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CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL SOUTH

Wednesday, 20 June 2018

Present:

Councillors	C Carubia	L Rowlands
	T Cottier	A Sykes
	P Gilchrist	J Walsh
	M Jordan	I Williams
	D Mitchell	KJ Williams
	C Muspratt	M Craig
	C Povall	R Squire

Apologies

Councillors	A Hodson	M Wright
	K Hodson	P wright
	K Sutton	

94 **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND VICE CHAIR**

RESOLVED: That

(1) Councillor I Williams be elected Chair for the meeting and the duration of the municipal year; and

(2) Councillor L Rowlands be elected Vice-Chair for the meeting and the duration of the municipal year.

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

Councillor C Muspratt declared a non pecuniary interest by virtue of a family member being employed by Merseyside Police.

96 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Hodson, K Hodson, Kevin Sutton, Mal Wright and Peter Wright.

97 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7 March 2018 be confirmed as a correct record.

98 **UPDATE PROVIDED BY MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Fergus Adams, on behalf of Ritchie Clarke, Station Manager – Merseyside Fire and Rescue updated members upon reported incidents between 1 April 2018 and 31 May 2018.

Members heard how there were:

- 13 deliberate fires (rubbish, bins, grass etc)
- 0 deliberate fires
- 7 accidental dwelling fires.

It was reported that there are no particular fire hotspots for any incident type within the Wirral South area.

99 **UPDATE FROM MERSEYSIDE POLICE**

PSCO Phil Roberts attended the meeting on behalf of Georgina Minnery, Neighbourhood Inspector.

PSCO Roberts addressed the Committee and informed Members that overall crime figures have increased from last year from 31% - 45% and that ASB figures had decreased by 1%. It was explained that the increase is partly due to the requirement to now record certain incidents as crimes that had not been a requirement previously. He assured Members that figures still remain low in comparison to other areas across Wirral. Members heard how Merseyside Police are actively working alongside other agencies in order to bring crime levels down. Members heard how burglaries had been a particular issue right across the Merseyside Police Force area.

PSCO then responded to questions by members

Questions and Answers

Councillor Muspratt queried the effectiveness of the new task force that had been established specifically to tackle burglaries.

PSCO Roberts informed Members that this had proven thus far successful and that some arrests had been achieved as a result. He explained that social media had been utilised in order to get messages across about preventative measures. He then informed that the Police force are actively looking and targeting individuals involved and have joined up with other agencies in order to achieve this.

Councillor Sykes acknowledged that ASB had gone down but queried as to whether incidents of ASB are moving across the Wirral?

In response, Members heard that dispersal zones had been well received by the public and promoted by the local press and social media and had been a good tool in order to manager where youths are congregating. PSCO Roberts appealed for Councillors and members of the public to inform the Police of

any incidents so that a plan can be put in place. He informed the Committee that plans had been put in place as a means to combat any ASB as far as mischief night and Halloween.

Mark Craig, Community Representative reported that there had been a number of incidents of speeding down the New Chester Road as a result of the implementation of average speed cameras down the New Ferry Bypass. He asked what could be done to combat this.

PSCO Roberts advised the Committee of his plans to utilise a mobile speed camera device in the area mentioned and to measure average speeds. He informed the Committee that there is a mobile police station in New Ferry every 3 weeks.

Councillor L Rowlands queried as to when the new Community Police Station would open

PSCO Roberts advised that he did not have a set date yet but advised that it would be available a couple of hours per day within Heswall Library and would report further when he had the information.

In response to this response, Councillor Cottier requested that a similar exercise be conducted in Bebington and was informed that this could be looked into.

Councillor J Williams enquired as to whether the speed camera on Mount Road was working.

Councillor Williams was informed that this could be answered by the Council's Road Safety Manager.

In addition to questions and answers some comments and information was provided by Members and Community Reps as follows:

Mark Craig informed the Committee that he had been constructive in helping to provide £2, 500 funding for a football programme due to be held in the Oval Leisure Centre, aimed at youths in order to further tackle incidents of ASB. In response to this PSCO Roberts informed about a further football programme involving Coaches from big clubs.

Ray Squires, Community Rep, expressed his gratitude to Community Police Officers and praised their hard work.

100 **PLACE BASED CARE**

This item was withdrawn from the agenda.

101 WIRRAL SOUTH PRIORITY UPDATE

A report by Fergus Adams, Constituency Manager, updated Members on the Constituency Committee's priorities for 2018/19. A presentation was given on key issues within the report.

The Constituency Manager drew members attention to para 3.1.1 of the report informing that: the first show case Eastham event was held in March with over 50 residents in attendance and the second showcase event will be held Saturday August 11th at Torr Park.

Members were then made aware of para 3.2 of the reports entitled ' Gaps in Youth Provision' and were informed that in its first two years of activity 37 young people had accessed therapeutic counselling sessions and 118 accessed the drop in sessions at Eastham and New Ferry youth clubs.

Paragraphs 3.3.1 & 3.3.2. of the report detailed budgetary details of local parks and the commitment of community members involved. Members were provided with details regarding ' Wirral South in Bloom 2018' and successful applications, appended to the report.

Members were then informed about the 'Love Where you Live' initiative as set out in paragraph 4.1 of the report and details were provided on the outcomes of a task and finish group that had met on 27 March 2018. Members heard how during this meeting the remaining budget was discussed and it was agreed to use the remaining budget (£11,250) to provide:

- Installation of new litter bins in locations to be used by dog walkers that currently lack adequate provision for disposal; and
- Dog waste disposal bad dispensers across a number of sites, working with existing partners (e.g. friends of parks groups) to ensure dispensers remain stocked.

Details were then given surrounding Place Based Social Action (PBSA) fund (para 4.2) and Members heard how New Ferry was chosen as one of the twenty locations to receive support as part of phase one of the PSBA fund earlier this year. The Committee were informed that phase one involves up to £5,000 development funding and some extra support from a facilitator allocated by the fund. They then heard how phase two allows the New Ferry Town Team to apply for up to £240,000 as part of the phase (spread over three years) to continue to run chosen projects.

Resolved - That the Wirral South Constituency Committee note the progress outlined within the report.

102 COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

A Report by the Wirral South Community Representatives highlighted particular issues experienced within the communities within the five wards and sought to bring them formally to the attention of the committee. Appended to the report were details of a working group ' First Pass Proposals'

Ray Squire, Community Representative, read out a statement provided by Kevin Sutton who had been elected as Chair of the Community Representatives, as follows:

"Members will recall that the "First Pass" proposal submitted to members at least a week before the last WSCC meeting by the com reps was not considered. The proposal aim was to include and involve members of this committee in developing proposals for the council to "Work Together" with local communities to develop a better model "that works for all and is fair to all".

Members may also recall that at the last meeting Rachael Musgrave gave a presentation on "Working Together" which highlighted serious deficiencies in how the council engages with local communities. It also highlighted the significant underspends of budgets allocated to constituency committees.

Since the last WSCC meeting there have been significant developments by senior council officers, com reps from this committee, Community of Practice and third sector organisations working together to develop proposals for a better model to involve and deliver community services across the Wirral.

The com reps believe that the opportunity for elected members from this committee to be involved in this process has been lost.

We also understand that a report on Working Together with Local Communities will be considered by Cabinet next month."

Resolved – That the report and subsequent written statement be noted.

103 **WIRRAL PLAN OVERVIEW UPDATE 2017 -18 QUARTER THREE**

Members were advised on how to access the Wirral Plan Overview Update 2017 -18 Quarter Four and the following link was provided:

https://www.wirral.gov.uk/sites/default/files/all/About%20the%20council/Performance%20and%20spending/Performance%20reports/2017_18%20Q4%20Overview%20Report%20Wirral%20Plan.pdf

104 **PUBLIC QUESTION & ANSWER (APPROX. 20 MINUTES) INCLUDING RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED AT THE PREVIOUS COMMITTEE**

The Committee and members of the public in attendance at the meeting raised the following questions, issues, concerns and requests. The first three questions were received in advance of the meeting.

There were 18 members of the public present.

Question one, received in advance of the meeting from Karen O'Rourke

In his letter to the Constituency Manager, dated 7th June, David Ball stated "For clarification it is important to state that the Cabinet decision taken to move to the next stage of the project viewed the proposed future loan of £26million to the project as a commercial investment from which the Council will receive a financial return that can be re-invested back into local service provision. It is not a sum of Council money that could in theory be re-directed to another location as New Ferry".

I believe that Mr Ball has misunderstood the questions relating to the funding of the Golf Resort and New Ferry. It is well understood by residents that the £26million to be lent to the Developers for the Golf Resort will not come directly from the Council, but via prudential borrowing.

The Council initially provided £350,000 for the initial New Ferry clear up work. Recently Homes England has announced an initial investment of £100k for further consultancy studies. Yet this £100k has not come directly from the Council. 16 months after the explosion New Ferry is only now receiving just £100k to carry out work over the next 12 months to produce a viable scheme capable of securing planning permission. The Council have so far spent over £1million of their own money on consultancy studies for the Hoylake Golf Resort and have invested significant time and resources to the project.(including a further £600k committed just months before the explosion). They have already committed to lending a Developer £26million should the Golf Resort secure planning permission – even though the golf resort is also still at the same stage as New Ferry i.e. requiring 12 month studies to produce a viable scheme capable of securing planning permission.

Therefore, please will the Council explain how it is able to spend £1million on Consultancy Studies and secure Cabinet Approval for a Prudential Loan to a Developer for the Golf Resort, despite the fact that there are still 12 months of golf resort design studies yet to take place? Please can you explain why, 15 months after the explosion, a similar amount of money has not been made available to progress the New Ferry development . Please will you clarify whether the Council will approve prudential borrowing to lend to a Developer for New Ferry?"

Answer

A full answer to this question will be provided in due course

Question two, received in advance of the meeting by Nick Drew

Following Rachael Musgrave's presentation at the last WSCC, and having studied the slides she presented, can the committee give any further indications on:

A) which Cabinet member is now responsible for the 'Localism and Engagement' portfolio? (there no longer appears to be a Cabinet member appointed to the post

B) what is the timeframe for bringing recommendations on the preferred approach to Neighbourhood working to Cabinet?

C) how will elected members be supported in taking this forward within their communities?

Answer

A) The Leader of the Council now leads this agenda; providing strategic direction and Cabinet leadership.

B) As per Cllr Patrick's commitment at the last Committee meeting, a report will be presented to Cabinet and is scheduled on the Forward Plan for decision between 1 July 2018 and 30th September 2018.

C) As leaders and advocates in local communities Elected Members have informed how the Council and other Partners develop a new approach to working with local communities and what they need to support them in this role. This will be reflected in the report presented to Cabinet.

Question three received in advance of the meeting by Louise Stothard

The Tree Loss Monitoring Report has identified the felling of, dismemberment of and damage to several thousand trees across the Borough, despite the Council's Parks & Countryside employing 190 persons to care for our parks and countryside and despite its employing a Tree Protection Officer. This report has been carried out during David Ball's tenure as Assistant Environmental Services Director and with his approval. The Council itself carries out hundreds of fellings per annum at the expense of our trees, our taxes, our Council and our environment, for no verifiable reason whatsoever. It has provided no evidence whatsoever for the need to fell our trees. This is scandalous.

The costs to Wirral's environmental health and the capacity of that environment to support human life and activity depends on the presence of trees/adequate tree cover. Trees, for example provide the most effective, useful and cheapest form of flood defence. The cost of leaving trees in situ is negligible. Yet it costs on average between 750 and 2000 to fell and remove a mature tree. The real cost, which can never be recovered, is the damage to our environment (which is exponential) the damage to human health, the loss of resource and amenity value. Why cannot WBC examine its own Parks & Countryside policy and its Highways policy so that it values trees instead of regarding them as unproven risks? It could then write into its orders and its statutory powers a penalty which reflects the seriousness of the damage caused by felling and removing their parts, and which is enforceable? Road traffic accidents make up 13% of all external causes of death in the UK. For the 10-14 age group road accidents make up over 50% of all external causes of death. Yet we do not scrap all cars on that basis. That is discounting the economic costs of traffic congestion. The risk of being killed by a falling tree or limb is 1 in 260m. The real risk to health and safety is created by removing a tree.

Why cannot the Council, on the back of this, incentivise the care of trees?

When will WBC stop spending taxpayers money on degrading Wirral's environment and start protecting the status and wellbeing of our trees (and, along with them, our air quality, our soil health, our wildlife (including pollinator health), our flood defences, our status as a place to live and work and ourselves)?

Answer

David Armstrong, Assistant Chief Executive responded by informing the Committee that the Council do try and replace trees when they had been taken down. He also explained that a full survey would be conducted by an outside company in due course and when information has been collated it will be shared.

Question four – Mr Phil Simpson, Greasby

Mr P Simpson raised the following query

Is it right that our Council should borrow £26million to build a golf resort, which is not needed or wanted and has a 15 to 1 against ratio by our citizens when a measly £100,000 is to be invested in New Ferry.

Is there more financial importance given to a golf resort than there is to our citizens who live in the most deprived areas of our Borough.

Why has our Council not given an undertaking to secure borrowing similar amounts of money to that of the golf course to loan to a developer to rebuild New Ferry. Our citizens, wherever they live deserve better than this- Our citizens are the wealth earners of Wirral.

Answer

A full answer to this question will be provided in due course

Question five – Mr Robert Wilkinson, Irby

Mr R Wilkinson queried information that Councillors and members of the public had been given as part of the consultation on dog related control orders. He stated that member of the public and Members had been told that support had given by both the RSPCA and the Kennel Club. He informed Members that he had spoken with both organisations and they had stated this not to be the case.

Answer

Mr Wilkinson was informed that this would be investigated and reported back.

Question six - Miss Sarah Ashworth, Heswall

Miss S Ashworth spoke in against of the consultation proposals relating to dog related control orders. She stated that public spaces orders are detrimental to local areas, are frowned upon by the RSPCA and are damaging to society as they can create social isolation. She asked given the research to support this, why has this been allowed? She further asked- why is a blanket ban being proposed?

Answer

A written response will be provided in due course.

Question seven – Ms Gwen Lawrence, Heswall

Ms G Lawrence expressed concerns over the proposed ban of dogs on football pitches even though they are used seldomly and the impact this would have in the Heswall area

Answer

Ms Lawrence was advised that this matter is still under consultation and would be addressed once all responses had been collated.

Question eight – Mr Peter Healey, West Kirby.

Mr Healey commented on the levels of ASB on local beaches, particularly West Kirby and the high levels of litter left behind. He suggested that the Police presence in the area be increased.

Answer

PSCO Roberts responded by stating that this could be reviewed following an assessment on threat, harm and risk in the area.

Question nine – Mr A Peters, Hoylake

Mr Peters informed the Committee that numbers of signatures in opposition to the Hoylake Golf Resort detailed on the Council's website is out of date and asked that this be updated.

Answer

David Armstrong, Deputy Chief Executive assured Mr Peters that this would be updated.

Question ten – Ms V Burden , Heswall

Ms Burden enquired into whether Wirral had plans to use " Kingdom", an environmental enforcement company

Answer

The Committee were informed that the contract with Kingdom had recently been renewed for a further three years.

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

An item of urgent business requested by Councillor Gilchrist was accepted by the Chair.

Councillor P Gilchrist addressed the Committee to inform Members about the ongoing issues surrounding bus routes in his ward and accross the southern Wirral area. He expressed concerns in particular about the lack of public transport to Arrowe Park Hospital.

Councillor Jordan also expressed her concerns about the situation in Spital and the impact this has had upon hospital staff who are often late for work as a result of inadequate bus services.

Councillor Muspratt further spoke of her concerns about the lack of provision and the unsatisfactory service.

On a motion by Councillor Mitchell and jointly seconded by Councillors Muspratt and Jordan and unanimously agreed and

Resolved – That

This Constituency Committee is concerned at the inconvenient, lengthy and time consuming bus journeys, affecting residents in southern Wirral when travelling to Arrowe Park Hospital and back,

The committee recognises that, since the changes to bus services introduced in September 2017, patients and visitors have been faced not only with less frequent but also indirect services, part of a complex deal negotiated between Merseytravel and the bus companies.

We consider it totally unsatisfactory that residents face journeys that might involve changes in New Ferry or Birkenhead Bus station, adding extra journey time, stress and the possibility of additional costs to their journeys.

Whilst some work has been started on ways to alleviate or tackle the situation such as the meeting attended by Merseytravel, representatives of the Clinical Commissioning Group, this Council and Councillors Muspratt and Gilchrist, the issues have not yet been resolved.

In addition the Urgent Care Review also needs to take account of the need to access services.

This committee therefore requests that the Leader of the Council and appropriate Cabinet members take this issue up with the LCR Transport Committee and the Mayor of the Liverpool City Region with a view to restoring a better and more direct service to Arrowe Park Hospital from those areas of southern Wirral most affected.

106 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Committee has been advertised as taking place at 6pm, 3 October (Venue TBC)

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Answers collated following the meeting

Question one

Thank you for your e-mail and the question you have raised about the Hoylake Golf Resort and New Ferry Projects.

As you will know these are two very different “projects”. The Hoylake Golf Resort has come through a competitive dialogue process; identified a preferred Developer and is now seeking to bring this project forward to implementation through a series of stages. All of this is set out in the various Cabinet reports submitted on this project. These reports explain the history of the project, the consultancy studies that have been undertaken in the past and the current position so I will not go into all the detail on these matters in this response as that information is publically available and has been the subject of numerous FOI enquiries.

The “project” in New Ferry was caused by the unfortunate events of the explosion which took place in March 2017. This was a major incident and has been dealt with through the Council’s Emergency Plan. The initial acute phase has been followed by a recovery stage (which is still progressing) and is now moving towards a stage of seeking to identify and explore options on how the Council and other partners can support the future of this area. At the present time Homes England have made £100,000 available to support a feasibility study to identify regeneration options. This work will be completed within the next few months. As there are currently no detailed options identified it is not possible to comment on whether the Council “will approve prudential borrowing to lend to a Developer for New Ferry” but the Council has made it clear from the outset of this incident that it will do all that it can to support the community of New Ferry following this unprecedented event. In terms of the Recovery Phase the Council has now spent over £400,000 of its own resources supporting the community in the area and in addition to this Council staff and local volunteers have spent many hours supporting people through these traumatic events.

In summary, therefore, there is currently an identified project in terms of the Hoylake Golf Resort and this is why matters are progressing as they are. The detailed design studies, which the Developer is commissioning and funding at its own cost, are required for the planning process. In New Ferry, there is no identified project(s) as yet because the feasibility study stage is on-going but when this is completed then whatever projects emerge these will be considered in terms of what is required to bring them to implementation. These matters will be discussed with the New Ferry community as all matters since the explosion have been, through local meetings and consultation, with the continued support of the Local Member of Parliament and Ward Councillors.

I hope that this answers your questions.”

Question Five

Mr Wilkinson is referring to the response produced on Cllr Patrick’s behalf to acknowledge enquiries and comments that have come in regarding the proposed dog control PSPO, please see extract of the response below referring to the Kennel Club and RSPCA:

‘I’m pleased that the proposals have been developed in consultation with the RSPCA and Kennel Club, who have both acknowledged the proposals are based on common sense and that the Council is conducting full public consultation before making any decision about future dog control measures.’

As part of the development of the proposed measures for inclusion in the dog control PSPO I undertook pre consultation with a number of local and national stakeholders. Specifically I held a conference call with several officers from the Kennel Club in December during which I presented the proposed measures and referred to their publication about PSPOs (Out of Order – The Impact of Access Restrictions on Dogs and Their Owners) which sets out the Kennel Club’s advice and expectations on dog control PSPOs. The officers asked some clarification questions about access restrictions in parks and about owners having means of disposal for dog fouling on their person. Their collective view and comment at the end of the discussion was that what was being proposed was based on common sense and that our intended means of consultation was comprehensive. Their main concern about PSPOs is the lack of meaningful consultation undertaken by some authorities prior to establishing far reaching PSPOs.

I also met a number of local stakeholders in December at the town hall, including the local senior RSPCA officer where again I presented the proposed measures of the dog control PSPO and intended method of public and stakeholder consultation. I received the same response from the RSPCA officer and others in attendance, that the proposals were based on common sense and would help improve the experience of open spaces for all. I have subsequently kept these stakeholders updated on timescales and notified them immediately prior to the PSPO consultation’s launch. They have all received the full details of the dog control PSPO proposals as part of the formal engagement with stakeholders.

Please see below extracts of website advice from both the Kennel Club and RSPCA regarding dog control PSPOs

The Kennel Club’s overview of Dog Control PSPOs includes:

- While the majority of dog walkers are responsible, unfortunately there is an irresponsible minority who don't pick up after their dog or allow their dogs to run out of control. This behaviour has resulted in an increasing number of local authorities introducing ever-more stringent restrictions on where dog walkers can exercise their dogs. Restrictions may require dog walkers to keep their dogs on a lead in part or all of a restricted site, such as a park or beach, or they could impose a complete ban on taking dogs into these areas.
- The Kennel Club accepts that there are scenarios where restrictions on dog walkers are required and justified; indeed we are aware of many restrictions which are perfectly sensible and fair for all.
- The Kennel Club is not opposed to the principle of restrictions on dog owners and walkers. It is often overlooked that problems associated with irresponsible dog ownership affect responsible dog owners as much as those without dogs. Dog walkers are one of the most common users of the open spaces where these problems occur and over which restrictions are introduced.
- While we will usually seek alternative options to legal restrictions to tackle issues relating to irresponsible dog ownership, we do recognise at times there is a need for them. When done in an appropriate manner they can be effective at dealing with problem dog walkers.

The RSPCA's national position statement on PSPOs includes the following headlines:-

- The RSPCA acknowledges the value of PSPOs for local authorities to ensure that sections of open space may be dog-free, for example childrens' play areas, sports fields, etc.
- Dogs enjoy interacting and playing with other people and animals and it is important that they are able to express this and other normal behaviour off the lead. It is therefore imperative that local authorities use PSPOs sparingly and in a manner that is proportionate to the problem, in accordance with Defra's guidance.
- Local authorities should be aware that under section 9 of the Animal Welfare Act, owners are required to ensure they meet their pets' welfare needs, this includes the freedom to express normal behaviour and regular and appropriate exercise. It is for this reason, that where dogs are excluded or restricted on open spaces, it is essential that local authorities ensure that other open spaces in close proximity remain accessible to dogs on and off leads to allow owners to fulfil their responsibilities.
- The RSPCA hopes that local authorities issue PSPOs cautiously and not as a blanket power that punishes the responsible majority in an effort to tackle problems created by an irresponsible few.

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