

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - BIRKENHEAD

Thursday, 21 January 2016

Present:

Councillor Rt Hon Frank Field (Chair)

Councillors	A Brighthouse	B Kenny
	P Cleary	AR McLachlan
	G Davies	M McLaughlin
	P Davies	C Meaden
	WJ Davies	D Roberts
	P Doughty	J Stapleton
	S Foulkes	

Apologies

Councillors	J Crabtree	D Realey
	T Norbury	P Williams

23 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT- DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were received.

24 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor J Crabtree
Councillor P Williams

25 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2015 be agreed as a correct record.

26 **CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Chair indicated that he had agreed for a presentation to be given to the Committee updating Members on the Budget Consultation "Residents Insight" Wirral Residents' Priorities, Attitudes and Values from the Council's Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications.

PRESENTATION - BUDGET CONSULTATION - A RESIDENTS INSIGHT

The Committee considered a presentation from the Council's Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications updating Members on the Council's Budget Consultation "Residents Insight" Wirral Residents' Priorities, Attitudes and Values.

He indicated that to drive a better strategy, policy and decision-making there was a need to have the best possible insight and intelligence into what residents actually wanted or needed.

Insight allowed the Council to make informed decisions in developing its five-year Delivery Plan and its five-year Budget Strategy.

Ipsos MORI had done the first stage of the insight work to provide a base snapshot of how residents felt about living in Wirral, what they saw as their priorities and what their top issues were for the area.

Residents were asked what was important to them. Feedback information would be used to inform all of the Council's strategies, policies and the budget-setting/planning process.

The Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications highlighted the methodology and benchmarking used behind the consultation; the views of those residents living within Birkenhead and issues which residents felt needed improvement ranked in the order of importance which included; low levels of crime and ASB; accessible health services and provision of good care; high educational standards and good schools; cleaner streets and environment and good standard and affordable homes.

The presentation highlighted those areas where Birkenhead residents had indicated most needed improvement road and pavement repairs being completed quickly and efficiently being ranked top.

The highest priority for Birkenhead residents was reported at being a reduction in ASB and crime, with the lowest being sport and recreation facilities.

In relation to ASB, dog fouling amounted to 65% reported in Birkenhead and there had been a reduction of 819 of reported incidents since 2014 to 2015.

In relation to Health and Wellbeing most residents (72%) felt that their health was at least fairly good, with one-third (33%) indicating that they had a long term condition/disability which had limited their day to day activities.

In terms of economy, there were inconsistencies in employment levels across the borough, Birkenhead (18%) having significantly higher levels of workless residents than the Borough as a whole.

The Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications concluded by highlighting the next steps and indicated that the Council was committed to repeating the research on a regular basis to track progress and changes in perception and to assist the Council in monitoring its progress along with that of the Wirral Partnership.

A Member indicated that this piece of work had many advantages and gave the Council a baseline on which to plan for the future, he indicated that MORI had done similar consultations in other Local Authorities therefore the information could be used to help the Council share best practice going forward.

RESOLVED:

That the Senior Manager, Marketing & Communications be thanked for his informative presentation.

28 **ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR BUDGET**

As highlighted within the previous item (Minute 27 refers) A Member reported that as evidence by the MORI survey, residents rated Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) as the serious issue I need of action in Birkenhead and the Council and its officers were working tirelessly to reduce the reported ASB incidents.

Officers had been working with Merseyside Police and the Fire Authority to create a structure whereby there would be only one command and budget for ASB which would sit under the Police structure.

In relation to the current provision within the Council to tackle ASB, he indicated that there was a designated ASB team who collated referrals from Members, Police and Residents and with prosecutions, there was also a designated Community Patrol Service which was a huge resource that looked after the Authority's schools, provided an out-of-hours service and responded to ASB incidents in the Borough's parks. It was hoped that by April 2016 there would be an integrated team under the Police structure which would include all of the relevant officers and agencies.

An update was given on the development of the Wirral Youth Zone for which work had started in December 2015; work was expected to be completed by January 2017. Members had visited a similar Youth Zone which had been established in Wigan and this example of good practice would be replicated within the centre at Wirral.

In response concerns raised by Mrs L Brace in relation to the cost of young people wanting to attend the Youth Zone and the barriers to transport, A Member indicated that there would be a small cost to attend but this would be kept to a minimum and would be used to assist with the running costs. In relation to the barriers to transport it was reported that Officers were in discussions with Merseytravel regarding this.

The Chair suggested that the remainder of £30,000 of the Committee's ASB Budget be placed under the control of the Police, on the proviso that it was used immediately to respond to those ASB hotspots that were identified by Members to take effect by April 2016, when the Police assumed full control of an integrated force.

The Chair also requested that the ASB Unit be asked to report back on whether those hotspots previously identified by Members had been acted on.

Members updated the Committee on a recent visit they had undertaken to the CCTV Control Room in Liverpool which they felt was a fantastic venue with representatives from all emergency services in attendance, monitoring two of Wirral's CCTV cameras. The unit also monitored systems for other neighbouring Authorities, but it was noted that systems were not monitored 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Mr Cambourne, Anti-Social Behaviour Manager indicated that in addition to those systems that were being monitored in Liverpool, Wirral had 112 public space CCTV cameras, which were recorded by a control room based at Cheshire Lines and were monitored on an intelligence led basis.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the remainder of £30,000 of the Committee's ASB Budget be placed under the control of the Police, on the proviso that it is used immediately to respond to those ASB hotspots that were identified by Members to take effect by April 2016, when the Police assumed full control of an integrated force; and**
- (2) Officers from the ASB Unit be requested to report back on whether those hotspots previously identified by Members had been acted on.**

29 **FEEDING BIRKENHEAD**

The Committee considered a verbal update from Andrew Forsey regarding 'Feeding Birkenhead', further details were also outlined within the Constituency Managers Report attached to the agenda.

Mr Forsey indicated that following analysis of feedback received 360 children had been feed through the Feeding Birkenhead half term projects in the month of October at a cost of £6.00 per child and Neo along with Involve North West had distributed 100 food hampers to families over the Christmas period.

Fare Share

The Wirral Fare Share was launched before Christmas and was located in Wallasey. Fare Share national was bidding to Your Wirral to cover the yearly costs for three community organisations subscriptions. Another application would be completed to cover three further subscriptions. Further work was to be done to source resources to support staff to provide further projects up to 2020.

The Chair highlighted the fantastic work undertaken by the representatives from voluntary sector as part of 'Feeding Birkenhead' agenda and on behalf of the Members of the Constituency Committee, suggested that a letter of thanks be sent to all the wonderful projects who had worked tirelessly on assisting with the "Feeding Birkenhead" project, and in particular their fantastic work in helping the Committee counter hunger amongst children.

Community Fridges

The Constituency Manager, Birkenhead updated the Committee on the progress in relation to community fridges. She indicated that she had spoken to the Council's Environmental Health Team who had provided guidance and officer advice.

The Chair reported that local supermarkets had agreed to help with this project and took the responsibility to clear and replenish the food in the fridges to ensure that the food made available to those who needed it was fresh.

It was noted that by the date of the next Constituency meeting, a series of community fridges would be established to offer fresh surplus food at locations in Beechwood, BEE, St. James, Gautby Road and Neo Café.

A Member indicated that alongside the work being undertaken on Feeding Birkenhead, particular attention needed to be paid to fuel poverty which was also a cause of concern. In response, the Chair indicated that whilst distributing food hampers it was noticed that there was big demand for candles which families were using to help with the heating of food; subsequently all hampers were changed to ensure that all food supplied could be consumed without the need for heating, but raised a huge concern regarding fuel poverty which also needing addressing as part of the Feeding Birkenhead agenda.

Food Hubs

The Constituency Manager indicated that Neo Café who was working in partnership with the Viking Centre to deliver a range of services including; discounted supermarket, feeding children in school holidays; hampers; luncheon clubs; breakfast clubs and activities.

The Constituency Manager indicated that she along with the Chair would be meeting with representatives of the Viking Centre and the Neo Café to discuss Neo's long term future it was hoped that Neo Café would be able to continue to provide services within the Viking Centre

Following a discussion from Members, it was recommended that the remaining £28,750 of the Committee's funding be allocated to a further two hubs in areas of most need in Birkenhead. St James and Beechwood had both come forward with proposals around delivering a food hub. The proposal from St James was attached as an appendix to the Constituency Managers report.

It was suggested and agreed that a Feeding Birkenhead Task and Finish Group be established consisting of Councillors A. Brighthouse, A. Davies, S Foulkes, A McLachlan, C Meaden and J Stapleton to consider bids from the St James Centre and Beechwood Community Trust for grants of £15,000 to establish two food hubs.

Once established, the Task and Finish Group was also requested to consider a request from the Chair for £80,000 of Your Wirral funding to be used as a block grant towards a new Community Shop in the Pyramids Shopping Centre and should this request be agreed to, a formal request from the Committee be made to Magenta Living.

At this point Councillor S Foulkes declared a Personal Interest by virtue of his being a Board Member of Magenta Living.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) on behalf of the Members of the Constituency Committee, a letter of thanks be sent to all the wonderful projects who had worked tirelessly on assisting with the "Feeding Birkenhead" project, and in particular their fantastic work in helping the Committee counter hunger amongst children;**
- (2) it be noted that by the time of the next Constituency meeting, a series of community fridges would have been established to offer fresh surplus food at locations in Beechwood, BEE, St. James, Gautby Road and Neo Café;**

- (3) a Feeding Birkenhead Task and Finish Group be established consisting of Councillors A. Brighthouse, A. Davies, S Foulkes, A McLachlan, C Meaden and J Stapleton to consider bids from the St James Centre and Beechwood Community Trust for grants of £15,000 to establish two food hubs; and
- (4) the Feeding Birkenhead Task and Finish Group be requested to consider a request from the Chair for £80,000 of Your Wirral funding to be used as a block grant towards a new Community Shop in the Pyramids Shopping Centre and should this request be agreed to, a formal request from the Committee be made to Magenta Living.

30 KEEPING BIRKENHEAD CLEAN

The Constituency Manager updated Members on Keeping Birkenhead Clean. In 2015-16 the Constituency Committee had been allocated £20,000 for environmental funds which had been fully allocated as follows:

- £14K Involve North West – Continued Grotspot project
- £6K skip fund

LCT was now called Involved North West. They had continued to deliver the Grotspot project and reactive fly tipping contract. They had also completed a series of clean-ups which were highlighted in Appendix 2 within the Constituency Managers report (Agenda Item 4). They have picked up any fly tipping not under the Biffa contract and the joined up environmental service had become effective with no outstanding issues reported. Involve had also planted up planters in Claughton Village and worked with Bidston Avenue Primary to plant daffodils on Bidston Avenue.

The Royal Horticultural Society co-ordinated an 'North West In Bloom' competition for local neighbourhood groups to enter. Judging was to take place in July against set criteria of: impact of planting, community involvement, using sustainable methods, biodiversity etc. Involve had allocated £1K to each ward for Birkenhead in Bloom for planning schemes and planting from March to July 2016 out of the Grotspot contract.

Wirral Environmental Network had agreed to deliver a hanging basket engagement day in each area. The eco-schools co-ordinator had written to each school in the identified area to deliver engagement afternoons with local schools. The police had suggested that they would like to be involved in engagement days and clean-ups prior to 'In Bloom' judging and Big Local Beechwood had agreed to contribute £3K for Beachwood and Bidston Village.

The Constituency Manager indicated that a Big Lunch would be held on conjunction with Food Share to celebrate the competition and also as a thank you to all participants for their hard work.

A Member indicated that at a previous meeting, the Committee had asked that Biffa be requested to provide a breakdown of contract spend in the Birkenhead area which had still to be received.

In response to the Constituency Manager comments, the Chair suggested and it was agreed by Members that in relation the Council's contract with Biffa, a plan be drawn up which reflected the needs of each local area.

In relation to the preparation for the 'In Bloom' competition, the Constituency Manager indicated that following a meeting she had, had, Probation had agreed to do some work on weed spraying in readiness for the competition submission. In response, the Chair asked if Probation could undertake the weed spraying prior to the flowers being planted.

A Member asked that particular attention be given to Balls Road, Oxton which was need of urgent cleansing.

A Member also raised an issue regarding the increased litter on the strategic routes into the area, such as Whetstone Lane and New Chester Road and suggested that Community Payback could be asked to clear these areas.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) in relation to the Council's contract with Biffa, the Constituency Manager be requested to draw up a plan which reflected the needs of each local area in relation to cleansing;**
- (2) the Constituency Manager be requested to liaise with Probation who would be doing some work on weed spraying to ask if the weed spraying could be done prior to the flowers being planted in readiness for the 'In Bloom' competition;and**
- (3) the Constituency Manager be requested to liaise with the Environment team regarding issues raised by Members in relation to Balls Road, Oxton which was in need of urgent cleansing and also the issue of increased litter on the strategic routes in the area; to include Whetstone Lane and New Chester Road and ask if Community Payback could be asked to clear these areas.**

31 ROAD SAFETY

The Constituency Manager indicated that in 2015-16, £25,000 was allocated to road safety problems in Birkenhead. The Road Safety task group met on 11th December and considered 9 road safety proposals. Funds were allocated to the following:

Circular Road – One Way Traffic Regulation Order

Local Councillors reported that there were a number of issues in the area. The most pressing being that Circular Road would be safer as a one-way street. It is comparatively narrow with limited parking spaces for residents' cars. This leaves a narrow roadway for vehicles to pass. There are elderly residents and young children in the immediate area and residents have complained that there are times when ambulances have real difficulty reaching people in need due to parking. Additionally there is no footway on sections of this road and pedestrians coming out of residences walk straight onto the road.

Officers have assessed the feasibility of providing a one-way restriction along Circular Road and consider there may be scope to impose such a restriction between property boundary no.1&11, Circular Road to property no. 12 Lowwood Road.

Decision

Concerns were raised about poor visibility, coupled with a lack of pavement for pedestrians and problems with vehicles reversing in the area. The project will address these issues and is estimated to cost £7000. It was agreed by the group that this project should be funded.

Hinderton Road - Two Vehicle Activated Signs

Local Councillors reported that Hinderton Road has a very dangerous junction with Holt Hill and there was serious collision there within the last year. Councillors felt that there is a strong case for additional measures at this junction to try and prevent further incidents of this nature.

Decision

After some discussion based on evidence of injury crashes, it was agreed by the Road Safety task group that a project to introduce two vehicle activated signs at £9K should be funded and that it also be encouraged that the community engage with the Council/Police Community Speedwatch initiative.

Bidston Village - Two Vehicle Activated Signs

There are traffic problems around cars speeding through Bidston Village.

Decision

After some discussion based on evidence of injury crashes, it was agreed by the group that a project to introduce two vehicle activated signs at £9K should be funded and that it also be encouraged that the community engage with the Council/Police Community Speedwatch initiative. The road was in a Conservation area so further engagement with residents and the conservation group would be needed.

Details of the full nine proposals submitted to the Road Safety task group can be found in Appendix 5. The remaining proposals will be reviewed if the Constituency Committee receives further funding for Road Safety measures next financial year.

A Member suggested that further details be given to the Committee explaining how the criteria worked in relation to the Highways Maintenance contract with a breakdown for Birkenhead.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the recommendations of the Road Safety Task Group, detailed with the Constituency Managers report in relation to Circular Road, Hinderton Road and Bidston Village be approved; and**
- (2) the Constituency Manager be requested to liaise with the Head of Environment and Regulation to ask for further details explaining how the criteria worked in relation to the Highways Maintenance contract and also provide a breakdown for Birkenhead, to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.**

32 MERSEY FERRIES LONG TERM STRATEGY

A Member updated the Committee regarding the recent report that had been considered by Members of the Merseytravel Committee; the purpose of the report was to share the outcomes from a recently commissioned Mersey Ferries long term strategy review and sought the endorsement of the 20 year strategy moving forward for Mersey Ferries operations.

In relation to Woodside Ferry Terminal, the report indicated that the terminal was underutilised; at that meeting Members asked whether the tourism factors around Woodside Ferry Terminal had been fully explored and that Wirral Council had invested a substantial amount of money in the area and the history of Birkenhead was significant. Officers had advised that no decision on the closure of terminals had been taken; however the ambition of the Strategy was to reduce costs. The patronage levels were lower from Woodside, with 10% of the total passengers, and the transport links in Birkenhead were thought to be a contributing factor. If the decision was taken to close Woodside terminal it could be reviewed should demand increase.

The Merseytravel Committee went on to approve the 20 year Mersey Ferries Long Term Strategy, subject to periodic review at not later than three year intervals and Officers were requested to explore the interventions as identified within the strategy to bring back to the Committee, within a six month period, proposals on which early decisions needed to be made and accompanied by associated detail; and Officers were requested to look at options around all three Terminals; Pier Head, Woodside and Seacombe, to include a future three terminal service.

A Member indicated that it was a question for the Council to look at why Woodside was so under utilised and there was a need to be proactive to ensure that regeneration was key in Woodside and Birkenhead.

A Member indicated that he was member of the Action Group he along with others would be meeting with officers from Merseytravel to discuss the future of Woodside.

33 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

The Chair invited the following members of the public to ask their questions.

Question 3 Patrick Dowling

Mr Dowling requested an update on the Council's plans for Hamilton Square and also the management plans for the Williamson Art Gallery

Mr Dowling had received a written response from the Department of Regeneration and Environment and also was provided with a verbal response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Phil Davies at the meeting.

The Cabinet Member for Transformation and Improvement indicated that part of her portfolio was to look at schemes to deliver services in different ways; the Council had Edssential and Wirral Evolutions and she would be driving this agenda to look at further schemes such as these.

A Member indicated that the funding had been made available from the Merseyside Pension Fund for local investment.

Question 2 Mrs M Robinson

Mrs Robinson raised concerns regarding the cleanliness of Birkenhead in particular, Waterford Road which was plagued by dog fouling.

Mrs Robinson had received a written response from the Technical Services Department.

A Member reported that dog fouling was a major issue in Wirral and the Council was doing all it could to alleviate the issues raised and ensure that both enforcement and prosecutions were brought to fruition.

Question 4 Crossways Estate Residents

Residents from the Crossways Estate indicated that they had attended the last meeting of the Committee and had been promised that Ward Councillors and the Chair would arrange to meet with residents to discuss the issues surrounding the future of the estate, it was now a year later and the issues were still unresolved.

The Chair suggested that a meeting with himself, Councillor S Foulkes, G Davies and the relevant Ward Councillors be held along with residents to try and progress the issues raised by Members.

34 **SUGGESTIONS FROM COUNCILLORS ON FUTURE WORK**

It was suggested that the Constituency Manager be asked to co-ordinate a list of emerging issues in relation to Birkenhead which could be discussed prior to these issues being formed as a paper.