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CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WALLASEY

Wednesday, 12 December 2018

Present:

Councillor	B Mooney (Chair)	
Councillors	C Blakeley	S Williams
	P Hayes	J Williamson
	S Jones	B Berry
	C Jones	T Usher
	L Rennie	

Apologies

Councillors	C Spriggs	T Jones
	RL Abbey	P Stuart
	AER Jones	I Lewis
	A Leech	

17 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to consider whether they had any disclosable pecuniary interests and/or 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.

No such declarations were made.

18 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ron Abbey, Adrian Jones, Tony Jones, Anita Leech, Ian Lewis, Christine Spriggs and Paul Stuart.

19 WALLASEY CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE BUDGET SPEND: TACKLING FOOD POVERTY

Further to Wallasey Constituency Committee minute (15) (26 September 2018) refers, the Constituency Manager introduced a report of the Director of Strategy and Partnerships that proposed an approach to, and sought a decision for, the spend of the Committee's budget. At that meeting it had been agreed that the Constituency Manager make further enquiries to develop a proposal regarding the best approach to tackle food poverty across the Constituency (within its available budget of £59,565) and a further special meeting of Wallasey Constituency Committee be arranged for decision.

A report of the Corporate Director for Strategy and Partnerships informed that discussion had taken place with the Constituency Manager for Birkenhead regarding the operation of the 'Feeding Birkenhead' project, which had been

established by the Rt Hon Frank Field MP in 2014; together with associated projects funded by the Constituency Committee. Discussions had also taken place with Wirral Council's Assistant Director for Early Help & Prevention. The Constituency Committee was informed that published data (up to November 2015) suggested that 13,675 children in Wirral were living in poverty (up to the age of 20 years); this equated to 19.9% of all children in Wirral living in poverty (HMRC, 2018). Whilst this was a year-on-year reduction from 2011, it was reported that this was higher than the 2015 average for England at 16.6%. Seven of twenty-two wards compared were above the Wirral threshold; including Seacombe (36.6%, 1,570 children), Leasowe & Moreton East (26.5%, 955 children) and Liscard (24.7%, 885 children), within Wallasey Constituency. Whilst the Constituency's three remaining wards were below the threshold, there were still children living in low income households within those areas – New Brighton (18.7%, 565 children), Moreton West & Saughall Massie (14.2%, 400 children) and Wallasey (8.7%, 235 children).

The report outlined that food poverty meant that an individual or household was not able to obtain healthy, nutritious food, or could not access the food they would like to eat. This often resulted in people eating poor diets, which could lead to heart disease, obesity, diabetes and cancer, as well as inadequate levels of many vitamins and minerals. Food poverty and economic poverty were linked. Rent, tax and debts were fixed costs; food was often the 'flexible' budget item. Poor children could suffer from lower nutrient intake, bad dietary patterns, hunger, low fruit and vegetable consumption and problems accessing food in school holidays.

It was reported that activity to tackle food poverty would help contribute to the Wirral 2020 pledges to ensure children were ready for school and enable them to reach their full potential. Considerable work in contribution to these pledges was led by Wirral Council's Early Help & Prevention Service. The Service had recently commissioned three contracts to support its Early Help offer (branded as 'Community Matters') and to create the right conditions for community-based early help to thrive. This included:

- Revitalising the voluntary, community and faith sector by creating a vibrant and visible network of providers;
- Providing support to children and families which was straight-forward and effective, easy to engage with and not constrained by overwhelming processes;
- Engaging all stakeholders in the process of developing a long-term approach to early help which was sustainable, responsive to need, proactive in delivery, and was owned by communities.

The Constituency Manager put forward the proposal that a commissioning exercise should take place, as an additional phase of 'Community Matters', to identify a provider to improve the response to tackling food poverty across Wallasey Constituency (i.e. the six wards of Leasowe & Moreton East, Liscard, Moreton West & Saughall Massie, Seacombe, New Brighton and

Wallasey). This would have the purpose of co-ordinating activity across the Constituency, addressing any gaps in provision and implementing an infrastructure that was joined up and sustainable following the conclusion of the contract. The contract would run for 12 months from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

The report set out the key tasks for the provider that would be to:

- Identify current provision to tackle food poverty within each of the six wards of Wallasey Constituency;
- Identify gaps in provision to tackle food poverty within each of the six wards of Wallasey Constituency;
- Identify six central points/hubs (one within each of the Constituency's six wards – more than one if sub-divisions within wards were appropriate) to support children and families within each respective ward with access to low cost food and healthy/balanced meals; ensuring that these hubs work with, support and build upon existing provision and address the gaps identified;
- Seek added value where possible with the central points/hubs and wider providers tackling other poverty in particular period poverty, encouraging volunteering and reducing social isolation;
- Co-ordinate a mechanism for the sharing of good practice across the central points/hubs and wider providers and identification of blockages etc;
- Engage and work with existing statutory and voluntary, community & faith sector provision (including but not exclusively, Wirral's Children's Centres, Family Hubs, Schools, Community Cafes, Social Supermarkets, Food Banks and Seacombe's Improving Life Chances Steering Group) and support new provision where required to address gaps in provision;
- Facilitate partnerships (across the public, private and voluntary, community & faith sectors) and processes to take advantage of economies of scale, access to continued funding, etc. across the Constituency;
- Ensure linkages with the new Early Help providers' network (being developed through the first Community Matters commission referred to in 3.5 above);
- Develop and implement plans to ensure the sustainability of the provision and ongoing linkages between the central points/hubs from 1 April 2020 (following the end of this contract).

To ensure consistency and strategic integration, it was proposed that the commissioning process be overseen through Wirral's Children's Services Contract Team. The Contract Manager for this commission would be the same officer managing the Community Matters contracts referred to in 3.5 of the report and the evaluation of this contract would be undertaken through the work commissioned via Community Matters. It was proposed that the contract value be rounded down to £59,000 and the remaining £565 be transferred to Children's Services as a gesture of goodwill in overseeing the monitoring and evaluation of this Committee project. By working with the

Service, this approach would also ensure that the Committee's funding was spent upon delivery rather than infrastructure.

Jane Egan, Early Help Partnership Manager, Children's Services, attended the meeting to explain her role and describe the proposal to manage the contract, how the work would track needs and how outcomes would be measured. Jane Egan and the Constituency Manager responded to Members questions and addressed queries regarding the monitoring of how the money would be spent. Members also asked about the legacy of this spend once the contract had ended and how this could continue to be funded; the Constituency Manager outlined that a key element of the contract was to build an infrastructure that ensured a level of sustainability. The Constituency Manager informed the Committee that a service specification had been drafted and said she would look into how elected Members could be kept updated, receive quarterly updates and receive an evaluation at the end of the project, given that the Constituency Committees were ceasing in the new municipal year.

The Committee welcomed the approach set out in the report and it was unanimously;

Resolved - That;

1 to help tackle food poverty across Wallasey Constituency the Budget Spend proposal outlined in 4.1 of the report be adopted.

2 Members of the Wallasey Constituency Committee be kept updated on the progress and outcomes of the Budget Spend to tackle food poverty in Wallasey.