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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Thursday, 21 July 2022

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes V Wilson
S Percy H Gorman
T Smith N Graham
A Gardner O Osanlou
L Fraser

Apologies Councillors P Connolly

19 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 for two years.

20 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Paul Connolly.

21 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. No such declarations were made.

22 MINUTES

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

23 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

23.1 Public Questions

The Chair indicated that 4 questions had been received.

Sarah Spoor asked about the possibility of a provision for wheelchair accessible swings to be installed in Wirral parks, and if this could be funded from a maintenance budget underspend.

The Chair responded by summarising the factors considered when replacing play equipment, including but not limited to; health and safety, play value, location and age range. Funding for such replacements was successfully secured in 2018 and has all been allocated to projects. The Chair made clear that there was no underspend and explained that there was a range of accessible equipment provided across Wirral. The Chair added that officers were open to discussions on how these provisions could be improved.

The Chair read out a question on behalf of John Devine which enquired about the possibility of a standalone procedure that would fast track the replacement of fluorescent lighting due to its inefficiency, in order to reap both monetary and environmental benefits sooner than the current system allows.

The Chair acknowledged the substantial benefits of LED lighting for its reduction in electricity consumption and longer lifespan. A standalone programme had yet to be established but other initiatives were in place, such as; any future replacements in Council buildings and maintained schools will be LED. Initiatives were being widened across all maintained schools in order to access the scale of work needed. These programmes were determined by a number of factors, such as; funding, timing of replacements and other works, capacity of approved contractors.

Gary Holmes asked for an explanation as to why a rubbish bin had been removed from Storeton Road and not replaced, as well as when a replacement could be expected.

The Chair responded that Council records did list a referral for a replacement rubbish bin. At the time of the request the stock of these rubbish bins needed to be replenished, new funding had also been received which required the council to procure a new provider of rubbish bins. This location was listed for replacement once these tasks had been completed.

James Hankey asked a question about what legal advice had been sought before expenditure on the proposed parking changes, as well as what were the running costs for this scheme, compared to the projected income, and what were the predefined purposes the excess profit would be used for.

The Chair informed that a written response would be provided within 10 working days.

23.2 Statements and petitions

No statements or petitions had been received.

23.3 Questions by Members

Councillor Osanlou asked a question regarding the extreme heat that had affected Wirral in recent events, and whether the council had undertaken any fire risk assessments in areas of long grass, and whether these areas had been listed in order to develop a risk mitigation plan which included the usage of fire breaks.

The Chair informed Councillor Osanlou that the Council did not currently have a single risk assessment in place for grass fires, but instead took advice from Merseyside Fire and Rescue. Specific concerns were included in the management plan for parks and open spaces. The Chair explained the most common source of outdoors fires were through the careless use of barbecues, discarded cigarettes, or deliberate arson.

24 CITY REGION SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORT SETTLEMENT HIGHWAY STRUCTURAL MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME 2022-23

The Senior Highways Officer, introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which sought the Committee's approval of the disbursement of grant funding from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority's (LCRCA) City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) for 2022/2023 into Wirral Council's Capital Programme for Highways Structural Maintenance and Bridge Maintenance. The report also requested approval for the disbursement of the indicative funding for years 2023/24, 2024/25, 2025/26, and 2026/27, in the same programme. The report also requested acceptance of an indicative highway condition matrix that would be used to inform future programme investment decisions.

In response to member questions in relation to which roads were eligible, it was confirmed that eligibility was determined using a long development process that members were involved in, this was looked at in further detail to determine which attributes would trigger eligibility. In response to a question regarding the overall deliverability of the scheme, it was explained that the scheme was considered deliverable taking into account the regular maintenance, and the fact that the work was planned to take place over multiple years. It was reported that a trial period was used to assure the longevity and cost effectiveness of the material used.

Resolved – That

- (1) The allocation of indicative grant funding likely to be allocated to Wirral Council in the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS) Combined Authority Transport Plan programme (Highways Structural Maintenance) amongst the relevant subject areas over the next 4 years, as set out in Appendix 1 to this report be approved and;**

- (2) The proposed programme of works for Wirral's Carriageways, Footway Improvements and Bridge Maintenance for 2022/23, using grant funding allocated to Wirral Council by Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) in the 2022/23 City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS), Combined Authority Transport Plan Programme (Highways Structural Maintenance), as set out in Appendix 2 to this report be approved and;
- (3) the indicative RAG rated highway network condition matrix as set out in Appendix 3 to this report, to be used by officers as one of the decision tools when developing highway structural maintenance programmes be accepted, and
- (4) The Director of Neighbourhood Services, in consultation with the Chair and Party Spokespersons of the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee, be authorised to revise or amend the delivery or implementation of the work programmes, as deemed necessary, having due regard for the available resources and applicable risk-based prioritisation of locations selected for intervention and treatment.

25 **FUTURE OF PARKS TENNIS - ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FROM LAWN TENNIS ASSOCIATION (LTA) AND IMPLEMENTATION AND PROCUREMENT OF THE FUTURE OPERATING MODEL**

The Leisure, Libraries and Engagement Modernisation Officer, introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which proved the Committee with the Lawn Tennis Association's (LTA) capital grant funding proposal for tennis court improvement works across Wirral, including operating models for the future management and maintenance of the courts.

The report also provided an overview of tennis provision across the Council's parks and open spaces and proposed a sustainable way forward for tennis provision across Wirral's Parks and Open Spaces in the future.

It was clarified to the committee that the funding would contribute to broadening the game of tennis to a wider audience and in turn work toward health benefits for the borough. Day to day maintenance would be the responsibility of the operator. The LTA had offered to increase funding to mirror the costs of building materials increasing. Trials were run previously to measure the effectiveness of the booking system, schools and libraries were also involved in order to facilitate the booking process for those without sufficient access.

On a motion moved by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Foulkes, it was,

Resolved – That the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee

- (1) Authorises the Director of Neighbourhoods to accept the grant funding from the Lawn Tennis Association in the sum of £300,000 to enable tennis court improvement for the Council parks courts.**
- (2) Requests that Director of Neighbourhoods develops a sustainable operating model and programmes of inclusive tennis activity that prevents low income from being an obstacle to participation in tennis across the borough and brings back a further report to the Committee which also includes detail as to how the model will support social inclusion and overall participation.**
- (3) Requests that the Director of Neighbourhoods continues to work with the NHS to develop social prescribing opportunities and a borough-wide referral programme.**
- (4) The Committee also welcomes the provision of £40k funding from the LTA to deliver the LTA Serves Programme which takes tennis into the heart of local communities and encourages residents to become more physically active.**

26 **TREE, HEDGEROW AND WOODLAND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT 2022**

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods Services introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided an update in the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy which was approved in July 2020.

The aims of the strategy were to protect, regenerate and care for Wirral's existing trees, hedgerows and woodlands. To plant more trees and hedgerows. To create a framework for decision making and establish a prioritised action plan for 2020-2030. The report provided the first update on the progress of the Strategy, including the metrics selected to assess performance and the actions achieved to date. The tree, hedgerow and woodland planting undertaken since the Strategy was adopted was summarised within the report.

a discussion followed on the engagement of residents in the removal of trees and development of hedgerows and gardens, as well as the importance of tree protection within the strategy. Officers advised that the strategy was developing in order to allow for further involvement with residents. Officers detailed some of the difficulties that arise when planting in urban areas. Furthermore, planning policy is in place to encourage new developments to involve more greenery. During the last planting season funding was secured for the first Natural Regeneration site.

Resolved – That

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee note the contents of the report, the progress of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy to date and the Strategy actions for 2022/23.

27 **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Assistant Director of Neighbourhoods Services introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided the Committee with a performance report in relation to Environment and Climate Emergency, and Highways and Infrastructure. The report was designed based on discussion with Members through working group activity in 2021.

Members were keen to establish that the figures in the report were largely affected by Covid working conditions and a number of unprecedented extreme weather incidents. Members wanted to know what was being achieved in terms of reducing transport emissions. The Chair highlighted the importance of road safety when encouraging active travel in order to reduce transport emissions.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

28 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the report and welcomed the inclusion of the Parking Strategy, and hoped that the committee could work closely with other councillors and officers to assure its smooth delivery.

Further suggested items for consideration included an update on flood risks and the introduction of parking charges.

Resolved - That the work programme be noted.