

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## WIRRAL SOUTH CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE

18 DECEMBER 2013

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT THROUGH THE CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b><u>BEBINGTON</u></b></li><li>▪ <b><u>BROMBOROUGH</u></b></li><li>▪ <b><u>CLATTERBRIDGE</u></b></li><li>▪ <b><u>EASTHAM</u></b></li><li>▪ <b><u>HESWALL</u></b></li></ul>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY MANAGER</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR GEORGE DAVIES NEIGHBOURHOODS, HOUSING &amp; ENGAGEMENT</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b> <i>(Defined in paragraph 13.3 of Article 13 'Decision Making' in the Council's Constitution.)</i>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out a proposed process for public engagement through Wirral South Constituency Committee.
- 1.2 This is an initial starting point that will form part of a broader public engagement framework and be supported by a communications strategy.

### 2.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 2.1 The development of the Constituency Committees, whilst built around a core set of principles, is underpinned by the notion that 'one size does not fit all'. Each Committee is therefore taking its own approach to how residents are engaged as part of the Constituency Committee process.
- 2.2 The previous Area Forum structure included time within the agenda for a public question time. Where possible questions were answered by elected members and/or Council officers at the meeting, although often questions were noted and answers brought back to the next Forum meeting.

- 2.3 Partners also have a range of mechanisms for engaging with the public. Merseyside Police operates 'Have Your Say' meetings with members of the public. These have been held in each ward across the borough on a monthly basis. The Police have decided to refocus these meetings around the Constituency footprints and reduce their frequency to quarterly.
- 2.4 There are opportunities to reduce duplication, create efficiencies and bring together a variety of public engagement forums into one meeting.

### **3.0 A PROPOSED WAY FORWARD**

#### **3.1 'Have Your Say' meetings**

- 3.2 At this early stage in the development of Wirral South Constituency Committee and as a starting point, there is an opportunity to bring together the efforts of the Council and Police in terms of public engagement.
- 3.3 It is proposed that the Constituency Committee incorporates a public 'Have Your Say' meeting. In order to ensure that the Committee has adequate time to deal with its business, it is suggested that this is bolted onto the Committee and operated as an event an hour before each and every Committee meeting. It is believed that this will add value to the Committee meeting and vice versa.
- 3.4 Initially, this 'Have Your Say' meeting will be focused around the work of Merseyside Police. Where possible this will be attended by the Neighbourhood Inspector, but may from time to time be deputised by a Neighbourhood Sergeant. An update will be provided by the Police about crime and disorder in the Constituency over the previous quarter, followed by a public question and answer session. The meeting will conclude with a discussion about issues/short-term priorities that the public wish for the Police to concentrate on over the forthcoming quarter. The Police will provide an update on how they have addressed the short-term priorities identified at each previous meeting. These short-term priorities will supplement annual priorities set out in the Constituency Plan. This meeting will be supported by the Constituency Manager.
- 3.5 It is proposed that as work with partners on the Constituency footprint develops, not least through the operation of Wirral South Public Service Board, this 'Have Your Say' meeting will be expanded to include the participation of wider Council services and partners. The format of the 'Have Your Say' meeting will likely develop over time and may include for example, a marketplace style surgery with a range of Council services and agencies available to the public, rather than one large meeting. This could even include public access to at least one Councillor per ward. The branding of these meeting may also change over time.
- 3.6 It is proposed that a standing item is added to the beginning of the Committee agenda to include a verbal update from the earlier 'Have Your Say' meeting, in order that the Committee can be informed about issues raised and short-term priorities set. Initially this update will be provided by the Neighbourhood Police Inspector (or deputy) and, as this meeting extends, wider updates for other Council services and partners will also be provided (for efficiency this may be provided by the Constituency Manager).

3.7 In order to ensure that as many members of the public as possible have the opportunity to attend the 'Have Your Say' meetings, it is therefore important that the Constituency Committee meetings take place in more than one location across the Constituency.

### 3.8 Public Question Time

3.9 It is proposed that the above is supplemented with a Public Question Time within the Constituency Committee meeting. This will allow members of the public to raise issues of concern with the Committee directly and/or seek answers to particular queries.

3.10 In order to enable a comprehensive response at the meeting and to allow members of the public to participate who are unable to attend the meeting, questions will be required to be submitted in writing in advance of the meeting. For future Constituency Committees this will be facilitated using online and downloadable forms on the Council's web site, with hard copies available in public buildings based in the Constituency. Residents with literacy issues can have submissions made on their behalf or be supported to complete forms by Council One Stop Shops. Questions will be required to be submitted by no later than 4.00pm the afternoon before the Committee meeting. The Chair of the meeting will determine which questions will be dealt with at the Committee and the order in which they will be taken.

3.11 It is suggested that no more than 20 minutes is set aside for the Public Question Time, to ensure sufficient time for the Committee's business. Questions that are not able to be covered will be responded to in writing within 14 working days by the Constituency Manager.

3.12 Further details on the operation of the Public Question Time will be set out in the Committee Handbook, which is to be populated by a Task & Finish Group consisting of elected members nominated at October's Constituency Committee.

3.13 As noted in 1.2 above, further work is ongoing to develop a wider community engagement framework and communications strategy for the Constituency.

## **4.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

4.1 Public engagement is at the heart of neighbourhood working and key to its success.

## **5.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

5.1 Consideration is continuing to be given to a broader framework for the engagement of communities.

## **6.0 CONSULTATION**

6.1 Consideration has been given to feedback in relation to previous and current processes for public engagement across a range of agencies.

## **7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

7.1 This provides an additional opportunity for groups to influence priority setting and shape the work of the Committee.

## **8.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

8.1 This will be delivered within existing resources.

## **9.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 Neighbourhood working helps the Council to deliver on the Localism Act 2011 and Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012.

## **10.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 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>

## **11.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The combining of forums for engagement, where appropriate, will help support carbon reduction.

## **12.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 This will impact positively upon community safety and perceptions of community safety.

## **13.0 RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that:

13.1 Committee agrees the adoption of a 'Have Your Say' meeting prior to the start of each and every Constituency Committee.

13.2 Committee agrees the development of the 'Have Your Say' meetings to include wider Council services and partners including at least one elected member from each ward.

13.3 Committee agrees that in order to maximise engagement Constituency Committees (and associated 'Have Your Say' surgery) move from ward to ward on a revolving basis (starting Feb 2014).

13.4 Committee agrees the adoption of a Public Question Time based on the format outlined in this report.

13.5 A further report is brought back to the Committee providing an update on the wider community engagement framework and communications strategy for the Constituency.

#### 14.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

14.1 To reduce duplication, create efficiencies and help facilitate public engagement and participation.

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#### REFERENCE MATERIAL

None.

#### SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet – Neighbourhood Working	24 January 2013
Council – Neighbourhood Working	11 February 2013
Cabinet – Neighbourhood Working – Proposed Operating Model	23 May 2013
Wirral South Constituency Committee	21 October 2013