

WIRRAL COUNCIL

WIRRAL SOUTH CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE

18 DECEMBER 2013

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| SUBJECT: | CONSTITUENCY PRIORITIES AND SPEND |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <u>BEBINGTON</u>▪ <u>BROMBOROUGH</u>▪ <u>CLATTERBRIDGE</u>▪ <u>EASTHAM</u>▪ <u>HESWALL</u> |
| REPORT OF: | HEAD OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENGAGEMENT |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | COUNCILLOR GEORGE DAVIES NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING & ENGAGEMENT |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report sets out proposed priorities and processes related to spend for Wirral South Constituency Committee for 2013/14.

2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

2.1 The report to Cabinet of the 23rd May 2013 setting out the proposed operating model for neighbourhood working stated the agreed devolution of £200,000 identified in the Council's budget for 2013-14 for the constituency working model would be allocated on the basis of £50,000 per constituency area to 'kick-start' work on the new model with a focus on tackling inequalities. A more recent report to Cabinet (10th October 2013) agreed a further amount of £100,000 (£25,000 per area) to be devolved to the Constituency Committees for public health initiatives from a non-recurrent under spend identified within the public health grant for 2013-15. The Wirral South Constituency Committee is therefore being asked to determine expenditure in relation to a total of £75,000 by in relation to the 2013-14 financial year

2.2 At its inaugural meeting (October 21 2013) Wirral South's Constituency Committee agreed to set up the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group to set priorities for the

remainder of the 2013-14 financial year (Minute 4 - resolutions 2 & 3 refers). Said group has met; consisting of five elected members (those nominated were Cllr P Gilchrist, Cllr L Rowlands, Cllr I Williams, Cllr J Williams and Cllr A Sykes). The Constituency Manager and Engagement Officer were also in attendance acting in an advisory capacity.

- 2.3 This Group considered priorities for 2013/14 from the information available and processes for spend against those priorities.

3.0 CONSTITUENCY PRIORITIES

- 3.1 A range of information was taken into account by the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group to determine proposed priorities for the Committee to concentrate on this financial year (2013/14). This included a 'Constituency Profile' document (produced by analysts in Public Health and a specific document reviewing the current situation in relation to fuel poverty in Wirral South (produced by Wirral's Acting Housing Strategy Manager).

- 3.2 Those in attendance at the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group also expressed a desire to allocate £10K per Ward to allow for various improvements work to be carried out. This desire has since been echoed by a number of elected members both verbally and via e-mail.

- 3.3 At its meeting on 10 October 2013 Cabinet agreed to the allocation of £100K to The Neighbourhoods Programme via the Public Health Outcomes Funding. As such each Constituency Committee now has the amount of £25K, to be spent on health related priorities. Said health priorities must enhance the health and well-being of the Wirral population by meeting at least one of the following two high level outcomes:

- Increased healthy life expectancy
- Reduced differences in the life expectancy and healthy life expectancy between communities

- 3.4 After careful consideration the Task & Finish Group suggested the following approach:

- £10K per ward for improvement work (e.g. highways/grounds maintenance improvements yet to be defined with associated costs)
- A project utilising a suite of methods is developed to reduce levels of childhood obesity in Wirral South
- Further research to be carried out to assess the reliability of the fuel poverty statistics for the constituency prior to any decision regarding further spend
- Promoting the collective energy provider switch to ensure all are receiving maximised value for money

- 3.5 Section 3.4 outlines in broad terms the proposed priorities but does not give specifics of projects and allocated spend. It is suggested that the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group meet once again in the New Year to agree allocation per project following further evidence gathering. A further report will be brought to the

next Wirral South Constituency Committee (26 February 2013) detailing exact allocation of budget to each individual priority.

- 3.6 It is important to note at this stage that; early investigations into both headline health priorities indicate that costs may well be higher than originally anticipated. As such it may not be possible to address both proposed priorities (Childhood Obesity and Fuel Poverty) in the remainder of 2013/14. Further information will be available by the time the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group meet again, allowing them to make an informed decision regarding cost versus impact. With timescales in mind, recommendation 14.5 below proposes giving the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group the autonomy to decide on a way forward and report their decision to the Constituency Committee on 26 February.

4.0 CURRENT PROGRESS/INDICATIVE COSTINGS FOR PROPOSED PRIORTIES

4.1 REDUCE LEVELS OF CHILDHOOD OBESITY

- 4.1.1 The Constituency Manager has been in discussions with colleagues from Public Health in relation to the feasibility, proposed impact and associated costs of various approaches to reducing the level of childhood obesity in Wirral South.
- 4.1.2 Colleagues within Public Health currently commission a number of projects from various Community Trust providers to tackle the issue across Wirral. Work within schools is based upon the National Child Measurement Programme and is clearly evidence driven. It is imperative that any projects funded via Wirral South's Public Health Grant add value to this approach rather than duplicating work streams. Further work with Public Health is needed to ensure this is the case. The Constituency Manager will continue to research this issue and provide further information for the Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group when they meet again.
- 4.1.3 Early indications are that any project spanning the constituency and demonstrating real added value and impact upon statistics could cost upwards of £20,000 (with elements of sustainability built in from the start).

4.2 FUEL POVERTY

- 4.2.1 As per 3.4 above; the Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group proposed that further research be carried out assessing the reliability of the fuel poverty statistics for Wirral South. Early indications show that costs would prove prohibitive in any attempts to commission a standalone and statistically robust piece of primary research for Wirral South.

Since its meeting (19 November) the Constituency Manager has been liaising closely with Ed Kingsley (Wirral's Acting Housing Strategy Manager) in an attempt to highlight any existing data which may corroborate (or otherwise) the fuel poverty statistics produced by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) presented to the Committee 21 October.

David Adamson & Partners Ltd were commissioned by Wirral Council to complete a review of housing conditions in the private housing sector (private rented and owner occupied). The study involved a comprehensive house condition and

household interview survey programme conducted across a sample of 1,200 dwellings. The survey programme was conducted according to national Government guidelines. The size and structure of the sample was designed to provide information for Wirral as a whole, for “settlement areas” and for parliamentary boundaries.

Fuel poverty was measured using the new Government definition and averages were reported for each geographical area. Under the new definition, a household is considered fuel poor where:

1. They have required fuel costs that are above average (the national median level)
2. Were they to spend that amount, they would be left with a residual income below the official poverty line.

Incomes are calculated after housing costs, i.e. mortgage and rent payments are deducted. Incomes are equivalised to reflect the fact that different types of households have different spending requirements. For example, a single person on a given income will usually have more disposable income than a family of four on the same income. Fuel bills are also equivalised to reflect the fact that different types and sizes of households will have different required spend on fuel. For example, a single person will need to spend less on fuel than a family of four living in the same home. The data from the aforementioned review are summarised in table one below.

Table 1: Housing Stock Survey Results

| | | No. of households in fuel poverty | % of households in fuel poverty |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--|--|
| Parliamentary Constituency | Birkenhead | 4,798 | 17.9 |
| | Wallasey | 4010 | 12.4 |
| | Wirral South | 4714 | 16.1 |
| | Wirral West | 3458 | 11.3 |
| Settlement Area | Area 1 – Wallasey | 3105 | 13.3 |
| | Area 2 – Commercial Core | 10 | 1.4 |
| | Area 3 – Birkenhead | 5299 | 18.1 |
| | Area 4 – Bromborough & Eastham | 2641 | 12.3 |
| | Area 5 – Mid Wirral | 1421 | 7.4 |
| | Area 6 – Hoylake & West Kirby | 1179 | 11.0 |
| | Area 7 – Heswall | 2834 | 23.6 |
| | Area 8 – Rural | 490 | 18.7 |
| All households | | 16979 | 14.2 |

4.2.2 The information detailed in table one adds weight to the notion that Wirral South is the second most affected constituency in Wirral in relation to fuel poverty. Although the review (detailed in 4.2.1) is not broken down into specific lower super output areas it does go some way to corroborate the DECC data presented to the committee 21 October.

4.2.3 The Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group propose the promotion of the collective energy provider switch to ensure all Wirral South residents are receiving maximised value for money in relation to fuel bills (3.4 above). The provider switch could be the mechanism through which any fuel poverty reduction project is delivered within the constituency.

The next Liverpool City Region (LCR) Collective Energy Switch will begin in January. The last one was held in spring 2013 and had positive results, especially amongst households not to have switched previously and amongst those households without internet access. The average annual saving for those who switched was £110 per year, with the top saving of £1,703 being for a Wirral household. Wirral resident Alan Brame, who saved £465 said: "A few minutes time, a straightforward process and a large saving. Why wouldn't you do it?"

The switch will be led by local charity Energy Projects Plus and supported by all six LCR local authorities. Energy Helpline is the switching partner. Participating local authorities were able to "pump-prime" the first switch with small financial contributions. The switching partnership then gained referral fees which will pay towards some marketing for the next switch and the remainder paying for the telephone advice service. Paid-for marketing is likely to be limited mainly to fliers and posters, with some door-to-door delivery of fliers in small areas of each local authority.

If a marketing budget could be allocated to Wirral South, much more engagement activity would take place. All people who telephone the advice line are also provided with energy efficiency advice and referrals to appropriate grants and loans.

The Constituency Committee could commission a local provider to ensure maximum participation with the next collective switch (due to commence in January 2014). Any such campaign would include:

1. Door to door distribution of information packs to a variable percentage of homes in the constituency containing:
 - Introductory letter
 - Collective switch leaflets and application forms
 - Basic advice report based on locally held data where sufficient data held (assumed 30%)
 - Advice survey form for residents to complete and receive report and/or verbal advice from local Save Energy Advice Service
2. Hold five community events in which one to one advice can be provided to attendees in order to identify other ways in which spend on energy can be reduced, or income can be maximised. These events could be aligned to

councillor surgeries or independently held and would be in locations accessible and recognised by the majority of residents.

3. Encourage residents to contact the Wallasey-based Save Energy Advice Service, which will provide personalised advice and where appropriate refer clients to support agencies and/or local contractors for improvement works under the Energy Company Obligation (ECO).
4. This activity would be supplemented by support activity such as poster distribution in local shops, cafes, libraries and other places where people gather in order to increase the opportunities to see the message and increase the likelihood of taking action. Press releases will also be circulated to local community groups to include in newsletters and local publications.

The last collective switch campaign included an element of door to door leaflet distribution. 3% of those who received a leaflet registered and 16% of them went on to switch through the scheme. The estimated outputs will vary depending on the budget set however by delivering the above programme we would expect the conversion rates to be significantly improved as well as providing much deeper support to residents to address fuel poverty.

Table two below outlines the projected costs and reach of three associated options for the proposed approach

Table 2: Projected Costs and Outputs

| Option | Approx. cost | Homes receiving information packs | Annual bill savings from loft and wall insulation installed | Annual bill savings from Collective Switch | Total annual savings |
|---------------|---------------------|--|--|---|-----------------------------|
| A | £8,000 | 3,477 | £5,860 | £3,740 | £9,600 |
| B | £11,300 | 6,000 | £26,660 | £6,380 | £33,040 |
| C | £25,000 | 18,400 | £47,320 | £19,360 | £66,680 |

** Other outputs which are more difficult to predict and quantify will include:*

- *Savings from successful benefit entitlement checks;*
- *Savings made by people who are prompted to switch energy suppliers or seek a better deal from their existing supplier but don't use the LCR Collective Switch;*
- *Behavioural change following energy efficiency advice;*

- *Other energy efficiency measures installed such as replacement boilers, draught proofing and improving heating controls; and*
- *Health improvements due to warmer, less damp homes.*

4.7 Love Wirral Grant

4.7.1 The Constituency area has been allocated £10k Love Wirral funding. This supports a borough wide campaign, launched in June 2013, to encourage people who live, work and visit Wirral to take pride in their local area. The grant scheme is open to applications from individuals, groups, schools and businesses for projects that must improve the appearance of the local environment; for amounts between £20 and £500. This funding launched on 28 October 2013 and closed on 6 December 2013. Eligible projects will be subject to online public voting 13-24 January 2014.

4.7.2 Proposed process

4.7.3 It is proposed that all elected members have ample opportunity to consider the results of the online voting and make recommendations to the 26 February 2014 Constituency Committee.

4.7.4 On 26 February 2014 a decision will be made by the Constituency Committee regarding the awarding of Love Wirral grants.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Failure to agree project spend expediently may result in a loss of funding allocation.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Careful consideration has been given to the best way to distribute this funding to help tackle the Constituency's priorities.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 Residents were consulted about their priorities in the drafting of the Neighbourhood Plans (2012).

7.2 Feedback from communities to elected members has also factored into this priority setting.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 The overarching proposed model for neighbourhood working will strengthen the Council's relationship with the voluntary and community sector.

8.2 Tackling the priorities of the Constituency will benefit communities directly.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 9.1 This report has implications for the expenditure of budget allocated to Wirral South Constituency Committee.
- 9.2 Funding may assist in greater use of and/or access to community assets.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The arrangements will help the Council to deliver on the Localism Act 2011 and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 Has the potential impact of your proposal(s) been reviewed with regard to equality?

Yes and impact review can be found at the link below (Progressing Neighbourhood Working).

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/community-and-living/equality-diversity-cohesion/equality-impact-assessments/eias-2010/chief-executives>

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Focus on fuel poverty as a priority will encourage maximum efficiency in relation to residential energy usage and thus reduce carbon emissions.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 This report may have positive community safety implications dependent upon the allocation of spend determined by the Constituency Committee.

14.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that:

- 14.1 Committee agrees to allocate £10K to each of the five wards for improvements work (e.g. highways/grounds maintenance improvements yet to be defined).
- 14.2 Committee agrees that reduction in levels of childhood obesity be considered a priority for the remainder of 2013/14.
- 14.3 Committee agrees that fuel poverty be considered a priority for the remainder of 2013/14.
- 14.4 Committee agrees that the previously appointed Priority Task and Finish Group meet in January to assess individual project costs and agree further action
- 14.5 Committee agrees that the 'Priority Setting' Task & Finish Group make an informed decision regarding which health priorities to take forward based upon further information regarding costs and impact of proposed projects. This will ensure that preparations for any agreed individual projects may commence prior to the next Constituency Committee.

15.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

15.1 To enable the work of the Constituency Committee to be focused upon the needs of the local area and to ensure projects commence as expediently as possible.

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REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--|-----------------|
| Cabinet – Neighbourhood Working – Proposed Operating Model | 23 May 2013 |
| Wirral South Constituency Committee | 21 October 2013 |
| Cabinet – Public Health Outcomes Funding | 10 October 2013 |