

CONSTITUENCY COMMITTEE - WIRRAL WEST

Thursday, 14 March 2019

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

37 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.

The following declarations were made:

Councillor Wendy Clements: Interest in Item 3 as she is a Trustee of Greasby Community Association

Councillor Tom Anderson: Interest in Item 3 as he is a Trustee of Greasby Community Association

Community Representative Jackie Hall: Interest in Item 3 as she is a Trustee of Greasby Community Association

Councillor Jeff Green: Personal interest as Chairman of Wirral Golf Club Ltd

38 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from councillors Phillip Brightmore, Andrew Gardner, Tony Smith, Mike Sullivan and Geoffrey Watt

39 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018 be approved.

40 **WIRRAL WEST COMMUNITY FUND (2018/19)**

Caroline Laing, Neighbourhoods Constituency Manager introduced a report which set out details of applications made to Wirral West Community Fund for decision by Wirral West Constituency Committee.

The Chair noted that he was concerned that funding for a defibrillator for Bertram Tennis Court could be deemed ineligible. The chair noted that the cost for this defibrillator was listed in the report and asked if the committee was willing to allow funding to be used for this request. Members agreed to allow this funding.

Councillor Stuart Whittingham put on record his thanks to everyone that had been involved with the Wirral West Community Fund.

Caroline Laing stated that the number of people that voted on the funding requests was 2294 in answer to a question from the Chair. The Chair stated that putting these funding requests to the public vote was an innovation that made the process more transparent.

The Chair put on record the committee's thanks to all the groups that have applied for funding and to the residents that have participated by voting.

Resolved: That

(1) the Wirral West Community Fund requests be noted and approved.

(2) The request for funding of a defibrillator for Bertram Tennis Court be approved.

41 **URGENT CARE CONSULTATION - JACQUI EVANS (ASSISTANT DIRECTOR - UNPLANNED CARE AND COMMUNITY CARE MARKET COMMISSIONING)**

Jacqui Evans, Assistant Director, Unplanned Care and Community Care Market Commissioning, gave an update on plans for urgent care access. It was noted that the consultation was in place to improve access to urgent care for residents of the Wirral as there was a variance across the Wirral in terms of the offer of urgent care such as differing opening hours. The committee was informed that no definitive position had yet been reached and that while the consultation had concluded on 12th December 2018, the information received was being analysed by an independent analysis company and that a report was due back from them by the 3rd week of April 2019. There have also been

a number of alternative suggestions from other providers including some primary care federations and those proposals are being considered in detail.

An urgent care stakeholder group had been established since December 2018 that has been meeting monthly to review progress. It was noted that this is considered to be national best practice.

Jacqui Evans noted that the biggest change to the current offer would be an urgent treatment centre being set-up at Arrowe Park hospital. This would be run by GPs and nurses and would help to free up the emergency department.

The Chair stated that currently the Wirral has walk-in centres in Wallasey, Birkenhead and Eastham and they are quite large, this could create a blockage if they are shut.

Jacqui Evans stated that of all the visitors to Arrowe Park Urgent Treatment Centre, 47% could have been treated by a nurse. There have been delays in ambulances being released. She stated that patients would have access to a GP in their local area if they need urgent care that day. The CCG want a consistent offer to all patients.

Councillor Burgess-Joyce asked why the Wirral failed to get funding from NHS England and whether pharmacies are charging the NHS £28 each time they give patients medical advice.

Jacqui Evans explained that NHS England had indicated that Wirral's funding bid was good but that it was mis-timed and funding had been reduced nationally. She stated that she was not sure of the figure of £28 being charged by pharmacies and would look into it.

Cllr Cox highlighted that communication was a key issue and asked how patients would be informed of where to go for the correct treatment.

Jacqui Evans acknowledged that communication needed to be improved. She stated that the consultation is not about moving all the urgent care to Arrowe Park. They will come back with the best recommendations based on the feedback received. She stated that they had not got communications right in the past and they would be working with councillors and residents on how to best communicate to patients how to best access the correct services.

Cllr Whittingham highlighted that some bus services have been cancelled and asked how this has been taken into account by the review.

Jacqui Evans that there was a regular access working group where they work with transport officers and companies. She stated that some buses had been re-routed to account for the cancelled service.

Cllr Ellis raised problems with waiting times and queried if this would be remedied as part of the service review.

Jacqui Evans stated that the focus of this review is for urgent treatment and that some people are not deemed to be in need of urgent care. Some of the changes would include extended access to GPs with an additional 1080 appointments a week which should see a reduction in waiting times.

The Chair opened questions up to members of the public.

A member of the audience stated that he had asked at the previous meeting if walk in centres would be closed and was told no. He stated that halfway through the consultation the council had voted to scrap it, but the CCG carried on. He claimed it was not acceptable that over 18s have to travel to Arrowe Park.

Jacqui Evans stated that under 18s were part of the consultation and what was described will not definitely happen. She stated there was a lot of feedback that needed to be analysed before a decision was made and that was why they were getting independent help to do this.

42 HOYLAKE GOLF RESORT

David Ball, assistant director Major Growth Projects, gave a brief update on the Hoylake Golf Resort plans. He stated that at the Extraordinary Council Meeting on 25 February 2019, the outcome was to take funding and phasing plans to scrutiny committee, who would then make recommendations to Cabinet. There was currently no timescale and was aware that there would be a new leader after the local elections in May. A referral will be made to cabinet in July.

Cllr Burgess-Joyce stated that some councillors had tried to vote against the project at the last Council meeting but were defeated. He asked where does the decision go after Cabinet?

David Ball clarified that the decision stops at Cabinet as an executive decision.

The Chair highlighted that a budget of £26m had been supported by the Cabinet and asked how much money has been spent on this project so far.

David Ball explained that he did not have an exact figure to hand but that it was in the last Cabinet report. Money had been put aside for consultancy support but it had not yet been spent.

The Chair opened questions up to the public.

A Stephanie Miller asked for an update on the Hoylake Golf Course funding and phasing plan and to know if there was a financial clause in the plan to pay compensation to the Nicklaus Joint Venture Group and Celtic Manor should the council decide to pull out of the scheme.

The Chair asked for reassurance that there are no severance costs associated with the Hoylake golf course contract.

David Ball explained that the council has entered into a development agreement with Celtic Manor and if the council were to break that agreement then they could be open to legal action. He stated that these were standard terms and conditions and covered breaches of condition for both sides. He also stated that he was developing an agreement between the council and the Nicklaus Joint Venture Group.

The Chair stated that answers to these questions should be made available to all.

A Ken Barnes asked 2 questions:

1. In recent media articles and on their website, the Hoylake Golf Resort developers have stated that the Golf Resort Link Road will not be funded from the public purse.

Yet in the report to cabinet of December 2017, it was stated that the Link Road would be funded either by a grant from the Liverpool City Region or by the sale of the publicly owned land for the Resort. Please could you clarify how the Golf Resort Roads will be funded?

2. Please can you provide an update on the proposal to “off load” municipal golf courses to private management companies. How many companies have shown an interest in taking on the courses and when are they likely to be transferred to the “private companies”?

David Ball could not give an answer on the second question as he is not working on the proposals for municipal golf courses.

David Ball stated that there was various opportunities for funding the link road including Liverpool Region or using other funding. He did not know why Nicklaus Joint Venture Group stated that it would not be publicly funded.

The chair asked for clarity on the number of proposed properties to be built on the golf course.

David Ball confirmed that the current plan included 160 executive houses and 40 apartments equalling 200 dwellings in total.

A lady in the audience mentioned that the current plan for the golf resort included a 90 bedroom hotel and stated that the Celtic Manor golf resort in Wales started off with less but now has a much larger capacity. She wanted to know if the planned 90 bed hotel at the Wirral resort was just for the first phase and if it was likely to be expanded in future.

David Ball stated that at the current time there were no plans to expand.

A man in the audience asked if the 40 apartments planned for the golf resort were likely to fall under affordable housing rules.

David Ball stated that the council has different affordable housing policies in different parts of the borough and that the 40 apartments at the golf resort are being built specifically for golfers.

A Doug Johnston stated that other Jack Nicklaus golf clubs have declining memberships. He suggested that Wirral Council should establish a golf tourism office which would generate more money than the current proposals.

The Chair stated that there is a tourism team within the council that works hard for the borough.

A lady in the audience commented that AMY had done a consultation on the road and approximately £1.5m had been spent on this. She queried what right the Cabinet had to make executive decisions. She also stated that the land that the golf resort is being proposed to be built on is a flood plane and the resort could exacerbate flooding.

David Ball stated that the Nicklaus group would be undertaking studies on flooding as well as other environmental and ecological issues and these studies would all be open to scrutiny by the council. He also noted that the Cabinet is the executive power of the council and therefore was the only group that could make executive decisions.

Cllr Ellis expressed his frustration at the project and suggested that everyone should work together to stop it.

A Graham Wilson stated that the decision by full council cannot effect Cabinet decisions.

The Chair clarified that 56 out of 66 councillors have no direct say on whether this project goes ahead or not. But that if the Executive saw the full weight of opposition then the Cabinet would be effected.

Cllr Whittingham (a cabinet member) stated that the Cabinet is made up of elected members and that all Cabinet meetings are held in public. He stated that it was the Cabinets duty to look at all evidence before making a decision.

A man in the audience asked which scrutiny committee would look at the golf resort.

David Ball stated it would be the Business Oversight and Scrutiny committee.

A Rob Wilkinson stated that he understood that the council will be financing the golf resort with £26m and queried what would happen to that money if the company went bust.

David Ball stated that the council is looking at loaning the developers to part fund the site and the money would be secured against the value of the homes to be built. He stated that Nicklaus Joint Venture Group are the preferred developer and have identified a number of partners including Celtic Manor and Red Row. Terms and Conditions being used are standard for this sort of development.

The Chair asked how the council would retrieve the £26m if the houses are not built on the site.

David Ball stated that it would be a breach of the commercial agreement.

Cllr Canon stated that she has spoken to greenbelt groups and has listened. She stated that the vote at Council was not meaningful and wanted to make clear that she is listening to those opposed to the golf resort.

The Chair proposed a statement from the committee and it was agreed (8-1 abstention) that: "This committee disagrees with the ongoing development of the Hoylake Celtic Manor golf resort and calls on the Cabinet to change its mind and end this development"

The Chair recommended that the public keep the pressure up in order to affect change.

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

Caroline Laing, acting constituency manager, read from the report "Getting the Basics Right "Implementing a new Model for Community Engagement" regarding the distribution of funding across wards.

The Chair stated that West Kirby, Thurstaston and Hoylake and Meols wards are looking go back to the old style of ward budget management and felt it would make sense to stay with the same officer to manage this.

44 **UPDATE FROM COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE**

Jackie Hall, Community Representative, made a suggestion to the audience member that raised the issue of dilapidated table tennis equipment; to look at the under-spends in the community fund and see if your local councillors can find the money to help.

Jackie Hall highlighted that Hoylake and Meols wards have so many community groups that they never have enough funds to get grants from and are always overspent. She stated that the £35k spent on Christmas lights came from the community groups directly and was not paid for by the council. She suggested that if other wards had such strong community groups that the Wirral would be a much better place.

45 **COMMUNITY QUESTION TIME**

A Peter Surrige, a representative of the Friends in Retirement Table Tennis Club at West Kirby Concourse, raised the dilapidated condition of the clubs table tennis tables and that the West Kirby Concourse will receive a share of a £340k fund for Wirral leisure centre improvements but that it will be spent on new consoles. He wished to know how to get funding for 4 new tables, which he estimated would cost no more than £1000 to replace all 4.

The Chair relayed an answer provided in advance to this question: a new Team Leader (Manager) to West Kirby Concourse – Mr Mike Henderson, has recently been appointed, and the Friends in Retirement Table Tennis Club should contact Mike in the first instance and then come to your local councillors from there. He also highlighted that there were going to be changes to budgets that would give councillors individual budgets.

A John Heath raised a number of issues relating to development on the greenbelt and the quoted government figures for houses that need to be built on the Wirral. He stated that there is no need to release any greenbelt for development until at least 2028. He queried what need there was for houses for additional 20k people when population on the Wirral is not rising.

David Ball stated that he would supply John with a written answer and would be happy to meet with him to discuss the figures.

A man in the audience stated that he had attended a meeting with Peel Holdings in Heswall where they stated that they had enough brown belt land to build 14,000 homes. He also stated that there are 4,500 empty homes in the Wirral so why do we need to build on the green belt?

A Roy Baston stated that flooding was a serious concern and that if the relevant company hasn't had a survey of the land done already then it was criminal, and the plans should not have got this far.

David Ball stated that the Nicklaus Joint Venture Group have done some surveys and that when the development comes through the planning stages there will need to be further surveys done at a greater depth.

A lady in the audience asked about the Wirral's need for new housing and suggested that the council's press release on the subject was misleading in stating that central government was forcing the council to stick with the standard method calculating a housing target. She quoted a recent letter from the secretary of state to Council Leader Phil Davies stating that the standard method for assessing housing need does not produce a housing target and that the authority should make a realistic assessment of the number of homes needed. She also stated that the Housing Minister Kit Malthouse had said that the governments targets were not mandatory and that any inspector would accept a variance from that target if properly evidenced. She asked why is the barrister being employed by the council at a reported cost of £135k not preparing a properly assessed variation from these housing targets? She mentioned that Tandridge Council had submitted a housing target of half what the standard assessment methodology suggested and the planning inspector found the plan to be sound.

David Ball stated that central government had made a standard methodology for housing need to be used across the country. Currently the council has been advised to use the standard method approach to determine what our housing need is. He suggested that he would need to give a much more lengthy answer to cover the specifics of the question.

The Chair summed up the current housing issues on the Wirral.

46 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Caroline Laing, acting constituency manager, gave a budget update for the committee. The community fund is currently underspent and any unspent funding would be returned to the council at the end of the financial year unless otherwise committed.

Caroline concluded by mentioning the Transport Plan for Growth Fund with a list of potential schemes from the Road Safety Panel made up of one Member from each ward.

The committee agreed to endorse these schemes.

The Chair stated that they would need to get funding agreed for community schemes as soon as possible to ensure that they do not lose the funding.

Caroline Laing stated that spending requests needed to be made by the following week to ensure they can be processed before the end of the financial year.

The Chair closed the meeting and thanked officers