

ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday, 21 September 2017

Present: Councillor P Stuart (Chair)

Councillors	S Foulkes	A Sykes
	T Jones	B Berry
	C Muspratt	I Lewis
	L Reecejones	C Carubia
	T Smith	M Sullivan (In place of B Kenny)
	T Usher	

15 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from; Councillors A Hodson, B Kenny, T Pilgrim and W Ward.

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

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

Members were reminded that they should also declare whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor B Berry declared a prejudicial interest in agenda item 4, 'Notice of Motion: Pavilions in Sports Grounds', by virtue of him being a Member of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee. He declared that he would introduce the item but take no part in the discussion or vote thereon.

17 MINUTES

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee meetings held on 19 June 2017 (Call-In) and 5 July 2017.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meetings held on 19 June 2017 (Call-In) and 5 July 2017 be approved.

18 **ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS APPROVED BY THE CHAIR**

The Chair indicated that with the agreement of Committee Members he would like to introduce an item of urgent business and requested that this be considered prior to item 4 on the agenda. The item related to the Libraries, Leisure and Culture Transformation Scrutiny Workshop.

The reason for the addition of the item was to update Members of the outcomes of the workshop and inform Members that a further scrutiny session to consider these proposals was likely to be arranged prior to the next committee in November.

He reiterated that for transparency, the interim report had been circulated to Members and would be published alongside the minutes of the meeting.

Following the agreement from the Members present, the Chair introduced the interim report following the workshop held to scrutinise the leisure, libraries and culture services which welcomed Members comments.

He expressed his disappointment by the lack of attendance at the workshop given that it had stemmed from a call-in in June 2017. He stressed the importance of such workshops and how vital member attendance to these sessions to enable appropriate scrutiny.

The Strategic Commissioner – Environment thanked Members for their attendance and suggested that a second scrutiny workshop be held. He commented that the business case was due to be submitted to the Cabinet in October 2017, however following discussions this had now been postponed till November 2017 which meant that Members could be afforded more time to scrutinise and feedback their comments to officers. All feedback received would be fed in to the business case report to include a revised timescale.

In response to a Member, The Strategic Commissioner – Environment indicated that the notes of the meeting were not verbatim but gave a broad example of what was discussed, he assured Members that all made comments were noted and following on from feedback received advice and guidance would be provided to Members as to how issues raised could form part of the strategic plan.

A Member commented that the issue of missed income/income collections had been discussed as part of the commercialisation agenda at a recent Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. He suggested that

comments raised at the recent workshop regarding this issue be shared with the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the outcomes of the Libraries, Leisure and Culture Transformation Scrutiny Workshop be noted; and**
- (2) the Scrutiny Support Officer be requested to arrange a further workshop for Members.**

19 **NOTICE OF MOTION - PAVILIONS IN SPORTS GROUNDS**

Having previously declared a prejudicial interest in the item by virtue of being a Member of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Bruce Berry introduced the item but took no part in the discussion or voted thereon.

The Chair reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 20 March 2017 (minute 152 (2) refers) the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Paul Hayes and seconded by Councillor Bruce Berry was referred by the Civic Mayor to this Committee for consideration -

PAVILIONS IN SPORTS GROUNDS

“Council notes that, among the 2020 Pledges, is a commitment to ensure ‘leisure and cultural opportunities for all’.

Council is therefore concerned with the poor condition of many of the sports pavilions and changing rooms within our parks, sports grounds and open spaces.

Council requests that a review of provision be undertaken by the Environment Scrutiny Committee, including visits to sites and evidence from sports clubs, football teams and other users, to enable a full assessment of the condition to take place and to explore opportunities for attracting external funding for refurbishment and repair.”

In accordance with Standing Order 7(6), Councillor Bruce Berry had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to explain the Motion

Councillor Berry elaborated on the Motion and highlighted the appalling condition of sports grounds and inadequate facilities within the Borough. He reiterated that this encompassed one of the Council’s 2020 Pledges and required the Council’s urgent attention.

Prior to the discussion on the item, Councillor Leech declared a personal interest by virtue of her grandson who played for a Wirral School Football Club.

Members echoed the comments made by Councillor Berry and highlighted that due to poor facilities football teams had been forced outside of the borough to train and play matches at alternative venues due to the lack of adequate facilities.

Members suggested that meetings be held with service users to see what improvements could be made and it was further suggested that local businesses be approached to sponsor facilities.

A Member commented that this issue should be looked at as part of the ongoing leisure review and form part of the commercialisation agenda in relation to income maximisation.

It was suggested that Members undertake a “mystery shopper” exercise to fully understand the issues concerning the borough’s pavilions. It was further suggested that a task and finish group be undertaken to allow further work to be carried out.

Members requested that further reports from officers be submitted to the Committee for discussion and it was further suggested that a site visit be undertaken.

In response to Members, the scrutiny support officer indicated the Children’s Overview and Scrutiny Committee had previously undertaken “reality check visits” which could be arranged for Members to look at facilities.

On a motion proposed by Councillor I Lewis, seconded by Councillor M Sullivan, it was -

RESOLVED: (unanimously) That

- (1) the ongoing review be noted and the Strategic Commissioner – Environment be requested to provide an officer report in relation to the specific issues raised by Members to a future meeting of the Committee; and**
- (2) the Scrutiny Support officer be requested to arrange site visits for Members of the Committee to undertake a review of the Borough’s facilities.**

20 NOTICE OF MOTION - FAIR VOTES

The Chair reported that at the meeting of the Council held on 10 July 2017 (minute 34 refers) the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Pat Cleary and seconded by Councillor Stuart Kelly was referred by the Civic Mayor to this Committee for consideration -

FAIR VOTES

“Council believes that a Parliament that more accurately reflects the views of the nation, enabling people to feel that their votes count, is more likely to develop an economic, social and environmental agenda that benefits Wirral’s residents.

Following the recent general election, this Council agrees that the 'First Past the Post' voting system:

- has again failed to live up to its reputation to provide strong and stable government;
- has again yielded a wildly disproportionate allocation of seats with, for example, the Democratic Unionist Party gaining 10 seats from 292,316 votes compared with 12 seats from 2.4 million votes for the Liberal Democrats;
- has spectacularly failed to match votes to seats with 27,930 votes required to elect one MP from the Scottish National Party compared with 525,371 votes to elect one Green Party MP.

This Council:

- (a) recognises that a robust democracy must include a fair voting system and that nobody should be disenfranchised because of where they live;
- (b) applauds the many groups and organisations campaigning for fair votes including the Electoral Reform Society, Make Votes Matter and the Labour Campaign for PR;
- (c) notes that the Single Transferable Vote system is already used for local elections in Scotland and in both Northern Irish local elections and the Northern Ireland Assembly while proportional electoral systems are used to elect the devolved parliaments and assemblies in Scotland, Wales and London;
- (d) therefore calls for the introduction of a proportional voting system
 - (i) for local elections in England and Wales;
 - (ii) for Westminster elections; and

(e) directs that a copy of this motion be forwarded to the Leaders of all political parties represented in the UK Parliament”.

In accordance with Standing Order 7(6) Councillor Pat Cleary had been invited to attend the meeting in order for him to explain the Motion.

Councillor Cleary elaborated on the Motion and highlighted the need for a fairer voting system and increased representation from women and those from an ethnic minority background into politics.

Members debated the Motion and a number of views, both for and against proportional representation were expressed.

RESOLVED:

(7:6 on the Chair’s casting vote) (One abstention) the Motion was put and lost.

21 **THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS FOR IMPROVING AIR QUALITY AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR WIRRAL**

The Committee considered a presentation from the Lead Commissioner – Environment and officers from the Environmental Health Department in relation to the Government’s plans for improving air quality highlighting the implications for Wirral.

Introduced by Mr M Cockburn, Lead Commissioner – Environment, the presentation highlighted the strategic overview; Wirral’s Air Quality monitoring arrangements; latest position across the Liverpool City Region; Government’s plans for improving air quality and the opportunities and issues in relation to air quality.

Mr K Smith, Environmental Health indicated that as part of its obligations, the Council produced an Air Quality Annual Status Report which was submitted to DEFRA. The current report had been submitted and once finalised would be shared with Members.

In relation to ‘hotspots’ Members raised concerns in relation to Singleton Avenue in particular, the effects air quality would have on the school in the area and asked if the monitoring undertaken took into account peak times such as children going to and from school and during break and lunchtimes.

In response Mr Smith indicated that work is currently being undertaken in conjunction with Public Health and officers within the department on pilot scheme to look at ways in which schools could influence parents to improve air quality.

In relation Singleton Avenue it was reported that there were no hourly harmful levels. In response, Members as a matter of urgency requested that further air quality monitoring be undertaken in particular at peak times at the school and surrounding area. The Lead Commissioner in response indicated that work could be undertaken with identified schools through the Eco Schools Officer to do some self-monitoring projects.

A further request was made by a Member for information in relation to air quality in and around St Albans Primary School and the current pilot scheme being undertaken by Liverpool John Moore's University in relation to better routes to school.

Members highlighted the conflict between road safety and air quality in that some of decisions taken to improve road safety and asked if this had had an impact on air quality and how as a Council could this be managed. In response, Mr Smith indicated that officers worked alongside transportation colleagues to ensure that air quality management did not compromise traffic safety.

In response to questions raised regarding planning applications it was reported that developers were expected to submit Air Quality Action Plan to ensure risks and impacts were identified this allowed for developers to be challenged on the information provided if necessary, prior to planning permission being considered.

In relation to the development containing 140 homes to be built in Upton, a Member indicated that residents had raised concerns regarding the impact on air quality given the increase to traffic to the area which already had a high volume of traffic travelling to the hospital and retail park, similar comments were raised by a Member in relation to a development proposed for Acre Lane. In response it was explained that it would be difficult to ascertain if air quality had been affected and further investigations of both developments would need to be sought and if necessary monitored to ensure identification of future risk.

A Member asked about Wallasey Road and how if it exceeded the national figure it was shown to not have relevant exposure. In response it was explained that this was in line with DEFRA guidance in relation to exposure considerations. Monitoring had been put in place due to the issues of idling taxi vehicles and officers were working with Licensing colleagues to raise awareness amongst taxi license holders and imposing a possible anti-idling law.

In relation to funding, it was confirmed that the Council had received some funding to improve air quality and other available funding streams were sought.

In response to Member, it was reported that there were currently two monitoring stations and Members of the Air Quality Liaison Group were looking at the development of further stations.

In terms of the introduction of real time or a more accurate monitoring system, it was stated that Government had no immediate plans and had given no instruction to Councils to change the current monitoring systems nationally, but as part of the Council's Strategic Review on Air Quality, officers would be exploring this.

The Lead Commissioner- Environment indicated that a report on the Strategic Review would be submitted to Cabinet in November and suggested that this be brought to a future meeting of this Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the officers be thanked for their informative presentation;**
- (2) the report on the Strategic Review be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee;**
- (3) the Lead Commissioner – Environment be requested to investigate issues raised in relation to St Albans Primary School and report back to the Member in writing; and**
- (4) the Lead Commissioner – Environment be requested to work with identified schools through the Eco Schools Officer to undertake some self-monitoring projects.**

22 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT QUARTER 1 2017/18

The Strategic Commissioner – Environment introduced the report of the Assistant Director: Finance (Section 151 Officer) that set out the Council's revenue and capital monitoring position as at the close of quarter 1 2017/18

He informed that the revenue forecasts overspend was at £1.1 million. In relation to Environment, he reported that officers were looking at options to reduce costs in relation to the waste contract: improve the quality of golf courses and enhance the Council's golf offer.

A Member indicated that she had been promised and was still awaiting information in relation to the report on trees on the highway and feedback from the survey work.

A Member further requested information in relation income and income collection in relation to golf courses and details on the Council's commercial approach.

In response to a question in relation to the Waste Management Business Plan, the Strategic Commissioner – Environment indicated that the Council had to find efficiency savings and officers were in discussions with Biffa to discuss options. A further report would be brought back to a future meeting of the Committee.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the financial monitoring report be noted;**
- (2) the Strategic Commissioner – Environment be requested to provide information in relation to trees on the highway and feedback from the survey work to the Member as requested;**
- (3) the Strategic Commissioner – Environment be requested to provide information in relation income and income collection in relation to the Council's golf courses and details on the Council's commercial approach: and**
- (4) the Strategic Commissioner – Environment be requested to provide a further report on the Waste Management Business Case to a future meeting of the Committee.**

23 2017/18 QUARTER 1 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE

The Strategic Commissioner - Environment introduced the report of the Executive Director for Strategy that provided the 2016/17 Quarter 1 (April – June 2017) performance report for Wirral Plan pledges under the People theme. The Quarter 1 report was included as Appendix 1 to the report, and provided a description of the progress in Quarter 1 that included available data in relation to a range of outcome indicators and supporting measures.

Members asked for further information on the activities undertaken in relation to homeless prevention and completion of home adaptations and the Council's Diabetes Programme.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the report be noted; and**
- (2) the Strategic Commissioner, Environment be requested to provide further information in relation to activities undertaken in relation to homeless prevention and completion of home adaptations and**

the Council's Diabetes Programme and report back in writing to the Members concerned.

24 **POLICY INFORM**

The Chair introduced a report on the September Policy Inform Briefing paper which provided an overview of ongoing and recent national legislation, bills presented to Parliament and emerging policies from September, 2017 and which were relevant to this Committee's remit.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

25 **ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Prior to the meeting an updated version of the work programme had been circulated to Members for their consideration.

The Chair introduced his report that set out the process of developing and managing the scrutiny work programme for the municipal year. The report informed that the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee, in cooperation with the other three Overview and Scrutiny Committees, were responsible for the proposing and delivery of an annual scrutiny work programme.

RESOLVED:

That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme for 2017/18 be approved.