

TOURISM, COMMUNITIES, CULTURE & LEISURE COMMITTEE

Thursday, 16 June 2022

Present: Councillor H Cameron (Chair)

Councillors T Smith J Johnson
S Percy N Graham
KJ Williams J Grier
I Camphor A Brame
M Collins P Martin (in place of
B Kenny)

1 WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed attendees and viewers to the meeting and reminded everyone that the meeting was webcast and retained on the Council's website.

2 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor Brian Kenny. Councillor Paul Martin attended as deputy.

3 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members are asked to consider whether they have 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 Naomi Graham declared a personal interest by virtue of her partner's employment

4 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 8 March 2022 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

5 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

There were no questions, statements or petitions from the public or Members.

6 PUBLIC QUESTIONS

The Chair indicated that 11 Public questions had been received.

Keith Marsh asked a question regarding the community asset transfer process and what progress had been made to expediate this process, and the earliest possible timeline for transfer.

The Chair outlined the timing and processes for community asset transfer. The earliest time for transfer would be the 22 October. The License agreement will be extended to the 31 October.

Robin Clarke asked a question about how much input the local community, Brackenwood Gold Club and its members would have in the decision-making process and outcome.

The chair informed the questioner that the final decision on any transfer will be made by the TCCL Committee in October 2022 based upon the submitted business plans. Although, stakeholders and the community will be involved in the business plan.

Jackie Watts asked a question concerning publicly available criteria upon which the business plan will be assessed.

In Response, the chair conformed that the business planning template will be publicly available from the 27th June. Assessment criteria is defined through the structure of the business case. Detailed assessment is under consideration and will be agreed by the community asset transfer project team.

Ann Edwards asked a question to confirm if the council had any assets that had been removed following the April 1st closure of the golf course, that may be reinstated when a new owner acquires the course.

The Chair advised that assets will be made available and returned should a new operator be successful in their submission for Community Asset Transfer and require these items. Transfixed assets that are a part of the infrastructure will remain in place.

Lucy Johnson asked a question about the Whitfield Common, seeking assurance on whether or not the committee would be upgrading the facilities to bring them back into regular use.

The Chair confirmed that the Parks and Countryside Service will carry out a detailed assessment of the work and cost involved in upgrading the Tennis Courts. The football pitch will be addressed during the out of season maintenance regime.

Ruth Molyneux asked a question about clarification on why the Bromborough Civic is not currently in the scope for CAT and which committee it will be referred to and when for further consideration.

The Chair confirmed that Members have not considered Bromborough Civic Centre for CAT. The asset will be considered by the Economic, Regeneration and Housing Policy and Service Committee at a later date.

Friends of Wallasey Central Library asked a question concerning why restricted access was still being maintained in terms of the number of people allowed into the building at once. The group asked if the council had made a mistake when interpreting the guidance available and if it was possible to remove all of these restrictions.

The Chair responded to say that It is a duty of care of the building owners to provide additional fresh air in buildings. This is supported by statutory approved documents. It is also prescribed by law in Regulation 6 of the Workplace (Health and Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

Friends of Wallasey Central Library asked a further question in the case of the restrictions being maintained further. The question asked which guidelines were being used to inform this decision and what risks are possible should guidance not be adhered to.

In her response, the Chair noted that it is important to heed government and local guidance as well as legal obligations that may change or be re-

introduced. Ventilation is an important aspect of a healthy work environment, prescribed by law in regulation 6 of the workplace. (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulation 1992 (HSMO 1992).

Joy Hogg asked a question about the advantages of Bromborough Library remaining open until there is a clear plan for Bromborough Civic Centre and its library to deliver community benefits.

The chair responded to say that the library is due to close 31st October. No expressions of interest were collected for Bromborough Library during the CAT process. Prior to this closure the Bromborough Civic Centre will be considered in September 2022.

6.1 Statements and Petitions

A statement was presented to the Committee by Keith Marsh, secretary of Brackenwood Golf Club regarding the Community Asset Transfer of Brackenwood Gold Course.

A petition was presented by Friends of Bromborough Library and the Committee was informed that the Friends of Bromborough felt that the closure of the library and civic centre would be irrevocable. Information was circulated to Members in advance including a letter from Alison McGovern MP.

7 QUESTIONS BY MEMBERS

Councillor Allan Brame asked a question regarding whether the Chair could tell the Committee when the library services would be reinstated in Heswall.

The Chair informed Cllr Brame that a delay was caused because the Testing Site Contractor was not able to remove all the equipment, and so Heswall Library was not handed back to the library service until the week commencing 9th May. Repairs needed to be addressed by the UK Health Security Agency.

In order to respond to ventilation requirements colleagues from Asset Management were involved. Similarly, Library staff have worked hard to return the site to that of a library. Heswall Library will reopen on Tuesday 21st June and details of the new opening hours will be on the website/social media.

8 LEISURE FACILITIES INVESTMENT STRATEGY REPORT

The Assistant Director for Leisure, Libraries and Engagement presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services. The report provided Committee with a proposed Facility Investment Strategy for Leisure Services which reflected the importance placed on the provision of quality, community-based facilities providing sport and physical activities which contribute towards positive health and social outcomes for Wirral residents as identified in the Wirral Plan.

Members were informed that the Strategy would provide the Council with the opportunity to develop new and refurbished community facilities, designed with and for the needs of the local community and in most cases housed with co-located services, in order to deliver broader outcomes that are fundamental to the successful delivery of the outcomes of the Wirral Plan and to ensure the longer-term financial sustainability of the Council.

The report was jointly commissioned with Sport England, and produced by leading Leisure Consultants, Knight Kavanagh Page (KKP). It was reported that the Facility Investment Strategy sets out the plan to deliver a combination of new and refurbished leisure facilities and community hubs for Wirral Council.

Members discussed the impact of childhood obesity and deprivation on healthcare outcomes in Wirral. It was noted that the report was thorough and further questions were asked of officers on bringing disused assets back into use. Officers responded to say that whilst all things are considered, the strategy was a requirement when approaching sporting bodies for funding and support. Also discussed was participation of women and girls in football. Members were advised that Wirral was the third highest borough for participation in the country for youth football.

A query was also raised regarding provision for the elderly in the strategy, including sites for bowling. Officers noted this and confirmed that this provision sat within the parks and countryside team.

A further discussion was held, after which it was agreed by assent that the rest of the report would be discussed in a closed session, due to the exempt appendix.

9 LEISURE AND LIBRARIES CONSULTATION OUTCOMES

The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced the Leisure and Libraries Consultation Outcomes Report, which provided the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee with the outcomes of public consultation exercises undertaken in relation to the development of new models of service delivery, in respect of Leisure and Library Services.

Members were informed that the consultation outcomes would contribute to the five thematic priorities within the Wirral Plan 2021-26 that focused on improving outcomes for whole population groups.

On 28 February 2022, Budget Council agreed a balanced budget for the 2022/23 financial year. The budget was predicated on assumptions that there would be cessation of services within the Neighbourhoods Directorate to generate savings and allow for the balanced budget to be achievable.

Public consultations on affected service changes and closures prior to the final decision by the Committee on what decisions to then take in the expenditure of their budget provision in exercise of their functions, were also agreed as follows:

- The Closure of the Fun (Leisure) Pool at Europa Pools and the development of a fitness facility
- The Closure of Woodchurch Leisure Centre
- The Closure (for a 12-month period) of Wirral Tennis & Sports Centre for redevelopment
- The closure of Brackenwood (18 Hole), Hoylake (18 hole), Wallasey Beach and Kings Parade (pitch n putt) golf courses

This public consultation exercise was opened on the Councils Have Your Say platform between 31st January 2022, and 27th March 2022.

Members were also informed that a separate consultation exercise was undertaken on the Council's proposals for a new operating model for Library Services, including a number of library closures. This consultation ran for 8 weeks from 21 February to 18 April 2022.

Members then took part in a lengthy discussion on the consultation outcomes and discussed each recommendation individually. Concerns were raised around the inclusion of an option 3 which had been discounted by the Policy and Resources Committee. Also raised as a concern by Members was the budget decisions agreed by Council had been brought back Committee for discussion.

Also discussed was accessibility, safety and public transport options in accessing library provision.

Members considered the recommendations individually.

Recommendation 1 was put by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent, it was therefore -

Resolved – That the outcomes of all public consultation exercises for Leisure & Library Services as contained in the “Have Your Say”

consultation reports at Appendix 1-4 (Leisure) and Appendix 8 (Libraries) be noted.

Recommendation 2 was moved by Councillor Helen Cameron, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins that the recommendations detailed within the report be agreed with subject to the inclusion of –

*the implementation of Option 3, **as amended and agreed by Council** be approved as the new core operating model for Wirral's Library Service with a detailed implementation plan to be presented back to a future meeting of this Committee in September 2022*

It was then moved by Councillor Naomi Graham, seconded by Councillor Judith Grier, that the recommendations within the report be agreed, subject to the inclusion of the following –

The £162,000 identified by Policy and Resources be used to permanently support library serviced provision across the Wirral based on greatest demonstrative need and the ease of access assessment.

Further information was sought from the officers regarding the agreement at P&R regarding ringfencing of money, for asset transfer of the libraires. Officers gave clarification on this.

The motion moved by Councillor Graham was put and lost (3:8)
The original motion was therefore put and agreed (1:8) with 2 abstentions. It was therefore –

Resolved – that the implementation of Option 3, as amended and agreed by Council be approved as the new core operating model for Wirral's Library Service with a detailed implementation plan to be presented back to a future meeting of this Committee in September 2022

Recommendation 3 was put by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Ivan Camphor, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent. It was therefore –

Resolved – That the permanent closure of the leisure pool at Europa Pools, with alternative provision and pool-based activities for children and young people within the main competition pool (and other sites where permissible) be approved.

Recommendation 4 was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent. It was therefore –

Resolved – That the retention of the alternative fitness offer within the space previously occupied by the leisure pool at Europa Pools be approved.

Recommendation 5 was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Paul Martin, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent, it was therefore -

Resolved – That, the permanent closure of Woodchurch Leisure Centre be approved.

Recommendation 6 was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Ivan Camphor, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent. It was therefore –

Resolved – That the permanent closure of Brackenwood and Hoylake Golf courses, and the closure of Kings Parade and Wallasey Beach pitch n putt golf courses be approved.

Recommendation 7 was moved by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Allan Brame, seconded by Councillor Mike Collins, and agreed by assent. it was therefore–

Resolved – That the reinstatement of the tennis offer, and development of community offer at the Wirral Tennis & Sports Centre (WTSC) subject to the implementation of a new model for tennis at the site, established through a partnership agreement with the Lawn Tennis Association as contained in Appendix 5, and with the development proposal submitted by Alliance Leisure in Appendix 6 that will continue to achieve the agreed budget savings for 2022/23 be approved

10 **COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER (STAGE 1)**

The Assistant Director for Special Projects opened the report of the Director of Resources which sought a decision in relation to the surplus assets that Members put into the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process as part of the 2022/23 Budget.

Members were advised that the report needed to be considered in the context of the Facilities Investment Plan and the consultation outcome reports which appeared elsewhere on this Committee agenda. This report also advised of unsolicited enquiries / expressions of interest, which were received during the

CAT process for assets not currently in-scope and recommended a way of dealing with these matters for members decision.

Members discussed the report in detail and expressed their thanks to officers for working with the various community groups during the expressions of interest stage. Members raised queries about the various Golf Courses and Libraries in relation to the CAT process which officers responded to. Members also queried previous CAT projects and if they had been successful, also questions the viability of the applications received. Officers responded to say that in 2009, a series of community centres were transferred and none of those have been returned. The next stage is the critical stage, and the council will be very thorough with those going through to next stage. If a transfer is approved on a viable business plan, but the way the CAT is structured is that should it fail at a later date, it will come back to Members for a decision as to next steps.

On a motion by Councillor Sue Percy, seconded by Councillor Helen Cameron and agreed by assent, it was therefore -

Resolved – That,

- (1) the Expression of Interest for the libraries at Hoylake, Irby, Pensby, Prenton, Wallasey Village, Higher Bebington and Woodchurch (as set out in paragraph 3.7 of this report) be taken forward to the business planning stage (Stage 2) of the Community Asset Transfer process.**
- (2) For Bromborough and New Ferry Libraries, the approaches set out in this report at paragraph 3.9 be progressed.**
- (3) The Expressions of Interest from the Woodchurch Wellbeing and Wellness Centre and Helen Diamond Swim and Leisure Limited, for Woodchurch Leisure Centre, be taken forward to the business planning stage (stage 2) of the CAT process for the reasons set out in paragraph 3.10**
- (4) The Expressions of interest from Special Ventures Partnership and Love Golf MCR for Brackenwood Golf Course be taken forward to the business planning stage (stage 2)**
- (5) The Expression of interest from The Royal Liverpool Golf Club and Royal and Ancient for Hoylake Municipal Golf Course be taken forward to stage 2 of the Community Asset Transfer process.**
- (6) the assets listed in Appendix 1 of this report be referred to the appropriate Policy and Service Committee for a decision**

(7) The Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee recommends that the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee requests that officers consider re-opening the Community Asset Transfer process in relation to Bromborough Civic Centre and consider expressions of interest in relation to the overall building before considering any other options.

11 2022/23 BUDGET MONITORING AND 2023/24 BUDGET SETTING

The Finance Business Partner introduced the report Director of Resources which detailed how the 2022/23 budget would be monitored through the Committee system which allowed Policy and Services Committees to take ownership for their specific budgets. The report emphasised the need to stay within budget and the requirements which had been set out across the Council. It was outlined that budget reports would be brought to Committee on a quarterly basis and a monthly budget monitoring panel would monitor the progress.

The chair queried if Budget reports could be placed higher up the agenda, given the recommendation of the improvement panel around the need to scrutinise budgets.

Resolved – That

- (1) The process for in-year monitoring of the 2022/23 budget be noted;**
- (2) the establishment and appointment of a Budget Monitoring Panel to comprise of the Committee Chair and Spokespersons in line with Section 3.12 of the report, with sessions to be led by the relevant Director/Assistant Director be agreed;**
- (3) The establishment of budget workshops as detailed in Section 3.26 of the report, the outcome of which to be reported back to Committee in September 2022 be agreed.**

12 2021/22 BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 4 - OUTTURN

The Senior Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Resources which set out the financial monitoring information for the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee and provided members with an overview of budget performance for this area of activity. The financial information in the report detailed the year-end revenue and capital outturn position as reported at quarter 4 2021/22.

Members were informed that the year-end position for Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure is a favourable variance of £1.185m against a budget of £10.261m.

This included mitigation available from the Sales, Fees and Charges income loss compensation scheme. Included in the Committee position is the mitigation available from the Sales, Fees and Charges income loss compensation scheme. This was available until the end of Quarter 1 and the service has claimed 75p in the pound for eligible planned income. The compensation claim is £2.028m.

The focus for the Directorate had been on recovery in 2021/22 with services being gradually reintroduced throughout the year. However, income generating opportunities had not yet returned to pre-pandemic levels due to phased and partial reopening of some services during the year. Most sites reopened and returned to full capacity before the end of the year. However, some Leisure and Library sites were utilised for COVID-19 purposes during the year which restricted income generating opportunities.

Members discussed the reports and asked for more clarification on the reserves, especially around Hilbre Island. This was due to the budget for Hilbre Island transferring to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee in the last municipal year. Also queried was the favourable outturn, with Members asking if this was due to extra Covid funding. Officers responded to say this was the case, and monitoring of the budgets will be important moving forward.

Resolved – That,

- (1) the year-end revenue position of £1.185m favourable, for 2021-22 be noted.**
- (2) the achievement of approved savings and the year end position for 2021-22 be noted 3.**
- (3) the reserves allocated to the Committee for future one-off commitments be noted.**
- (4) the year-end capital position of £5.734m favourable, for 2021-22 be noted**

13 APPOINTMENT TO BIRKENHEAD PARK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Head of Legal Services opened the report of the Director of Law and Governance. The purpose of the report was to enable the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee to review the continuing need

for the Birkenhead Park Advisory Committee and to appoint Members and named deputies to serve on those for the 2022/23 municipal year.

Resolved – That the Monitoring Officer as proper officer be authorised to carry out the wishes of the Group Leaders in allocating Members to membership of the Birkenhead Park Advisory Committee and to appoint those Members with effect from the date at which the proper officer is advised of the names of such Members.

14 **APPOINTMENT OF HERITAGE CHAMPION**

The Head of Legal Services introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance to enable the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee to appoint a Member Champion for Heritage.

The Committee noted and thanked Councillor Jerry Williams, the Member Champion for Heritage for the municipal year 2021/22, for his work in the role.

On a motion put forward by Councillor Tony Smith and seconded by Councillor Helen Cameron it was,

Resolved – That Councillor Jerry Williams be appointed as Heritage Champion for 2022/2023.

15 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Chair introduced the report of the Director of Law and Governance which provided the Committee with an opportunity to plan and review its work across the municipal year.

The Committee was invited to consider its work programme so that it only included items of business that required a decision, relate to budget or performance monitoring or which were necessary to discharge their Overview and Scrutiny function, in line with the recently revised Constitution.

Resolved – That the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee work programme for the remainder of the 2022/23 municipal year be noted

16 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The Public Interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

17 APPENDIX - 5 WIRRAL COUNCIL LEISURE FACILITY INVESTMENT STRATEGY (004)

The Tourism, Communities and Culture Committee then considered the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services in its entirety and agreed the recommendations as below,

Resolved – That

(1) the Leisure Facilities Investment Strategy be deferred to a future meeting of the Committee and that a workshop be arranged by the Director of Neighbourhood Services to enable Members of the Committee to consider the proposals further.

(2) the Director of Neighbourhood Services and Director of Regeneration and Place be authorised to develop proposals within the context of regeneration master plans currently under preparation. Business cases are to be presented at a future meeting of this committee.