

# CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 4 October 2018

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	JE Green (Chair)	
	Councillors	M Patrick T Anderson D Burgess-Joyce W Clements T Cox D Elderton	G Ellis A Gardner T Smith M Sullivan S Whittingham
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	P Brightmore K Cannon	G Watt

## 11 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from councillors Tom Anderson, Phillip Brightmore, Kate Cannon and Geoffrey Watt.

## 12 ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chair suggested, and it was agreed that item 9 (Any Other Business) be considered before item 5 (Urgent Care Centre Development) as the speaker for item 5 had given notice that she would be late. This would allow discussion on the Local Plan and the Chair requested that David Ball gave an update on the Local Plan and take questions from members of the public.

## 13 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 Jeff Green declared a personal interest as a non-executive director of Magenta Living. Councillor Green stated that he had taken advice and as the committee was not a decision-making body felt that it was still appropriate to facilitate discussions on the Local Plan.

Councillor Wendy Clements declared a personal interest as chairman of Greasby Community Association.

14 **MINUTES**

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2018 be approved.

15 **WIRRAL WEST CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE BUDGET AND SPEND 2018/19**

Consultant in Public Health, Rachael Musgrave gave a presentation based on a Power Point slide show that had been printed off and made available at the meeting (a copy of this presentation is included with these minutes). Rachael went through recommendations for the expenditure for the constituency committee for the year 2018-19. £50,000 core budget for each committee has been reinstated and it was proposed that this sum was spent in the way that was established for this committee in the form of a grants programme.

The second proposal was for the allocation of £25,000 comprised of £12,500 from last year and £12,500 from this years' expenditure. This would be allocated for Environmental projects with 3 proposals for this: The first being £5000 to fund 5 'Environmental Action Days' in each ward within the constituency. The second was for £15,000 to run the 'Small Grant, Big Difference' fund, the details of which are included in the attached presentation. The remaining £5,000 is proposed to be spent on local improvements.

The Chair noted the success of the work that has already been done through the 'Small Grant, Big Difference' grant scheme and highlighted the importance of residents being able to vote on such schemes.

**Resolved – that the Wirral West Constituency Committee Budget and Spend report be noted.**

16 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**UPDATE AND QUESTIONS ON THE LOCAL PLAN**

David Ball, Assistant Director of Major Growth and Housing Delivery gave a brief description of where the Council was regarding the Local Plan. David stated that on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2018, Cabinet had considered a report on the Local Plan. This report covered land supply for the future, including employment uses, housing uses and mixed uses. It also included other options around open spaces, densities and the opportunity to cooperate with other local councils. The Cabinet took the decision to formally consult on those development options. The consultation commenced on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2018. David has attended 15 public consultation events in the past 2 weeks with approximately 1500 people attending.

The Consultation ends on 26<sup>th</sup> October 2018 with written representations needing to be submitted ahead of this date. The consultation is based on

figures from the Office of National Statistics (ONS). The ONS have just released updated (lower) figures which central government will decide on how to interpret before the council can make any amendments to their consultation.

Members will make decisions on a range of options given to them in July 2019 at full Council.

The Chair asked for questions from the audience:

Jane Chesters, a resident, questioned whether the greenbelt will still be involved in light of the new figures from the ONS. Stated that there were a large number of people within the greenbelt that worked on farms and other industries who's lives were on hold until a decision is made regarding building on the greenbelt. Felt that as planning approval had been given for Wirral Waters that a large proportion of the housing requirement would be fulfilled there.

The Chair reiterated that any decisions on the matter were the responsibility of the full Council.

In response to Jane Chesters, David Ball explained that the previous figures for new dwellings expected to be built per annum were 803 and looking at the new figures released by the ONS the new figures would be 488 dwellings per annum. The governments' current national target is 300,000 new homes per annum by the mid 2020's with the new figures suggesting that this target would not be met on the lower figures as nationally this would only add up to approximately 214,000. David stated that the council has asked the government how they intend to use those figures. These figures are "Household Projections" and to work out the overall housing needs there are other factors involved in the calculations such as household formation, affordability calculations as well as population trends among others. The council is waiting to see how the government wants to proceed before the council can decide on these figures. It is likely to be sometime in December to see how the government will interpret these numbers and therefore what numbers can go into our local plan. David stated that Peel have given a range of housing numbers for Wirral Waters but the evidence to support these figures is still awaited from Peel.. David stated that even if we were to go by the lowest projection of 488 dwellings per annum, we would still need to develop into the greenbelt to some degree.

Jane Chesters followed up by stating that many estates within Birkenhead are in poor condition and need to be re-developed. She felt it was unacceptable to develop in new areas rather than re-develop land we already have.

The Chair highlighted that David Ball and his department must follow protocols and agreed methodology. He suggested that members of the public should maintain their activism against building in the greenbelt and that it would be bizarre if these new figures were not factored in to the Local Plan.

Phil Simpson, resident, stated that the new, lower figure should be 477, not 488 as stated by David Ball. He also stated that the council was scaring residents by using the national figures or 300,000 properties. He stated that Wirral does not need to build on the greenbelt and claimed that consultations were flawed. He claimed that the current consultation should not be going on as the council knew that new figures were coming from the ONS. He stated there had been over 22,000 signatures against building on the greenbelt and stated that the council was corrupt.

The Chair interjected by stating that he does not believe council officers or councillors to be corrupt and that this was to be a measured question and answer session.

A resident stated that the new figures from the ONS altered things drastically for the Wirral and that it was not logical that the government would still want 300,000 properties built per year when the new numbers are so much lower.

Peter Owen, resident, stated that the government came out with the number nationally and pro-rata's it to councils, losing site that housing number come down to the Local Plans of each council.

David Ball responded to both of these statements by explaining that there are a number of factors taken into account and that the figures being spoken about do not include forecasts for economic growth. The council have to publish a housing target number and be able to robustly defend it. David stated that the government is looking to keep their national target and that we will see in December which way they will interpret the numbers from the ONS.

A resident stated that she appreciated that we have a growing need for housing as a nation. She felt that other areas of the Wirral are not being used correctly claiming that in Hamilton Square whole properties were selling for £250,000 while similar properties are going for much more elsewhere. She felt that the council was not thinking collectively.

A resident claimed he had sent a letter to Council Leader Phil Davies in September but had not yet received a response. He stated that the new figures of 470-480 new dwellings per annum instead of 800 alters the perspective on building on the greenbelt. He wanted to know if the council will now acknowledge that there is now no need to build on the greenbelt.

A resident claimed he had been to a number of events in the Wirral and felt that Birkenhead and other areas such as New Ferry and Rock Ferry were some of the most deprived areas of the country. He stated that the Labour council had let them down.

Caroline Evans, resident, stated that the Council should be taking a broader view. She compared the developments in Salford/Manchester to the plans for

Wirral Waters, stating that those areas had massively improved. Caroline stated that there was no need to threaten farmers, especially regarding declining food production.

The Chair stated that it is Council policy to avoid building on the greenbelt.

David Billington, resident, commented that he had lost count of the times the word “probably” had been used in David Ball’s opening presentation. He stated that he had been to a presentation from Peel about Wirral Waters and feels that the Council and Peel are starting to communicate. He felt the Council need to know definite figures before we consult.

John Heath of the Irby, Thurstaston and Pensby Amenity Society (ITPAS), stated that he represents 600 members the group. He states that there are 13 scenarios that consultants have come up with and that they have only based these scenarios on the Council’s projections. He states that the Council has chosen to use the highest figures in their projections and means to take any decisions to build in the greenbelt to court. He has had professional conclusions that there is no need to develop the greenbelt. ITPAS has produced their own report and given a copy to the Council which he claims they have ignored.

David Ball clarified that the council was not currently subject to government intervention over the Local Plan. In response to the mention that correspondence was not being responded to, David stated that he was currently receiving hundreds of representations from people all over the Wirral and that they would all be answered but that some may take a while to get to because of the detail required for each response.

David Ball stated that the projection of 803 properties per year was based on objectively assessed need and does not include economic growth, the number could be as high as 1200 when this is taken into account. He stated that Wirral’s local plan is looking at the Wirral as a whole with redevelopment plans for Birkenhead, Rock Ferry and New Ferry already underway alongside other brownfield sites. There are also approximately 4600 empty properties and the council is helping to bring them back into use.

A resident asked why the council can’t just develop the 4600 properties.

Councillor Matthew Patrick asked what number of properties built per year would be needed to avoid building in the greenbelt. He also asked what David Ball’s advice would be on whether the council could exclude the greenbelt from the Local Plan. Councillor Patrick mentioned the Wirral Growth Company and that it would be bringing a lot of money into the Wirral to help with the level of economic deprivation.

David Ball stated that the council is trying to bring as many empty properties back into use as possible. He stated that while the number of empty

properties help towards the overall target figures, new dwellings still need to be built.

David stated that to avoid building on the greenbelt would require a figure much lower than the new figure of 488 per year from the ONS and would rely on Wirral Waters too heavily. David then stated that for the Local Plan there are acts of Parliament that have to be met and that the council must comply with a whole range of things. He stated that the council is some way from a number that would avoid the necessity of building within the greenbelt. The current plan will need to include some element of greenbelt development but will seek to maximise brownfield and the Wirral Waters development etc before looking to the greenbelt.

Councillor Mike Sullivan stated that he had listened carefully and felt that the council has been supplied with arbitrary housing figures to come up with our own numbers. He stated that he does not want to build on the greenbelt and would go to court to challenge the numbers being provided.

Councillor David Burgess-Joyce stated that he is not a professional when it comes to land development. He raised that he is an estate agent and that he has taken the decision not to support developers coming into the Wirral to build on the greenbelt. He raised the tactics of such developers as a problem to come as they will come into the area looking to circumnavigate planning policies etc. He also suggested that the construction of larger, more expensive houses in the greenbelt areas would raise more council tax. He claimed that the population of Wirral was not increasing and that in his experience the vast majority of property purchases were from people who already lived nearby.

Councillor Tony Cox claimed that the figures on development targets were grossly over estimated. He raised that Wirral Waters/Peel have promised 6000 properties which will mostly be 1-2 bedroom flats. The Hoylake golf course is to include 160 band G-H (council tax banding) properties. He disagreed with David Ball's figures saying that they didn't stack up. Councillor Cox stated that if the commercial aspect of Wirral Waters does not come to fruition then there will be no economic growth. He stated that the government have given every council the method to work out housing needs and that they have detailed what will be development land for commercial/housing and protection of the greenbelt. He stated that the public have the opportunity to approve of these plans by voting.

Councillor David Elderton stated that he had been on the planning committee for 18 years. He felt there were too many numbers being quoted without enough information on where they were coming from. He stated that there were people getting planning permission for properties within their own land who were not then building. He felt there was not enough pressure on developers to complete a build once they had planning approval. Councillor Elderton felt that current growth statistics were wildly varied and that nobody

knew how the housing needs would change in the future. He stated that the Wirral Waters plans were within a self-contained development and that if anyone could make a success of it, Peel were the company to do so.

David Ball responded by saying that there were more than 2000 outstanding planning permissions and that the council was taking an active approach by contacting all of those people with planning permission, arranging visits and encouraging to build.

The Chair reiterated that it was important that the public keep pressure on the council regarding greenbelt development before closing the item.

## 17 URGENT CARE CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Jacqui Evans, Assistant Director, Integrated Commissioning Programme gave a presentation (attached to these minutes) on changes to urgent care on the Wirral with the development of a new Urgent Care Centre at Arrowe Park Hospital. The public are to be consulted on 2 options that differ on opening times with one option being a 24 hour service and the other a 12 hour service. Jacqui highlighted that the current offer cannot be maintained with an urgent treatment centre due to the costs. She stated that they would begin analysing all feedback from 12<sup>th</sup> December 2018 and would provide a final recommendation by February 2019 with plans to implement those recommendations by December 2019.

The chair opened questions to the public.

Phil Simpson, resident, stated that terms such as “transformation” and “sustainability” generally lead to budget/staff cuts. He recommended to the public that they join local health groups.

Mr Simpson asked if Jacqui Evans could categorically assure him that current walk in centres will not close.

He claimed that he had never seen a ‘lay-person’ at a CCG meeting.

Mr Simpson also raised the issue of pharmacies charge a patient’s GP £28 when they give medical advice to the patient.

A resident stated that current staff levels were wrong and asked where the staff will come from for the new urgent care centre.

Peter Owen, resident, stated his interest in what was happening at the moment with urgent care. It was mentioned in the presentation that 50% of those attending A&E were there for relatively trivial matters and being able to reduce this by half would make a huge difference.

Mr Owens also mentioned the 111 service and how it appeared to operate like a triage, using level 3 support to pass patients on to the relevant care giver.

Jacqui Evans stated that the 111 service was a national development and that the NHS was taking into account the learning of the past 2 years. Under the current 111 offer people were fed up of waiting on the phone and there was a pattern of them going straight to A&E rather than waiting to be put through to the correct person. She stated that she couldn't make absolute claims on costs etc but that the figures were being developed. Under the new system you would be immediately referred to the relevant department rather than having to wait for a call back.

Jacqui Evans stated the communications was an issue for pharmacies giving medical advice. People go straight to A&E because they know they will be treated. Not enough people are aware that they can go to a pharmacy for advice and that it is a matter of signposting people to the relevant treatment. Approximately 20% of people at A&E could have been treated at a pharmacy. A large proportion of patients could have been treated locally by a GP or nurse and the message received from patients was that they struggled to get access to their GP when they needed it.

A resident queried if there was a pharmacy within the A&E building. Jacqui Evans confirmed that there was but that the hope was that patients went to their local pharmacy.

Jacqui Evans stated that regarding the workforce query, they have a working group looking at how to plan their workforce, they have engaged with the Community Trust and other groups. For the urgent care centre, they are trying to consolidate more highly skilled workers. Jacqui confirmed that there were no planned job losses but that some nurses may be required to work elsewhere. Jacqui stated there had been good feedback from staff and that there were good opportunities for 'up skilling'. She confirmed that there were no plans to close any of the current walk-in centres. There will be no walk-in options at these centres for adults with urgent care needs who would now have to go to Arrowe Park. All other services at these walk-in centres would continue. There would also be same-day access to GPs locally.

Phil Simpson, resident, asked Jacqui Evans to confirm that none of the current walk-in centres will close and referred to his previous question about a perceived lack of lay-people at CCG meetings.

Jacqui Evans responded by stating that there is a lay-person at every CCG meeting. She also confirmed that none of the walk-in centres will be closing.

A resident stated that there are issues for people going to current walk-in centres and being referred to relevant departments.

Jacqui Evans stated that current walk-ins are not all open at the same times and that the new plan makes the service offer equal across the borough. She

confirmed again that there would be no change to the walk-in offer for children.

The Chair wrapped up the questions for this item and asked Jacqui Evans to return to the Wirral West Constituency Committee at the end of the consultation to give an update. Jacqui confirmed that she would be happy to do so.

## 18 **COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME**

Keren O'Rourke, a resident, stated that David Ball had been invited to talk about the planned golf course and asked if he could be invited back to the next meeting to do so.

The Chair responded by confirming that David Ball would be invited back.

Keren O'Rourke stated that the council did a consultation on the greenbelt methodology review that concluded last December. This does not appear to have been published and would like to know when the public can expect to see the results of this review.

The Chair noted that David Ball had left the building so an answer could not be given at this time.

Keren O'Rourke then stated that the government are now going to be holding another consultation on the methodology regarding housing targets and she would like to know if the council are going to respond to those.

Keren then asked the question she had submitted in writing:

"On the Council's Hoylake Golf Resort web page, in the common questions section, the Council are asked about what other options for the golf resort site have been considered (including the option of a wetland resort)

The Council web site states that no other scheme "measures against the golf resort in terms of positive impact" and that the golf resort provides "the best return for Wirral across a number of indicators".

This has also been repeated by both Councillors and Officers at public meetings.

A Freedom of Information request has now revealed that the Council have never undertaken any studies looking at any other options for the golf resort site and, it would seem, never measured any other options against any indicators.

Please would you explain how the Council can be certain that the Golf Resort is the best option for the site and can you explain why you will not consider funding a feasibility study for a wildfowl and wetland resort for the site, even though such an alternative proposal would have the support of many more people?"

The Chair asked that this question be noted and passed to someone that can answer it. The Clerk confirmed that it has been sent to David Ball who will provide a written response.

A resident asked if there could be some input on Heron Road road safety issues.

A resident stated he had received a letter in May 2018 from David Rees, Road Safety Manager, stating that Heron Road does not meet the criteria for a fixed road safety camera based on its' comparatively good road safety record. The resident stated that the residents of Heron Road do not agree with this assessment and that there had been further accidents in the residential area, speeds of 60mph in a 30mph limit and felt that there were no other roads on the Wirral with such high speeds within a 30mph road. He asked the council to make a recommendation to the police for a fixed camera.

## 19 **ROAD SAFETY UPDATE**

David Rees, Road Safety Manager, gave an update on the situation on Heron Road. He stated that there have been 7 collisions recorded over the past 5 years; this is the statutory information that local authorities use to decide on placement of traffic cameras. All 7 collisions were within the rural 40mph section of Heron Road. The government estimated that there were approximately 17 unrecorded collisions for every recorded one.

There was an evidence based 437 crashes reported last year where people were hurt. This indicated that there was a weight of evidence that other roads were a higher priority than Heron Road.

David stated that 'No Entry' signs were going to be installed, starting on the week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018. He has looked into the maintenance of the road, including the tarmac and the road noise. He stated there is no budget to resurface the road currently but that there is a work plan for all roads within the Wirral. The road surface will continue to be monitored and when it has deteriorated to the level that action is required, David's team will be recommending a road surface treatment. There are some markers/posts that need replacing, they were originally put in as part of a safety scheme, David has been in contact with colleagues to organise this.

David felt that self-illuminating speed signs would be worthwhile in the rural 40mph section of the road but that he would require £10-12k to install them and does not have this money currently but is looking into ways of funding this.

In the longer term the road needs a more major scheme.

David stated that he has lived on a road with similar issues of speeding and understands the frustration of the residents. It's not possible to have police on the road at all times, he's discussed installing a fixed camera with Merseyside Police and the road does not meet the criteria to be approved. David

suggested that residents could help the situation by joining Community Speed Watch.

Councillor Andrew Gardner stated that Heron Road is the biggest issue in his area. He stated that the ongoing issue was the high number of accidents that would be considered of 'low seriousness' by the police. He continued that there is so much likelihood of a low-level accident that it is only a matter of time before someone is seriously hurt or killed. He stated that the illuminated 30mph sign does not work and asked if this can be fixed.

David Rees confirmed that the illuminated sign would be repaired.

The Chair suggested that the council should have another go at tackling the issues on Heron Road and that David's team could look at creative ways of finding funding and ways to move these issues forward.

A resident stated that for people who live just off Heron Road such as those on Acres Road; the illuminated 30mph sign had been a useful safety feature as it would alert them of approaching, speeding cars when they were trying to pull out into Heron Road. The sign has now been broken for months. She asked if mirrors could be provided to give a better view of the junction.

David Rees stated that mirrors were not approved street furniture and could not be installed by the council.

## 20 **UPDATE FROM COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE**

The Chair announced that there would be a service at St John the Baptists Church in Meols on Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2018 at midday for a World War One remembrance.

The Chair announced that AGE UK were running a door knocking event on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> October 2018 to visit residents feeling lonely or excluded.