

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 12 March 2020

Present: Councillor T Anderson (Chair)

Councillors	C Muspratt	L Rennie
	G Davies	H Cameron
	K Greaney	A Hodson
	B Kenny	A Brame
	S Spoor	S Hayes
	I Williams	

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence had been received.

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

There were no declarations of interests.

40 MINUTES

Resolved - that the minutes of the meetings of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 30 January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41 2019/20 Q3 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced this report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report provided Members with detail to scrutinise budget performance for this area of activity. The financial information covered the financial information as at quarter 3 2019/20.

Information had been drawn from the relevant sections of the most recent Cabinet revenue and capital monitoring reports and combined with additional relevant service information to produce a bespoke report for this Overview & Scrutiny Committee. The report included performance against both the revenue budget (including savings) and the capital budget.

Members noted that several items of expenditure had moved to subsequent financial years as the schemes, such as LED lighting installation and West

Kirby Flood Defences, had been reprofiled. Also planned savings could not be agreed due to changes in Council policy on the golf project and Floral Pavilion.

Members questions also raised detailed issues including:

- That the Council sought to increase income, reduce costs and transforming its approach to services which were sometimes difficult to balance.
- That there had been significant calls for road gritting despite a seemingly mild winter, and half of the budget cost was for the vehicles
- A car parking strategy was being developed for 2021/22 to mitigate changes in shopping patterns
- Where road repairs were inadequate, they are rectified at the contractor's expense
- A direct debit programme was being worked on for the garden waste subscriptions

Resolved -

That the report and appendices be noted.

42 **TREE STRATEGY SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Councillor Tom Anderson introduced this report which set out the findings and recommendations arising from a scrutiny review of Wirral Council's draft Tree Strategy. The review had been commissioned as part of the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee's work programme in 2019/20. The Committee agreed that although there was a risk with trees that could not be completely mitigated, the tree strategy and scrutiny review findings provided a comprehensive basis for effective tree management and a focus on planting.

Councillors raised points and questions about the strategy and highlighted several of the review's recommendations which included

- A request that the consultation data be shared
- That 'friends' groups and community groups be engaged with
- That assurance be provided around the perception that profits were being made by companies selling wood from felling, although it was clarified that tree surveyors were independent of felling contractors
- The Council currently did not have the resources to undertake the entire process from inspection to maintenance in-house.
- The duty of inspection and maintenance extended to all Council land including public footpaths as well as parks and highways, although they all faced the risk of trees falling during storms
- There was a commitment to plant about 200,000 trees in the next ten years as part of the Council's Climate Strategy and this would help replace the approximately 2,000 trees that required felling

- Ward groups identified by Members who had previously adopted trees as part of the Council's 'Adopt a Tree' scheme and had concerns around maintenance would be investigated by officers on a case by case basis
- Councillors could not pay for new or replacement trees from their Ward budgets because there was an ongoing maintenance cost, but those rules may need reconsidering

Resolved - That

- (1) the findings and recommendations contained within the Tree Strategy Scrutiny Review report be approved**
- (2) the report be presented to the next meeting of the Cabinet for consideration.**

43 **A NEW CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY FOR WIRRAL**

The Lead Commissioner for Environment and the Sustainability Liaison Officer presented this report which detailed the new climate change strategy to replace 'Cool Wirral', which followed the Council's resolution on Climate Emergency in December 2018. The new strategy had been prepared by the Cool Wirral Partnership. It took on board the latest evidence and changes in policy globally and nationally and had involved a series of engagement events and a public consultation.

The new strategy - Cool 2 - was agreed by the Cool Wirral Partnership in December 2019. Partners had been asked to each endorse the new framework and to develop actions in support.

The Council had set itself a stricter target than the Wirral as a whole, including:

- Being carbon neutral by 2030
- Using 100% renewable energy
- Piloting electric vans
- Improving in-house recycling and waste management
- Delivering events in a sustainable way
- Eliminating unnecessary journeys
- Having a tree strategy for planting and maintaining trees
- Eliminating paper use
- Having an Eco schools programme

Resolved – That

- (1) the new strategy and the steps taken by the Cool Wirral Partnership to create an up to date framework that reflects the climate emergency be noted.**
- (2) the efforts underway to develop a Council climate emergency action plan as the council's principal contribution to the new strategy be noted.**
- (3) that the strategy be endorsed and that others be encouraged to play their part by developing locally determined contributions in support of it.**

44 FUTURE PROVISION OF FLORAL PAVILION THEATRE AND CONFERENCE CENTRE - UPDATE

The assistant Director for Community Services presented this report which provided an update on the proposed transfer of the Floral Pavilion Theatre and Conference Centre to an alternative specialist theatre provider on a long lease, while the Council retains the freehold ownership. This was a part of the 2019/20 Budget options.

After consideration, there were no submissions which met all of the criteria so the recommendation was not to proceed and explore alternative solutions and reduce costs. Further reports on options would be presented in the future.

Resolved - That:

- (1) the offer received following the bid process detailed in the report does not fulfil the aspirations of the Council, does not match the bid process and should not be accepted.**
- (2) the Floral Pavilion be retained 'in house' and opportunities for additional income and cost savings be explored in order to reduce the Council subsidy.**

45 FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT

The Flood and Water Management Act (FWMA) 2010 and Flood Risk Regulations 2009 established Wirral Council as a Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). LLFAs were required to lead the strategic management of local flooding sources (surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses).

The Flood Risk and Coastal Defence Manager introduced the report which summarised the governance arrangements in place to oversee the LLFA

Flood Risk Management activities and reported on key flood risk management activities in 2019.

Resolved –

That the content of the report be noted and the action taken with respect to Flood Risk Management during 2019 be endorsed.

46 **2019/20 QUARTER 3 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE**

In the development of the Wirral Plan 2020 the Council made a commitment to develop a robust monitoring framework to ensure effective oversight of delivery was available to all stakeholders across the Wirral Partnership. Quarterly reporting over the five-year period has been delivered to Members through Overview and Scrutiny Committees. In March 2020 the plan would be completed and the final closedown report which would summarise the impact on outcomes for residents through the delivery of the plan would be reported through the new Council Governance arrangements; these were due to commence in May 2020.

This report provided the 2018/19 Quarter 3 (October - December 2019) performance report for the Wirral Plan pledges under the remit of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Resolved –

That the content of the report be noted.

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

The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in co-operation with the other three Overview & Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual scrutiny work programme. The work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which were within the remit of the Committee. The work was formed from a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports.

Members noted that the 'Public Health Impact of 5G' workshop had been delayed due to the Covid19 Coronavirus outbreak which was dominating the workload of the public health service.

Resolved –

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

48 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

Resolved:

That, in accordance with section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business, on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part 1 of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

49 FUTURE PROVISION OF FLORAL PAVILION THEATRE AND CONFERENCE CENTRE - UPDATE. EXEMPT APPENDICES

Resolved –

That further to Minute No 44 above the content of the exempt appendices circulated with the agenda be noted.