

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 28 November 2019

Present: Councillor T Anderson (Chair)

Councillors T Cottier S Spoor
G Davies H Cameron
K Greaney A Brame
B Kenny S Hayes
L Rennie

23 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

There were no declarations of interests or of a Party Whipping arrangement.

The Monitoring Officer reminded Councillors that the country was in a pre-election period where the Councillors should avoid overtly political comments and the Chair would intervene and could adjourn the meeting until after the election if necessary.

24 MINUTES

The Corporate Director for Delivery Services updated Members on some issues since the last meeting. A briefing note about garden waste had been circulated to Members, and there had been a comments about the use of the word 'storm' in the Hilbre island presentation. At the meeting it was stated that there was no storm, just heavy seas and this was re-emphasised. There had been no complaints in the previous few weeks about anything on Hilbre Island.

Resolved - that the minutes of the meetings of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 24 September 2019 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.

25 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 2 2019/20

The Principal Accountant introduced this report which provided detail for Members to scrutinise budget performance for this area of activity. The financial information was dated as quarter 2, 2019/20.

The Capital programme was around £32 million less than planned, mostly due to the reprofiling of schemes to the next financial year and LED street lighting replacement costs.

The Revenue programme had a projected adverse variance of £2.5 million, mainly in delays or reversals of key decisions relating to income generation. There was to be efforts to correct the variance before the end of the financial year.

Members questions about the financial performance raised issues including that the uptake of garden waste services was below the ambitious target which had been set despite promotional activity.

Resolved – that the Financial Monitoring Report Quarter 2 29019/20 be noted.

26 **WIRRAL COUNCIL ENFORCEMENT POLICY**

The Lead Commissioner introduced this report which introduced the updated Wirral Council Enforcement Policy following changes in the Council's approach to enforcement. The key changes to the document included: the removal of references to a robust approach to litter and dog fouling by authorised third parties; and expanded scope to include safety within sports grounds. There was also a move away from zero tolerance to a more subjective approach. The policy would subsequently go to Cabinet for approval.

Resolved – That the updated Wirral Council Enforcement Policy be endorsed.

27 **NOTICE OF MOTION - VERGES & POLLINATORS**

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced this report to Members which had been requested through a Motion at the Council meeting in July 2019.

Officers had researched a model for planting native wildflowers used in Rotherham, and the report detailed potential areas for trials to consider the costs, visual impact, viability and residents views. It was recognised that there were potential positives for habitat diversity and lower maintenance.

Members questions also raised detail issues including:

- Some plants considered as weeds in other areas may also have wildlife benefits
- In other areas, such as Lever Causeway, there had been agreement to delay the mowing of some verges whilst pollinating plants flowered
- Motorways came under the national Highways Agency, who cut less than they used to

- There were benefits from reduced mowing and it made maintenance easier in areas such as dual carriageways where the organising of mowing was difficult

Resolved - That the contents of the report to provide guidance on future work regarding pollinator verges be noted.

28 **MARINE LAKE MANAGEMENT**

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced this report which informed the Committee of the environmental and civil engineering issues affecting the water and sea wall of the West Kirby Marine Lake. Two independent sets of specialist companies had detailed the steps required to provide solutions for the council to consider.

Three options were presented: doing nothing; doing the minimum work which had previously been done in 2009; and engaging a civil contractor to complete the job. The report detailed risks, legal issues and impact on activities.

Members debated the options presented, and noted various points, including:

- That the weed and silt issue had been raised previously
- The beach level in the Dee estuary had been increasing which had led to more sand blowing into the Lake
- Dropping dredged sand on to the Dee estuary was no longer allowed because of the risk of spreading the invasive weed, and this raised costs as the sand had to go to a waste site
- Any work would have to be timed with the activities of the various clubs as well as with the life cycle of the invasive weed, and Autumn 2020 seemed the most appropriate time
- Previously the lake had been emptied and dredged, but weaknesses in the walls made this a more costly solution
- So far, no other similar facility had been found with the same problem so advice had been difficult to obtain

Resolved – That the report on Marine Lake management be noted and the Cabinet Member be requested to begin the works as soon as possible.

29 **USE OF GLYPHOSATE FOR WEED CONTROL**

The Assistant Director for Community Services introduced this report which presented the position regarding Wirral Council's use of glyphosate and proposed measures to reduce its usage, whilst developing and monitoring the Council's weed control strategy - balancing the operational challenges with the commitment to protecting the environment and the Glyphosate Free Wirral motion as passed by Council in July 2019.

The report proposed longer term measures that would eliminate the use of glyphosate in some areas of high public footfall and recreational activity, whilst maintaining local environmental quality on streets and highways, recognising that, in the short term, the continued use of glyphosate may be essential. Officers were mindful that a long-term plan (post 2022) would need consideration in the event that licensing of glyphosate-based products was withdrawn. This report did not consider the management of Hoylake Beach which was being managed as a separate issue. A twelve-month trial was proposed for non-use in parks and crematoriums unless a persistent weed such as Japanese Knotweed was present.

Members questions drew out other details, including:

- The palm oil in the product was cross contamination and not an ingredient
- There was a steam alternative but that had more expensive elements for the equipment and water needed and may not provide the wide area coverage required. A demonstration was planned for January 2020
- There were conversations with Biffa about removing live weeds as well as their responsibility for removing dead ones.
- Previously, residual weed-killers were used that lay in the soil and prevented plant growth over a longer period, but these had been banned

The Chairman proposed that glyphosate use continue until a viable option was identified. This was seconded by Councillor Mike Collins and put to the vote and declared lost.

Resolved - That

- (1) the intention to utilise the next 12 months to examine all potential weed control solutions as alternatives to glyphosate be noted.**
- (2) it be noted that this research will form the basis of a further report to this committee in November 2020 identifying the outcomes.**
- (3) it be noted that a 12-month trial ceasing glyphosate use in some settings will commence with immediate effect.**

30 2019/20 QUARTER 2 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE

The Committee considered the report which provided the 2019/20 Quarter 2 (July - September 2019) performance report for the Wirral Plan pledges under the remit of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The relevant Wirral Plan 20/20 pledge(s) were:

- Leisure and culture opportunities for all
- Wirral residents live healthier lives

- Community services are joined up and accessible
- Good quality housing that meets the needs of residents
- Wirral's neighbourhoods are safe
- Attractive Local Environment for Wirral residents

RESOLVED – That the 2019/20 Quarter 2 Wirral Plan Performance report be noted.

31 **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Committee considered the updated work programme for the remainder of the Municipal Year and discussed some forthcoming items.

Resolved – That the proposed Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20 be approved.