

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 20 June 2022

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes V Wilson
S Percy H Gorman
T Smith N Graham
A Gardner O Osanlou
L Fraser C Povall (In place of
P Connolly)

In attendance: Councillors I Lewis P Gilchrist

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed Members, Officers and members of the public to the first meeting of the municipal year, particularly new members of the committee, and thanked those who had left the committee for their work to date.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Connolly.

3 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.

Councillor Naomi Graham declared a personal interest by virtue of her employment and volunteering.

4 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2022 be approved as a correct record, subject to the following amendments:

- **Minute item 71 – in relation to Minute 63, the deletion of “road safety strategy” and it’s replacement with “tree strategy”.**
- **Minute item 71 – in relation to Minute 67, the wording be amended to read “that the parking strategy be added to the work programme”.**

5 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair indicated that 15 questions had been received, a number of which were in relation to agenda item 7 - Consultation on Proposed Car Parking Charges - Update Report.

The Head of Legal Services reported that the Council had recently received a submission from legal representatives of a local business relating to car parking charges which posed a number of technical legal questions in relation to the car parking and Traffic Regulation Order processes. Due to the late serving of the letter, Legal Services had been unable to provide detailed advice to the Committee, therefore the Committee was advised that they may be minded to defer the consideration of that item until further legal advice could be provided.

In light of the advice from the Head of Legal Services, the Chair informed the Committee that any questions in relation to car parking where the questioner was not in attendance would be responded to in writing, and any questioners present would be afforded the choice of still putting their question and being provided a written response when possible, or deferring their question until the Committee meeting where the item was to be considered.

Sean Martin asked a question on behalf of the New Brighton Coastal Community team, which raised concerns that the Council was acting unlawfully by setting parking charges in order to raise funds as opposed to relieving congestion of traffic.

Rupert Millard asked a question seeking clarification on the consultation summary stating that the objective of the Multimodal Parking Strategy was not to raise revenue, but the Council website stating that the council was in a difficult financial position and was raising an additional £1m from parking charges.

The Chair reported that all other questions in relation to car parking would be responded to in writing.

Verity Smith asked a question on behalf of Jane Lloyd, seeking the Committee's views on holding a stakeholder meeting with the Hoylake Beach Community group following the consultation period around Hoylake Beach. In response, the Chair detailed the already agreed stakeholder consultation process was due to commence shortly, which would allow consultees to put forward their ideas around solutions and compromises, and those that were deliverable within the regulatory framework protecting North Wirral Foreshore SSSI would be taken into account. It was reported that the consultation exercise would include drop-in events for the community and stakeholders to speak to council officers about the future management options.

Verity Smith asked a question on how the social, financial and environmental benefits of the decision to cease the Hoylake Beach Management Plan were being measured. In response, the Chair outlined that the decision to cease spraying and raking Hoylake beach was not driven solely by the climate emergency and that the decision followed a discussion with a senior officer from Natural England, driven by the biodiversity crisis and the legal parameters of the assent from Natural England and that the Council assesses the social, financial and environmental impacts of its decisions within reports, with a later agenda item displaying the increasing rigour of reporting on environmental policies.

The Chair read out a question on behalf of Derek Holmes seeking sand protector gates to be fitted to the lower part of the RNLI slipway at Hoylake Beach to reduce the sand distribution and the impact of the cost of removal of sand. In response, the Chair confirmed that the Council would consider the request in being mindful of the likely build of sand at key access points.

Charlotte Smith asked a question in relation to a breach of the Habitat Regulation Assessment at Hoylake Beach by the Sand Yachting Club. In response, the Chair thanked the questioner for bringing the issue to the attention of the committee, and explained that the individual involved had been identified as a new member of the Sand Yachting Club and had since given assurances that the breach would not reoccur.

A supplementary question was asked challenging the rarity of the plants growing on Hoylake Beach and concerns in relation to toxic plants growing and urging the Committee to consider implementing a new beach management plan and restoring it to a managed amenity beach. In response, the Chair undertook to provide a written response to the supplementary question.

The Chair confirmed that all other questions received on behalf of individuals who were not present would be responded to in writing.

6 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

The Chair reported that notification of a statement had been received in relation to Item 7 – Consultation on Proposed Car Parking Charges – Update Report, but that in light of the advice from Legal Services, the statement had been withdrawn.

7 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

There were no questions by Members.

8 WALLASEY EMBANKMENT TOE REINFORCEMENT

In light of there being an appendix to Item 8 that included exempt information, the Committee confirmed that it could consider the item without discussing the content of the exempt appendix.

The Assistant Director for Parks and Environment introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought the Committee's approval for the acceptance of grant funding from the Environment Agency and award of a contract for the reinforcement of the toe of Wallasey Embankment to tackle erosion.

The Wirral Coastal Strategy had identified that ongoing erosion at the base of Wallasey Embankment required the intervention to prevent further erosion and reduce the risk of failure of the flood defence which protected large areas of Meols, Moreton and Leasowe from flooding from the sea. It was reported that an outline business case had been approved with grant funding secured, and a procurement exercise for the construction of the works had also been completed.

In response to several questions in relation to the Social Value Statement of the winning bidder for the contract, officers undertook to provide further information to members. It was confirmed that if agreed, construction work would commence in mid-July to be completed by the end of August 2022, and would not affect access to the promenade.

Resolved – That

(1) the Environment Agency's Grant in Aid Award of £1,358,000 be accepted.

(2) a contract be awarded to Jones Bros Ruthin (Civil Engineering) Co Ltd with a value of £721,277.52 for the delivery of the Wallasey Embankment Toe Reinforcement Scheme.

9 CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CAR PARKING CHARGES - UPDATE REPORT

In light of the advice from Legal Services to defer consideration of the item as detailed in Minute Item 5, it was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Andrew Gardner, that the item be deferred until the next meeting. The motion was put and agreed by assent. It was therefore –

Resolved – That consideration of the item be deferred until the next meeting.

10 CARBON BUDGET PERFORMANCE 2021-22

The Assistant Director for Parks and Environment introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided the second annual Carbon Budget Performance Report covering the 2021/22 financial year, and detailed the actual emissions compared against the 2021/22 Carbon Budget Target to allow the Council to measure progress towards its target of carbon net zero by 2030.

The Energy Conservation Engineer provided further detail on the performance against the target, reporting that the net emissions for the period were 6275 tonnes against a target of 7843, 1568 tonnes under the limit, and that this had principally been achieved through the temporary purchase of green electricity and the reduced use of council assets due to Covid-19, meaning that the target for the following year may be more difficult to achieve. However, it was reported that steps were in place to reduce output, including projects in collaboration with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority and a bid for low carbon skills funding.

Due to the close ties between the two items, the Climate Emergency manager was invited to introduce the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan Progress Report for 2021/22, which provided the second update on the Council's response to the declared environment and climate emergency and progress on the Environment and Climate Emergency Action Plan, covering the 2021/22 financial year.

The report detailed the progress made on the action plan, with short, medium and long-term measures overseen by the Climate Emergency Action Group. It was reported that 30% of the actions had been completed with a further 40% green and in delivery, and some of the actions were highlighted including the installation of 53 electric vehicle charging points, the planting of 21,000 trees and the awarding of the bronze Carbon Literacy award to the Council, with the ambition to be award silver status in the future.

Members were invited to comment upon both reports, and information was sought on a variety of elements of the reports, including the cost of the purchase of green electricity as well as the method which could be used to measure the carbon expended through council activity done from the homes of staff. Further discussions were had in relation to the low carbon skills fund bid to enable plan for the decarbonisation of council assets, as well as the mechanism to measure the success of the Climate Emergency Action Plan. Further information was to be shared in relation to the projects done in collaboration with partner organisations such as the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority.

Resolved – That the Council's performance and progress made towards the target of carbon net zero by 2030 be noted.

The Chair reported that the consideration of the item had been covered under Minute Item 10.

Resolved – That

(1) the progress of the environment & climate emergency actions undertaken in 2021/22 be noted and the priority actions for 2022/23 be endorsed.

(2) the preparation of a public-facing Environment & Climate Emergency Action Plan and progress report be endorsed.

12 APPOINTMENT TO WIRRAL FLOOD WATER MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance seeking appointments to the Wirral Flood and Water Management Partnership. The main purpose of the partnership was to achieve through joint working an effective management of flooding and coastal erosion incidents on Wirral.

Resolved – That the Monitoring Officer as proper officer be authorised to carry out the wishes of the political group leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Wirral Flood and Water Partnership and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

13 APPOINTMENT OF PANELS, STATUTORY/ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES 2022/23

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance enabling the Committee to review the continuing need for various panels, statutory / advisory committees and working parties, and to appoint Members and named deputies to serve on those (including the statutory committees and panels) that were to be retained in 2022/23.

Resolved – The Monitoring Officer be authorised as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Active Travel Forum, the Wirral Climate Change Group and the Hilbre Island Management Committee to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

14 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING AND 2023/24 BUDGET SETTING PROCESS

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Resources which set out how the 2022/23 budget would be monitored through the Committee system, which would facilitate the Policy and Services Committees (the Committees) to take ownership of their specific budgets and present appropriate challenge and scrutiny of Officers on the management and performance of those budgets. The report also set out the concurrent activity of budget setting for 2023/24 and how this would be approached with the establishment of budget workshops to consider savings proposals within the Medium Term Financial Plan.

In response to questions from members, officers undertook to include further detail in future reports around the impact of the inflation rate. The report detailed the strengthening of reserves to ensure funds for the future to support the Wirral Plan and outlined that resources should only be allocated to the themes in the Wirral Plan and where beneficial outcomes could be evidenced. Clarification was sought on the proportion of the increased reserves and the significance of the Wirral Plan in the budget setting process. Members noted the requirement to set a legal budget and were mindful of their duty to contribute to the budget saving process.

Resolved – That

- (1) the process for in-year monitoring of the 2022/23 budget be noted.**
- (2) the 2023/24 budget setting process be noted.**
- (3) a Budget Monitoring Panel be established to comprise of the Committee Chair and Spokespersons in line with Section 3.12 of the report, with sessions to be led by the relevant Director/Assistant Director.**
- (4) budget workshops be established and held as detailed in Section 3.26 of the report, the outcome of which to be reported back to Committee in September 2022.**

15 **BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 4 (OUTTURN)**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee outturn for 2021/22 and provided an overview of budget performance to enable the Committee to take ownership of their specific budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets. It was reported that the year-end revenue position was £0.873m adverse, and the year-end capital position was £13.628m favourable for 2021/22.

Further information was sought on the shortfall in savings from the reduction in grass cutting and maintenance of verges as well as the carry over of funding for capital schemes into the next financial year.

Resolved – That

- (1) the year-end revenue position of £0.873m adverse, as reported for 2021-22 be noted.**
- (2) progress on the achievement of approved savings and the year-end position for 2021-22 be noted.**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments be noted.**
- (4) the year-end capital position of £13.628m favourable, for 2021-22 be noted.**

16 WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Chair opened the discussion on the Committee's annual work programme by requesting that a report on the Parking Strategy be brought to the Committee. The Chair also sought clarification and confirmation that as per the resolution passed at Council in September 2021, all Active Travel issues should be considered by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee other than those which were within a masterplan regeneration scheme, which should be considered by the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted.

17 EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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 items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

18 WALLASEY EMBANKMENT TOE REINFORCEMENT - APPENDIX 1

Members discussed the detail of the appendix.

Resolved – That the appendix be noted.