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CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL SOUTH

Wednesday, 25 June 2014

Present: Councillor S Niblock

Councillors C Carubia Tracey Smith
P Gilchrist W Smith
D Mitchell A Sykes
C Muspratt J Walsh
S Niblock I Williams
C Povall KJ Williams

Apologies Councillors A Hodson L Rowlands
K Hodson

1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

RESOLVED:

That subject to the following amendment, the Minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 February 2014 be confirmed as a correct record:

Minute No. 24 – Police - ‘Couple with a Copper’ be replaced with ‘Cupper with a Copper’.

2 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors C Muspratt and W Smith declared non pecuniary interests in Item No. 6 on the agenda – Wirral South Health and Wellbeing Fund Update by virtue of them being friends of Mayer Park, a community group who had made an application for a funding contribution and were listed in Appendix 1 to the report.

3 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE UPDATE

The Constituency Manager reported that a recruitment process for co-opting community representatives onto the Committee had run from 23 May to 13 June 2014. A Selection Panel had met on 19 June 2014 to consider the applications received and had recommended that the following community representatives be co-opted onto the Committee:

Lin Longshaw Parr
Dave Johnson
Kevin Sutton
Mal Wright
Mark Anthony Craig
Warren-Andrew Ward

The Committee was informed that Mr Sutton had been unable to attend this meeting and had sent his apologies.

RESOLVED:

That those recommended for co-option by the Recruitment Panel and listed above be co-opted onto this Committee with immediate effect and be invited to join Elected Members at the table.

The newly Co-opted Members indicated that they had no interests to declare.

4 WIRRAL SOUTH PRIORITIES, SPEND AND BUDGET UPDATE 2014/15

A report by the Constituency Manager detailed the proposed priorities for the Wirral South Constituency Committee for 2014/15 and beyond. This report also detailed the confirmed budget for 2014/15 and progress on spend so far.

At its meeting on 25 February 2014, the Council had agreed to allocate £50,000 to each of the four Constituency Committees. This had been done to “enable the new approach to Neighbourhood Working to be further developed.”

On 13 March 2014 the Cabinet had approved recommendations set out in a report that covered the greater Local Transport Capital Funding and the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) programme for 2014/15. The report had proposed an allocation of £77,750 for each Constituency Committee. Recommendation 13.1 had requested that discussion take place and a decision made by the Constituency Committee on how this fund would be allocated. Appendix 1 to the report provided examples of the various ways this money could be spent and approximate costs of any such schemes.

It was reported that £50,000 in total had been allocated to this Committee from the Wirral Health and Wellbeing Fund. An update on this was provided in a report elsewhere on the agenda. (Minute No. 32 refers.)

The Committee at its second meeting held on 18 December 2013, had approved a funding allocation of £10,000 to each of the five wards (Minute No. 12 refers). The agreed £10,000 per ward had to be spent on a number of improvement ideas developed by Elected Members. Members noted that as of 31 March 2014 £38,720.50 remained to be spent of this £50,000. This

amount had been carried over into the 2014/15 financial year and those Elected Members with a balance were currently working with the Constituency Manager to deliver various projects utilising this funding.

The Constituency Manager informed that 'Your Wirral' funding had been devolved to the Constituencies Committees for 2014/15. This was a small grants programme that had been in operation since 2007. It was a strand of the Community Fund that came into being as a result of the Value Added Tax (VAT) return generated by the housing stock transfer from Wirral Council to Wirral Partnership Homes, now Magenta Living. From November 2007 to October 2012 a total of £1,835,585.85 had been spent supporting 783 groups, projects and activities across Wirral. Members noted that the fund had lain dormant during the last financial year.

The Committee was informed that grants were available to voluntary and community sector (not for profit) groups across Wirral. The Fund rested with Magenta Living. A Joint Working Group acted as an accountable body for the Fund and was composed of Elected Members and Magenta Living Board members. Previous applications had been evaluated by representatives from Magenta Living and Wirral Council and then payments had been either signed off to successful groups or withdrawn by the Joint Working Group.

A total of £250,000 was available for 2014/15. The amount allocated had been determined by the number of Magenta Living housing units within each Constituency. £50,000 was available for projects or activities that were delivered in two or more constituencies or across Wirral.

The Committee noted that to be eligible for funding, applications had to be compatible with one or more of the seven themes agreed by the Joint Working Group in line with the charitable objectives of the Community Fund Deed as follows:

- Creating an attractive and safe environment
- Contributing to community economic regeneration
- Preventing crime or reducing the fear of crime
- Providing employment and training for local people
- Benefiting local people who face discrimination
- Improving community facilities
- Engaging communities to improve quality of life

Members noted the conditions that had to be adhered to, so as to ensure that the conditions of the Community Fund deed were not compromised. They also noted the proposed process set out in detail in the report, a breakdown of the Committee's confirmed budget for 2014/15 and the Committee's priorities.

It was proposed that each of the three priorities below should be allocated £15,000 each, thus leaving £5,000 of core budget to support various engagement initiatives:

- Improved Open Spaces; to increase the number of green flag parks in Wirral South year on year.
- Gaps in Youth Provision; to work with the internal and external partners to identify and rectify any existing gaps in provision of youth services in Wirral South.
- Tackle Social Isolation; Identify the various groups affected by social isolation in Wirral South, establish the evident gaps in provision throughout the Constituency and aim to either support existing providers or commission a new piece of work.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) **one Elected Member per ward be nominated to sit on a Task and Finish Group to discuss directly with colleagues from Road Safety the various options for spending the Local Transport Capital Funding and the Integrated Transport Block (ITB) programme budget of £77,750;**

(Names to be supplied by Ward Members in due course.)

(This Task and Finish Group will report its proposals to the next Committee meeting scheduled for 8 October 2014 with a view to commencing work shortly thereafter.)

- (2) **Members will continue to work with the Constituency Manager to spend the remaining core budget for 2013/14 as expediently as possible; and**
- (3) **the establishment of the 'Your Wirral' fund and its associated processes be noted.**

5 CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE HANDBOOK UPDATE

The Constituency Manager reported that Members had met in a number of Panels to consider how the Constituency Committee Handbook would be drafted. This had now been accomplished and each Member of the Committee had received a copy of the Handbook with their agenda for the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made in producing the Constituency Committee Handbook be noted.

WIRRAL SOUTH HEALTH AND WELLBEING FUND UPDATE

A report by the Constituency Manager provided the Committee with an update on the funding allocation of £50,000 from the Wirral South Health and Wellbeing Fund. Appended to the report was Appendix 1 which contained the detail of the selection process used and the recommended successful projects.

The Committee was informed that on 10 December 2013 the Director of Public Health had presented a report to the Cabinet recommending a further £100,000 be "...administered through the Constituency Committees" aimed at supporting the voluntary sector in Wirral (Cabinet Minute No. 120 refers). Therefore, the Committee was now responsible for administering the original £25,000 provided by Public Health and the further £25,000 Voluntary Sector Support Funding.

Members noted that the Wirral South Health and Wellbeing Fund was aimed at increasing the healthy life expectancy of local residents and reducing differences in healthy life expectancy between communities. Funding applications were able to be submitted between 1 April and 6 May 2014 and 51 applications had been received, bidding for a maximum of £3,000 per project. A strict scoring criteria was set out in Appendix 2 to the report which had been used to score the projects that were the subject of the funding applications. All Members of the Committee had been invited to the assessment session held for all the applications received on 28 May 2014. Applications had been scored against:

- Need (demonstrated need within the application rather than perceived/understood need)
- Demonstrated impact upon public Health Outcomes (Set out in Appendix 3 to the report)
- Partnership Working

Those Members who had declared pecuniary interests had left the room whilst the projects they had an interest in had been under discussion.

The Constituency Manager reported that from the scores allocated 18 projects out of the 51 received were being recommended to receive funding within the £50,000 budget. This would then leave a surplus of £1,881.03. This could be allocated by the Committee in line with its proposed themes of work, provided they matched the Public Health Outcomes. All spend would be reported back to the Public Health Department in order to satisfy its audit processes.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) funding be awarded as set out in Appendix 1 to the report; and**
- (2) the £1,881.03 under spend be allocated in line with Wirral South's agreed priorities during 2014/15 ensuring all spend satisfies the criteria outlined in Appendix 2 to the report (Public Health Outcome Framework Indicators).**

7 INDIVIDUAL ELECTORAL REGISTRATION

The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration (IER) was a Government initiative to transfer the existing property-based electoral register to a new register which would rely on individuals registering themselves.

The Committee considered a report by the Director of Public Health/Head of Policy and Performance that had been written for consideration by the Policy and Performance Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 15 January 2014. The report provided a detailed account of a Scrutiny Review that had considered the Council's preparations for the introduction of IER in 2014. Attached to the report as Appendix 1 was the Scrutiny Review Final Report.

The report set out the formal process for transferring to IER in summer 2014 and the preparations the Council had made so far.

It was noted that the Scrutiny Review Panel consisted of the following Members: Councillors Jean Stapleton (Chair), Moira McLaughlin, Denise Roberts and Steve Williams. It was also noted that the review had provided an opportunity for Members to gain a good understanding of the work being undertaken to mitigate the risk associated with all voters on the register successfully transferring to the new one.

The report informed that the Panel's assessment was that overall the Council was in a strong position and was likely to have a relatively smooth transfer to IER in 2014. However, Panel Members were concerned that in some wards, notably those with higher levels of known deprivation, there would be higher proportions of voters not automatically transferred. It was noted that additional work would have to be undertaken to ensure these voters were successfully transferred.

It was also noted that the Panel was also concerned that these same locations tended to have higher numbers of people not on the electoral register. As such, Members were keen for the IER process to be used as a vehicle to promote electoral registration more generally to encourage those not registered to register.

The Senior Electoral Services Officer was in attendance at the meeting and informed that the Council was in a strong position to implement this scheme, it had been possible to register online since 10 June 2014 and take up had been high. He also informed that there would be a national publicity campaign which the Electoral Commission would launch in an attempt to boost registration figures.

Members had a number of questions on IER which the Senior Electoral Officer answered as appropriate. It was noted as a consequence of this that:

- People who were already on the Electoral Register would be transferred automatically to the new one and would receive individual letters confirming that this had been done and that no further action was required.
- People who were not on the Electoral Register often had difficulty in opening bank accounts etc.
- There would also be a local publicity campaign involving the local media.
(Free Newspapers, radio announcements, publications in One Stop Shops and the Council's website.)
- Schools, Sixth Form Colleges and interest groups e.g. Magenta Living and other Housing Associations would be informed of the IER process.
- Advanced copies of the local IER publicity leaflets would be sent to Members of the Committee providing the appropriate wording was received from the Electoral Commission in enough time to do so.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Senior Electoral Officer be thanked for his report and attendance at the meeting; and**
- (2) the contents of the Wirral Council's Preparations for Individual Electoral Registration Scrutiny Review Final Report and the recommendations therein be noted.**

8 PARKING ON PAVEMENTS/VERGES UPDATE

At its last meeting held on 26 February 2014 the Committee had been asked to consider a report in relation to parking on pavements and grass verges (Minute No. 22 refers). It was resolved:

'That this Committee looks forward to working with Highway Officers to tackle the problem of parking on pavements and grass verges and they be invited to attend the next meeting to progress this'.

Consequently, the Group Leader (Road Safety) was in attendance at the meeting to outline any progress/future projects in relation to this matter. He

reported that pavement parking was a vexatious issue nationally. There was a blanket ban on it in the Greater London area but the rest of the country was left to implement restrictions. To do this involved the introduction of a Traffic Regulation Order plus appropriate signage.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that legislation regarding pavement parking was very complex. Action could be taken if the Council could prove that damage had been caused as a result and so witnesses who saw the damage being done were required. The Police had powers to deal with pavement parking but it was a witness able offence and Police Officers had to see it happening before taking action. If they witnessed an obstruction they could act. Members noted that grass verges were constantly being damaged but it was difficult to prove who had caused the damage.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed the Committee that he was willing to speak to the Task and Finish Group about warning people and encouraging them to be better community minded and not park on grass verges and pavements.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) was then asked a number of questions which he answered as appropriate. Matters discussed included the following:

- There was a problem of unseated kerbs on Kings Road by Sunnybank because motorists parked on the kerb. The damage had been caused by a serial offender and there had been 50/60 complaints from residents about it. The person concerned had not been invoiced for the damage caused. The answer to this could be a Traffic Regulation Order but the cost of this would be an issue.
- The offenses being committed needed to be determined and then Officers should take them forward with the Parking Enforcement Contractor.
- Some Members had not heard of motorists being prosecuted for parking on verges and pavements but they were aware that recently, a person had been prosecuted for placing stones on the grass verge to deter motorists from parking there. Under the Highways Act stones should not be placed on verges. If damage was caused to vehicles as a consequence of this the Council was legally obligated to take action because stones should not be there.
- Preventative measures should be taken where there was a particular issue.
- The Council needed to work with the community as much as possible to bring about improvement.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the Group Leader (Road Safety) be thanked for his report and attendance at the meeting; and**
- (2) the Group Leader (Road Safety) be requested to work with the Task and Finish Group to pick up and progress all of the transport issues raised.**

9 UPDATE FROM MERSEYSIDE POLICE

The Neighbourhood Inspector Wirral South reported on current Policing issues including the following:

- Merseyside Police Authority was 40 years old this year having come into existence in 1974. To commemorate this there was to be a Grand Exhibition at the Museum of Liverpool between 10am and 5pm on Saturday, 28 June 2014 and admission was free. This would include displays from the Fire Arms Unit, the Mounted Police and the Dogs Sections. There would also be a fly past by the Police helicopter.
- A mobile Police Station borrowed from St Helens Policing Division was currently on trial on Wirral and the general consensus from the public on this had been very positive so it was intended that two mobiles would be purchased for Wirral West and for Wirral South's use. People could use these to speak privately to Police Officers.
- Statistics in respect of reported crimes and burglaries. Nationally Merseyside suffered more crimes than the national average but Wirral suffered less. In Wirral most crimes were carried out in Birkenhead and Wallasey. Burglaries were two over target. Some had been technical and some traditional. The figures were significantly under target for auto crime e.g. stealing and criminal damage. There was some retail theft.

Members then asked a number of questions which the Inspector answered as appropriate. Issues raised included the following:

- Bebington residents were concerned by a spate of burglaries where elderly people's doors had been kicked in.
- It was important to get the message over to residents to ensure their homes were secure when they were out in their gardens.
- The Police intended to send out leaflets to prevent burglaries and would inform the Constituency Manager which areas were being targeted and when.
- The Police was actively promoting Home Watch again. The information provided was brilliant but the way it was delivered was not. The data base was not very user friendly.

RESOLVED:

That the Neighbourhood Inspector Wirral South be thanked for his report and his attendance at the meeting.

10 UPDATE FROM THE MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

The Station Manager Wirral South reported on current Fire and Rescue Service issues including the following:

- Statistics for the period April to June 2014. There had been seven accidental fires dealt with, six had been to do with kitchen and cooking and there had been 51 secondary fires. Wirral South was not very high risk.
- There had been an Open Day at Heswall Fire Station with the aim of attempting to reduce the risk of fire.
- In respect of road traffic collisions advice had been prepared on how to drive safely.
- The Fire and Rescue Service sent representatives into schools to target 15/16 year olds about being safe.
- The second round of the Prince's Trust Programme was underway and it was expected that there would be a third and fourth round this year.

RESOLVED:

That the Station Manager Wirral South be thanked for his report and his attendance at the meeting.

11 PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION (APPROXIMATELY 20 MINUTES)

Elected Members and members of the public in attendance raised the following questions, comments and requests.

Number 1

A member of the public requested that additional parking space be provided in Oakfield Road, Bromborough. Residents who lived on that road had lots of vehicles and the parking of them was causing issues. Neighbours were falling out as a result. Buses had difficulty in getting by the parked vehicles. This was also considered a health and safety issue because emergency vehicles could not get past. The Committee was advised that additional parking space had been provided in other areas e.g. Bromborough Pool at a cost of £28,000 for a vast area and Oakfield Road was only half the size of that area.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that he would look with the Task and Finish Group at the possibility of providing the requested additional

parking. However, similar requests had been received from elsewhere in the Constituency area and he had the details of them on file.

A Member informed that the green in Oakfield Road belonged to Magenta Living. The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that he would look into this and ascertain which was adopted highway and which was not adopted highway.

Number 2

A member of the public informed of a persistent offender who regularly drove a vehicle on the pavement in Eastham. She asked if an Officer could make a site visit in an attempt to witness this.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that he would discuss this with the member of the public after the meeting and take the details.

Number 3

A member of the public enquired about the makeup of the Committee that had made decisions in respect of the grants awarded from the Wirral South Health and Wellbeing Fund.

The Constituency Manager informed that an open invitation had been issued to all Members of this Committee and eight or nine Members had been able to attend the meeting where recommendations to allocate the funding had been made.

Number 4

A member of the public was concerned about having to walk children to St Peter's C of E Primary School and back, along the lower part of Thurstaston Road where there were sandstone walls. Whilst doing this she had been clipped by car wing mirrors because motorists drove onto the pavement. She asked how motorists could be prevented from doing this.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that the Council was constrained by the sandstone walls which were not in its ownership. The Council could look at the possibilities of making this road one way but if this was to be done the speed of traffic on the road may then increase. He agreed to look into it and take some details from the member of the public.

The Constituency Manager agreed to arrange a site visit with all interested parties including representatives from the School.

Number 5

A member of the public informed that in Bromborough where he lived there were two massive grass verges in the centre of The Avenue. There was no where to park so motorists parked on the kerb.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that the carriageway was the place for vehicles to drive on and it was not acceptable to drive on kerbs and grass verges. It was costly to widen roads. Motorists should not damage the infrastructure and should not drive on pavements.

The member of the public informed that if motorists did not park on the kerb they could get their vehicles damaged as the road was very narrow.

Number 6

A member of the public requested the contact details of the newly co-opted community representatives. (Minute No. 29 refers.)

The Constituency Manager informed that he would discuss this request with the Co-opted Members but they could be contacted through him.

Number 7

A member of the public asked if arrangements were being put in hand in retail parks to encourage people not already on the Electoral Roll to register.

Number 8

A member of the public noted that a Cultural Strategy was being put together for Wirral. She was very interested in this and enquired if the Committee was represented on the group that had been tasked with this work.

It was noted that the Head of Regeneration and Planning was a member as was Alison McGovern MP.

A Member informed that the Cultural Strategy was an absolute priority and was in its early stages of development. He agreed to take the member of the public's details and pass them on to the Head of Regeneration and Planning.

Number 9

A member of the public asked how the new Individual Electoral Registration would affect him.

The Constituency Manager informed that the vast majority of people would receive a letter informing them that they were registered and the member of the public would probably one of them.

The member of the public was concerned that the Senior Electoral Officer had been allowed to leave the meeting because it meant that the opportunity to question him had been lost. He informed that for those who did not receive copies of the free press, there were free Newspapers available in Co-op Stores and some Tesco Stores.

The Constituency Manager informed that as well as information about IER being in free newspapers the publicity campaign would also involve face to face contact by knocking on doors in some areas.

Number 10

A member of the public was aware that the Government had provided funding of £360,000 to help repair potholes caused by severe weather last winter. He enquired whether this funding would be allocated via the Constituency Committees.

The Group Leader (Road Safety) informed that the Government funding would be used on priorities that had been identified by Highways Inspectors. Members of the public were invited to raise issues via Streetscene.

The member of the public asked if the Committee could not take the responsibility for allocating the funding.

The Constituency Manager informed that the funding for road repairs had not been devolved to the Committee this year and that the roads were scored to determine the priority for receiving attention.

The member of the public informed that this was a perfect opportunity for the Constituency Committees to take responsibility for spending this funding.

It was noted that the Council had adopted a prioritised system for road repairs but Elected Members could push to get potholes repaired as well. It was their job to identify issues like this.

Some Members agreed that the funding should have been devolved to the Constituency Committees. Others reminded the meeting that it was new money and it was not known whether a similar Government grant would be provided in future years. The funding would go into the Integrated Transport Block programme budget and the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport would decide which roads were resurfaced.

Number 11

A member of the Public informed that Heswall Hall Community Trust wanted to thank the Committee for the grant it had provided from the Health and Wellbeing Fund.

12 DISCUSSION OF ITEM RAISED AT THE LAST MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE REGARDING ELECTING A CHAIR FOR THE WHOLE OF THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

It was proposed by Councillor Adam Sykes and seconded by Councillor Cherry Povall that instead of having a different chair and Vice Chair for each Committee meeting, a Chair and Vice Chair be elected for the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year. This was put to the vote and it was

RESOLVED: (Unanimously)

That a Chair and Vice chair be elected for the ensuing Municipal Year.

13 ELECTION OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE ENSUING MUNICIPAL YEAR

RESOLVED: That

- (1) Councillor Phil Gilchrist be elected Chair of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year; and**
- (2) Councillor Jerry Williams be elected Vice Chair of the Committee for the ensuing Municipal Year.**

14 URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

(a) Seating Arrangements

A Member proposed that as the Committee was large, in future only one Elected Member from each ward should sit at the table whilst the other two Members from each ward sat with the public in the seats at the side of the Hall. There was little support for this proposal however, so the Member indicated that he wished to withdraw it.

(b) Use of Microphones

Members of the public made representations that in future microphones be used at Committee meetings as it had been difficult to follow the debates and hear what was being said without them. Members agreed with this and it was

RESOLVED:

That microphones be used at future Committee meetings.

15 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Committee Calendar for 2014/15 had been agreed by the Council. However, Constituency Manager informed that it was not now possible to hold Committee meetings at the Mayer Hall on Wednesday, 8 October 2014 and Wednesday, 15 April 2015 because a Community Group had made a block booking for Wednesday evenings. Consequently, he proposed that the Committee meet instead on Thursday, 16 October 2014 and Thursday, 16 April 2015 and that the Constituency Committee Handbook be printed with these revised dates in it.

RESOLVED:

That the proposal put forward by the Constituency Manager and set out above be agreed.

{NB Following the meeting it was noted that the Committee meeting scheduled for 21 January 2015 also needed to be rescheduled as it was due to be held on a Wednesday. With the agreement of the Chair, it will now take place on Thursday, 22 January 2015. This change will also be included in the Constituency Committee Handbook.}

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