

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - BIRKENHEAD

Thursday, 28 February 2019

Present:

Councillor G Davies (in the Chair)

Councillors	P Cleary	S Kelly
	A Davies	J McManus
	S Foulkes	G Wood
	EA Grey	

Apologies

Councillors	A Brame	B Kenny
	WJ Davies	M McLaughlin
	P Davies	C Meaden
	P Doughty	T Norbury
	S Frost	J Stapleton

18 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair advised that agenda item 6 (Getting the Basics Right – Implementing a New Model for Community Engagement) would have precedence over the remaining agenda items.

20 GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT - IMPLEMENTING A NEW MODEL FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Constituency Manager presented a report advising of a Council decision taken on 10 December 2018, on receipt of a recommendation from the Cabinet, to implement a new model of community engagement. The new model, to commence in the 2019/20 Municipal Year, would involve the establishment of Ward Member budgets and the submitted report advised on:-

- the distribution of funding across Wards according to a weighting mechanism based upon 75% per head of population, 15% deprivation, 5% under 5 years population and 5% over 75 years population, details of which, together with allocations in respect of each Ward Member;
- the governance arrangements for the processes of applications for Ward Member budget funding and for annual review and evaluation; and
- Member support arrangements to aid Ward Councillors.

The decision of the Council also deleted the Constituency Committees, meaning that this would be the final meeting of the Birkenhead Constituency

Committee. Members were therefore invited to consider arrangements for collaborative working outside of formal governance conditions.

The report considered the background to the decision of the Council arising from a review undertaken by the former Cabinet Member for Community Engagement, key principles as to how the Ward Member budgets were to operate, a process for funding applications and approval, the availability of Member support, and options available for Members to work together within and across Ward boundaries. Draft guidance and a proposed application form were further appended to the submitted report for consideration.

The Chair questioned whether current projects such as the provision of skips across the Constituency area would be able to continue under this scheme. The Constituency Manager advised that should Members so wish it may be possible to consider a top slicing of the budgets. It was noted that there were services provided in certain Wards, for example foodbanks, that were accessed from across the Constituency, and comment made that there needed to be a way for these schemes to be funded from across the Constituency. The Constituency Manager advised that it was proposed to establish a workshop to enable Members to discuss their approach to Ward Member budgets and how these were to be managed.

The need for a dedicated area on the Council website to publicise the availability of Ward Member funds in the Birkenhead Constituency and to provide the opportunity to apply for funds was stated. This would allow access to funding for new and difficult to reach groups. The need for a robust communications strategy to support this was referenced.

The Constituency Manager further advised that the Highways Integrated Transport Block (ITB) Funding for Constituency Committees was coming to a close. A sum of £28,000 remained for the Birkenhead Constituency and the Committee was asked to consider allocating this amount to the following schemes that had been discussed previously by Members:

Location	Scheme	Estimated Cost
Harcourt Street, Birkenhead	Traffic calming	£10,000
Shrewsbury Road / Palm Grove, Oxtun	Pedestrian Refuge	£8,026
Woodchurch Road Service Road, Prenton	Traffic calming	£10,000
Total estimated schemes		£28,026
Approved remaining Constituency Committee funding		£28,026

RESOLVED: That

- (1) **the Ward Member Budget process and criteria, as set out in the submitted report, and the necessary Officer delegations required to administer the Ward Member budgets, be noted;**
- (2) **the opportunities for working together be noted and the convening of workshops to further consider how to progress this approach be supported;**
- (3) **the remaining Highways Integrated Transport Block funding for this Committee be allocated to schemes at Harcourt Street, Birkenhead for traffic calming; Shrewsbury Road / Palm Grove, Oxton for provision of a pedestrian refuge; and Woodchurch Road Service Road, Prenton for traffic calming.**

21 **MINUTES**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Birkenhead Constituency Committee held on 27 September 2018 be approved as a correct record.

Councillor George Davies left the meeting at this point.

Councillor Steve Foulkes in the Chair.

22 **SHOWCASE PRESENTATION: FOOD PROJECTS**

Eve Barrett of the St James Centre reported on activity in Birkenhead. Over summer 2018 Birkenhead provided 10,000 meals for over 900 individual children. The importance of both providing good quality meals and activities for families, and of collecting data to show impacts, had been recognised. Christmas had seen St James provide 63 hampers to local residents, while Gautby Road had fed a Christmas dinner to 85 children over the festive period. A video providing feedback on February half term activities, which had seen over 220 individual children and young people use services, was shown.

The Committee was advised that the previous year had seen a growth in partnership working, collaboration and co-ordinated efforts and timetables. While the growth in the number of projects was a positive, this presented a challenge by putting financial pressure on projects overall. A growth in the number of people, including parents, accessing projects had also been seen. Further funding to support this would be needed, for example, through partnership bids.

For the future, the outcome of a bid to the Department for Education to fund projects across Wirral for holiday provision using the Birkenhead model food

hubs was due at the end of March. Regardless of whether the funding is allocated, a start had been made to establish a Birkenhead and Wirral-wide approach to food insecurity, including a community food provider list, training offers and connections to lifelong learning to support parents' continuing education with the aim of creating more than just a 'sticking plaster' approach to food insecurity.

George Thomas of the Beechwood Community Trust advised that the Trust was involved with the His Church charity, received food from Fair Shares and, through the Constituency Committee, had received 46 pallets of food, putting £48,000 of value back into the community. He noted that government figures for foodbank usage came primarily via the Trussell Trust, meaning that provision from many smaller providers was not counted. It was suggested that foodbank usage might be at least double that indicated by official figures.

The Community Trust was looking at other issues of poverty beyond food poverty. As examples, assistance was being offered to families struggling with gas and electric supply and a low cost funeral option had been identified. 280 hampers, supported by local and Constituency money, had been distributed at Christmas, along with toys from a Radio City appeal. The Trust had developed a good working arrangement with the Constituency Committee and the partnership work had impacted on many local people.

A member of the public supported the identification of issues beyond food poverty, referencing community cohesion and the availability of support to counter issues such as knife and gang crime. In looking at these schemes, value for money needed to be considered not in terms of cash, but in ensuring that every child has a future. Reference was made to support to families also given by Birkenhead Lions, including a family found at Christmas with no food or presents for children. Referring to the consideration of the new model of community engagement, a Member noted the need to prioritise such schemes and ensure that impetus in this area was not lost.

RESOLVED: That Eve Barrett and George Thomas be thanked for their presentations to the Committee.

23 **SHOWCASE PRESENTATION: ENVIRONMENT ACTION DAYS**

Sheila Henry and Nikki Groves gave a presentation to the Committee on the Community Environmental Action Days that are supported by the Committee.

Community Clean Up days are assisted by Community Payback and see the removal of household waste, the clearing of alleyways, the painting of buildings and railings, weed clearance, litter picking and the placing of skips on streets to tackle repeated fly tipping. In delivering Clean Ups, the Constituency worked jointly with partners in the statutory, business and community sectors, as well as the various Departments of the Council who

input into services such as waste and recycling, housing renewal, highways, parks and countryside, public health and anti-social behaviour.

The provision of skips in local areas produced a reduction in fly tipping and in the cost of collecting and disposing of waste, helped those residents without cars who might not be able to otherwise properly dispose of waste, helped all residents to legally dispose of their waste, improved resident wellbeing and helped create a more positive outlook among residents, encouraged community cohesion, and encouraged residents to take a pride in their community and become involved in future issues. The Committee viewed a series of 'before' and 'after' pictures of clean-up projects that had been undertaken in Birkenhead.

Further activities reported were 'Operation Sparkle' led by the Birkenhead Improvement District (BID) Team and supported by the Constituency Team, Magenta Living, Environmental Services and the Community Payback Team to target streets in retail areas in need of a general tidy-up to make these better places to shop and work, and 'Operation Banger' led by the police and supported by the fire service, housing providers and the Community Payback Team to remove combustible materials and flytipping in advance of Halloween and bonfire night in order to prevent the setting of deliberate fires and related anti-social behaviour. Positive feedback from the fire service on the impact of Operation Banger was noted.

The support of Community Payback Team was noted and thanked. Over six months Community Payback service users had completed more than 5,600 hours in Birkenhead, equating to more than £43,848 at the national minimum wage, paying back to the community. The Teams had made a positive impact on the Birkenhead community with alleyway clearances, weedkilling, and the removal of flytipping.

Members noted the impact and success of the Community Environment Action Days, commenting on the importance of Constituency staff to support them and of the need to consider the use of the new funds available to Ward Members to maintain the momentum of this initiative.

DECIDED:

That Sheila Henry and Nikki Groves be thanked for their presentation to the Committee.