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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 14 September 2010

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
	Councillors	A Bridson (In place of D Mitchell) T Anderson A Brighthouse D McCubbin	AR McLachlan H Smith R Wilkins S Williams
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	G Gardiner (Cabinet Member) L Rennie (Cabinet Member)	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	KJ Williams	

73 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP**

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were.

Councillor T Anderson declared a personal interest in respect of minute 80 Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority by virtue of his membership of the Authority.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement. No such declarations were made.

74 **MINUTES**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management submitted the minutes of the meeting held on 21 June, 2010.

Resolved – That the minutes be received.

75 **HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION PANEL - MINUTES**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, submitted the minutes of the panel meeting held on 8 July, 2010 when it was resolved that the panel:-

(1) Recommend that the residents' parking scheme in Manor Lane, Liscard, be approved for advertisement. (Note that the petitioners' request is an exemption to the

Criteria for the Introduction of Resident Parking Schemes and review the criteria regarding the minimum number of residential properties that are required for such schemes).

(2) Recommend that no further action be taken in relation to the petition regarding the operation of Stoneacre Garage, New Brighton, that the area continue to be monitored for any enforceable breaches of highways, planning or environmental legislation, and that officers respond appropriately to any specific enforceable matters that are raised with them.

(3) Recommend that no further action be taken regarding the request for additional parking facilities in Berrylands Road, Moreton, on the basis that there is no specific budget provision for this type of scheme.

(4) Defer consideration of petitions requesting the introduction of an articulated vehicle restriction to prevent such vehicles utilising Berwyn Drive and Hillfield Drive, Heswall, for further negotiations with the company and yard owners.

(5) Note the relative feasibility of a puffin crossing or a pedestrian refuge at Seabank Road, Liscard, and endorse the previous recommendation approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to proceed with the proposed pedestrian refuge scheme.

In response to a Member's question regarding the progress of item (4) Heavy Goods Vehicles - Berwyn Drive and Hillfield Drive, Heswall, the Director of Technical services reported that officers were seeking a meeting with company and yard owners and he would report back to committee on the outcome of these discussions.

Resolved –

(1) That the minutes of the panel be received.

(2) That the Committee recommend to the Cabinet Member that the residents' parking scheme in Manor Lane, Liscard, be approved for advertisement .

76 **UNITED UTILITIES - OPERATIONS**

Further to minute 7 (Cabinet - 27/5/2010) Gary Dixon, Customer Operations Director, Stuart Atkinson, Network Manager, and Niall Clarke, Emergency Planning and Resource Manager, attended the meeting to discuss the loss of supplies incident in Wallasey Village area last May, and outline improvements being made based on the lessons learnt.

Mr Atkinson explained that the loss of water supplies had been caused by a fault on a valve which was required to maintain water pressure on the network. The repair of the valve was a very difficult engineering task which required the use of specialist contractors to work with the company's own maintenance crews. The situation was further complicated due to the close proximity of high voltage electricity cables and the resulting health and safety implications, which had considerably slowed the progress of the repair works.

As a priority, the company had arranged for bottled water to be provided to its most vulnerable extra care customers and alternative supplies were also provided to other residents whilst repairs were ongoing.

Arrangements had been made to communicate regular updates on the situation through press releases, local radio, and the Council and partner agencies.

Mr Dixon and his team responded to questions from Members including the company's records and mapping systems, its communications strategy for Major Events, feedback and lessons learnt from the in-depth review of this particular incident, and arrangements for compensation payments.

Councillor Lesley Rennie, ward councillor, thanked Mr Dixon and his colleagues for their co-operation in sharing information with the Council regarding this particular incident, and emphasised the need for them to involve ward councillors and use their special local knowledge when co-ordinating their response to any future emergencies.

She also asked the company to look into the issue of compensation payments for local businesses that were affected by the loss of water supplies. Mr Dixon agreed to pursue this matter.

Mark Camborne, Health, Safety and Resilience Manager, reported that arrangements had been made with the company for a pilot scheme whereby his team would in future be notified of all interruptions to water supplies. This was a major improvement for cascading information and engaging relevant local authority service areas and also elected members at the earliest opportunity.

The Chair thanked Mr Dixon and his team for their attendance at this meeting. He welcomed the opportunity to share the lessons learnt from this particular incident and noted the improved liaison arrangements.

Resolved –

(1) That the reports be noted.

(2) That Mr Dixon and his colleagues be thanked for their attendance at this meeting.

77 **SCOTTISH POWER - STREET LIGHTING**

Further to minute 64 (21/6/2010) Mr Bob Wales, Scottish Power Network Manager, attended the meeting and answered questions from members regarding the provision of street lighting services by Scottish Power, the number of jobs outstanding and site specific faults within Members' wards. He explained that his company provided a good level of service and a new work management computer system had been installed earlier this year as part of its investment programme. The computer spreadsheet which was produced on a weekly basis showed that there were no street lighting works currently outstanding, but he agreed to look into any specific complaints raised by members.

Mr Bob Clifford, Highway Maintenance Service Manager, referred to a report produced by the street lighting section showing average response times for each of the service faults on the street lighting network. He would prepare a further report to the committee after Scottish Power had an opportunity to comment on his report.

The Chair thanked Mr Wales for his attendance at this meeting. He commented that there was longstanding dissatisfaction with street lighting services and repairs as demonstrated by complaints from received constituents. He asked for a further report to be presented to the January meeting of this committee comparing the Council's list of outstanding work with the reports produced by Scottish Power.

Resolved –

(1) That Mr Wales be thanked for his presentation.

(2) That a further report be prepared for the January meeting of this committee to include the latest information and works schedules from both Scottish Power and the Council in respect of street lighting services and repairs, and that Scottish Power be invited to attend this meeting.

78 **HIGHWAY AND ENGINEERING SERVICES CONTRACT - LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS GATEWAY REVIEW 5**

Further to minute 61 (21/6/2010) the Director of Technical Services reported upon progress in addressing the recommendations of the Gateway 5 Review carried out in respect of the Highway and Engineering Services Contract.

The Gateway 5 Review which was carried out by the external Local Partnerships Organisation considered the operational arrangements in place and looked to establish the extent to which the qualitative and quantitative benefits that were identified during the procurement exercise had been realised. It highlighted a range of good practice and innovation that had taken place to date, together with the operational achievements of the service. The Review Team further noted the identification and tracking of benefits “to be highly systemised and exemplary”.

The Review Team found that despite the challenges of introducing a contract of this scale that the contract was now running much more smoothly, and was delivering value for money and improving levels of both technical quality and customer care. The Team found that the Council had achieved the benefits expected from the new contract, at the time of the Review, including significant cost reduction. However, they recognised that there were significant risks associated with the contract which would need to be resolved to secure future benefits realisation.

The Reviewers made a number of recommendations, which together with a commentary on progress in acting upon those recommendations (Appendix 1 refers).

The Reviewers concluded that the Delivery Confidence Assessment was measured as Amber/Green, and defined as “Successful delivery appears probable. However constant attention would be needed to ensure risks did not materialise into major issues threatening delivery.”

Resolved – That the Committee:

(1) Note the contents of the Report.

(2) Request a further report on the completion of actions required to meet the Gateway 5 Review recommendations, and for this to be presented the January meeting of this committee.

79 HIGHWAY AND ENGINEERING SERVICES - ANNUAL PRESENTATION

Further to minute 26 (18/11/09) the Director of Technical Services referred to his previous report outlining the next phase of the Gateway review process in terms of benefits realisation and partnership working to assess the various issues affecting the development of the contract.

Mr Cameron Neill, Regional Manager for Colas, gave a presentation outlining: the Colas group structure; its vision to provide quality services in a streetscene partnership with the Council; management and governance arrangements; successes to date; and future investment plans covering its fleet, people, and new depot at the North Cheshire Trading Estate.

Mr Neill responded to questions from members including:

- the removal of redundant highway line markings
- quality assurance and inspection of finished works
- the interface between Colas and the Council
- the computerised referrals and inspection process

Resolved – That Mr Neill be thanked for his presentation.

80 MERSEYSIDE WASTE DISPOSAL AUTHORITY

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management, reported receipt of a letter from Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority concerning arrangements for their representatives to attend the meeting of this committee on 10 March 2011 to discuss the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

81 SITE VISITS - UPDATE

Members' views were requested on the dates suggested by Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority for a site visit to the MRF, Bidston.

Resolved – That arrangements be made for this site visit on Monday 11 October 2010.

82 CARBON REDUCTION - PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT 2

The Director of Technical Services reported upon the progress of the various projects currently being undertaken by the Council, its LSP and other partners, to 'Reduce Wirral's Carbon Footprint', which was a Corporate Priority in the Council's Corporate Plan 2010/11, and supported NI 186, one of Wirral's LAA Targets.

The Committee was requested to note and endorse the progress made to date on these ongoing projects as highlighted in the Wirral Wide Carbon Reduction Action Plan (Appendix A refers).

In response to questions from members regarding the promotion and take up of the home insulation scheme, the Director explained the scheme had been advertised and was now underway. Arrangements had been made for the most deprived areas to be targeted directly through the Energy Projects Plus Organisation.

It was noted that funding beyond March 2011 from HMRI was uncertain, but there was still a need to provide heating grants in priority areas to low income households that did not qualify for the government's grant scheme.

It was moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Williams:

"That the Committee:

- (1) Note the performance and progress of the various Wirral-wide 'Carbon Reduction' projects undertaken by the Council and its LSP and other partners.
- (2) Endorse the various joint 'Carbon Reduction' projects being undertaken, and support future proposed projects."

It was moved by Councillor Smith and seconded by Councillor McLachlan that the motion be amended by the addition of the following paragraph:

"That the Council lobby the Government with a view to ensuring that HMRI funding continues past March, 2011 failure to do so will lead to the previous funding being wasted and other areas will not receive the benefit of this investment."

The amendment was put and lost (2:7)

The motion was put and carried (9:0)

Resolved (9:0) – That the Committee:

- (1) Note the performance and progress of the various Wirral-wide 'Carbon Reduction' projects undertaken by the Council and its LSP and other partners.
- (2) Endorse the various joint 'Carbon Reduction' projects being undertaken, and support future proposed projects.

83 **BEACH MANAGEMENT**

With the permission of the committee, this item was withdrawn.

84 **FIRST QUARTER PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Director of Technical Services presented an overview of progress made against the indicators for 2010/2011 and key projects which were relevant to the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee covering the first quarter, from April

to June 2010. Appendix 1 provided the detail of the performance indicators that were reported for the first quarter and included the context and corrective action as requested by the committee.

In summary, 20 of the 28 indicators that were reported to this committee were green and only 8 were amber/red. The overall performance against the 2010/11 projects showed that 31 were green, 4 were amber (corrective action to bring these projects back on track was provided), and 2 had been withdrawn.

In terms of achievements:

- A new composting scheme had recently been launched, aimed at reducing the amount of waste being sent by residents to landfill
- Wirral Council's Road Safety team and Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service had organised a series of events across Wirral to provide advice and guidance on car seat safety.
- Technical Services accounted for 79% (659) of all Councilor/MP contacts received (increase from 72.5% (652) in previous quarter) and resolved 97% of those contacts within the corporate target (99% in the last quarter), with an average time taken of 5 working days. Road (100) and Pavement (96) defects and Traffic Issues (89) accounted for 34% of all contacts received.
- Wirral's numbers of Green Flag parks had increased from 11 to 12 (the target for 2010/11 was 11, again exceeding the target).
- The Family Safety Unit continued to reduce levels of repeat incidents of high risk domestic violence.
- The Wirral Joint Community Safety Team continued with its partners to reduce crime and disorder in the borough, compared to the other Merseyside boroughs overall Wirral was the best performing with its residents being less victimised than others in the country.

The financial monitoring focused on those areas of the budget that were identified as key risks in delivering the objectives of the department within available resources. At this stage the projected variations were:

(a) Regeneration - There were no significant variations identified but the volatile areas of the budget were being closely monitored. Employees' costs and income targets, particularly within Cultural Services, were expected to be at variance with the agreed budget and were being reviewed by the Department.

(b) Technical Services - The Government announcement on reduction in grant support to local authorities had seen a £1 million reduction in the capital programme and this had been reported to Cabinet on 22 July 2010.

There was a projected overspend of £300,000 relating to bridges and in particular, works at The Dell underpass where substantial additional substructure work had been identified. The Department for Transport had been approached with a request to grant aid the additional costs and this application was currently being considered. The M53 junction 3 scheme, was underway and scheduled for completion in October 2010.

The Department for Transport was offering one-off grant funding of £297,300 to help address the effect of the adverse weather conditions and this would be used to support schemes identified in the Structural Maintenance Programme. The car parking enforcement and cash collection contract was being re-tendered and the Streetscene contract inflationary uplift was due in August 2010. Due to fluctuating workload and uncertainty over the capital programme, Architects' fee income was unlikely to achieve the budget.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

85 DECISIONSTAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS

The Director of Technical Services submitted a report informing Committee, in accordance with the Approved Scheme of Delegation, of those instances where delegated authority had been used for the appointment of contractors or consultants.

Resolved – That the report be noted.