

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE

24<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2014

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>CONSTITUENCY MANAGERS UPDATE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>WARDS WITHIN THE BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY BOUNDARY.</b>  <b>BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE BIDSTON AND ST JAMES CLAUGHTON OXTON PRENTON ROCK FERRY</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>HEAD OF NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ENGAGEMENT</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	<b>NO</b>

### 1.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 1.1 Section 2.0 of this report provides an update on progress in relation to actions from the previous Constituency Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014.
- 1.2 Section 3.0 of this report details other updates relevant to the committee.

### 2.0 PROGRESS TO DATE- Actions from Committee Meeting 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014

- 2.1 **Action:** Improving the Environment was approved as a priority for 2013/14 in Birkenhead with an allocation of £20,000. The Constituency Manager to form a proposal on how to deliver a project to deal with pieces of land of unknown ownership considered 'eye sores' and a process to respond to fly tipping.

**Update:** A specific report from Head of Service, Streetscene & Waste details the proposal in Agenda item 4 of this committee meeting.

- 2.2 **Action:** The Constituency Manager to work with Ward Councillors to collate other issues within Birkenhead related to Improving the Environment to contribute to the Constituency Plan for 2014/15

**Update:** This has been ongoing and audit is being collated, this will contribute to the Constituency Plan. The ownership of the identified spots is being clarified but the majority appear to be unadopted or privately owned.

2.3 **Action:** The two proposals that were approved at the Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014 in relation to the priority 'Improving Services for Young People' to be implemented.

**Update:** Proposal 1 was a project to increase Breast Feeding initiation rates in Birkenhead by developing an antenatal support programme specific to the area. Appendix 1 details the first quarterly report in relation to this service for the period of April- June 2014.

Proposal 2 was a project to develop a 'Community Hub' at a local primary school. All primary schools in Birkenhead with over 50% of pupils living in areas of high income deprivation have been invited to submit an Expression of Interest to this project. The deadline for submissions is 28<sup>th</sup> July 2014 and 2 schools will be offered a grant of £25,000 each to achieve the outcome that 'Children are Ready for School'. They will utilise the funding to:

- Provide high quality service provision and interventions for children below statutory school age that will have a positive affect on Childrens' intellectual and social /behavioral development prior to school entry.
- Work in partnership with parents to help children to learn and develop at home and in the community, delivering the key message and understanding that what parents do is more important than who parents are.
- Build on the strengths and well-being of the local community; mapping what resources are available for parents and children and help families learn about and use resources and services available within the community

MP Frank Field, Councillor Moira McLaughlin and Councillor Ann McLachlan have guided this project and will be involved with the assessment process to select the 2 schools to deliver the pilot project.

2.4 **Action:** The two proposals that were approved at the Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014 in relation to the priority Improving Communication to be implemented.

**Update:** Proposal 1 was a project to increase and develop the use of the Wirral Well website through improved and targeted promotion. Methods of how to do this in terms of what tools to use and a segmented approach to specific target groups has been written and is to be implemented. A report on the impact will be provided at the next committee meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

Proposal 2 was to develop a pilot community based publication in Birkenhead.

**Background:** On 31 March 2011 the Secretary of State issued a Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the 'Code'), which applies to the Council.

The Code sets out a range of provisions in relation to local authority publicity, including seven principles of local authority publicity, (1) lawful, (2) cost effective, (3) objective, (4) even-handed, (5) appropriate, (6) have regard to equality, and (7) diversity. The Code also includes statements of the actions a local authority should or should not take in order to comply with the principles. In particular, a local authority should avoid anything likely to be perceived by readers as constituting a political statement, or statements about the frequency, content and appearance of local authority newssheets or similar communications.

Paragraph 28 of the Code Publicity provides that:

*Local authorities should not publish or incur expenditure in commissioning in hard copy or on any website, newsletters, newssheets or similar communications which seek to emulate commercial newspapers in style or content. Where local authorities do commission or publish newsletters, newssheets or similar communications, **they should not issue them more frequently than quarterly**, apart from parish councils which should not issue them more frequently than monthly. Such communications should not include material other than information for the public about the business, services and amenities of the council or other local service providers.*

Section 39 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 came into force on 30 March 2014 and provides a specific power for the Secretary of State to direct a Council to comply with the Code (as applicable).

The Secretary of State in a letter to local authorities (dated 25 March 2014) confirmed that, where on the basis of any material or information currently available to him, he considers that there is some evidence of non-compliance with the Code, and that non-compliance has not ceased, he will be minded to give a direction to the local authority concerned to bring an end to the non-compliance or remove the risk of any future non-compliance.

**Update:** Accordingly, there is a risk that the proposal for a quarterly newsletter to be circulated within the Birkenhead constituency could be subject to challenge given paragraph 28 of the Code and the Secretary of State's stated position. It is therefore considered prudent that this risk be considered and explored by Cabinet before a final decision is taken by this Committee to proceed with this proposal.

- 2.5 **Action:** The task and finish group to finalise the draft of the Committee Handbook, including a section on Community Engagement.

**Update:** The Task and Finish group to devise a Handbook and a Community Engagement Strategy had a further meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014. Appendix 2 is the final draft of the Handbook for approval from the Constituency Committee. It includes an Engagement Strategy that will be developed as the actions are practically implemented. The Constituency Committee will receive an update on this strategy at each meeting for discussion and guidance. Discussions have continued at the Birkenhead Public Service Board on how partners can share resources and co-ordinate activity more effectively around community engagement.

The handbook also includes a revised process for Public Question Time (pages 8-9) in order to improve the quality of the responses given to questions and to enable community members who cannot attend the meeting to ask questions of the Constituency Committee.

- 2.6 **Action:** £10,000 be provided from the Committee's budget allocation for 2014/15 to fund the urgently needed repair works to the River Wall and Esplanade at Rock Park to maintain this asset for the benefit of local residents in terms of their recreation, health and heritage.

**Update:** A grant of up to £10,000 will be given to Rock Park Trust Company to carry out the repairs to the Esplanade. A specification for the works is being formulated with Wirral Council's Conservation Officer. Once completed, Rock Park Trust Company will tender for the necessary works.

### **3.0 Other Updates**

- 3.1 Following a tender process Wirral Council has appointed 'Nurture Development' to lead a 12 month programme to introduce and implement the principles of Asset Based Community Development in the borough through the training and supporting of the council's workforce, partners, local councillors, voluntary sector organisations and residents. Nurture Development are currently finalising an action plan to implement this work, an update on this will be provided at the next Constituency Committee meeting.
- 3.2 A targeted piece of work relevant to the priority of 'Improving the Environment' has been carried out with traders based in the top end of Grange Road, Charing Cross and Grange Road West area. This has involved meetings with traders and relevant officers/professionals. An action plan has been written summarising the main issues and how they can be overcome to meet the aspirations of:
- Creating a safe, clean and pleasant trading environment to attract visitors.
  - Enabling Birkenhead to be more competitive and progressive in promoting/communicating/advertising the benefits to living, working and trading in Birkenhead
  - Increasing visits to Birkenhead.
  - Building greater community pride in the area.

Appendix 3 is a copy of the Action Plan and updates on progress made to date.

- 3.3 Appendix 4 details an update on Community projects in progress.
- 3.4 Appendix 5 is a briefing paper of a new initiative called 'Seven Beats Project'. An area of Birkenhead has been identified by the Community Safety Partnership and the Police as accounting for a large proportion of crime on Wirral. It is proposed to dedicate a team of officers to this area who will work in partnership with other agencies and the local community to actively reduce crime and ASB. A steering group met for the first time on 9<sup>th</sup> July 2014, the Birkenhead Constituency Manager is a member of this steering group and will update the committee on progress made with this project.

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

- 4.1 There are no resource implications detailed within this report further to those approved at the Constituency Committee meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2014.

### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The risk of producing a local publication to be considered by Cabinet to ensure it complies with the principles of the Code of Recommended Practice on Local Authority Publicity (the 'Code').

## **6.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Not required as this is a research task.

## **7.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

7.1 This report has no direct carbon reduction implications.

## **8.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 This report has no planning and community safety implications.

## **9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

9.1 The Committee are asked to note and approve the content of the report.

## **10.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 To continue to progress the targeted schemes of work identified within the constituency to develop the new approach to neighbourhood working.

**REPORT AUTHOR: Dawn Tolcher, Constituency Manager (Birkenhead)**

Telephone: (0151) 691 8295

Email: [dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:dawntolcher@wirral.gov.uk)

## **APPENDICES**

APPENDIX 1 - Antenatal Breast feeding Project Quarterly Report (April-June 1014)

APPENDIX 2 - Draft copy of Birkenhead Constituency Handbook

APPENDIX 3 - Grange Road Action Plan

APPENDIX 4 - Community Projects Update

APPENDIX 5- Briefing Paper, Seven Betas Project.

