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SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday, 30 January 2012

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	J Hale (Chair)	
	Councillors	D McCubbin	S Whittingham
		C Jones	R Wilkins
		A Sykes	J Williams
		J Walsh	S Williams
<u>Deputies:</u>	Councillor	I Williams (In place of P Hackett)	
<u>Cabinet Members</u> <u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	C Meaden	H Smith

60 MEMBERS CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

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.

Councillor Whittingham declared a personal interest, by virtue of his employment, in agenda item 8 – Wirral Climate Change Group Annual Report (see minute 67 post).

61 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2011 be approved.

62 CORPORATE PLAN

In accordance with Council minutes 77 and 78 (12 December, 2011), the Committee considered those parts of the Corporate Plan within its remit. The Committee had also had sight of a motion which had been referred to all Overview and Scrutiny Committees by the Council at its meeting on 12 December, 2011 (minute 76 refers) and which was considered in connection with the Corporate Plan.

The Draft Corporate Plan and report of the Chief Executive which had been considered by Cabinet at its meeting on 8 December were considered by the Committee and the Chair sought comments from Members.

A Member made a number of general points in relation to the Corporate Plan and some specific issues that were relevant to the work of the Sustainable Communities O&S Committee. The Chair also commented that the Corporate Plan lacked detail in relation to specific targets.

On a Motion by Councillor Wilkins and seconded by Councillor Hale, it was –

Resolved (10:0) – That the following comments form the basis of this Committee's response to the Corporate Plan –

A. GENERAL POINTS

- (1) There are dozens of priorities that have been either omitted from the current corporate plan or so severely watered down as to be meaningless.**
- (2) It shows a loss of commitment to engagement, consultation and involvement – these are scarcely mentioned.**
- (3) In particular there is no mention of any annual budget consultation.**
- (4) There is no mention of the Strategic Change Programme, or of the need for the Council to change.**
- (5) There is no reference to reducing the costs of running the council / bureaucracy.**
- (6) There is no reference to delegation or devolved decision making or budgets.**
- (7) There is no mention of Area Forums.**
- (8) There is no mention of the Voluntary and Community Sector, or of grants.**

B. SOME KEY ISSUES RELEVANT TO THIS COMMITTEE

- (9) There is no mention of Libraries**
- (10) There is no mention of 20mph zones**
- (11) There is no mention of Alcohol Harm, despite recent public health reports saying how bad Wirral is for alcohol related hospital admissions and conditions. (Cabinet agreed on 17 March that the recommendation of the Alcohol Scrutiny Review (*Tackling Alcohol Harm*) be picked up in the Corporate Plan).**
- (12) There is no mention of Green Technology / Solar Energy. The pledge in the current plan “we will make sure all future Council projects incorporate green technology and sustainable products and urge private developers to do the same” has been deleted.**

(13) There is no mention of Community Justice.

(14) That the Plan contains no detail in relation to targets

63 STREETSCENE ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES CONTRACT 5TH ANNUAL REVIEW

The Director of Technical Services presented the 2011/2012 Review of Performance of the Environmental Streetscene Services Contract with Biffa. He provided an update on the progress made on a number of work streams that were endorsed by Committee on 20 January 2011 (minute 104 refers) and highlighted the pending 7-year break clause opportunity that existed within the contract. He requested Members to consider their current level of satisfaction with the standards of waste collection and street cleansing services, in order to inform the Cabinet over their pending deliberation of the future of the contract.

He referred to the notable achievements within the contract and provided details of Key Performance Indicator results for 2011/2012. Representatives of the Biffa Management Team gave a detailed presentation on work progress and provided an outline of the contract management and governance arrangements.

The Director also sought the views of Members in relation to a number of work streams upon which to focus in 2012/2013.

Resolved –

(1) That the Key Performance Indicator information and the corresponding high levels of service to which they relate be noted.

(2) That the following projects highlighted for attention in 2012/2013 to further improve service reliability, customer satisfaction and enhance the environmental quality of Wirral, be endorsed –

- **Street Cleansing: Improving Environmental Quality with Particular Focus on Reducing Levels of Dog Fouling.**
- **Contamination of Collected Co-mingled Recycling – Risk Reduction**
- **Increasing Recycling (to Support the Council Notice of Motion passed on 12 December 2011 (minute 90 refers).**
- **Contract Review and Associated Benefits Realisation.**

(3) That the Director of Technical Services be requested to report to the next meeting of the Committee with any proposed service changes that arise as a result of the conclusion of the Price Waterhouse Cooper contract review so that the strategic implications may be scrutinised before they are presented to Cabinet in April 2012.

(4) That the Committee notes that based upon the details contained within his report, the Director of Technical Services intends to recommend to the Cabinet that there are no current concerns over the Environmental Streetscene Services Contract with regards to the quality of service

delivery that should prevent the continuation of this contract with Biffa beyond the 2013 break clause, should Cabinet wish to consider a future savings package presented by Biffa in return for securing the contract until 2020.

- (5) That the thanks of the Committee be accorded to those Council officers and members of the Biffa Management Team for the improved levels of performance of the Environmental Streetscene Services Contract in 2011/2012.**

64 **REVIEW OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE TO THE GAS SUPPLY DISRUPTION AFFECTING LEASOWE/MORETON IN NOVEMBER 2011**

The Director of Technical Services reported that at its meeting held on 24 November 2011, the Cabinet (minute 195 refers) had requested that a review be undertaken into the recent major gas disruption that affected some 5000 homes in the Leasowe and Moreton areas during November 2011, after a water main fractured at the junction of Danger Lane and Hoylake Road causing water to pour into the gas supply network.

Representatives from National Grid and from United Utilities provided a short brief for Members from each organisations perspective. They outlined the cause of the problem and provided details of the work undertaken to ensure that the gas supply was restored in a safe manner. The Director commented also that although electric heaters were distributed freely to all affected properties, their use had created a local 'spike' in electricity use, which resulted in an electrical power disruption from a blown cable. However, National grid contacted Scottish Power, who deployed a team to repair the fault immediately.

The Director commented that almost all properties had gas supplies restored within 7 to 10 days and nearly all properties were entitled to emergency payments as a result of the disruption to their gas supply. He outlined the Council's response to the incident and indicated that although the gas disruption was clearly not a Council responsibility, the general health and wellbeing of our communities and residents was. Council officers assisted National Grid in response to their requests including accommodation, press officer liaison, parking facilities, etc. National Grid had also made a request for assistance in supplying food to their engineers and had expressed gratitude to staff at the Leasowe Community Centre, who had provided catering to National Grid staff at their café.

The Director commented that although the response to the incident went well, there were a number of lessons to be learnt from it including the need for a clear role for established community groups and community representatives to assist in the humanitarian aspects of response to similar types of incidents. He also proposed that a guidance document and training should be provided to all community groups so that they would be aware of how an incident was likely to be responded to and to understand all agencies' roles and capabilities. The Director referred also to the excellent response from local and regional media and commented specifically on the service provided by 7 Waves Local Radio who had kept residents up to dates with events.

He had also suggested that National Grid should review their emergency compensation scheme, so as to ensure that the most vulnerable received financial compensation as soon as was practicable to allay any financial worries. This was especially important when it came to feeding and heating and he referred to anecdotal information received during the review, which indicated that some of the more elderly residents affected by the gas disruption were worried to put their electric heaters on as they would not be able to afford the future fuel bills.

Resolved –

- (1) That the report be noted and the thanks of the Committee be accorded to all who assisted both in the response to the incident and in the post incident review.**
- (2) That an Emergency Planning Information leaflet be prepared for all community centres and groups.**

65 **CORPORATE GOAL PROGRESS REPORT - "MINIMISING WASTE BY ENCOURAGING WASTE REDUCTION AND RECYCLING"**

The Director of Technical Services provided an update on the Technical Services Delivery Plan (TS1) that supported the Corporate Goal to "Minimise waste by encouraging waste reduction and recycling". His report covered two key areas of activity revolving around –

- Educating and raising awareness to reduce the amount of household waste being sent to landfill and improving recycling rates; and
- Maintaining high levels of participation in the kerbside recycling scheme through the delivery of a reliable waste collection service.

He referred also to a motion agreed by the Council (minute 90 (12 December 2011) refers) in relation to 'Increasing Recycling' and commented that although a full response to it would be presented to the March meeting of the Committee, some elements of it were included in his report.

He provided details of performance over the last seven years, which showed steady improvement since 2005/2006 and he referred to the strategic approach for the next eight years. He highlighted the significant progress on Recycling and Waste Reduction and Prevention Initiatives and proposed a number of future projects for Members' consideration.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress of the 2011/2012 TS1 Delivery Plan; be noted and the thanks of the Committee be accorded to the officers for the excellent work undertaken.**
- (2) That the inclusion of the following projects in the draft 2012/2013 TS1 Delivery Plan be endorsed –**

- **Fly Tipping of Household Waste in Alleyways**
- **Small Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Recycling**
- **Bring Site Review**
- **Kerbside Waste Electronic and Electrical Equipment (WEEE)**
- **Improving Recycling through Incentive Schemes**
- **Government Funding to Increase Collection Frequency of Residual Waste**
- **Christmas Tree Recycling**
- **Door Knocking to Promote the Love Food Hate Waste Campaign**
- **Food Waste Digester Project (Floral Pavilion)**
- **Commercial Waste Recycling**

66 **CORPORATE GOAL PROGRESS REPORT - "HAVE HIGH STANDARDS OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACROSS WIRRAL"**

The Director of Technical Services reported upon the current position of the Technical Services Delivery Plan (TS2), which supported the 2011/2012 corporate goal, *"To have High Standards of Environmental Quality Across Wirral"*. The Plan aimed to achieve a number of objectives in order to support the delivery of the Council's Corporate Plan and the Director highlighted a number of new initiatives that had been included within it. He commented upon progress during 2011/2012 and indicated that every action within the Delivery Plan had a target status of Green, which confirmed that the project was continuing as targeted.

He set out also a number of initiatives for Members consideration for inclusion in the TS2 plan for 2012/2013, including –

- Reducing Levels of Dog Fouling Present in Wirral
- Reducing the Number of Tyres Fly-Tipped Across Wirral
- Environmental Improvements to Wirral's Off Road Cycle Paths
- Expansion of Wirral's Graffiti Steering Group

Although Members endorsed the initiatives proposed for inclusion in the Plan for 2012/2013, the Chair referred specifically to the problem of dog fouling on Wirral's beaches and in other areas used by families for recreational purposes and suggested that this could form part of the Committee's work programme in the forthcoming municipal year. The Director suggested that the work stream could be expanded to parks and beaches and proposed to investigate and report to a future meeting upon issues around policies adopted by some Welsh authorities to have seasonal bans on dogs on some beaches. In response to further concerns expressed by Members to the problems associated with leaf fall and a lack of clarity as to areas of responsibility, the Director indicated that the matter was being investigated and discussions with Wirral Partnership Homes were ongoing.

Resolved –

- (1) **That the report be noted and the progress made in delivering TS2- *'Have high standards of environmental quality across Wirral'* Plan for 2011/2012, be endorsed.**

- (2) That the projects highlighted for inclusion in the TS2 plan for 2012/2013, be endorsed.**

67 **WIRRAL CLIMATE CHANGE GROUP ANNUAL REPORT**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management provided an update on the work of the Wirral Climate Change Group during 2011; and sought endorsement of the development of a replacement Wirral Climate Change Strategy.

He commented that the Council's early commitment to action on climate change, which resulted in the adoption of a climate change strategy in 2007, had heralded more concerted, co-ordinated action on carbon reduction and energy efficiency. This was now reflected as a corporate priority to reduce the Council's carbon footprint and it had also led to some initial work on local adaptation to expected changes in the climate. However, the Council could not respond adequately to the climate agenda alone and the Wirral Climate Change Group had been developed into a local partnership with representation from various organisations from different sectors. The group maintained a rolling Wirral-wide carbon reduction programme which details the actions of partner organisations. It met on a regular basis and progress had been reported through this Committee and through the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP).

The Director reported that the Climate Change Strategy from 2007 was now due to be updated. Many of the actions associated with it had now been implemented and the agenda had moved forward and the context changed. Therefore, the Wirral Climate Change Group proposed to initiate a consultation process leading to the development of a new replacement strategy. Although its production was not a statutory obligation, he indicated that since the adoption of Wirral's first strategy, a variety of legal changes and policy instruments had been introduced by government to drive climate-related actions which did demand action. The strategy was therefore envisaged to act in part as a co-ordinating framework for such action.

Resolved –

- (1) That the activity of the Wirral Climate Change Group from 2011 and the actions of partner organisations contained in the Wirral-wide Carbon Reduction Programme be noted.**
- (2) That the partnership's proposed work to develop a replacement climate change strategy for Wirral be endorsed.**

68 **LIBRARIES STRATEGY**

The Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance presented a Strategy for Libraries in Wirral, "Wirral Libraries – A New Chapter", which had been formulated to provide a base for the many changes and key challenges the Library Service was facing both locally and nationally. The document would be subject to regular review and he commented that, given the Libraries integration with the One Stop Shops, the Strategy had been developed taking account of the Council's Customer Access Strategy. He commented that the Library Service played a key role in supporting a number of key objectives outlined in the Corporate Plan and the Strategy addressed the vision for the service to ensure that it was modern, accessible and responsive to user needs. The Director referred to ongoing consultation and commented that if the

Authority did not have a Strategy, then it was likely that while day to day business could continue, the medium to long term development would not occur in a planned and efficient way.

The Chair sought clarification as to what consultation had been undertaken as he was aware that the proposals had not been considered by all libraries or user groups. Members expressed a view that the proposed changes to opening times would not benefit those key user groups without access to the four main libraries at Birkenhead, Wallasey, Bebington and West Kirby. However, Members commented also that extensive consultation had taken place, and was ongoing, and the Strategy had also been informed by current library usage.

On a motion by Councillor Hale and seconded by Councillor McCubbin, it was –

Resolved (6:5 carried on the Chair's casting vote) – That consideration of the Libraries Strategy be deferred until the completion of the consultation process and the views of all libraries and user groups have been taken into account.

69 **DECISION TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS - TENDER ACCEPTANCE FOR HIGHWAYS ASSET AND CONDITION SURVEYS FRAMEWORK**

The Director of Technical Services reported upon the acceptance of a tender under delegated authority with respect to the procurement process for the provision of Highways Asset and Condition Surveys Framework. He reported that the procurement exercise was undertaken by Cheshire West and Chester Council in conjunction with Cheshire East Council and was open to all unitary authorities in the North West, including all five Merseyside authorities, Halton Borough Council and Shropshire County Council.

He outlined the detail of the contract and commented that annual condition surveys of the Council's highways network were necessary to verify and validate the overall condition and deterioration of the network to produce annual performance indicators in accordance with national best practice, and to assist in prioritising programmes of maintenance. In response to a request, the Director proposed to provide the figures associated with the bids direct to Members.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

70 **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS - DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES**

The Director of Technical Services reported, in accordance with the Approved Scheme of Delegation, upon the appointment of contractors under delegated powers for the Supply, Installation and Maintenance of Electronic Variable Message Signs; the Supply of Catering for the Floral Pavilion Theatre and Conference Centre; and Bromborough Station Footbridge Parapet Replacement. Each of the procurement exercises were undertaken by the Council's Corporate Procurement Unit using the electronic tendering process called The Chest and in all cases the lowest/most economically advantageous tender was accepted.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

71 **DECISIONS TAKEN UNDER DELEGATED POWERS - DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported, in accordance with the Approved Scheme of Delegation, of his use of delegated authority with respect to the appointment of Contractors pursuant to Contract Procedure Rule 14.1. Since the last meeting of the Committee, tenders had been accepted for works to Grosvenor Ballroom; Hoylake Community Centre and Sanderling Unit; and Woodchurch Leisure Centre.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

72 **FORWARD PLAN**

The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management reported that the Forward Plan for the period February to May 2012 had been published on the Council's intranet/website. Members had been invited to review the Plan prior to the meeting in order for the Sustainable Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee to consider, having regard to its work programme, whether scrutiny should take place of any items contained within the Plan and, if so, how it could be done within relevant timescales and resources.

Resolved – That the Forward Plan be noted.

73 **REVIEW OF SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received an update in relation to its work programme and were asked to consider whether any additional topics should be added to it for consideration at the 28 March 2012 meeting.

Resolved – That the Work Programme be varied and the following reports be presented for consideration at the 28 March 2012 meeting –

Director of Technical Services

- **Corporate Goal Annual Progress Report – ‘Provide and Maintain High Quality Parks and Open Spaces in Partnership with Local Communities’**
- **Corporate Goal Annual Progress Report – ‘Provide High Quality, Value for Money Leisure and Cultural Facilities for Wirral Residents’**
- **PACSPE Internal/External Bid Comparison**

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

- **Wirral Climate Change Group Annual Report**
- **Review of Underage Sales Prevention and Enforcement**

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Finance

- **Libraries Strategy – Update on Outcome of Consultation**

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