

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 15 June 2017

Present: Councillors T Anderson G Ellis
E Boulton JE Green
D Burgess-Joyce M Patrick
W Clements M Sullivan
D Elderton G Watt

In attendance: Community Representatives
J Hall MBE and A Butler-Ward

1 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017-18

The Solicitor to the Wirral West Constituency Committee requested nominations for the appointment of Chair for the Municipal Year 2017-18.

On a motion by Councillor Wendy Clements, seconded by Councillor Mathew Patrick, it was –

Resolved (unanimously) – That Councillor Jeff Green be appointed Chair for the Municipal Year 2017-18.

(Councillor Green in the Chair)

The Chair then sought nominations for Vice-Chair.

On a motion by Councillor Eddie Boulton, seconded by Councillor David Elderton – “that Councillor John Hale be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2017-18”.

Resolved (unanimously) – That Councillor John Hale be appointed Vice-Chair for the Municipal Year 2017-18.

2 APPOINTMENT OF COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR 2017-18

The Constituency Manager informed the Committee that members of the public were invited to express an interest in becoming a community representative and that of the 5 Wards within the Wirral West Constituency area, there were currently 3 vacancies. She further informed that there was no deadline in place for this process and that information on the application process could be found on the Council’s website.

The Chair sought approval for the re-appointment of two community representatives:

- Jackie Hall MBE, representing Hoylake and Meols Ward; and
- Alisha Butler-Ward, representing West Kirby and Thurstaston Ward.

Resolved (unanimously) – That Jackie Hall MBE and Alisha Butler-Ward, be re-appointed as Community Representatives for the Municipal Year 2017-18 (representing Hoylake and Meols Ward, and West Kirby and Thurstaston Ward respectively).

3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P Brightmore, J Hale, L Reecejones, T Smith and S Whittingham.

4 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

Councillor W Clements declared a personal interest in item 9 – Evaluating the Wirral West Community Fund, by virtue of being Chair of the Greasby Community Association and involvement with various community groups within Wirral West Constituency.

5 MINUTES

Councillor G Ellis pointed out that he had not attended the meeting held on 9 February, having been out of the country at the time.

Resolved – That subject to the above correction, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 February 2017 be approved as a correct record.

6 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair informed that there were two items of note relating to public consultations that had arisen following publication of the meeting agenda.

- Merseytravel – Bus Network Review; and
- Police and Crime Commissioner – Community Police Stations

He was of the view that it would be helpful to take these reports in advance of community question time should people have comments or queries.

With the agreement of the Committee it was:

Resolved - That the public consultation updates in relation to Bus Network Review and Community Police Stations be considered prior to agenda item 11 'Community Question Time'.

7 **WIRRAL STRATEGIC REGENERATION FRAMEWORK**

The Constituency Manager informed that the item in respect of the Wirral Strategic Framework had been withdrawn from the agenda. A statement in explanation that had been provided by the Place and Investment Team was relayed to the meeting attendees, as follows:

“The Strategic Regeneration Framework for Wirral set out the priorities and challenges for economic growth in order to guide and proactively drive investment and regeneration activity across the Borough.

The framework will align the key development opportunities with relevant national, city region and local strategies and will support the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges.

The Council is finalising the Strategic Regeneration Framework and will then be consulting with residents, businesses and local Members through a variety of approaches and will be seeking the views of the Constituency Committees in the near future.”

8 **2017 'GROTSPTS' CAMPAIGN**

The Committee considered a presentation introduced by Mike Cockburn, Lead Commissioner for Environment. The presentation updated Members on the efforts undertaken in 2016-17 to tackle the problems of untidy land, and the action plan for the coming year(s).

The Lead Commissioner for Environment informed that a ‘grotspot’ was deemed a piece of land that causes detriment to the local amenity i.e. having a significantly detrimental impact on the local community and residents’ lives, e.g. large-scale fly tipping, anti-social behaviour. Members were advised of the number of sites identified in 2016-17 and actions taken, as follows:

- No. of sites referred - 26
- No. of Community Protection Notices served – 7
- No. of Section 215 Notices (Town & Country Planning Act) – 1
- No. of sites where the owner has taken action following issue of notice – 18
- No. of sites referred for Council remediation – 7
- No. of sites completed to date - 5

The Committee and members of the public in attendance viewed a short video that detailed the condition, and resulting clear up, of a site adjacent to Telegraph Road, Thurstaston.

Discussion took place regarding the identification of unregistered land ownership, and the particular difficulties experienced with the example provided, that had been a highway, effectively under control of the local

authority until it's reversion to the original owner when road straightening took place. Councillor G Watt informed that the site could not be observed from the road due to high hedges, which had contributed to its use as a site for fly tipping, and it was information provided from a member of the public that had led to the resulting clear up.

A Member questioned the Lead Commissioner for Environment on whether the prosecution of fly tippers formed part of the action plan, in addition to the actions taken against the land owners themselves. The Lead Commissioner for Environment informed that this was the case and the use of covert surveillance on identified sites assisted with this. As part of the process the following actions were employed:

- Clarify site ownership and issue improvement notices where known, serve on land where not known.
- Carry out improvement works and investigate sustainable solutions, including site security.
- Keep stakeholders informed of progress with sites and timescales for improvement.
- Pursue landowner for reimbursement of the costs incurred from carrying out improvement works in default.
- Prosecution of those responsible for fly tipping (that included reimbursement of clear up costs).

The Committee and members of the public in attendance were asked to assist in communicating the message to identify further grotspots for inclusion in the forthcoming action plan by emailing details of locations direct to mikecockburn@wirral.gov.uk or highwaysenforcement@wirral.gov.uk by Friday 21 July 2017.

Resolved - That the content of the report be noted.

9 **CONSTITUENCY MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) presented her report that provided an update on current constituency projects and activities funded using the Committee's 2016-17 budget allocations and any budgets carried over from previous years.

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) provided a verbal summary and update on progress for each item of report that included:

- Neighbourhood Working Review - two workshop dates had been scheduled for stakeholder engagement with Elected Members on Thursday 13 July and Tuesday 25 July, both at Wallasey Town Hall; and
- Budget 2017-18 – a one year pause in respect of £50,000 core budget for each of the four Constituency Committees, with an exception that

any underspends in budgets would be used in this financial year. Notice of a £50,000 allocation through Constituency Committees to further support community clean ups yet to be determined. Views of the Committee will be sought in the future. The Constituency Manager highlighted a table within the report that provided a summary that detailed underspent budget funding carried over, and the purposes for which it had already been earmarked by the Committee.

- Small Grant Big Difference – the Constituency Manager informed that applications for funds were invited from Monday 26 June 2017, with a closing date of 12 noon on Friday 28 July 2017. Small grants being aimed at making a big difference for groups in Wirral West to improve their local high streets, parks and open spaces and community assets. Details may be found on the Council's website at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralwest or by contacting the Constituency Manager's Office on 0151 691 8650.
- Connect Us Project delivered by Involve Northwest – the constituency team is supporting the project and working with 'community connectors' in local areas to reach out to people in receipt of Employment Support Allowance / Incapacity Benefit who may have felt trapped and isolated. The Constituency team is also helping to coordinate door knocking initiatives, making best use of the resources available.
- Wirral Together Volunteering Strategy – coordinated delivery planning has been developed by a Steering Group that included representatives from voluntary and community groups as well as the public and private sector. The strategy recognises the vital role of residents and communities in achieving the Wirral 2020 pledges and set out clear priorities for inspiring, encouraging and enabling volunteers to grow.
- Mailing Lists – the constituency team is currently refreshing its mailing lists to ensure that information is better targeted, based upon people's interests.

In conclusion the Constituency Manager reported that as a member of the Advisory Panel for the DONG Burbo Bank Extension Community Fund and that to date, five Wirral West projects had secured a total of £45,629 from the fund (part of a total of £96,572 for Wirral as a whole).

Resolved – That the progress and updates set out in the Constituency Manager's report be noted.

10 EVALUATING THE WIRRAL WEST COMMUNITY FUND

The Committee considered a presentation introduced by the Constituency Manager (Wirral West) that provided a summary of the background to the Wirral West Community Fund and some examples of the works undertaken in the Constituency during 2016-17.

The Constituency Manager informed that the Community Fund had been established in the first year of the Committee with four funding rounds of £50,000 available each year having taken place to date (£10,000 per ward).

The Committee were apprised that the focus was on resident engagement and increased participation through voting on projects and the raising of awareness of local activities and groups. Members noted that there had been consistently high levels of applications and involvement as a result. Members noted that over the four year period since its inception, £165,000 had been allocated in grants, with 85 groups having received monies to enable 200 individual projects.

The Constituency Manager provided a summary of five projects that had received monies from the Wirral West Community Fund, as follows:

£6,000 invested in total for **Green and Blooming Greasby** to transform Greasby Village Centre - the centre has been improved for ALL residents and visitors, increasing pride in the area and increasing number of volunteers gaining skills, building friendships and networks - additionally contributing to increased footfall to local businesses.

£5,000 invested in total to support the development of **Festival of Firsts** community participation activities - The Festival of Firsts puts the area on the map as a place where community arts can flourish, and has recently been announced as Winner of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - recognising excellence in voluntary activities carried out by groups in the community.

Just under £3,000 invested in total for **Carers Get Together** to undertake activities for local carers - People are cared for at home for as long as possible, with more independence and better quality of life. Support is available locally which helps to reduce demand on health and social care services.

£1,800 invested in total for **Woodchurch High Community Farm** for community activities, focused on horticulture and opening up school assets to local residents - inter-generational activities bringing together different parts of the community and improving cohesion.

£4,800 invested in total for **Autism Together** to undertake work at **Wirral Country Park** (e.g. access improvements) - service users are learning new skills, gaining confidence and feeling part of community.

The Constituency Manager informed that each example demonstrated strong evidence to meet the Wirral 2020 pledges. She further informed that the next steps involved a) the production of a report highlighting the impact of the Community Fund, with further development of case studies and looking at social value, b) ongoing support to current Community Fund projects, and c) continued engagement with groups to identify opportunities to promote their work and activities.

The Chair and a number of Members of the Committee expressed their thanks to the Constituency Manager and her team; and to volunteers and colleagues who ensure successful delivery of the projects.

In response to a question from a member of the public relating to equality of the distribution of funds across the area, a Member described how the Committee had allocated funding equitably across the five wards in the constituency area but had also targeted funding where this was most needed, i.e. to help with specific problems associated with anti-social behaviour.

Resolved – That content of the report be noted.

Councillor W Clements having earlier declared a personal interest in this item remained in the meeting whilst the item was considered.

11 **COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES UPDATE**

The Chair asked Ms Jackie Hall MBE for an update on local issues in the Hoylake area.

Jackie Hall MBE informed the Constituency Committee of the ongoing engagement with local Hoylake community groups and further updated on the Festival of Firsts' recent success as Winner of the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service - recognising excellence in voluntary activities carried out by groups in the community. Ms Hall further informed that five planning applications in the Ward were broadly supported in respect of their potential to improve footfall in the area. On slightly more negative note she was sad to report of vandalism to flower displays / planters and anti-social behaviour experienced in Hoylake, however she remained confident that these issues would be addressed, given the continued vigilance of residents and the groups affected. Ms Hall also advised the Committee that 'Friends of' group members had expressed disappointment regarding their involvement in recent consultations..

The Chair then asked Ms Alisha Butler-Ward for an update on local issues in the West Kirby and Thurstaston area.

Ms Alisha Butler-Ward supported the concerns of the previous speaker with regard to the reporting of a restaurant owner who had recently been attacked and injured. Given the number of bars and restaurants she was surprised to learn of the limited coverage afforded by CCTV in the area. Ms Butler-Ward then raised the subject of residents parking in key areas of West Kirby. She informed that, although the matter had been considered in the past, residents were still requesting solutions to the problem of not being able to park outside / near to their homes.

The Chair explained that the concerns raised and described previous attempts to bring forward resident parking schemes and how these had highlighted opposing views.

Resolved – That the verbal updates be noted.

12 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS - WIRRAL BUS NETWORK REVIEW AND COMMUNITY POLICE STATIONS**

Given the time bound nature of the subject matter, and at the request of the Chair with the consent of the Committee, two items of additional business were considered, namely:

- Merseytravel – Bus Network Review; and
- Police and Crime Commissioner – Community Police Stations

Wirral Bus Network Review

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) informed that Merseytravel were seeking local people to provide feedback about the bus network on the Wirral. She informed that a consultation had been launched on proposals to make the area's bus network simpler and clearer. Proposals may be seen and commented upon via an online survey until 5:00pm on Thursday 22 June 2017.

<http://www.merseytravel.gov.uk/about-us/Pages/BusReview.aspx>

The Committee was informed that three drop-in events were taking place so that members of the public can speak to Merseytravel staff about the proposals and give their feedback. Details of the events can be found below:

- Friday 16th June, 10am to 3pm – Cherry Tree Shopping Centre, Liscard;
- Monday 19th June, 12:30pm to 4pm – Bromborough Civic Centre; and
- Wednesday 21st June, 10am to 3pm – Birkenhead Bus Station

Community Police Stations

The Constituency Manager (Wirral West) informed that Merseyside's Police Commissioner was asking people living on the Wirral to give their views on proposals for the location of two new community police stations. The sites proposed are:

The Conway Centre on Conway Street – to replace the access point in the Pyramids Shopping Centre which had not been staffed since 2011. The Conway Centre already hosts a One Stop Shop for Birkenhead which holds public advice surgeries, has computers for council and partner services and appointments with a NHS trainer; and

Carrbridge Community Centre, Woodchurch Estate – to replace Upton Police Station which has been closed to the public since January 2012 – the community centre also provides training, advice and guidance services, access to IT facilities and a space for conferences, meetings and private functions.

The meeting was informed that feedback was welcome via the following link:

<https://surveymonkey.co.uk/r/WirralCPSs>

Resolved – That the verbal updates be noted.

13 **COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME**

The Chair invited questions from members of the public upon matters that were relevant to the Wirral West Constituency. Two questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting.

Question from Mr Bill Montgomery by email:

“I can’t help but notice the great work done by the Hoylake and Meols volunteers but, more noticeable, what appears to be the sad decline of Council input to our roads, pavements, promenade and beaches. The kerb sides and roads are beginning to break with weeds and grasses growing through. Sand is mounting on pavements and the beaches are something of an eyesore. I recognise financial restraints, but sometimes we have to gamble on spending to generate income. We need to embrace tourism as our best bet for income. Can we look at these areas of possible council neglect and upkeep?”

Response - a detailed response has been sent to Mr Montgomery as below:

“We also absolutely value the fantastic work done by local volunteers in Hoylake and Meols and continue to work with them to support the great work they do.

In respect of the kerb sides and roads are beginning to break with weeds and grasses growing through, the Council’s Ground Maintenance Manager has reported that the highways spraying programme takes place in two parts, the first starting in April over about a 3 month period – there was a good start to the spraying season and the team was due to have completed Hoylake and Meols by now but unfortunately the last few weeks of bad weather has

delayed progress. The Council completely understands it's frustrating, however spraying activity is very much weather dependant. The team is working additional hours to try and get back on track.

In respect of the beaches, the Council's Parks and Countryside Team Leader for West Kirby, Hoylake and Meols has reported that over the past few years the foreshore at Hoylake has been sprayed to get rid of grass in late July or August, and observation of the foreshore appears to show it is successfully controlling the spread of grasses. One of the most important factors for successful spraying, is to get maximum leaf coverage - the majority of the grass is Puccinellia Maritima which under typical conditions grows most vigorously between August and October. It is good practice to minimise herbicide usage, so for this reason we aim to spray only once per year, in July or August, which can be revisited later with a knapsack sprayer to clear up any parts where the weed control has not taken effectively. The spraying programme has been researched, agreed with Natural England and appears to be working - there are no plans to change it at present, unless in the future new information comes to light."

Given his interest in tourism, Mr Montgomery was also sent the link below for his information, relating to work that was happening to increase tourism in Wirral:

<http://wirralview.com/news/wirral-s-tourism-businesses-set-huge-boost>

Question from Mr Sills by email:

"Yet another year and still no action to pollard the top twenty or so trees in Burlingham Avenue. Still the roots grow to further crack and block our drains. Small branches still falling on the road, pavements and verges. When will we hear the results of the Wirral survey of the 24,000 trees under council responsibility? Will it take an accident to prompt action?"

Response

Following this issue being raised previously at the Constituency Committee, the Highways Asset Manager was meeting the tree contractor on site week commencing 5th June to discuss future work programme for Burlingham Avenue and surrounding roads and an update is being provided to Mr Sills accordingly.

Question from Mr Barry James, Meols.

There remains an ongoing and dangerous situation at the mini roundabout located at the junction of Heron Road and Birkenhead Road, Meols. Although a meeting had taken place with the local MP, Councillors and 60 residents nothing had been done to address the problem. Residents believed that the installation of a no entry sign to clearly mark the one-way nature of the roundabout would alleviate some of the danger. The junction had been closed

at least seven times in the past year, which did not reflect the statistics of the highways department which stated that five accidents had taken place in the past five years. Can something please be done to help?

Response

A number of Councillors responded and agreed that the situation was further exacerbated by the number of HGVs using Heron Road, and that the official statistics do not always reflect the true nature of the problems experienced on a day to day basis. A Councillor suggested that the Constituency Committee should consider inviting the Road Safety Manager to its next meeting to receive information on this and other locations of concern to residents. The Constituency Manager to action. A Member of the Committee further commented that he was aware of action being undertaken with regards to 'No Entry' signage at the location.

Question – from Mr Andrew Gardiner

Mr Gardiner raised the matter of weeds and weed control, and apparent lack of concern regarding ongoing preventative maintenance as had been raised at the June 2016 meeting of the Constituency Committee held in Pensby.

Response

The Constituency Manager and the Deputy Chief Executive provided further information on the processes involved, staffing and seasonal issues affecting weed control and grass cutting. The Deputy Chief Executive informed that he had been given assurances that the team was adequately staffed to ensure the programme would be delivered. He further confirmed that Mr Gardiner's comments had been noted and would be fed back to the relevant officers.

The Chair commented that there was obvious tension between what residents were being told, and the actions being undertaken. He informed the Committee that he would investigate the matter and share the response with Members of the Constituency Committee.

Question – from Mr David Bebbington, Woodchurch T.R.U.S.T.

Could the Committee provide an update on the planned Hoylake Golf Course project?

Response

The Chair informed that at present nothing had changed with regard to the Council's proposals and there was nothing to report. The Deputy Chief Executive advised that the Council was awaiting a submission from the partner/developer.

A Councillor informed that there had obviously been some delays, given that public consultation had been scheduled for Spring 2017. Members of the Committee added that it would be appropriate for the proper officer to provide a factual presentation on the matter to a future meeting of the Constituency Committee. Members who also served on the Council's Planning Committee advised that there had been no planning application formally submitted at this time.

Question – from Mr Harry Webster, Irby.

Following up on the earlier presentation regarding 'Grot Spots'. Could Members please provide information on what was happening to the 'Heatherland' site at the end of School Lane, Thurstaston?

Response

A member of the Committee who served on the Planning Committee informed that a planning application for development of the site to provide housing had been submitted and approved. The consent would remain valid for a period of three years, and would be subject to work having been started on site during that period, after which the permission would lapse.

Question – Ms Barbara Moores, Irby.

Further to a point raised in the budget report, Mrs Moores expressed concern that voluntary bodies / organisations that covered the whole of Wirral were restricted from accessing the constituency funds that were ring-fenced to particular areas.

Response

The Constituency Manager informed that, whilst each of the four constituencies had identified their own priorities for funding, and that there was regular discussion within the Council about joining up support for voluntary and community organisations wherever possible. She further informed that she would talk with colleagues about this issue, and that the Burbo Bank Extension Community Fund (DONG Energy) might be an alternative source of funding support. Members of the Constituency Committee commented that the work of volunteers and how the Council engages with them and groups was vitally important.

A member of the public, Mr Barry James, suggested that a lottery bid be submitted, commenting on recent success in obtaining funds for the Gilroy Allotments in West Kirby.

Comment – Ms Angela Green

Ms Green wished to note that clarification of her question raised at the last Constituency Committee in respect of the Committee's constitution and terms of reference had now been received from the Constituency Manager.

The Community Question Time session closed with an update on the Festival First project from Ms Susan Brown with Members of the Public being apprised of a free brochure detailing upcoming events, and the opportunity to register for an Arts Newsletter delivered each month via e-mail.

A Member informed that details of the project would also be appearing in the Council's publication 'Wirral View'.

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.

14 **DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Wirral West Constituency Committee was scheduled for 5 October 2017 at St Michaels and All Angels Church, 1 Gills Lane, Pensby CH61 1AD.