

POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 20 January 2021

Present: Councillor J Williamson (Chair)

Councillors A Leech P Stuart
JE Green C Spriggs
P Gilchrist T Anderson
P Cleary W Clements
M McLaughlin L Rennie
EA Grey C Carubia
Y Nolan

Deputies: Councillors T Jones (In place of T Usher)
J Robinson (In place of J McManus)
H Cameron (In place of A Hodson)

44 **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

45 **APOLOGIES**

The Chair announced that apologies had been received from Councillors Andrew Hodson, Julie McManus and Tom Usher and that Councillors Helen Cameron, Jean Robinson and Tony Jones were deputising for them respectively.

46 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest.

No such declarations were made.

47 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meetings held on 18 and 21 December, 2020, be approved and adopted as correct records.

48 **LEADER'S UPDATE**

The Chair gave an update on the latest Covid-19 situation in the Borough and informed the meetings that on Monday, 4 January, 2021, Wirral had recorded its highest number of Covid-19 cases to date, with some 537 people testing

positive in Wirral in a single day, some 10 days after Christmas Day. Putting this figure in context, on 2 December, 2020, just 20 people had tested positive for Coronavirus in Wirral.

The highest number of cases were in the working age population (20-59 year olds) which was why Wirral had prioritised symptom-free testing for those people who had no alternative than to leave home each day to go to work, including supermarket workers, bus drivers, taxi drivers, school staff etc.

The average number of cases in the last 7 days (up to 15 January, 2021) was 361 cases per day, which was higher than anything seen in the Autumn when the Liverpool City Region was the first region placed into Tier 3.

Confirmed cases continued to be reported in care homes and in hospital settings, but approximately 51% of all cases reported (in the previous 7 days) related to residential households. Numbers were falling but they were still incredibly high.

The Chair stressed the need for everyone to keep doing the right things to keep each other safe.

Paul Satoor, Chief Executive, thanked residents, Members and Council staff for all their commitment and hard work in supporting the Covid response over the past 10 months. He highlighted the work of the Merseyside Resilience Forum and the Council response in re-mobilising services following the announcement of the new national lockdown, including the helpline, business support grant and food distribution hub. Council services were stretched and all the Group Leaders had agreed that the Council's focus should be on three key priorities, the response to Covid-19, budget challenges and the Local Plan. He also referred to the partnership working with the Council working with NHS colleagues to help Arrowe Park Hospital maintain its capacity and also supporting the NHS in its vaccination roll-out.

The Chair also thanked Council employees for the way they had gone above and beyond in their response since the beginning of the pandemic.

49 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair reported that no questions had been received from members of the public.

50 **STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS**

The Chair reported that no statements were to be received but that notice had been given of two petitions to be presented.

The first was presented by Mr Stuart Barnes from the Hive Youth Zone. At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Barnes with the support of two young members, Mollie-Rose McKee and Charlotte Pollard of the Hive, introduced their petition of some 2,500 signatories against any proposed cuts to funding for the Hive Youth Zone.

The second petition was presented by Mr Jon Whyte regarding the potential closure of Europa Pools. At the invitation of the Chair, Mr Whyte introduced his petition, which he stated had some 4,000 plus signatories.

The Chair thanked all those who had spoken to their petitions.

51 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

The Chair reported that one question had been received from Councillor Phil Gilchrist on the subject of disclosure of information relating to the Hoylake Golf Resort. The Chair responded accordingly, explaining the reason for the information remaining exempt. The Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee would be asked if it wished to pursue the difference of opinion with the Information Commissioner over the question of the public interest in not disclosing the information outweighing the public interest in disclosing the information, at its meeting on 26 January, and if that question should be put before the First Tier Tribunal.

The Chair responded to a supplementary question from Councillor Gilchrist and stated that the matters were subject to legal privilege and would be considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Development Committee at its meeting next week.

52 CAR PARKING CHARGES

The Chair invited Councillor Liz Grey, Chair of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, to introduce the report of the Director of Law and Governance, which provided for consideration the final recommendations of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in respect to Car Parking Charges resulting from the findings of the Working Group which that Committee had established.

Councillor Grey clarified that the recommendations to this Committee proposed and carried by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee were for option 4, which was for the re-introduction of charges as to how they were before they were suspended. She went on to elaborate on the reasons to re-introduce car parking charges immediately with the Council currently foregoing income of approximately £1.8m, which would otherwise need to be found from elsewhere by cutting other services and the fact that most other Councils had reinstated their charges. Providing a service for free which was previously paid for did not sit with the Council's Climate

Emergency declaration, in subsidising driving of vehicles which might not be necessary, nor with the Council's health and wellbeing goals.

The Chair thanked all the members of the Working Group and the Committee for all their work on this matter and for the information put before this Committee.

Members expressed a variety of views as to whether or not car parking charges should be reintroduced immediately. Some Members commented that circumstances had once again changed, with the country now in a third lockdown and that now would not be the time to re-introduce these charges. Other Members suggested the need to start charging again due to the substantial loss of income to the Council and the fact that not all these losses were covered by Government grants which amounted to 75%, although, as the Director of Resources clarified, the first 5% of this loss had to be discounted, in effect meaning 75% of the 95% remaining would be eligible for relief. She would be able to provide the figures in relation to the relief received from Government after the meeting.

In response to comments from Members Simon Fox, Assistant Director: Highways and Infrastructure stated that income lost between July and January when Government relief didn't apply could have amounted to anything between £300,000 to £650,000.

Following further discussion on the proposals it was then moved by Councillor Chris Carubia and seconded by Councillor Phil Gilchrist, that:

'Parking charges be re-introduced at all locations immediately, with the exception of Country Parks, for which charges would be reintroduced at the end of this current lockdown.'

The motion was put and lost (2:15).

It was then moved by Councillor Tom Anderson and seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, that:

'In view of the change of circumstances since the Working Party considered this, with the country now in a third national lockdown, the reintroduction of parking charges at the moment would have a detrimental impact on small businesses when they open up, and also have a public health impact and discourage residents from using the Country Parks, therefore Committee resolves to continue with the suspension of Council car parking charges to be reviewed in April, 2020.'

The motion was put and lost (5:12).

It was then moved by Councillor Liz Grey, seconded by Councillor Pat Cleary and -

Resolved (10:7) – That parking charges be re-introduced immediately at all locations.

53 **SMARTBUSINESS FULL BUSINESS CASE**

The Chair thanked the Working Group which had undertaken a review of this project and full business case.

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, then introduced the report on the SmartBusiness Project regarding the upgrade of the council's Enterprise Resources Planning Systems. The Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems integrated key business processes across finance, human resources, procurement and other areas. The approach standardised and streamlined procedures and approaches to the administration of a number of key business activities. The Council's current ERP system, Oracle - 1 Business had been in operation since April 2005 and was now obsolete.

The report and supporting Full Business Case (FBC) (attached as an exempt appendix to the report) discussed the future of the system and the requirement to implement an alternative to the current ERP that was now over 15 years old. It was envisaged that by replacing the current systems the Council would take full advantage of recent developments to make a step change to its operational effectiveness.

To date, the SmartBusiness Project had gone through extensive Discovery and Design phases which had resulted in a successful tender and evaluation process.

Councillors Jeff Green, Chris Carubia and Paul Stuart, the members of the Working Group, which had looked in detail at the comprehensive business case, all expressed their support for the project.

On a motion by Councillor Paul Stuart, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green, it was -

Resolved (unanimously) – That this Committee:

- (1) approves the implementation and upgrade from the current unsupported version of Oracle (Release 11) to a new cloud solution;**
- (2) approves the budget and allocation of funding of £4.6 million (£2m capital / £2.6m revenue) for transformation projects that deliver ongoing savings;**

- (3) approves the award of a five-year contract with the option to extend for another two years to the company named in the Full Business Case (FBC) via the Crown Commercial Service (CCS) Data and Application Solutions Framework, Agreement (RM3821) for:
- New cloud platform licenses for a 5-year (with the option to extend for a further 2: 5+2 years) period
 - Implementation partner to implement the new platform for a total value detailed in the FBC.
- (4) re-appoints the existing Members of the Working Group, Councillors Chris Carubia, Jeff Green and Paul Stuart, to monitor project performance during Delivery phase.

54 **GOVERNMENT SPENDING REVIEW - IMPACT OF WIRRAL BUDGET 2021/22**

Shaer Halewood, Director of Resources, introduced a report which provided a summary of the financial impact for Wirral Council as a result of the Government Spending Review for financial year 2021/22. The information contained within this report did not change the requirement for budget savings, as set out in the “draft revenue budget 2021/22 – proposals for consultation” paper considered by the Committee on 18 December 2020 (minute 32 refers).

Shaer Halewood emphasised that the figures in the report were based on the draft settlement received from Government in December, the final settlement would not be known until the end of this month or early February. She elaborated on the detail within the report and referred to a correction to the report with regard to the Social Care Grant at paragraph 3.20, which was an increase of £3.34m (as shown in Table 1 in the report) and not £2.4m. This additional monies was being earmarked for additional pressures on children’s and adults’ social care for next year, 2021/22.

Resolved – That this Committee notes the items impacting Wirral Council as a result of the national spending review announcement.

55 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

A report by the Director of Law and Governance advised how the Committee, in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which were within the remit of the Committee.

It was envisaged that the work programme would be formed from a combination of key decisions, standing items and requested officer reports. The report provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year. The work programme for the Policy and Resources Committee was attached as an appendix to the report.

Resolved – That the proposed Policy and Resources Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2020/21 municipal year, be noted.

56 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Responding to comments from a Member, Philip McCourt, Director of Law and Governance, confirmed that the appendix to the SmartBusiness Full Business Case report was currently considered exempt due to the commercial sensitivities contained within it. A Member suggested that the commercial elements of the appendix could be removed so that the Full Business Case could then be published.

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Chris Carubia, that:

‘Under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.’

It was then moved as an amendment by Councillor Jeff Green and seconded by Councillor Lesley Rennie, that;

‘The commercial elements of the Full Business Case appendix be removed to enable its publication.’

The amendment was put and lost (5:12).

The motion was then put and carried by assent and it was therefore –

Resolved - That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

57 **EXEMPT APPENDIX - SMARTBUSINESS FULL BUSINESS CASE**

Resolved – That the exempt appendix to the SmartBusiness Full Business Case report, be noted.