

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - BIRKENHEAD

Thursday, 28 July 2016

Present:

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

Apologies

Councillors	P Doughty	J McManus
	S Kelly	T Norbury

1 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2016-17**

The Legal Advisor to the Committee invited nominations for the appointment of the Chair.

On a motion by Councillor P Davies, seconded by Councillor A Davies, it was –

Resolved – That Councillor George Davies be appointed Chair of the Birkenhead Constituency Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

The Legal Advisor to the Committee then requested nominations for appointment of Vice-Chair.

On a motion by Councillor P Davies and seconded by Councillor J Stapleton, it was –

Resolved – That Councillor Moira McLaughlin be appointed Vice-Chair of the Birkenhead Constituency Committee for the ensuing municipal year.

The Chair thanked Frank Field MP for the work he had done in respect of this Committee and also the work he would continue to do for the constituency.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Councillor P Doughty

Councillor S Kelly

Councillor J McManus

Councillor T Norbury

Mr J Blott, Strategic Director, Transformation and Resources

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

Councillor Steve Foulkes, declared a prejudicial interest in respect of agenda item 4 - Minutes and item 9 – Public Questions and Answers - by virtue of reference being made to Magenta Living, of which he is a Board Member.

Councillor Jean Stapleton declared a personal interest in respect of agenda item 6 – Birkenhead Business Improvement District – by virtue of being a Member of the Steering Group who had submitted a bid.

4 **MINUTES**

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2016 be agreed as a correct record subject to the amendment of the attendance list to reflect the presence of Councillor Angela Davies.

5 **PRESENTATION - WIRRAL AREA COMMANDER**

The Committee considered a presentation by Chief Superintendent Ian Hassall.

He provided an outline of the current position in the Birkenhead constituency, the work being done and changes that would be undertaken.

Chief Superintendent Hassall reported that there had been a downward trend in respect of the number of reported incidents of anti-social behaviour which included a 28% decrease within Wirral and a 30% decrease within the 7 beats area.

He advised that there had been a reduction in crime from April 2015 to March 2016 and that the current figures could be used to identify hotspots where resources could be placed. He further advised that there was a high footfall of social media crime in Birkenhead and Wallasey.

Members were informed that a collaborative approach would be taken as it was recognised that it was effective to use a multi-agency approach to target ASB, volume crime and serious organised crime, particularly through intelligence sharing. A Wirral ASB team was co-located at Wallasey Police Station and a detective constable had been appointed to the Wirral Priority Team to establish and develop partnerships with other agencies. Multi agency days utilised partners including enforcement officers, Licensing, Trading Standards, Social Services, HMRC, RSPCA, DVLA/VOSA, Immigration, WASB Team, Catch 22, Barnardo's, Utilities and Illegal Money Lending Team.

Chief Superintendent Hassall explained that there were a number of initiatives underway in respect of controlled drinking environments and advised that a lot of work, including the Reducing the Strength campaign, had been undertaken. He referred to the myriad of partnership working on The Beechwood Estate.

It was reported that there had been positive feedback in respect of the Collaborative Events which included the Birkenhead Summer Festival, ASB Play, Litter Picks, Town Centre PSG and Pride in your alley.

In respect of moving forward, it was reported that a number of old buildings had been closed down some of which had been sold and that there would be community Police Stations, to be close to other partners and to provide drop in surgeries. Work would also be undertaken with Birkenhead First and The Hive. During this transition it was also hoped that staffing shifts would be provided to meet demands.

In response to questions from Members, Chief Superintendent Hassall advised that Merseyside had not seen the same replication as other areas in respect of incidents of hate crime and that this seemed to have levelled off nationally. He also reported that there would be more resources in place and there would be an increase in the numbers of staff in the response portfolio for emergency calls. He stressed that sharing information was key in making sure that correct areas were targeted and to enable discussions to take place in respect of what activity each agency could put in place.

The Chair reiterated the importance of a collaborative approach and agreed that this approach would be the way forward.

Resolved – That Chief Superintendent Hassall be thanked for his presentation.

PRESENTATION - BIRKENHEAD BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT

Mr K Adderley gave a presentation in respect of Birkenhead First.

He reported that further to consultation taking place, local businesses had voted in favour of introducing a Business Improvement District where a levy of 1.5% would be applied to business rates.

Mr Adderley advised that the Chamber of Commerce had worked together with the Council and that the key priorities were for a safer, more secure, cleaner, more attractive Birkenhead; better marketing and promotion of Birkenhead and better support for businesses. Members were informed that a steering group had been set up and an outline of the area where the BID would be operating was provided. It was believed that it was important to have a voice for the business community and that Birkenhead First would bring businesses together by creating one voice for the business community, which would allow lobbying local authorities on the issues that matter most to the businesses in Birkenhead. Quarterly meetings had been held and town hosts had been introduced which had proven to be a huge asset for Birkenhead. Town hosts would act as ambassadors for Birkenhead providing visitor information and work together with the local authorities and police to discourage anti-social behaviour and provide a uniformed presence in the town. It was reported that the town hosts had already been involved with the anti-social behaviour team and that 31 reports had been made with two people having been banned from the town centre as a result. They also identified a number of issues in respect of the environment and as a result planters had been moved to Woodside and filled with flowers.

A programme of events was underway, the first of which had been held on Tuesday 26 July where over 6,000 people had visited Hamilton Square. This had also demonstrated a positive effect on surrounding businesses.

The business support service would offer practical advice and information to businesses and the programme of events planned for 2016 and into 2017, would raise the profile of Birkenhead within the wider Wirral community and to tourists, generate interest and knowledge of the area, increase footfall for retailers and create a positive image of Birkenhead as a safe and secure child and family-friendly town.

It was reported that over the next five years Birkenhead First would continue to demonstrate commitment to the town and its people and would also continue to listen to, and work for, the benefit of businesses in the BID area.

In response to questions from Members, Mr Adderley advised that the monies spent would be available for the public to access. He also reported that works could not be carried out that were the responsibility of the public sector,

however work would be undertaken with the Council in respect of signage and lighting.

Members expressed their support for the Birkenhead Business Improvement District.

Resolved – That Mr Adderley be thanked for his presentation.

7 PRESENTATION - HEALTH AND WORKLESSNESS PROJECT

Ms J Webster gave a presentation in respect of the Health and Worklessness Project.

Members were advised that work in this field had been ongoing since 2014 and Ms Webster referred to the fact that Public Health had moved under the responsibility of the Council in 2013. It was reported that being in work was good for mental health and wellbeing. Statistics were provided in relation to percentages of worklessness and it was also reported that 50% of all claims made were mental health related. Members were advised that health, employment and community organisations had been invited to practitioner workshops to share professional insight/experience and a number of questions had been identified.

Ms Webster informed Members that work had been undertaken with local businesses and a workshop hosted by Wirral Chamber had highlighted the fact that physical problems are 'easier' to deal with than mental health. She referred to research undertaken by ESRO to understand the demands and challenges to be fit for work and advised that more than twenty stakeholder interviews had taken place and that 150 people had been spoken to who were providers of services eg Job Centre, Arch Initiatives. A bleak picture had been found of people feeling a deep sense of isolation and loneliness. Social networks had got smaller and smaller which had led to mental health issues being exacerbated. A danger of creating dependency and negative views had led to demotivation. A negative feedback loop was demonstrated with many respondents existing in the grey area which contained unrealistic goals, overly basic support and confusing service provision landscape.

It was reported that funding had been identified to commission a network of community connectors to engage and support local people to get them back to where they needed to be.

Resolved – That Ms Webster be thanked for her presentation.

BIRKENHEAD CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S REPORT

The Constituency Manager provided an update on progress of projects funded by budgets devolved to the Birkenhead Constituency Committee. A finance summary sheet for the Birkenhead Constituency Committee budget and expenditure was attached to the report as an appendix.

Also attached to the report were appendices which the Constituency Manager presented to the Committee in relation to updates on Clean-ups, the Birkenhead Food hub and the Birkenhead Library Health, Wellbeing and Reading Park.

The Constituency Manager provided further information to the Committee on the following:

Birkenhead in Bloom

The Constituency Manager reported that this had been a very successful day which had brought £15,000 from different sources and confirmed that it was a really positive way of getting the community together to improve the environment. She advised Members that almost £5,000 had been used to hire 44 skips for clean ups in a number of areas throughout Birkenhead and that an estimated 33,000 tonnes of rubbish had been removed as a result of the clean-up days.

The Constituency Manager advised that the 'Community Pay Back' team had done a lot of work involving cleaning, weeding and painting and that this work would continue in the future.

Resolved –

- (1) That the successful completion of Birkenhead in Bloom areas; Involve North West contract and community clean ups, work by probation and the related spend on skips be noted.**
- (2) That an invitation to tender for a further grotspots project be put out on the chest, allocation amount to be agreed, to be overseen by the Environment Task Group.**
- (3) That £5,000 be allocated to the 2016-17 skip fund.**
- (4) That £20,000 be allocated for environment works for 2016-17.**

Food Hubs

The Constituency Manager reported that £15,000 had been invested into three food hubs: Rock Ferry, Beechwood and Bidston and St James.

A representative from the Bidston and St James food hub addressed the meeting and advised that a weekly programme of activities had been run which included after school clubs where children and parents could eat. She advised that 110 meals had been provided during that week and that they were working closely with the Local Authority and Children's Centres to encourage families to attend. She informed Members that together with Lifelong Learning they were hoping to provide adult cookery classes with an optional qualification in Food Hygiene, Nutrition and Allergy Awareness. She believed that partnership was key and advised that they were working closely with Beechwood and Gautby Road Community Centres.

A representative from the Rock Ferry food hub was also in attendance. She advised that the venue had now changed to Beaconsfield Community House and a lot more support could be offered. She reported that 1637 meals and snacks had been delivered throughout the year of running the programme. Members were informed that Rock Ferry food hub ran a weekly large social supermarket and allowed people to pay what they could in money, skills or time. She reported that 1235 kilos of food had been intercepted and redistributed and that 345 k had been given to other projects. This had all been done by the commitment of volunteers.

The Chair congratulated the representatives on the work that had been done.

The Constituency Manager referred to the Wirral Fare Share which had been launched before Christmas and was located in Wallasey Wheatland Road Business units. She advised Members that they intercepted food from suppliers and outlets and distributed to charities at lower costs for redistribution to people as part of luncheon clubs, social food hubs and food banks. It was reported that Fare Share now had a number of Birkenhead Members.

The Constituency Manager reported that food hubs were working together and had decided to increase their order and delivery from His Church from August 2016 and expressed her thanks to the volunteers.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress of the Birkenhead food hubs be noted.**
- (2) That £40,000 of the 2016-17 committee funding be allocated to the Feeding Birkenhead Task Group for expanding food related projects.**

Your Wirral Birkenhead

The Constituency Manager reported that since the last committee meeting a final round of Birkenhead Your Wirral Funding took place and a total of £22,560 was awarded to 10 organisations to carry out projects to address food poverty and provide provision to children and young people during the school holidays. It was reported that after all the projects were awarded, an underspend of £69,049 remained and that this could be used as matchfunding for a community shop project located in the Pyramids, subject to securing lottery funds for the project.

Resolved –

- (1) That the progress in relation to Your Wirral spend 2015-16 be noted.**
- (2) That it be noted there remained £69,049 to match fund the community shop project.**

Road Safety

The Constituency Manager advised that the Road Safety Task Group had met on 11 December 2015 and considered nine road safety proposals. Members were advised that funds had been allocated to Circular Road, Hinderton Road and Bidston Village and that the projects were currently being delivered by the Highways and Road Safety Section.

It was reported that a further £32,500 had been allocated to the Constituency Committees for 2016-17.

Resolved –

- (1) That the update from the Road Safety projects 2015-16 be noted.**
- (2) That the allocation of £32,500 for 2016-17 road safety projects be delegated to the Road Safety Task Group.**

Tackling ASB

The Constituency Manager reported that in 2015-16 the Committee had £54,000 to allocate to ASB projects and that the total spent was £23,999. It has been agreed by the ASB task group and committee that the remaining £30,034 go to the Integrated Approach where it would be allocated through the Police and the ASB team.

Resolved – That the Constituency Committee note that the integrated team had allocated the funds to the following projects:

- **Child Sexual Exploitation Project - £1,000**
- **Sports Development Project at the tennis centre until ‘The Hive’ opens in February 2017 - £2,136.**

9 PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The Chair referred to the pre-raised questions that had been received by the Committee and invited those present to address the Committee in respect of the questions raised.

Question 2 Patrick Dowling

Mr Dowling requested a report from Mr Field in respect of averting the closure of the Woodside Ferry. He also queried whether there had been a separate ceremony for Armed Forces Day other than the one held in Hamilton Square.

Mr Dowling had received a response advising that Frank Field would be meeting with Liam Robinson (Chair of Merseytravel) and Councillor Paul Doughty to discuss the options for securing the long term future of the Ferry Terminal.

Councillor Foulkes expanded upon this at the meeting and advised that a meeting had been held at Merseytravel earlier that day and that Frank Field had engaged with Merseytravel to discuss the development of the Birkenhead Plan. Councillor Foulkes also advised that a sum of money would be spent on the landing stage and that Councillor Doughty had also taken part in the discussions.

A written response was also provided stating that the Armed Forces Day had been organised by a third party. While the Council had given permission for the event to take place on Council land the third sector group had taken responsibility for the organising and running of it.

Members of the Committee also advised that Councillors had been present at different locations where events had been held in respect of the Armed Forces Day.

Question 3 Alan Dollery

Mr Dollery raised the following query:

The Prenton Tenants and Residents Association has been running for over 15 years and over those years we have had the normal amount of complaints over street parking, we have approached the Wirral Council over this matter 2

years ago, and we were told of the complexity of preventing pavement parking due to various situations in and around the areas involved. We have also informed the police because they are the only ones that can prosecute the offender/s again nothing has been done.

Recently we the PTRA went around the estate due to having quite a few complaints coming in to our shop from residents. We found no fewer than 22 cars fully parked on the pavements, this surely is against the law. I need to inform the residents effected by this alarming increase to pavement parking in our area what action if any can be done.

I therefore would like to ask the meeting if they can they look at our situation again, and although money is tight, I feel that more lay-byes could be introduced to alleviate some of the problem areas we have. The areas most effected are Prenton Dell Road, Garrick Road, Boswell Road. Prenton Dell Road being the route taken by Mums with prams going to the local Doctors surgery have to walk on the roads to get past a car parked on the pavement. Please advise on what action can be applied legally.

Mr Dollery received a response from the Department for Regeneration and Environment advising that pavement parking where it causes obstruction to pedestrians can also increase potential danger for them if they have to walk in busy roads. In comparatively quiet residential roads (and indeed in many new housing estate areas where roads are designed with no footways) it can be less of a problem in practice. The provision of parking laybys is normally comparatively expensive to undertake with rough costs approximating to £24,000 for a 50m length of layby. This indicative cost is also potentially subject to additional costs for relocating underground services such as gas, water, telecoms etc.

Generally when providing laybys we need to ensure that in addition to accommodating the width of a vehicle, we also need to have sufficient footway remaining to cater for pedestrians. Reviewing the roads highlighted in this request there are a number of additional factors to be taken into account including the cost of relocating street lighting columns along with a requirement to accommodate many driveways.

Pavement parking is a particularly complex issue, and unless there is a specific traffic regulation order (either a yellow line in operation or a separate verge/pavement parking TRO), the Council doesn't have any specific powers to take action against drivers.

The current initiative on pavement parking aims to make drivers more aware of the problems that it can cause, particularly relating to obstructive pavement parking. In these instances we may issue a warning notice to the vehicle and keep details of the registration number, time, location etc. Where we find

repeated problems we may pass this information to the police to see if they wish to undertake enforcement (prosecutions).

In dealing with such issues, it is important that we operate correctly and within the law. The legislations available to take action are somewhat complex but in essence relate to:

- Wirral Council can take action where we have a traffic regulation order relating to waiting or specifically around footway & verge parking.
- Wirral Council could take action where we can identify and prove (to a legal standard) that a specific driver (not vehicle) has caused damage to our property.
- Merseyside Police can take action where they can prove unnecessary obstruction.
- Merseyside Police can take action where they can prove driving on the footway.

Officers have visited this area and whilst some parking on footways was observed this was not obstructive and pedestrians would still be able to pass. It is suggested that residents raise any concerns over obstructive parking with the police who have powers to prosecute if needed.

The Chair advised that this would be referred to the Highways Department for consideration. Councillor Foulkes advised that the Committee would liaise with the other Constituency Committees in respect of this.

Question 10 Sue Hughes

A trustee of Shaftesbury Youth Club addressed the Committee and advised that discussions had been ongoing for over 5 years about the possible Asset Transfer of Council owned football pitches to Shaftesbury Youth club (Registered Charity). The pitches are adjacent to the club. A Transfer would ensure an improved use of this facility and provide a better maintenance regime than currently exists.

He asked whether the Area Constituency Committee were aware of these discussions and whether it supported such a proposal, as Shaftesbury are very keen to take on this project.

Also, since April 2016 Shaftesbury's annual grant from Wirral Council had been reduced by £10K, therefore the income from these fields would help towards much needed revenue for the club.

A response had been provided from the Department for Parks and Countryside who advised that the information had been forwarded to the relevant department who would provide the answer to Shaftesbury Youth Club via the Constituency Team when it had been completed.

The Constituency Manager advised that she would follow this up with the Asset Team and provide feedback at the next meeting of the Committee.

Question 13 John Brace

Mr Brace asked what was happening to combat fly tipping in Hoblyn Road, Collin Road, Naylor Road and Flaybrick Cemetery.

A response had been provided from the Department for Regeneration and Environment who advised that Hoblyn Road, Collin Road and Naylor Road were subject to street cleansing on a 4 weekly schedule and that over the past months several deposits of fly tipping had emerged at the very top of these areas. The Council's Enforcement Team and Kingdom had been investigating the fly tipping and had had positive feedback.

Work had also been undertaken with Magenta Living regarding the development of the existing houses with additional street cleansing. This work would continue when the new development was completed, working with housing officers tackling waste and recycling, street cleansing and fly tipping.

Councillor McLachlan advised that extra resources had been provided as the area had been treated as a Grotspot due to the number of empty properties.

Question 14 Leonora Brace

Councillor S Foulkes declared a prejudicial interest in this matter and left the room during its consideration (minute 3 refers).

Mr Brace addressed the Committee and asked what was happening to all the houses in and around Hoblyn Road, Collin Road, Naylor Road and some in Hoylake Road as a lot of people have to live rough and these houses are vacant.

A response had been provided from Magenta who reported that the Crossways Estate in North Birkenhead comprises of 200 three bed houses including Hoblyn, Collin and Naylor Road along with 13 properties on Hoylake Road. Mr Brace was advised that very limited demand began to be experienced and Magenta Living took the decision not to allocate any of the properties on Crossways until a longer term, sustainable solution could be found.

Magenta Living had carried out survey work and been working with residents to identify improvement options. One of the principle issues raised by residents was the unpopular 'gilbury' units, ground floor extensions that house the bathroom facilities. Two demonstration properties were made available to residents to view in May 2016, one had the bathroom relocated upstairs and

made into a 2 bed house, the other was retained as a 3 bed again with the bathroom upstairs.

Feedback from residents was largely very positive and work has subsequently commenced, on a phased basis in order to ensure demand still existed, improving the empty properties in Hoblyn Road, including the demolition the gilbury units, before the occupied properties are then improved.

Other works identified included:

- Demolition of some properties towards Flaybrick Memorial Gardens
- Improved physical security measures
- Improving the external appearance of properties
- Exploring the option of a low cost home ownership scheme

The Chair advised that during the public meetings that had taken place the residents had favoured the properties being made into 2 bedroom properties where bedroom tax would not be applied.

Question 15 Alan Dollery

Mr Dollery had raised the following query:

The PTRA team have been in touch with the Wirral Council Environmental team with concerns over the amount of weeds that are growing in the gutters in and around the shopping area in Prenton Hall Road. The main reason we have named Prenton Hall Road in particular is because it runs through the shopping area in which people do their shopping, people pass by on buses or drive past in their cars far more times than the other roads within the area which also have similar problems.

However, our concern is the presentation of our area to those who pass us by on a daily basis, not to mention our community who have to look at the problem day night.

After talks with Lisa Blackwell from the Council the PTRA proposed we try weed picking ourselves, thus after being successful with the Litter picking around the same area. After the collection of over 5 bags of weeds from the area in question we found that the reason the weeds are growing so regular is that the road does not fit.

What I mean by the road does not fit is because it does not reach the kerbs should this be the case? Build a road and if it's not big enough fill the two inch gap that's left with soil?

I'm sure this is not right because we will never get rid of the weeds ever, they will just grow, and grow, and grow, and grow. Spraying the weeds does not

work, our problem proves this, as all our weeds in and around the estate were sprayed a few months ago but the weeds they are still growing.

I have taken photographs of before and after and hopefully I will present them on the night of the meeting.

I must add that not all roads affected in the Prenton Dell area are 2" short either side, but the ones in Prenton Hall Road are, and they need addressing. not just with weed killer these gaps must be filled in with concrete, otherwise we are going to be overgrown with weeds constantly, and we as the PTRA will not be weeding again in this area because of the regularity of the weeds over - growing.

We the PTRA need to ask the meeting if they would look at our situation with urgency and rectify the problem as soon as possible. We also feel that the situation is not a natural / nature problem, we believe it's a bad workmanship problem and one that needs urgent attention

A response had been provided by the Department for Regeneration and Environment who advised that the carriageway in question had been constructed decades ago with the gap being installed intentionally as part of the construction process to allow for sideways expansion of the concrete slab. Without this gap the kerbs would be pushed out of place or the surface of the slab would break up when there was no room for expansion in the warmer weather.

The Council's Ground Maintenance Team would visit the shopping area around Prenton Hall Road to provide additional weed spraying to try and address the issue raised.

The Chair suggested that this be raised at the Environmental Task and Finish Group.

The Chair thanked all those who attended the meeting.