may be limited.

A resident raised a further point regarding the earlier question about the proposed Holylake Golf Resort and the lack of definitive answers. Mr David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive responded stating that a number of copies of the Cabinet decision report had been provided for the public at this meeting, and in response to questions at the last meeting of the Constituency Committee a copy of plans for link road was also available for inspection. A Member re-iterated the earlier point that some Councillors may not publicly express an opinion in support of, or against, the proposed development by

virtue of their membership of the Planning Committee. Mr David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive added that in response to earlier comments the housing development would take place after the establishment of the golf course.

A resident expressed a number of views regarding the suitability of the Joint Venture Partner, the need for first-time buyer properties and prioritising of brownfield sites for development on Wirral. Mr David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive informed that a number of new dwelling developments had just been announced, on brownfield sites, former school sites in addition to specialist dementia care provision and a variety of bridge and infrastructure projects many of which had been supported by inward investment grants.

A copy of the document 'Common questions relating to the Hoylake Golf Resort' referred to above is appended to the meeting minutes.

32 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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

Information regarding the date and time of the next meeting - to be confirmed.

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REF MINUTE 31 (PUBLIC QUESTIONS)

Common questions about the Hoylake Golf Resort

1. Who is behind the golf resort proposal?

Wirral Council introduced the concept and the (Jack) Nicklaus Group won the opportunity to take forward the project and build and run the golf resort.

2. What does the proposal consist of?

Primarily a new 18 hole Jack Nicklaus Signature golf course, a new 18 hole municipal course, a links golf academy, a quality hotel and club house, a new link road and quality housing.

3. What stage is the proposal at?

The project is at an early stage, although significant progress has been made in securing the Nicklaus Group to deliver the project. The Council wishes to consult people on the golf resort concept before more detailed design work starts.

4. I don't play golf so what benefits will there be for local people like me?

A wide range of benefits are expected, including 175 new jobs. The project would also boost the tourist economy and inject much needed investment into Hoylake and beyond. It will also provide a new link between Hoylake and Saughall Massie Road, which would benefit the existing highway network by offering an alternative route into and from Hoylake.

5. Is there a chance that the proposal won't happen or is there a firm commitment or legal agreement in place?

There is much work to do but the Council is committed to making it happen. A draft legal agreement is being discussed with the Nicklaus Group with a view to having it signed by all parties in the next few months. This will allow the detailed design work to commence and pave the way for a planning application to be submitted.

6. How long will the surveys and design work take?

It is estimated that this could take up to 12 months to prepare the proposal to a sufficient level to allow a planning application to be submitted.

7. Will people have an opportunity to comment further?

Yes. The Nicklaus Group will undertake pre-planning application consultations and once the planning application is submitted there will be an additional formal period of public consultation as part of the planning process. These will give everyone opportunities to make their views known.

8. I understand that the area earmarked for the golf resort is green belt land. How then could the golf resort plan get planning permission?

The area is green belt land. In their application to the Council for planning permission, the Nicklaus Group will have to argue and prove 'very special circumstances' for the development and show that it outweighs any harm to the green belt.

9. As the proposed site is prone to flooding, how will you ensure the golf resort does not flood?

This detailed technical issue is one that the Nicklaus Group has experience in dealing with. They will deploy well tested measures within the design of the resort to retain and manage the flow of water across the site. All technical solutions will be studied carefully and reviewed by the Environment Agency.

10. What is the total expenditure by the council on this project to date?

The council has invested just under £650,000 on this project, which has been to ensure the initial investigations into environmental, transport and economic impact of the development were delivered.

This investment would be repaid in just the first six months of the development being open, through increased business rates and revenue from a major tourist attraction in the borough.

The developer is now funding all additional studies which the council require, and will be submitting the results as part of the full planning application, which will of course be subject to extensive consultation with local residents.

11. How do you expect this project to benefit the local community regarding permanent jobs?

The current estimate stands at 175 permanent jobs.

12. Is there any breakdown of public feedback from the local communities following any consultation thus far, and are you able to share the results of this?

An initial consultation exercise undertaken over 6 days in 2015 showed that;

- *207 people (33.82%) stated that they fully support the proposals for the Hoylake Golf Resort,*
- *223 people (36.44%) stated that they support the proposals but have some concerns,*
- *182 people (29.74%) stated that they do not support the proposals.*

13. If the project and course are to be run by the selected private group, will the council have any say in how it is run, and will they take a formal share of any profits?

The private sector will take the lead on all operational matters although the nature of the municipal course will be controlled by the Council as will certain other matters by legal agreement for example during the return of the Open Golf Championship.

14. Is there a possibility that Wirral Council may be expected to invest future public funding to avoid the project failing?

No. The project has been independently reviewed and is commercially viable.

15. How will the development impact on allotment sites in the vicinity?

It won't have any impact. All environmental impacts will be considered as part of the planning process.

16. What will become of the footpaths currently situated on land where the resort would go?

Public consultation will be undertaken to seek views as to the future of the footpaths affected. Public Rights of Way are subject to statutory protection. The re-routing of footpaths will be one option to consider where it is necessary to do so in which case a formal application will have to be made to have the footpaths diverted where necessary for operational and public safety reasons.

17. Has any assessment been made of the impact on existing business in the local area, eg. hotels, gyms and cafes?

The developer will be undertaking studies to assess the economic impact of the golf resort.

18. Significant numbers of wintering wading birds and wildfowl currently use the area as a roost. How will they be accommodated, as they are very sensitive to disturbance?

This will be considered by the developer in their environmental and technical studies.

19. How will legally protected species such as water vole, bats and barn owl be accommodated?

This will be considered by the developer in their environmental and technical studies.

20. How will other existing wildlife such as breeding birds, plants, invertebrates, hedgehogs, toads be accommodated?

This will be considered by the developer in their environmental and technical studies.

21. This is Green Belt land: has the Council applied the correct tests to proposing development here? Does the proposed development have to be in this location? Is there an over-riding public need for the development? Are there "very special circumstances" to permit housing and a hotel on this land? No affordable housing is proposed, yet Wirral needs 40% affordable housing. How will this be mitigated?

The developer will have to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority and Secretary of State in their planning application that the very special circumstances test is satisfied. The NPPF states that very special circumstances will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

In relation to affordable housing the current policy requirement would be for 20% affordable housing provision in this location. A reduced level of provision could only be approved where an independently verified site-specific assessment has been submitted to demonstrate that the site would not be viable for housing development at the rate specified.

22. Wirral Borough Council is both proposer and planning authority on this project. How will a proper judgement be obtained?

This is normal practice and measures are in place to ensure a conflict of interest does not arise. The Planning Committee operates independently from the rest of the Council and will determine planning applications on their own particular circumstances and merits in line with national and local planning policies.

Following the submission of any formal planning application, the Local Planning Authority is required to consult the Secretary of State before granting planning permission for the proposed development, as required by the Direction in DCLG Circular 02/2009. If he is minded to do so the Secretary of State could decide to call in the application for determination. Representations received following statutory publicity of the future planning application will be taken into account by the decision maker.

23. Housing is a particular concern as it will bring light, disturbance and domestic pets such as cats into one of Wirral's few dark, quiet areas, where ground-nesting birds live. Where would such houses be put, and how many?

The houses will be positioned on two parts of the site. One plot will be on an island feature and the other close to Saughall Massie Road. There will be 160 houses in total. Their impact will be considered by the developer in the environmental and technical studies.

24. Thorough studies of the wildlife and hydrology are needed. Who will fund these (normally it is the developer) and who will judge if they are properly carried out?

This is especially important if by then we are outside the EU, as the rules in the relevant Directives may not apply, and there will be no recourse to the European Court.

The developer will undertake all the necessary environmental and technical studies for submission with the planning application for the resort at their cost. Statutory Consultees such as Natural England and the Environment Agency will be consulted and representations will be taken onto account before a decision is taken in line with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order.

No further comment can be made as to the possible outcome of the decision of the UK Government to exit the European Community.

25. The nature conservation policy in the draft Local Plan (2012) needs updating to reflect the National Planning Policy Framework. But the Local Plan is already so far behind that central Government has said it will intervene. How do we avoid a rushed bad job on the Local Plan?

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will be an important material consideration alongside the emerging Core Strategy Local Plan, adopted UDP, adopted Joint Waste Local Plan and Hoylake Neighbourhood Development Plan. The Council has an agreed timescale for taking the Local Plan through all of the Statutory requirements.

26. Can Wirral Council demonstrate that it has followed the mitigation hierarchy for this site? In particular, can it demonstrate why development in this location is unavoidable given its ecological and hydrological sensitivity?

The developer will have to demonstrate through their environmental and technical studies that their proposal is consistent with the principles of the mitigation hierarchy, both in terms of the selection of the site and also its design and layout.

27. Including both roost searches and activity surveys, pipistrelles and noctules are known to feed over the area. How could foraging for bats be retained and enhanced?

These matters will be addressed by the developer in the environmental and technical studies.

28. As the area is known, now or in the recent past, to support locally unusual and declining species such as greater pond sedge, grass vetchling, meadow barley and various orchid species, how could these plants be retained and/or how would the project create greater areas of equivalent habitat?

These matters will be addressed by the developer in the environmental and technical studies.

29. There are records for good numbers of dragonflies, butterflies, molluscs and beetles, including unusual species. How would these be retained, or suitable mitigation off-site provided?

These matters will be addressed by the developer in the environmental and technical studies.

30. The proposed resort sits on shallow alluvial and sandy soils, which lie over a considerable peat body. Will any fill be needed to create the course, and if so, what sort and where from?

The need for and impact of, any earthworks will have to be assessed and justified as part of the detailed design of the golf course and in the technical and

environmental studies required as part of the planning application process, therefore at this stage it is not possible to provide this information.

31. In view of what Wirral Archaeology describes as ‘the very high number of known artefacts recovered from adjoining areas and the certainty that the area was important during the Roman, Viking and Anglo Saxon periods’ are there plans for suitable independent archaeological surveys to be conducted and, if so, can the results be published prior to any planning decisions?

These matters will be addressed in the environmental and technical studies.

32. What account will the Council take of climate Change when reviewing the Flood Risk Assessment? Will the Council insist that flood mitigation measures should be designed to deal with flood events greater than a 1 in 100yr event, given that we are increasingly experiencing more frequent and extreme storms? How will the Council ensure that flood risk in Meols and Moreton will not be increased should a storm greater than a 1 in 100yr event occur?

Such issues will need to be addressed by the developer in the environmental and technical studies, including a Sustainable Drainage Strategy that will be submitted with the planning application. The details of the planning application will be considered in consultation with Statutory Consultees such as the Environment

Agency and the Lead Local Flood Authority to ensure that full account is taken of current national climate change allowances.

The Drainage Strategy and site-specific Flood Risk Assessment will also require the developer to demonstrate, through appropriate mitigation, that flood risk is not increased on site or off site as a result of the development.

33. If the resort is built, the 160 houses are likely to have at least 2 cars per household and the hotel complex & visitors' cars will add to the volume of traffic. This will increase pollution in the area. The Carbon Footprint of this resort will be huge. What assessment of the Carbon Footprint has been undertaken?

National Planning policy requires that new development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change. This requirement, including traffic and air quality impacts will have to be addressed by the developer in the environmental and technical assessments submitted with the planning application.

34. The Council have stated there will be a maximum of 160 houses built as enabling development? Will there be any additional flats or apartments?

Yes, the proposal includes 40 apartments linked to the hotel.

35. Has a cost / benefit analysis been undertaken for the project? If so have future costs, such as increased flood risk, traffic issues, cost of the By-pass been taken into account?

The project has been the subject of cost modelling exercises and all known cost headings have been identified and built into the project financial model. Actual contracted sums will not be identified until tenders are received however contingency sums have been built into the calculations.

36. Where can the Council show that it has considered other uses (including leaving alone as a farm) as per Aarhus convention? Why have the Council not considered a Wildlife / Wetlands Resort or an Eco-resort as suggested by the Hoylake Vision Team?

The do-nothing approach is always an option with every project however this was discounted in favour of the current proposal as the Council's strategy is to drive balanced economic growth and to take advantage of opportunities where they occur.

The Council is pursuing a project that provides the best return for Wirral across a number of indicators. That is not to say that other schemes, such as the wildlife / wetlands resort, do not have some merit in principle, it is just that no other scheme measures against the golf resort in terms of positive impact. The developer will commission an in-depth study of all the economic benefits of the resort in support of their planning application.

The Council is very willing to engage with all stakeholders and have recently held a meeting with Hoylake Village Life to discuss the feasibility of the proposals for an eco-golf resort including a wildfowl and wetland centre. This meeting included representatives from the Wildfowl and Wetland Trust, the Golf Environment Organisation and "Stop the Hoylake Golf Resort" Group.

37. Why have the Council described the land as "Low Grade Agricultural Land", when evidence submitted by the Wirral Society and the Soil Association suggest that the agricultural land is of higher value? Why do the Council not place value on the land for food production, particularly with the possible implications of Brexit?

The Council does place value on all land uses including that of agriculture however in bringing forward development the consideration is to balance the merits of each use against current planning policies. The environmental and technical assessments submitted with a planning application will be expected to consider the impact of the proposal on ground conditions.

The national classification of agricultural land undertaken by Natural England classifies the land as Poor in terms of its agricultural value. This is just one step higher than the lowest possible national land value which is Very Poor. National planning policy states that where significant development of agricultural land is necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.

38. The Council's own study found that over 90% of visitors to the Wirral come for the Coast and Countryside and only 0.2% come for Golf. We already have 14 golf courses, including the World Class Royal Liverpool. What economic analysis have the Council undertaken to show that this is a good investment for tourism?

This development will be a significant tourist attraction given the nature of the resort elements combined with an internationally recognised quality branded hotel.

The benefits of the resort from an economic point of view, including tourism, will be the subject of a study which will be undertaken by the developer – at their cost – as part of the planning application process. The Coast and Countryside offer will remain as important assets which can be enjoyed by all tourists including those that are initially attracted to the golf resort.

39. A recent study showed new roads and By-passes provide little economic benefit, increased traffic and carbon emissions, destroy the environment, put pressure on adjoining roads and are as “likely to suck money out of the local economy as to bring it in”? The By-pass will link to Saughall Massie Road, which is already used by 100,000 vehicles per week. What assessment of the impact (social, environmental and economic) of the By-pass has been made on the West Wirral Area?

The whole project including the new link road will be the subject of a Transport Assessment (TA) which will be prepared by the developer for the planning application. This will be evidence based and will provide an answer to all relevant traffic issues. The new road is not proposed to by-pass Hoylake in the manner suggested.

Should a grant be secured from the Liverpool City Region to contribute to the cost of a new road it will be a requirement to undertake both an Outline Business Case and Full Business Case. These studies will adhere to the Department for Transport guidance to establish value for money and the social, environmental and economic impact of the scheme.

The Business Case approach will show whether the scheme is supported by a robust case for change that fits with wider public policy; will demonstrate value for money; will be commercially viable; will demonstrate that it will be financially affordable and that it will be achievable.

40. Given the inevitable increase in traffic congestion, (both during and after construction) has a Risk Management Survey been carried out into how this will impact upon the building of the new Fire Station in Saughall Massie and its ability to answer 999 calls to Hoylake, West Kirby, Meols and the surrounding environs?

All traffic impacts will be considered in the Transport Assessment prepared by the developer for the planning application and the fire service will be given an opportunity to make representations when a formal planning application is submitted.

41. Will Chief Fire Officer Dan Stevens still be able to reiterate his projected times of arrival in the event of an emergency within the regions?

As above, the fire service will be afforded an opportunity to make representations in due course.

42. Phil Davies promises that this will be an “iconic international project”. What account has the Council taken of the competition from other Golf Resort projects,

such as the Hulton Park project in Bolton which promises to be “the only facility of its kind in Northern England” and “to put Bolton on the Global Stage”?

Wirral Council cannot control other developments or the claims made about their individual merits, however the Council is firmly of the opinion that the resort opportunity in Hoylake is truly unique and of international standing. Competition is inevitable in the marketplace and is an indicator to the attractiveness of the resort concept.

43. Phil Davies states the golf resort will be “a globally significant tourist attraction”, it will provide “hundreds of jobs” and bring “hundreds of millions of tourism revenue”. The golf resort will provide only 170 mostly low paid jobs. There have been no scientific or economic analysis of the impacts and there is no financial business plan in place – so can Phil Davies justify these claims?

Given the nature of the proposal and the proposed package on offer it is clear that the resort will be very attractive to national and international visitors.

Although the number of jobs has been estimated based on similar operations and the experience of the partner organisations, the NJVG will commission an in-depth study of all the economic benefits of the resort in support of their planning application. This study will provide more information as to the wider indirect benefits which will feature in any future assessments.

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