

POLICY AND PERFORMANCE - REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 2 December 2015

Present: Councillor M Sullivan (Chair)

Councillors KJ Williams D Mitchell
J Crabtree T Pilgrim
G Ellis C Spriggs
R Gregson A Sykes
J Hale S Williams

Deputies: Councillors C Muspratt (In place of S Niblock)
M Patrick (In place of M Daniel)
J Salter (In place of J Stapleton)

Cabinet Member
in attendance: Councillor S Whittingham

Visiting Member: Councillor C Blakeley

22 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST/PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or any other relevant interest in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state the nature of the interest.

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.

The following declarations were made:

Member	Item(s)	Reason	Action
Councillor D.Mitchell	Agenda Item 3 – Notice of Motion: Proposal for a Fire Station on Green Belt in Saughall Massie	Non-pecuniary interest – By virtue of his membership of the Planning Committee	Left the room whilst the item was under consideration – did not vote.

Councillor J. Salter	Agenda Item 6 – Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation, Objections to Highways Proposals	Non-pecuniary interest – By virtue of his membership of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee, having previously considered the item on 23 November	Took part in the debate.
Councillor J.Hale	Agenda Item 6 – Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation, Objections to Highways Proposals	Non-pecuniary interest – By virtue of his membership of the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee, having previously considered the item on 23 November	Took part in the debate.
Councillor C.Muspratt	Agenda Item 6 – Amendment to the Scheme of Delegation, Objections to Highways Proposals	Non-pecuniary interest – By virtue of her membership of the Wirral Cycle Forum	Took part in the debate.

23 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 15 September 2015 be approved.

24 **NOTICE OF MOTION - PROPOSAL FOR A FIRE STATION ON GREEN BELT LAND IN SAUGHALL MASSIE**

Reference Minute No 11 (15 September, 2015), Members further considered the issues raised by the Motion put before the Council on 6 July 2015 (proposed by Councillor Chris Blakeley and seconded by Councillor Bruce Berry): That

“Council acknowledges the overwhelming public opposition to the proposal by Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service (MFRS) for a fire station on green belt land in Saughall Massie, as demonstrated by:

- The 200 people who attended a public meeting arranged by MFRS, and a further 270 who were unable to gain admission to the venue.

- The opposition of the Saughall Massie Village Area Conservation Society and the Wirral Society.
- The 970 people who have, so far, signed a petition against the proposal.

Council impresses upon Cabinet:

- (1) To maintain protection of Wirral's Green Belt, as set by agreed policies and stop inappropriate development.
- (2) Not to gift, sell or lease the land concerned in Saughall Massie, because of the value it has for the community."
- (3) To ask officers to continue to work co-operatively with Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service in identifying and facilitating a more suitable brown field site for operational purposes and to maintain the amenity of the local people."

That Motion had been rejected by the Committee at its meeting on 15 September 2015 but the Committee had not decided on its recommendation to the Council on the issues the Motion had raised.

A Member informed the Committee that as a result of the important issues raised by Councillor Blakeley when presenting his Motion and the subsequent debate on the item, the Committee's Chair had requested that a Senior Officer from the Fire Service, with knowledge of the site selection process, be invited to attend the meeting in order to answer any questions.

Consequently, Mr Dan Stephens, Chief Fire Officer, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service was in attendance at the meeting.

Members questioned Mr Stephens on site selection for the proposed new Fire Station, requesting information on the circumstances behind the proposal to site a Fire Station on Green Belt land at Saughall Massie and availability of other possible locations not in the Green Belt.

Mr Stephens informed the Committee of the requirement to make significant budget savings in 2015/16, and explained how closures of existing fire stations and sharing/re-siting of services in other areas of Merseyside had been implemented to achieve this. At this point, the Chair quelled an interruption from the public gallery that had questioned the relevance of this information.

A Member noted that it was important to understand the context and pressures that had brought about this proposal.

Mr Stephens went on to inform the Committee of the mid-point location of the proposed site (equidistant between the current Upton Fire Station and West Kirby Fire Station). He explained that a 12 week consultation exercise had taken place across the affected areas earlier in the year, he also provided information on operational matters i.e. response times summarising the statistical analysis, and issues faced by the Fire Service regarding the initial site selection – Greasby Library (brownfield site), and acknowledged that as a result the only sites that met the requirements of a combined Fire Station that would achieve the required response times were located in the Green Belt. He explained that the matter would ultimately be decided by via submission of an application to the Council's Planning Committee. Mr Stephens informed that a number of alternative sites had been under consideration, but as the Fire Service did not have any compulsory purchase powers, any site would have to be purchased / leased with the permission of the owner.

Members questioned the Chief Fire Officer on a range of matters specifically related to the selection of the site in Saughall Massie, public objections to the planned location and the scope and outcome of the consultation process. The Committee noted the difficult position faced by the MFRS in terms of its budget, having lost 38% of its Revenue Support Grant i.e. £26million from an initial figure of £70million. It was noted that the most cost effective option available to the Fire Service in terms of location would arise from obtaining the land which was currently in the ownership of the Council.

A Member pointed out that the original Motion consisted of three elements – protection of the Green Belt, not to gift land, and to look for alternative sites. These were the issues upon which the Committee should report.

The Chair pointed out that it was the duty of the Committee to obtain as much information on the matter as was feasible before making its recommendation to the Council.

A Member pointed out that in the long run, whatever the site, the primary objective remained 'to save lives', and as such response times were a key factor to be taken into account.

A Member informed that whether the Committee agreed that a Saughall Massie site was appropriate or inappropriate, development in the Green Belt was ultimately subject to Planning Law and the Council's own Development Plan and by agreeing the Motion, the Committee could in effect block this essential service, and the debate to find a solution would have to continue.

The Head of Regeneration and Planning clarified that, at present, the use of Green Belt land for the building of a Fire Station under the Development Plan was classed as inappropriate development - unless special circumstances could prove otherwise – this could include technical data and information

regarding the consideration of other sites. The matter would have to be considered by the Planning Committee in planning policy terms.

Discussion took place regarding the appropriateness of the site at Greasby Library and the complex reasons for its removal as an option for consideration. The Chief Fire Officer provided additional information about approaches to private land owners in the area, and how given the lack of response and refusal to engage in dialogue these site options had also been discounted.

At this point in the debate,

The following Motion was moved.

Proposed by: Councillor Matthew Patrick

Seconded by: Councillor Chris Spriggs

“The Council acknowledges that the devastating cuts to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority put the Authority in an incredibly difficult situation.

Whilst the Council expresses strong disapproval of the Conservative Government’s decision to cut 38% from the Fire Authority’s grant, it acknowledges that there is a lack of time to force the Fire Service to find alternatives.

Council impresses upon the Cabinet to:

Support Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority in its obligations to balance the budget and ensure that a decision is not unnecessarily delayed.

The Council also recognises that the Planning Committee will be responsible for the planning aspect. It further recognises that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will also have to agree with the development’s appropriateness.”

A vote was taken:

For: 8

Against: 5

The Motion was therefore carried.

At this point, the Chair quelled an interruption from the public gallery relating to a Member’s right to speak further on the original Motion (which had already been exercised at the previous meeting).

Resolved:

That the COUNCIL BE ADVISED that this Committee supports the Motion:

“The Council acknowledges that the devastating cuts to Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority put the Authority in an incredibly difficult situation.

Whilst the Council expresses strong disapproval of the Conservative Government’s decision to cut 38% from the Fire Authority’s grant, it acknowledges that there is a lack of time to force the Fire Service to find alternatives.

Council impresses upon the Cabinet to:

Support Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority in its obligations to balance the budget and ensure that a decision is not unnecessarily delayed.

The Council also recognises that the Planning Committee will be responsible for the planning aspect. It further recognises that the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government will also have to agree with the development’s appropriateness.”

25 **NOTICE OF MOTION - SUPPORTING WIRRAL'S PART IN OUR NUCLEAR INDUSTRIES**

Members of the Policy and Performance Regeneration and Environment Committee considered a motion to Council (6 July 2015) as proposed by Councillor Steve Williams and seconded by Councillor Wendy Clements, that:

“Council notes many Wirral residents work in our major nuclear power and defence industries, both directly (in companies such as Urenco, Cammell Laird and CNS) and indirectly, in the supply chain.

Council believes these highly-skilled, well paid advanced engineering jobs offer opportunities for residents and welcomes the skills and apprenticeship training at Wirral Metropolitan College for young people entering the industry.

Council agrees with the Leader of the Council that Wirral has a strong track record in manufacturing for the nuclear industry and calls on the Administration to play an even greater part in providing students with the skills required to play a full part in future manufacturing and production.”

At the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Williams introduced the Motion, and informed the Committee about the opportunities arising from Wirral's well-established nuclear power and defence industries and available apprenticeship training. He provided detail regarding the types, and levels, of employment in the industries informing of the need to support and keep 'high value, high tech' employment opportunities on the Wirral. Members noted that the employment figures for those employed in the nuclear and defence industries on the Wirral were in the region of 21% compared to the National average of 10%.

Members applauded the Wirral businesses success welcoming any opportunity to develop or expand the workforce in such industries. Although supporting the Motion, a Member expressed concerns regarding the problems associated with the handling of nuclear waste by-products. Other Members of the Committee compared the cleanliness of nuclear power generation methods to fossil fuel power production, and informed that the local businesses included research facilities looking to further improve safety and cleanliness of the industry.

A vote was taken:

For: 9

Against: 1

Abstained: 3

Resolved:

That the COUNCIL BE ADVISED that this Committee supports the Motion in respect of Wirral's part in providing students with the skills required to play a part in the future of our Nuclear Industries i.e.

“Council notes many Wirral residents work in our major nuclear power and defence industries, both directly (in companies such as Urenco, Cammell Laird and CNS) and indirectly, in the supply chain.

Council believes these highly-skilled, well paid advanced engineering jobs offer opportunities for residents and welcomes the skills and apprenticeship training at Wirral Metropolitan College for young people entering the industry.

Council agrees with the Leader of the Council that Wirral has a strong track record in manufacturing for the nuclear industry and calls on the Administration to play an even greater part in providing students with the skills required to play a full part in future manufacturing and production.”

The Policy and Performance Committee Regeneration and Environment received a verbal update on the current position of Devolution in the Liverpool City Region from Ms. Rose Boylan, Policy & Strategy Manager.

Ms Boylan informed that in the Budget 8 July 2015 the Chancellor confirmed the Region's commitment to negotiate a "Devolution Agreement" with Government, and that a framework of devolution 'asks' formed submission to the Comprehensive Spending Review on 4 September 2015. The Committee was advised of detailed on-going negotiations, with a number of meetings to outline scale of ambition having been held with:

- Rt. Hon Greg Clark 10 September
- Lord Heseltine 29 October
- Lord O'Neill 9 November

The Committee noted that following months of negotiations, a deal had been agreed with Government on 17 November and that this had been formally agreed by all 6 participating Councils on 19 November, and at the meeting of the Combined Authority on 20 November 2015.

The Policy & Strategy Manager informed Members that the deal was phase one of Devolution, and gave Councils in the City Region more power on key issues of economic growth, business support, skills, housing and transport, with phase 2 discussions to start now, focussing on health, social care, police and fire & rescue services.

Members were informed that key areas of the deal were as follows:

- Economic Development – to support trade and movement of goods through the Port Recognition of the River and Liverpool Bay as a key asset within Northern Powerhouse. A commitment to review a business case to develop a cost-effective tidal power scheme was also included in the deal.
- Transport Responsibility for a devolved and consolidated local transport budget with a multi-year settlement, that included powers to rebrand bus services, and a commitment that the Department for Transport work with the City Region to review Tunnel Tolls.
- Housing and Planning – agreement of a Statutory City Region Framework to support delivery of strategic employment and housing sites, with further discussion to take place on the potential devolution of housing loan funds and future housing ambitions.

- Employment and Skills – a focus on hard to reach groups, using a household approach and the improvement of skills and vocational education.
- Governance – In response to the devolution of the above powers, the City Region would be voting for an Elected Mayor in May 2017

The Policy & Strategy Manager informed Members that the devolution of powers was to provide an investment fund worth £900m over 30 years, direct influence over key policy areas – Skills, Employment, Business Support, Euro funding, Transport, Public Assets and Culture. Members noted that the deal also provided a realistic prospect of reducing Tunnel Tolls, committed Government to further discussions about Housing; Vocational Education; Tidal Power and other possible areas for devolution.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

27 **AMENDMENT TO SCHEME OF DELEGATION - OBJECTIONS TO HIGHWAY PROPOSALS**

The Head of Environment and Regulation introduced his report that set out proposed changes to the existing Scheme of Delegation in respect of unresolved objections to traffic management measures, including traffic regulation orders. The report recommended that delegated powers to decide on such objections be devolved to the Head of Service (in consultation with the Portfolio Holder) in cases where unresolved objections were below a set threshold. Members were informed that the views of both the Regeneration & Environment Policy & Performance and Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee were being sought in advance of seeking approval for the change to the Constitution at Council in December.

The Head of Environment and Regulation informed of the procedures as operated under the current Scheme of Delegation, whereby detailed reports regarding objections are put to the Highways & Traffic Representation Panel, which considers the officer's report and invites representations from objectors. He further informed of the actions undertaken following consideration by the Panel.

The Head of Environment and Regulation explained that the proposed amendment to the procedures recommended that the Scheme of Delegation in relation to unresolved objections to traffic management measures be altered such that it operates in a similar manner to the Scheme of Delegation for objections to planning applications.

Members were informed that following consideration by the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee 23 November, 2015 (Minute No 10 refers) noting that a number of recommendations had been proposed, namely to alert Ward Councillors on local highways matters under the new procedures. Members were also informed that the words 'traffic management' were to be removed from para 3.3. of the proposal to allow a broader, more practical, approach to supporting objections. A further amendment to para 3.2 included the removal of the words 'from individual households'.

In support of the Amendments put forward by the Standards and Constitutional Oversight Committee, Members requested that new procedures must incorporate provision of notice about highway schemes to Ward Councillors 'in good time', to include a deadline for views / submissions from Members, and that the notices or 'Ward Reports' be supplied in a larger print font than currently. Members stated that these incorporations and alterations would provide an opportunity for Councillors to discuss proposals with residents.

Visiting Councillor, Stuart Whittingham, Cabinet Member Transport, Technology Strategy and Infrastructure assured Members that such notifications were currently circulated to Councillors via e-mail.

Resolved: That

- (1) the proposed changes to the Council's Constitution as outlined be endorsed; and**
- (2) the COUNCIL BE RECOMMENDED to approve the changes to the Council Constitution in respect of Part 3, Schedule 5, Scheme of Delegation - Objections to Highway Proposals.**

28 **MINUTES FROM HIGHWAYS AND TRAFFIC REPRESENTATION PANEL**

Resolved: That

- 1) the recommendations of the Highways and Traffic Representation Panel as detailed in the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2015 be endorsed; and**
- 2) the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transportation be recommended to take appropriate action in respect of the following:**

PROPOSALS TO INTRODUCE CALMING FEATURES AND 20MPH SPEED LIMIT, ANNESLEY ROAD AREA, WALLASEY - That the

proposal as shown on drawing no. DC/0113/100 be approved for implementation.

PROPOSALS TO PROVIDE OFF ROAD UN-SEGREGATED CYCLEWAY/FOOTPATH(S) AND ROUNDABOUT IMPROVEMENTS ALONG CORPORATION ROAD AND CLEVELAND STREET BETWEEN DUKE STREET AND BEAUFORT ROAD - That the proposal as shown on drawing no. 357912-MMD-H-DR-01-0100-001 is approved for implementation.

29 **2015/16 QUARTER 2 DIRECTORATE PLAN PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT**

The Head of Regeneration and Planning presented a report of the Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment that set out Quarter 2 (July – September 2015) performance against delivery of the Regeneration and Environment Directorate Plan. Members noted that the Directorate Plan had been reported to the Policy and Performance Regeneration and Environment Committee on 15 September 2015.

A performance report attached as Appendix 1 to the main report set out progress against a suite of agreed key performance indicators.

The report informed that for each performance measure, a Red, Amber or Green (RAG) rating had been assigned, setting out a performance level against a target, and showed the direction of travel for each measure to illustrate whether performance was improving, deteriorating or sustained.

Of the 14 reportable indicators, 13 (93%) were rated Green, and 1 (7%) was rated Red. For indicator rated Red, the responsible officer had indicated the corrective action being put in place to get performance back on track.

Members were informed that although the first 6 months of 2015 compared to the same period in 2014 showed there have been some KSI improvements in pedestrian casualties (particularly child KSIs), there had been increases in the number motorcycle and scooter casualties as well as in-car casualties. Members noted that a multi-agency action/activity plan had been agreed by key partner agencies to address the matter.

A Member informed the Committee about the Safety Awareness Show held in July attended by 1048 children from across the Wirral and Liverpool, at no cost to the attendees. He informed that people had given up the spare time, to instruct the attendees these included Doctors, Nurses, Police, Police Cadets, Rail Transport Police, Coastguards, Merseytravel, Network Rail, Wirral Borough Council road safety team, CEOPS, St John,s Ambulance, and the NHS. He stated that the event had surpassed all expectations, and hoped that

another such event already planned for July 2016 would be just as successful in raising awareness of road safety issues to young people.

Resolved:

That the contents of the report be noted.

30 **FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Head of Regeneration and Planning presented a report of the Acting Section 151 Officer that set out the financial monitoring information for this Committee. The report provided a basis for Members to scrutinise budget performance for the Directorate and provided financial information for Quarter 2 (July-September 2015) as reported to Cabinet on 5 November 2015.

The report informed of the following key points:

- Environment and Regulation: Highway Maintenance - was the largest component of this part of the Capital Programme, and so far £3.3 million of the £3.9 million budget had been spent. Energy schemes (LED Street Lighting) - competitive tendering process has resulted in a contract saving of £1.074 million with the scheme being successful in securing an interest-free loan. Coast Protection - aids to Navigation scheme will now be completed during the 2016/17 financial year. In respect of West Kirby Flood Alleviation the business case has been submitted to the Environment Agency. Approval to commence the scheme was awaited and anticipated to be primarily in 2016/17.
- Housing: In order to allow people with disabilities to live more independently, Aids and Adaptations and Grants continue to be approved and the budget was committed. Incurring of the budget spend was determined by the grant applicant which meant that there would invariably be works approved remaining uncompleted during the year. The clearance programme involved complex legal processes and with potential Compulsory Purchase Orders, public enquiries and business relocations could impact on the delivery of the programme.
- Regeneration - Regional Growth Fund. Additional grant will be received to match the expenditure relating to this particular regeneration activity. Nearly £5 million has been provided from this and other growth funds to provide investment and assist with the regeneration and development of local businesses.

Members noted the summary figures as below:

Capital Programme 2015/16 at end of Quarter 2 (30 September)

	Capital Strategy	Revisions Since Budget Cabinet	Revised Capital Programme	Actual Spend September 2015
	£000	£000	£000	£000
R&E Environment & Regulation	12,633	-147	12,486	4,698
R&E Housing & Community Safety	6,412	-984	5,428	1,308
R&E Regeneration	1,808	4,736	6,544	5,018
Total expenditure	20,853	3,605	24,458	11,024

Note: revisions reflect re-profiling of schemes from 2014/15 plus additional grant funding

Discussion took place regarding the proposed Hamilton Square Accessibility Improvements and historic links with previous spending on projects in the Square. Members debated the merits and their concerns regarding proposals to revitalise the area, noting the need to link the Square and other plans to improve and integrate Birkenhead Town Centre linking with local bus routes, and the Mersey Tunnel. Members noted that the proposal formed part of proposals within the Wirral 2020 Plan / Culture Strategy, to animate the Wirral Waterfront and develop Wirral's culture, tourism and heritage.

Members agreed that Birkenhead Town and its immediate environs were of strategic importance to Wirral and that they would welcome a more in-depth look at the work that was going on in this area by the Committee. The specific way in which this was best done would be discussed and agreed between the Party Spokespersons and the Head of Regeneration and Planning.

Resolved: That

- 1) the contents of the report be noted; and**
- 2) Members should look in more detail at the various initiatives taking place in and around Birkenhead Town Centre. The best way of doing this to be agreed between the Party Spokespersons and the Head of regeneration and Planning.**

31 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE REPORT**

The Policy and Performance Regeneration and Environment Committee noted the report of the Chair that updated members on the current position regarding the Committee's work programme as agreed for the 2015/16 municipal year.

The report summarised a number of key points in relation to the planned work of the Committee that included:

- Members to receive regular updates on the devolution deal for the Liverpool City Region. Noting that this particular update had been covered elsewhere on the agenda but would, in future, be included as a standing item for future Committee meetings.
- Initial scoping for the Task & Finish scrutiny review on Tourism had taken place.
- Three scrutiny workshops for Members to consider the delivery of the Wirral Plan had taken place. The workshops covered each of the three themes (People, Business and Environment) and the outcomes are to be presented in a consolidated report to the Policy & Performance Coordinating Committee scheduled for 10th December.

Resolved:

That the updated Regeneration and Environment Policy & Performance Committee work programme for 2015/16 as shown in the appendix to the report be noted.