

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 7 September 2021

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors H Collinson M Collins
S Foulkes S Mountney
C O'Hagan C Cooke
I Williams H Cameron
B Berry A Brame

17 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair opened the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was being webcast and a copy is retained on the Council's website.

18 APOLOGIES

Councillors Andy Corkhill and Les Rowlands had given apologies for absence and were deputised by Councillors Alan Brame and Helen Cameron respectively.

19 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members were asked to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and any other relevant interest and to state the nature of the interest. There were no declarations of interests.

20 MINUTES

**Resolved (by assent) –
That the minutes of the meeting of the Environment, Climate Emergency
and Transport Committee held on 14 June 2021 be approved and
adopted as a correct record.**

21 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

Question 1 from Sally Scott

Re: Declaration of Climate Emergency and Carbon Literacy Training

In July 2019 Wirral Borough Council was one of the early Local Authorities to declare a Climate Emergency. This Declaration affects every area of Council responsibility.

It is significant that The Declaration made by WBC in July 2019 includes a commitment to become a **Carbon Literate Organisation** - with all elected and employed members of the Council undergoing Carbon Literacy Training. Two years on, it is increasingly clear that catastrophic, global climate change is already upon us, and academic climate researchers, meteorologists, and economists, in fact experts from many different disciplines are calling for an urgent **scaling up** of Climate Crisis Action. Action is needed at every level of society, with an increasing number of 'ordinary' citizens ready to do their part. The Committee for Climate Change, who advise the Government, have stated very clearly that Local Authorities are well placed to play a major part in the action, as they have local knowledge and understanding of their area and are probably very well motivated to help their own residents – this was shown to be true during the pandemic and can be true again.

The importance of Carbon Literacy is that if Councillors, especially decision makers, need to be aware of the realities of Climate Change to avoid supporting ill-advised, and possibly, costly policies, which unintentionally making the Climate Crisis worse.

Council staff use procedures to ensure that Council's policies are in place, but if staff are not carbon literate bad-information mistakes will be made... There is a case for saying that all employed staff should be required to undertake professional training as part of their job.

As the Crisis deepens, Wirral Borough Council needs to become more active in fulfilling their stated commitment to Carbon Literacy.

The reality that finances are very tight for Local and Regional Authorities makes any significant contribution towards Climate Change a very big ASK – but with, or without, improved financial support, progress towards dealing with Climate issues requires a widespread and high degree of Carbon Literacy.

As a resident of Wirral I would like to know....

1. How many present WBC councillors have already undertaken, or are booked into, a Carbon Literacy Training course?
2. Is it possible to know which councillors have not yet taken, or signed up to, Carbon Literacy Training?
3. What proportion of WBC's employed staff have already undertaken, or are booked into, such a course?
4. What contractual precautions are in place to ensure that workers in companies contracted to work on behalf of the Council are required to operate in a climate sensitive way?
5. How will WBC mount a public information campaign about Climate Action to help members the public to appreciate Council strategies, which of course, need to be visible and verifiable?

Significant strides have already been made towards to the goal of the Council being/becoming Carbon neutral by 2030 ... however the increasing impact of Climate Change is here and now, the risk affecting everyone, everywhere. Carbon Literacy [as with other Information] should not be viewed as a party-political matter and Carbon Literacy is needed to slow the Crisis and mitigate the already-present change.

I urge this committee to take whatever steps are needed to fulfilling the Council's commitment to become a Carbon Literate Organisation

Answer

As part of Wirral Council's commitment to becoming a carbon literate organisation over 120 officers and members have attended the carbon literacy course over the past year, therefore the Council already meets the 'bronze level' carbon literate organisation standard and we applied to the Carbon Literacy Trust to recognise this. Further to Council is also on target to reach 'silver level' by the end of the municipal year, with over 300 people due to attend the course.

Achieving carbon literacy organisation status is a key part of the Council's response to the environment and climate emergency declaration, to ensure decisions are informed and service provision is delivered in a sustainable way. The Council's reporting template has also been amended and report authors must now advise Members of the environment and climate impact of their recommendations for decision. The Council is also promoting carbon literacy through the Cool Wirral climate change partnership encouraging partners to take up the carbon literacy commitment through the training of their staff and decision makers.

Supplementary Question

How will Wirral Borough Council mount a public information campaign about Climate Action to help members the public to appreciate Council strategies, which of course, need to be visible and verifiable?

Answer

The Council has been developing a comprehensive climate emergency communications strategy which has been designed to be inclusive of communities, organisations and individuals, helping people to understand how they can contribute to responding to the environment and climate emergency as well as detailing events and action. The strategy will also support and compliment the Cool Wirral partnership's communication programme (Cool Communities) as well as work with Wirral's schools through the Eco School initiative. The communications strategy will provide people with advice, access to support and resources and set out the position/progress against performance targets.

Question 2 from Stephanie Thompson

The Government Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs known as Defra, identifies a dangerous air pollutant associated with road traffic known as 'particulate matter'. This danger is expressed by this government statement "The strongest evidence for effects on health is associated with fine particles (PM2.5)"

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-matters-air-pollution/health-matters-air-pollution>

For those unfamiliar, PM2.5 is 30 times thinner than the human hair and can penetrate the blood stream and even reach the brain.

Defra has also published the following statement, and I quote: "Exposure to high concentrations of PM (e.g. during short term pollution episodes) can also exacerbate lung and heart conditions, significantly affecting quality of life, and increase deaths and hospital admissions. Children, the elderly and those with predisposed respiratory and cardiovascular disease are known to be most susceptible to the health impacts from air pollution."

<https://laqm.defra.gov.uk/public-health/pm25.html>

A Kings College London study published in January 2020 of the Liverpool City Region identified around 180 deaths on Wirral from PM2.5 air pollution and at the time the report received publicity from the BBC and ITV.

Before I say the next bit, for those unfamiliar with the word 'anthropogenic', it just means 'caused by humans'.

On the 26th April this year, Defra stated ". . . it is in the interest of the UK to measure concentrations of particulate matter as close to these sources of anthropogenic emissions as possible in order to effectively assess exposure to particulate matter that can (be) tackled via UK policies."

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/air-quality-statistics/concentrations-of-particulate-matter-pm10-and-pm25>

However, Wirral Council's 2020 Air Quality Annual Status Report states that there is only one PM2.5 monitoring point in the whole of the Wirral Borough Council area and that is at a 'park' in Tranmere.

Wirral people need the proper measurement of PM2.5, after which community consultations, expenditures and actions can be prioritised in the interests of human health. The death of each child and the death of each adult from air pollution also reflects a deteriorating quality of their life usually over many years, not to mention a major burden on the National Health Service – a service already under extreme pressure.

Therefore my question is:

Why is Wirral Council not urgently undertaking regular PM2.5 monitoring at schools during drop-off and pick-up times, and also at communities adjacent to busy roads, particularly in Birkenhead where the Kings College London study identified as one of "the most deprived and highest level of air pollution" areas in the Liverpool City Region?

[Maybe of interest to the Council: A group of academics 'Transport for the North' has developed systematic techniques that inform real-life modification of traffic flows to produce LTNs in towns and cities (see 21 minutes into the video): <https://youtu.be/RTXmIR2BU-4> It welcomes local authorities to join/participate in their work: https://transportforthenorth.com/northern-evidence-hub/northern-evidence-academic-forum/?mc_cid=86fb792bf3&mc_eid=624d5054ed

Answer:

Whilst the Council does not currently undertake specific monitoring for particulate matter outside schools at drop off and pickup times, it does have

air pollution monitoring in place, as part of our Local Air Quality Management responsibilities.

There is currently no requirement for Councils to assess PM_{2.5} levels as part of their Local Air Quality Management responsibilities. Government technical Guidance ([TG16](#)) states that “PM_{2.5} is still not incorporated into LAQM Regulations, and therefore there is no statutory requirement to review and assess PM_{2.5}”. However, Wirral is part of the National PM_{2.5} monitoring network, with a monitoring station located in Tranmere. Government guidance indicates that the use of the data from this network provides a good indicator as to likely PM_{2.5} concentrations within the Council area. The monitoring undertaken in Wirral has demonstrated that the background levels of PM_{2.5} within Wirral have not exceeded the UK’s national Objective levels and the more stringent World Health Organisation levels for over 5 years. The data obtained from the Tranmere monitoring station demonstrates that the 2020 concentration of PM_{2.5} was 8µg/m³, below the Target Value of 25 (and also below the World Health Organisation guideline level of 10 µg/m³). Although there is no requirement to undertake monitoring for PM_{2.5}, Wirral Council is currently in the process of commissioning 5 real time, indicative air pollution monitors, which will, amongst other pollutants, provide real time monitoring data for particulate matter. The location of these real time monitoring sites has been determined using the findings of an air pollution screening and detailed modelling exercise, which was recently commissioned by the Council. This screening and modelling focussed on roadside emissions and included particulate matter. These stations will be located in the vicinity of busy roads, with the majority situated near to housing. In addition to the above, the Council has recently received funding to make cycling and walking safer and as part of this, we are currently investigating the implementation of low-traffic zones around schools. Reduction of traffic levels around schools should have a positive impact on air quality.

Further Background Information:

DEFRA have provided [background](#) ambient air mapping data for Local Authorities to assist them the review and assessment of local air quality. These background maps included data on point sources, distant sources, local sources (road / domestic) etc. and are validated against AURN data. These background maps do not highlight any areas in Wirral where exceedances of national objectives for PM have been identified. Roadside modelling has also been undertaken; again, this modelling does not indicate any exceedances of the national objectives for PM.

For the purposes of monitoring / modelling and reporting, the United Kingdom has been divided into zones and agglomerations. The Secretary of State has classified each zone according to whether the upper or lower assessment threshold applies. Birkenhead Urban area has been classified as the lower threshold for annual limits for PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} and between the upper and lower levels for PM daily limits⁽³⁾. Only those zones that exceed the upper limits have to use fixed measurement. All zones where levels of pollutants are below the lower threshold can use modelling or estimations instead of measuring. In all other zones a combination of fixed measurements and

modelling or indicative measurements can be used. The Department of the Environment Farming and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) monitors PM_{2.5} at an Automatic Urban Rural Network (AURN) monitoring station in a background Urban location in Wirral (Tranmere).

The latest DEFRA report (Air Pollution in UK 2019) ⁽²⁾ states that:

- All zones met the limit value for daily mean concentration of PM10 particulate matter, without the need for subtraction of the contribution from natural sources.
- All zones met the limit value for annual mean concentration of PM10 particulate matter, without the need for subtraction of the contribution from natural sources.
- All zones met both limit values for annual mean concentration of PM2.5 particulate matter: the Stage 1 limit value, which came into force on 1st January 2015, and the indicative Stage 2 limit value which must be met by 2020.
- The running year Average Exposure Indicator (AEI) for 2019 was within the 2020 exposure reduction target.

The data obtained from the Tranmere AURN in relation to PM2.5 demonstrates that the 2020 concentration of PM2.5 was 8µg/m³, below the Target Value of 25 (which must be achieved by 2015) and also below the World Health Organisation guideline level of 10 µg/m³.

We have also looked at DEFRA background modelling and they are not expecting any increase above 9.5 µg/m³ PM 2.5 in the next 5 years. This can be verified by the DEFRA background mapping at the following link; <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/data/laqm-background-maps?year=2018>.

Question 3 from Simon Jiang

Can somebody in a position of responsibility PLEASE explain why there appears to be a degree of poor management and lack of consistency, even wastage, prevailing in the current borough-wide street light replacement programme being carried out by appointed contractors SSE Enterprise on the council's authorisation? The following are examples to illustrate this point - on some main roads, new columns are being put in which are the wrong height (usually smaller than they should be instead of a uniform height), whilst on others, columns with working lights have been cut down or removed prematurely even before their replacements have been installed, leaving that specific area without illumination. There are also many locations where lights - which have already been replaced the previous year - are now being replaced A SECOND TIME with new columns and lights, whilst elsewhere, other locations which have been awaiting new columns and lights for the best part of three to five years - and which have been repeatedly logged with the council as broken/faulty or even a safety risk - continue to be ignored.

There seems to be no logic to this randomness: renewing lights again which have already been changed the previous year, or leaving out obvious broken lights on one street when the rest have been replaced. Is this not a

mismanagement and waste of resources, given that I was already informed that everything is done as a matter of priority? This makes absolutely no sense. Most frustrating of all, despite repeated and exhaustive attempts to get answers to these questions from departmental officials over the last 18 months, there has been no reciprocation, let alone communication, which is not acceptable.

With just a few weeks remaining before the onset of the darker evenings once again, and with the SSE contract drawing close to its completion, can I just plead with these officials to show a bit of common sense and rationale for once and to focus on imminent and urgent renewal of all of the logged outstanding locations [with old or damaged columns and broken lights, chiefly in the Liscard and Seacombe areas] which have yet to see even their first new LED replacements, let alone their second, instead of repeatedly attending to what is not broken!

Answer:

A full update report on street lighting and the LED replacement programme will be brought to this Committee by officers on 20 October 2021. This will include progress against targets and performance of the contractor. Many temporary repairs will have been undertaken across the borough as an interim measure to retain lighting at certain locations until the main contracted work of full replacement could be completed. It is not necessarily the case that certain units have been repaired twice, since one visit by our in-house team may have been to temporarily repair to retain lighting levels in a reactive response when appropriate, and one visit may have been by our LED replacement contractor, SSE, to replace the full unit which had failed a structural test or which was part of the planned major project. Mounting heights are determined by a number of factors and whilst in most cases heights are generally uniform, in some locations varying heights are required to obtain the correct lighting levels. To obtain lighting uniformity we may at times choose to install a taller column or a shorter column along a specific route, or to reduce the mounting height in some areas to concentrate more light on to a particular section of road. Columns are only cut down if they pose a risk to public safety. Often these are replaced later as per the level of priority. We do not remove lighting columns prematurely; if lighting columns are identified as being surplus to requirement – due to improved lighting levels because of modern technology, such as LED, then these may be removed permanently. This offers a saving both in energy and maintenance cost and is standard practice. It is not the case that Seacombe and Liscard have been neglected when it comes to lighting maintenance. Unfortunately, there are occasions when a particular light cannot be repaired quickly, when other locations require a higher degree of priority. The current replacement contract is an enormous undertaking and inevitably some locations will have been omitted either intentionally, if part of other future planned work, or due to an oversight as a result sheer volume of installations we are managing. Any

genuine omissions will be corrected as part of the LED replacement contract review.

Supplementary question:

Over the last couple of years, I have spoken and engaged with many residents at locations where these oversights described in the first question have been noted and they too have expressed bewilderment and concern as to why these omissions have not been addressed in anything ranging from 18 months to four years. I have also urged them to contact the street light department and councillors directly themselves as all too often my queries have fallen on deaf ears. In most cases there have been no responses. Can you thus provide for once, an explanation to us residents as to why many street lights I have logged repeatedly with the council have been continually ignored in this way, leading me to suspect that these delays are wholly premeditated or strategically intended tactics to put off remedial work for as long as possible?

Answer to Supplementary question:

We do not ignore any reports of street lighting defects. Reference to our customer enquiry data reveals that the number of reports or complaints received in the area subject to the questioner's various enquiries have reduced dramatically over the past 18 months, which would imply good progress with the contract works and suggests residents are generally more satisfied with the street lighting there than they previously were.

Question 4 from Verity Smith

The final paragraph of section 6.4 of W.B.C.'s 2010 – 2015 Beach Management Plan, published in September 2010, says

*"The Appropriate Assessment has to take into account the very small area of scattered Spartina growth that is to be controlled and the possible long-term and major impacts that a **'do nothing' policy** would have on the designated protected site. Using information provided by the reference 'Spartina anglica: a review of its status, dynamics and management' and the fast colonization of areas of foreshore and associated issues with this species that makes it 'possibly one of the most controversial species worldwide' the most obvious choice of management at Hoylake is **to eradicate** this species before it spreads any further."*

Subsequent to this publication, please pinpoint the exact meeting, advice or publication where it was determined that Spartina was no longer a controversial species that needed to be eradicated?

The answer to this and subsequent Hoylake beach questions were given at the end and are transcribed below, after the questions.

Question 5 from Jeanette Hatter

How many members of the Committee have visited Hoylake / Meols beach in the past 3 months?

Question 6 from Charlotte Smith

Main Question

It has come to light that the current state of Hoylake Beach is having a detrimental impact on the operations of the emergency services and therefore potentially putting lives at risk. The accumulation of sand for example near Kings Gap is an example of this. With this in mind will the Committee make provisions to rake and maintain the amenity beach between Kings Gap and the new Lifeboat Station to allow easy access for the Emergency Services. Basic legislative principles can be found under the Coastguard Act 1925. Local authorities do have the power to provide such provision under section 234 of the Public Health Act 1936.

Supplementary Question

Please can you advise of the list of Stakeholders in regard to the beach and why you appear to be whitewashing them by referring them to an email inbox when we know that the Environmental Chair has a very poor record of engagement and rarely responds to enquires pertaining to Hoylake Beach. Except to refer to the Have Your Say Website which is now debunked as no one hardly ever receives a response from that as well.

Question 7 from Miles Jones

Why is the survey of Hoylake Beach taking so long that by the time it reports, the beach may be beyond reclamation?

Supplementary question:

Will the Hoylake Beach scientific survey consider that dried mud has encouraged grass and spartina as a result of regular dredging of both the Mersey and Mostyn Port approaches?

Question 8 from Joanne Randles

On the 21st November 2019 I emailed Councilor Elizabeth Grey, regarding my concerns about the excessive amounts of grass growing on Hoylake and Meols foreshores.

In her reply, she quoted to me that;

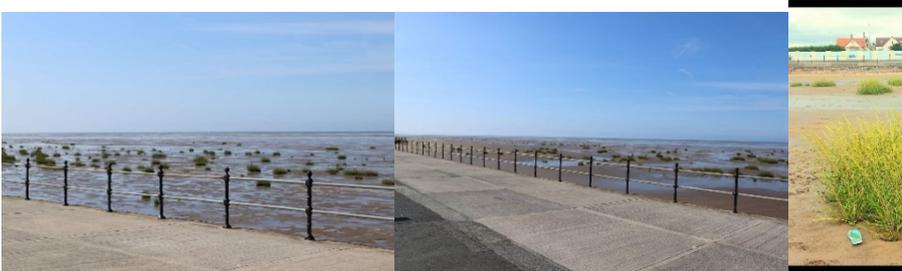
“The grass is almost all meadow grass, not spartina”

today the entire length of the Meols promenade from the Hoylake RNLI station to Dovepoint is exclusively covered with spartina growth and all within 2 years too and is continuing to spread unchecked in a north easterly direction towards Moreton shore.

my question is;

"what considerations were made by the cabinet member for environment two years ago, the environment committee since, and have officers produced advice on the implications of letting spartina spread unchecked with the

possibility of spartina spreading along the entire northern Wirral coastline and the likely impact it might have on the established wildlife of this coastline?



Question 9 from Julie Hunter:

Wirral surrounded on 3 sides by 25 miles of coast which has sections assigned Special International, European & UK protected site status means that the council has a very complex management task. Actions taken or not taken within these designated areas could have long term & far reaching implications & repercussions.

Scanning the horizon of our shores I easily identify several hazards which need to be managed to protect this environment & its local communities for the future.

Can you give assurances that the council is preparing a transparent Coastal Management Plan to help keep coastal communities safe, healthy & happy &

that it will incorporate some of the very unexpected relevant new science which is emerging now in light of COP26 that would help futureproof the plan.

Supplementary question:

Will the Council consider pursuing a sandscape coastal defence project with royal Has Koning because when I scan the beach horizon I see a climate crisis hazard, out of control salt marsh grass recently shown as emitting more CO2 than it stores and even worse emitting methane, a greenhouse gas 80% more potent than CO2 over a 20 year period. Marsh gas methane would be a climate disaster

Question 10 from Wendy Bennett:

Is the Council planning to consult & meet with bona fide groups in Hoylake as part of their Beach Management Consultation and if so, which groups and when will the meetings be?

Question 11 from Joe Pinnington:

On the part of the Council's website devoted to Hoylake Beach Management, why is it not possible for contributors to ask questions and receive answers relating to Hoylake beach, whereas on the rest of the website this is possible?

Question 12 from Neil Smith

Please describe the education and training that environmental officers and committee members receive to ensure that they are up to date with the latest guidance and thinking and can therefore provide accurate answers posed to them through the "*Have your say*" portal.

Please also share the sources of the information used to provide this education and training.

Supplementary question:

When the grass from Hoylake and Meols spreads, as it is doing along the beaches, to Leasowe and New Brighton will you take the same approach to those beaches as you are doing to Hoylake and Meols beaches and if you aren't taking the same approach tell us why?

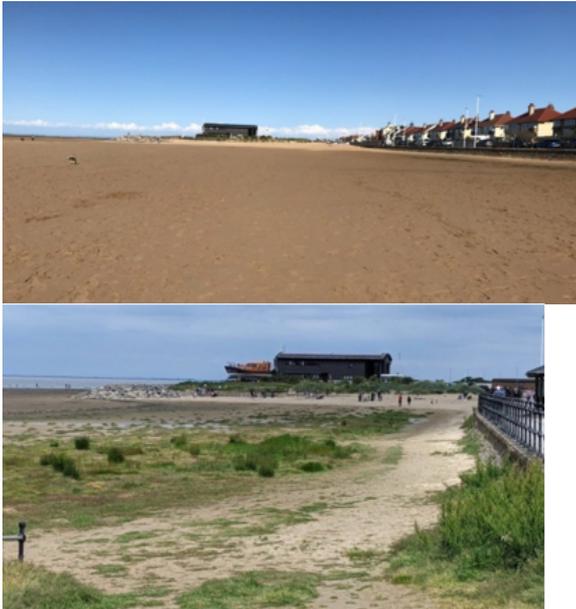
Question 13 from Caroline Wright

We have reached a two-year anniversary of the cessation of the beach management plan, required "**to consider both conservation and the needs of residents**".

Councillor Elizabeth Grey has previously advised residents that a compromise could be negotiated with Natural England to rake a section of the beach, from the RNLI station to the old toilet block, but more preferable would be to the Kings Gap.

Given the time lapsed and detrimental effects on the community, will the Council give urgent consideration for this compromise to be negotiated and approved by Natural England before the damage is irreparable?

So the community and tourists can enjoy a sandy beach amenity area once again, as afforded to New Brighton and West Kirby.



Question 14 from Nicola Verkade

I am a self employed business owner based in Hoylake running a short term letting company in the corporate and holiday letting sector, we have been severely affected by the pandemic and are desperately trying to recover and build our business going forward, the current disgraceful and unmaintained state of Hoylake beach has and is in my opinion having a direct negative effect on my business and other businesses locally as visitors are no longer coming with no usable, clean beach, footfall is down significantly and with less people and less money spent in Hoylake the economic impact is obvious.

My guests some of whom have visited for over 20 years are shocked and horrified by the current state of the beach and I cannot justify the councils actions to them when they say how beautiful it once was and yet how sad and neglected it is now.

We as residents and business owners expected our council to support us post pandemic and we feel incredibly let down and dismissed as our demands for a clean raked usable beach are continually ignored.

What assurances can you give me and other Hoylake business owners today that we are being heard and that plans to clear an amenity beach area are imminent, as a plan to delay this for another 12-18 months will be disastrous and potentially fatal to mine and other local businesses and Hoylake's economy may never recover.

Question 15 from Kelvin Wright

Spartina is a pioneer salt marsh species rapidly spreading in Hoylake and Meols. Salt marsh is considered as a “sink” for global warming-causing

carbon. However, recent research* published on 05 April 2021 has established that half of global methane emissions come from aquatic ecosystems – including salt marsh conditions.

My question:

Given the above, in respect of the post study findings, following the independent evaluation, what are the hopes and aims of the Council on receipt of the evidence?

*Rosentreter, J.A., Borges, A.V., Deemer, B.R. *et al.* Half of global methane emissions come from highly variable aquatic ecosystem sources. *Nat. Geosci.* **14**, 225–230 (2021). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41561-021-00715-2>

Answer to questions about Hoylake beach:

Thank you all for these questions. It is important to direct you to the Have Your Say Beach Portal ([Hoylake Beach Information | Have your say Wirral](#)) and the reason for that is that is where we are constantly updating the data as it comes in so that's where the latest information regarding the scientific findings but also regarding the law are to be found, so you can find the Natural England guidance setting out the parameters of what we legally can and cannot do on Hoylake beach. You can find that on the Have Your Say Portal which is available through the Council website. That is where the consultation will be held. In the meantime people can leave comments but at the moment it is for information and for leaving of comments. The consultation stage is yet to start. It is most important that you do place and leave your comments there. Many of these questions have clear answers that you will find in that Portal if you look through that information. If the public want to find answers to any of the questions asked tonight they can look at the Portal and they will find the answers to those questions.

It's important to note that the Natural England advice has been updated considerably so one questioner referred to the advice we were given in 2010 so that's over a decade ago and that advice has changed dramatically in that time. We cannot follow out of date information and advice. The permissions that were given in the past would not be given now and Natural England have assured us of that. If you read the information in the Portal you will see that. We must legally follow Natural England advice at all times and as the climate and environment emergency has unfolded their advice has increasingly been to protect and promote the natural world. I note that I have been quoted out of context regarding grass on the beach and this can be corrected in writing later.

I visit the beach regularly. I can answer that question personally. It's one of my favourite places. I cannot speak for the rest of the Committee and I'm not prepared to ask them what they do in their free time but they may wish to get in touch with you if your contact details are available.

We have not been notified by any emergency services of any obstacle to their operations at all.

I can assure you that all Wirral beaches are treated the same. None has been raked since 2019 and the fact that others are grass free is due to natural processes.

Spartina Anglica has environmental benefits. For example, it can trap sand sediment helping other salt marsh plants to colonise. *Spartina* interspersed with other salt marsh species can provide habitats for invertebrates and therefore create suitable feeding grounds for waders and water birds. The RSPB has a number of times approved our current approach to Hoylake beach. Emerging evidence is showing that *Spartina Anglica* is not dominating the vegetation and reducing in frequency as the beach changes and other plants become established. The coastal environment is dynamic and subject to natural change. Allowing habitats to respond naturally and establish can help to stabilise beach sediment making them less prone to coastal erosion, effectively acting as a natural sea defence when sea levels are bound to rise.

Wirral Council is in discussion with the RNLi ass to the exact nature of any issues that they might notice on the slipways.

Key stakeholders are those with a regulatory function with regard to the area such as Natural England, the Environment Agency and the Marine Management Organisation.

The Communication and Engagement Strategy approved by this Committee on 16th March 2021 sets out that the first phase of consultation, which will start after the publication of the Geomorphology and Ecology Study, will seek a wide range of views from both key stakeholders and other stakeholders, that is, anyone with an interest in the beach. Wirral Council will then consider all stakeholder interests and, subject to further consultation, develop an appropriate and legally compliant management plan.

The process and timescales for the development of a beach management plan for Hoylake are set out in the Communications and Engagement Strategy approved by this Committee. It's also referenced on the Hoylake Beach Information Have Your Say portal.

The Discretionary Advice received from Natural England in March 2020 states that

“As habitats form naturally in new locations within the statutory designated sites they will be considered as conservation features of the statutory designated sites and will therefore be covered by the sites' conservation objectives. For example developing pioneer saltmarsh and sand dunes on north Wirral foreshore are protected as features of the Dee Estuary Special Area of Conservation.”

The Council takes a strategic approach to managing flood and coastal erosion risk and is in turn given direction by the Environment Agency's National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy.

The Shoreline Management Plan, which sets out coastal defence policy, is currently undergoing a refresh to ensure that the policies remain suitable in light of changes since the last update in 2009.

Where Policy and Strategy documents are subject to updates and refresh the current government guidance on the impacts of climate change is considered as a matter of course.

22 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS

Councillor Liz Grey made the following statement to the Committee and presented Members with books she had purchased.

We are not moving far or fast enough on the environment and climate emergency crisis and this is deeply frustrating. In many cases it is not down to lack of political will and I believe that when we declared an environmental and climate emergency in July 2019 it was heartfelt for most of us. But when Councillor Brame quoted Greta Thunberg he really meant it and when Tony Norbury referred to the critical choices we face regarding a habitable or uninhabitable planet in the future that was also from the heart. I know that when I said we needed to learn from the war generation on how to live within our means or rather within our planetary boundaries I certainly hoped we would have achieved more than we have now as a Council, as a country and as an international community. In July 2019 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change said we had a decade to sort things out before they became irreversible and catastrophic. They have recently declared that humanity is on red alert - code red for humanity. The Intergovernmental Panel on biological diversity and ecosystem services has also said that time is running out to stop a mass extinction all around us. Both climate change and biodiversity loss are devastating life on earth. I know how hard our officers have been working on this and just how committed most of them are. But this is something for us to be thinking about now. We should be rightly proud of what we have done as a Council but we need to do more. We are the ones as elected Members who need to give a steer on policies. At this critical juncture before as we head towards COP 15 and COP 26 are we going to guide the Council to do the right thing in transport and environment policies or not? Are we going to make the difficult decisions and explain to our residents why we must make sacrifices in our daily lives now to ensure that our children and grandchildren have a recognisable safe and viable planet on which to live in the not too distant future? COP 15 on biodiversity is still going ahead soon though fragmented and online at first. COP 26 on climate change is still being planned and each of these conferences needs to make radical promises for all our sakes. Our governments then need to act. We can't save the world just from this Committee but we absolutely must do everything within our power. We have a variety of really experienced Councillors around the table here in all parties bringing all kinds of life experience and understanding to this Committee and we need to harness that and work together. Remind me if you get political. I'm just as prone as everybody else to party politics and I urge you and your parties not to use the environment for any political campaigns. It's just too big. The questions regarding our carbon literacy was spot on. If we are to avoid partisan positioning and petty campaigning and if we are to

really work together to address the biodiversity crisis, and the climate crisis then we will need to be fully informed and up to date on the facts about these problems and we need to address them here in Wirral. We will need carbon literacy training and I commend each of the Councillors and officers that had already given up precious free time to attend the training. I know that others are signed up to the next round and we will become a carbon literate organisation. In preparation for Cop 15 and COP 26 I have been reading and rereading some key books and one of the very best is David Attenborough's latest book on his life and his work charting the increasing problems of habitat loss and climate change. I would be grateful if Members would accept as a small gift from me a copy of this book which I will also give to the Chief Exec and the Leader of the Council. I do have alternatives to those of you who have read it already as I know you are interested in this. I did think possibly about resigning in protest at us not getting enough done but I know I'm not significant enough for that to have much impact or achieve anything so I do hope that you can accept this gift in the spirit with which it is intended, read and work together to move further and faster in response to the devastating environmental problems we all face.

23 **QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS**

Questions were invited from Members which related to matters which the Council has powers or duties or which affected the Borough fell within the terms of reference of the Committee.

Councillor Helen Cameron asked if Carbon Literacy training could be held in the evening. Officers promised to look into this.

24 **ROAD SAFETY PROGRAMME UPDATE**

Simon Fox, the Assistant Director for Highways and Infrastructure presented this report which provided an update on the Council's road safety programme, strategy and policy as well as progress with resolutions agreed by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 16 March 2021, which included recommendations from the Road Safety Working Group and the Combined Authority Transport Plan Integrated Block programme. A future report would include a full schedule of locations requested by various people with evidence, budget allocation and a proposed programme of implementation for 2022/23. The report highlighted key achievements against the recommendations of the Working Group, including six pilot 20 mph schemes, the vision zero pledge on road casualties and vehicle activated speed warning signs.

Members questioned detail in the report which established:

- Surveys were carried out following schemes to assess their success
- Some schemes had been postponed because of the Covid-19 pandemic which affected finances and officer time

- Variable speed limit signs were most effective if used sparingly but required set criteria to be installed
- Behavioural science was utilised and more information on this would be shared with Members
- There was a time lag between a Committee decision and implementation
- Satnav companies were informed of changes in speed limits
- Schemes connected with schools had been delayed whilst schools were not operating consistently although an externally funded School Streets Officer was being appointed to help implement schemes

Councillor Liz Grey proposed additional text to the recommendation. This was seconded by Councillor Allan Brame.

Resolved (7:4)

That

- (1) the various workstreams included within the Council's programme of road safety improvements and the proposed mechanisms for the delivery of this programme in 2021-22 and beyond be noted;**
- (2) the cttee request the officers focus on delivering each of the road safety working groups recommendations as an urgent priority and asks that officers provide clear feedback on each recommendation before the end of this calendar year detailing progress made in planning, funding and implementation**
- (3) Committee notes that 4.24 of this report omits full reference to the Department for Transport guidance on implementation of 20 mph which can be implemented on roads with average speeds above 24 mph. Committee also notes that 4.25 of this report does not acknowledge that the data on collisions can never reflect the extent to which road safety fears drive behaviour choices in local travel. Roads may appear safe in terms of collision data because people are too scared to walk or cycle along them. Committee wishes these factors to inform the rollout of 20 mph zones.**

25 **WEED CONTROL OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

Mike Cockburn, Assistant Director for Parks and Environment, introduced this report which provided an overview of the appraisal exercise undertaken to consider options for future weed control across the borough.

Members discussed the options and explored a further option of having an in-house service to cover a variety of tasks. There were concerns over the financing and recruitment this would require and it was estimated that it would take a year to plan and implement. The existing contract could be retendered with an option for extension if an in-house service proved to be uneconomic.

Councillor Michael Collins proposed a motion to have a reduced term contract to allow for investigations and planning for an in-house service.

Resolved:

That the Committee does not support the option presented in the report to procure a weed control contract for a term of up to 4 years and wishes to have more information before deciding on a long term option for weed control.

Committee would like further information on a fully integrated in-house service, covering all aspects of edge of highways and street maintenance including but not necessarily limited to grass cutting and weed control.

Committee therefore requests that the Director of Neighbourhoods reports back to the Committee as soon as possible with the above information. In the meantime the Committee agrees to the commencement of a tender process for the procurement of a weed control services contract for a period of one year with an option to extend for 1 year.

The Committee also agrees to give delegated authority to the Director of Neighbourhoods to award the one year contract with an option to extend for 1 year within approved budget and in accordance with the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criteria.

26 **QUARTER 1 BUDGET MONITORING**

Sarah Cox, Senior Finance Business Partner, presented this report which set out the financial monitoring information for the Committee as at quarter 1 (Apr – Jun) of 2021-22. A revenue shortfall was largely due to car parking income not being realised, and the Capital programme also showed an adverse position as several schemes had slipped into the next financial year after not being progressed during the pandemic.

Resolved:

That

- (1) the projected year-end revenue forecast position of £0.850m adverse, as reported at quarter 1 (Apr – Jun) of 2021-22 be noted**
- (2) progress on the achievement of approved savings and the projected year end forecast position at quarter 1 (Apr – Jun) of 2021-22 be noted**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments be noted.**
- (4) the projected year-end capital forecast position of £1.143m adverse, as reported at quarter 1 (Apr – Jun) of 2021-22 be noted.**

27 **APPOINTMENT TO HILBRE ISLAND NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE**

Vicky Shaw, Head of Legal Services, introduced this report which was to enable the Committee to review the continuing need for the Hilbre Island Nature Reserve Management Committee and if necessary to appoint Members, and possibly named deputies, to serve on it in 2021/2022.

Members discussed the membership of the Committee and whether political proportionality should be considered.

Due to the lack of consensus, Councillor Liz Grey proposed taking the matter to Policy and Resources Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Chris Cooke.

Resolved:

That Policy and Resources Committee be recommended to: authorise the Monitoring Officer as proper officer to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in relation to the matter of Councillor membership of the Hilbre Island Nature Reserve Management Committee.

28 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Councillor Liz Grey proposed that Active Travel be restored to the Committee's Work programme. This was seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes.

Resolved:

That the proposed Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2021/22 municipal year be noted and that active travel items removed after the Committee voted to keep them be restored to the Work Programme of this Committee including active travel funding and strategy.