

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 21 September 2016

Present:

Councillor	P Brightmore (Chair)	
Councillors	S Foulkes	I Williams
	T Jones	T Anderson
	J McManus	B Berry
	C Muspratt	T Pilgrim
	L Reecejones	C Carubia
	T Usher	D Burgess-Joyce
	J Walsh	W Clements

Deputies:

Councillor D Burgess-Joyce (in place of Councillor L Rowlands)
Councillor W Clements (in place of Councillor A Sykes)

12 **CHAIRS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and indicated that in relation to Item 3 – Work Programme Workshop Feedback this would be considered together at Item 9 – Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Work Programme Update.

13 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP**

Councillor S Foulkes declared a Personal Interest in Item 7 – Financial Monitoring Quarter 1 2016/17 by virtue of his appointment of Board Director of Magenta Living.

14 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Rowlands and A Sykes.

15 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 July 2016 be approved as a correct record.

16 **MINUTE 4 - FLOOD AND WATER MANAGEMENT ACT: SIGNIFICANT FLOOD INVESTIGATION: AUGUST 22ND TO SEPTEMBER 2ND 2015**

Further to the Minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Minute 4 refers).

Councillor Muspratt sought clarification as to whether the properties she had given details of at the last meeting which had been affected by flooding in Bebington had been included within the Section 19 report.

In response, the Head of Corporate and Community Safety responded to the Member indicating that the Section 19 Report did not refer to every property in detail but those that she had highlighted at the last meeting were included within the action plan.

17 **MINUTE 10 - WORK PROGRAMME**

Further to minute 10 from the meeting held on 10 July 2016, the Chair indicated that following his suggestion and Members agreement that a more inclusive approach be adopted by the Committee, all Members were invited to take part in a workshop which had taken place on 1 September 2016.

18 **TRANSFORMING WIRRAL - COMMUNITY SAFETY**

Further to Minute No. 6 of the meeting held on 12 July 2016, the Committee considered the report of the Chair of the Committee updating Members of the outcome from the workshop held on 1 September 2016 which was attended by Members of the Committee to discuss the approach to the outline business case in relation to Community Safety

The outcomes from the workshop were detailed within the report.

A Member suggested that the report be shared and discussed with the Chair of the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee given that safeguarding and MASH were mentioned as they also came under the remit of People Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted;**
- (2) the report be referred to a future meeting of the Cabinet; and**
- (3) further consideration be given to the optimal timing for the involvement of scrutiny in the development of future business cases.**

19 FUTURE DOMESTIC REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE - PRESENTATION

The Committee considered a joint presentation from Mr Carl Beer, Chief Executive, Merseyside Recycling and Waste Authority and Mr Mike Cockburn, Senior Manager Waste & Environment; Environmental Services on the future domestic refuse collection services.

Mr Beer gave the Committee some background information on the joint recycling and waste management strategy indicating that the current strategy was five years old and was currently under review.

He commented that the Authority was currently working with Merseytravel on the potential for using food waste to generate biogas, which can be used as a vehicle fuel.

Mr Beer indicated that up to 85% of the material delivered by householders to Household Waste Recycling Centres was re-used or recycled. Two Materials Recovery Facilities (MRFs) at Bidston and Gillmoss sorted the co-mingled recyclates collected by Merseyside Councils; refuse not recycled is now being sent to a Rail Transfer Loading Station at Kirkby, and then on trains to the Energy from Waste plant in Wilton, Teesside.

He explained that the Wilton Energy from Waste plant is a combined heat and power (CHP) facility had been commissioned by MRWA for Merseyside and Halton authorities through the Resource Recovery Contract (RRC). It is anticipated that this would be fully operational by October/November 2016.

The Authority supported various community projects via its Community Fund with the aim to encourage people to recycle and re-use, giving advice and guidance.

The presentation detailed the comparative recycling rates across the neighbouring Authorities, with Wirral comparing well against neighbouring authorities.

In relation to residual waste, Mr Beer commented that it costs more to disposal of non-recycling waste than it does for recycling and therefore incurred a higher levy charge. The Wirral kerbside waste results for 2015/16 indicated that residual waste was the highest, of which 36% being food waste and 13% being avoidable food waste. He indicated that 5.5% of all kerbside waste was potentially reusable. According to the ACORN figures the most deprived areas of the borough had the highest percentage of avoidable food wastage.

Mr Beer concluded his presentation by highlighting the Authority's collection strategy considerations and future plans which included waste prevention, recycling and re-use targets.

Following on from Mr Beer's presentation, the Committee received a presentation from Mr Mike Cockburn, Senior Manager Waste & Environment on the options for future domestic refuse collection services in Wirral.

Mr Cockburn highlighted the rationale for change which included the obligation to increase recycling rates to 50% by 2020 and the need for a major system change to meet the target.

Mr Cockburn gave Members an overview of the options and informed that the outline business case was agreed by Cabinet who instructed officers to carry out a full business case to be considered by Cabinet in early November 2016. He further outlined that the full business case is being delivered internally but would also be scrutinised externally by waste industry experts.

Mr Cockburn concluded by highlighting the project outcomes, cost benefit analysis and the implementation plan.

In response to a Members question regarding target figures for recycling, Mr Beer explained that the national UK figure was agreed with Europe, with a five year strategy to reach 50% by 2020. He commented that Wirral had set its own 50% target but there was not clear how the Government intends to administer the target. Europe had stated that, as a member state, the UK would be fined for those targets not met, but there was no information to say that the UK as a whole would fail to reach the target. Given the vote on Brexit this may change.

In response to Members comments regarding the reported reduction in recycling rates from 2013/2014 through to 2015/16, Mr Cockburn indicated that this was due to the introduction of subscriptions for the garden waste collection service; people not taking up garden waste subscriptions had driven down the recycling the Council's performance by approximately 4%.

In response to a Member's question regarding the segregation of waste, Mr Beer indicated that card and paper could easily be done and prices for those materials were good, but some types of hard plastic would be difficult to separate and command only a very low market price. In the current market it was not value for money and therefore there was not a strong case to do this.

In relation to the facilities that use waste to make gas and energy, Mr Beer indicated that the MRWA organises this for a number of local councils. The current facility is based in Halton and treats food waste by Anaerobic Digestion.

Mr Beer indicated that in relation to clothing waste, commodity prices rise and fall therefore there was a lot of wastage; the biggest carbon footprint was from textiles thrown into refuse. This was largely down to education. There was a need to inform people of the best way to dispose of their unwanted textiles/clothes encouraging them to recycle by giving them to charity shops etc. There was also a need to increase the opportunities for people to donate. He indicated there was a small community fund available and asked the Members to think about those organisations who could help the Authority with its Waste Strategy.

In response to a Members question, Mr Cockburn indicated that officers within the department would be building up the approach to the preferred option, making sure it was high profile and highlighting the fact that Wirral was not the first authority to do this; there would be a huge consultation/communication drive, advertising etc. There would be increased support for residents during the roll out.

Mr Beer reiterated the importance of that public engagement and commented feedback to residents was key.

In relation to producer responsibility there were calls to enhance this for e.g. reduction in packaging, Government were currently being asked to consider options including moving more costs from Local Authorities to producers.

RESOLVED:

That Mr C Beer and Mr M Cockburn be thanked for their informative presentation.

20 **WIRRAL PLAN OVERVIEW REPORT: 2016-17 QUARTER 1 – ENVIRONMENT THEME**

Introduced by the Team Leader – Performance and Scrutiny, the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive on the Wirral Plan Overview Report 2016-17, that described performance at Quarter 1 (April to June 2016). The report outlined the Wirral Plan Pledges (Environment Theme) focused on high level population measures and described progress towards making a difference to the lives of Wirral residents.

The report provided a summary of highlights and the Wirral Plan Quarter One 2016-17 Overview report was appended to the report.

The Chair indicated that following comments received over the confusing nature of the report and the need for Members to see what was relevant to this Committee.

The Chair sought the Committee's approval for himself, the vice-chair and party spokespersons to meet with representatives of both the People and Business Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the format of a special meeting to consider the overview report format.

The Team Leader, Performance and Scrutiny referred to the Members briefing held on 7 September 2016 to which 22 Members had been in attendance and that he was keen to take any further feedback to ensure future reporting on the indicators was pertinent and clear. He indicated that the People Overview and Scrutiny Committee had recently resolved that the Chairs and Party spokespersons from the three Overview and Scrutiny Committees should meet to discuss the approach

The Team Leader – Performance and Scrutiny indicated that in relation to initial feedback received on the new arrangements, comments had been positive in terms of the narrative and he welcomed further feedback from Members.

Responding to Members' comments The Team Leader, Performance and Scrutiny, reported that more detailed reports on performance were available on the website, and these had been circulated to the Committee at the meeting. With regard to those items whose status was marked, 'Not started' although their status for the current period was marked as, 'Green', he would look into this and respond by email to the whole Committee.

In relation to the indicator in relation to "healthy life expectancy at birth: males", the Team Leader, Performance and Scrutiny agreed to provide further details on this to Members.

In relation to the indicator relating to "fixed penalty notices" the Assistant Chief Executive indicated that he would provide details of the breakdown of the nature of the notices issued and in which areas they were issued.

In relation to the indicator relating to "anti-social behaviour and crime reporting", the Assistant Chief Executive indicated that this was the only indicator made available to officers but reiterated that anti-social behaviour was a very important issue for the Council.

A Member commented that the pledge sponsor should be identified within the report this would add a personal touch to the pledges.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and**
- (2) the Chair, Vice-Chair and Party Spokespersons be requested to meet with representatives of both the People and Business**

Overview and Scrutiny Committees in the format of a special meeting to consider the overview report format.

21 FINANCIAL MONITORING QUARTER 1 2016/17

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive which provided the projected revenue and capital position for 2016/17 as at the close of Quarter 1 (30 June 2016) as reported to Cabinet on 18 July 2016 (Minute 26 and 27 refers).

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted that the quarter one revenue report had forecast an overspend of £1.1 million for the year and had sought approval from Cabinet for the allocation of £11.1 million from the Revenue Contingency Budget contingency to Directorates and similarly the use of £1.6 million of General Fund Balances. The report also updated on other budgetary movements which had arisen since the 2016/17 budget was agreed.

The Committee further noted that the capital report had updated the capital programme to reflect re-profiling of schemes between years which produces a capital programme of £58.97 million for 2016/17 and that expenditure after the first quarter concluded was £2.7 million.

RESOLVED:

That the report and appendices be noted.

22 POLICY INFORM BRIEFING PAPER

The Chair introduced a report on the September Policy Inform Briefing paper which focussed on the policies and legislation to emerge from the Queen's speech of 18 May, 2016 and which were relevant to this Committee's remit.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

23 ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE

The Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee noted the report of the Chair that updated Members on the current position regarding the Committee's work programme as agreed for the 2016/17 municipal year.

The report informed on the process of developing and managing the scrutiny work programme for the municipal year. Members noted that the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other two Overview & Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual work programme and that the work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which fell within the remit of the Committee.

Members noted that the report provided an update regarding progress made since the last Committee meeting held on 18 July 2016 and that the current work programme was made up of a combination of scrutiny reviews, standing items and requested officer reports, providing the committee with an opportunity to plan and regularly review its work across the municipal year.

A Member asked that for future presentations, a copy be sent to the Committee in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2016/17 be approved.