

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 24 July 2023

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes G Davies
G Jenkinson N Graham
P Jobson Jason Walsh
V Wilson A Brame
M Booth

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

Councillor Anne Ainsworth sent apologies. Councillor Angie Davies was in attendance as substitute.

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. There were no declarations of interests.

22 MINUTES

Cllr Naomi Graham asked that the climate emergency action plan be updated to include protecting vulnerable residents from heatwaves and flooding. The Chair asked that the public question relating to Fender Way be amended to 'had not reported any problems' and reference to Director of Regeneration and Place be changed to Director of Neighbourhood services. Reference to 'it was noted that these issues are reserved should be changed to 'resolved'. The chair also asked that the statement that 'the council had no intention of taxing people to the point of poverty' include that the council has 'no intention of introducing roadblocks, cameras or other restrictions'.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2023 be approved as a correct record with the above amendments.

23 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

23.1 Public Questions

The Chair advised that 17 public questions had been received.

Catherine Evans asked a question relating to Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, stating that she had submitted a Freedom of Information request regarding the trial LTN for Grange Road West and suggested that the response was not comprehensive. Ms Evans requested that the Council scrap LTN.

The Chair responded to say that the Grange Road Scheme was due to be implemented using an experimental Traffic Order which would be in place for 18 months. Feedback would be welcomed from businesses. During the development of the scheme to date the Council engaged with businesses, and prior to the public consultation also undertook a separate consultation for local businesses. There is significant evidence to demonstrate that increasing pedestrian and cycling activity can boost a second consultation has just ended on the 19th July and therefore until the feedback from this has been reviewed it would be inappropriate to pre-determine the outcome and recommendations regarding the scheme.

A question was read on behalf of Keith Randals, who asked if an Equality Impact Assessment had been conducted in respect of the cessation of maintenance on Hoylake Beach.

The Chair responded to say that an Equality Impact Assessment was carried out before the Cabinet Member Decision to pause spraying and raking was taken, and an EIA will definitely be part of the process of deciding a final beach management plan for Hoylake Beach.

A question was received from Linda Ferrie who asked what proposals will the Council have for enforcing the 20mph speed restrictions, who was going to enforce these restrictions and by what means.

The Chair responded to say that the Police are the only people who can enforce speed restrictions and the Council work closely with Merseyside Police, noting that Merseyside Police support Road Safety work the Council are undertaking.

Anthony Pritchard asked a question regarding 20 mph zones, asking if the committee considered that consultation regarding the 20mph scheme, carried out October / November 2022, was fair and inclusive of all Wirral residents.

The Chair responded to say that consultations on 20mph are carefully done in line with legal requirements and are promoted via multiple channels including the local press, social media, emails to residents and the Council website.

Catherine Kelly asked a question relating to 20 mph zones, stating that this could have an impact on carers, district nurses, and emergency services. Ms Kelly asked the chair to confirm what risk assessments had the Council carried out pertaining to people waiting in their homes for carers as well as confirming whether any consultations had taken place with Home Care Agencies.

The Chair responded to confirm that an equality impact assessment was carried out before the recommended 20mph policy was agreed by the committee and subsequently by Full Council.

Charlotte Smith asked a question relating to the removal benches along the prom at Hoylake refurbishment and to accommodate buses/coaches during the Open. Has the council ever considered an Equality Impact Assessment in making this decision and noted that in her opinion the council is in breach of the Equality Act 2010 by not providing temporary seating to accommodate people with disability/mobility needs.

The Chair responded to say that she had been informed that the benches were in need of refurbishment and repair to keep them safe and fit for use.

Elaine Revans asked a what was the Council's opinion on keeping the 20mph limits to necessary areas such as around schools and nurseries whilst allowing drivers to exercise common sense in 30mph areas and could the Council provide the sources of the statistics from their own research for accidents and fatalities in the Wirral zones they are targeting for the new restriction.

The Chair responded to say that 20mph zones were not introduced to reduce pollution but to reduce road danger and numbers killed and seriously injured. The Chair also noted that it would be helpful to explain the benefits of 20mph more and confirmed that officers are working on this right now.

Rosie Evans asked a question stating that the Birkenhead 2040 Framework clearly stated that the Wirral Council's preference for the Birkenhead tunnel is to become not for cars but public transport only and asked if the Council would be engaging with the Liverpool City Region, as owners of the tunnel, to facilitate a feasibility study.

The Chair responded to say that the Council are not aware of any immediate proposals from the LCR for changes to the Birkenhead tunnel. Any proposals would have to be led by the LCR as owners of the asset and would

be subject to comprehensive feasibility studies and consultation with all affected parties. The Chair also noted that, the 2040 Framework recognised that the Queensway tunnel provides strong strategic highway links that are essential for the flow of people and goods but does note that the infrastructure has a lifespan which naturally requires its renewal, replacement, or change of use in the future to extend the economic life of the tunnel.

Derek Holmes asked why could the Council send out letters to residents to let them know about the Open Golf, not one letter was sent out about the Beach Management consultation.

The Chair responded to say that letters were sent to residents close to the golf event who were likely to be disrupted by it. Letters cannot be sent to all people that use the beach as it is an open space available to all Wirral residents and visitors and that would be too many people to write to.

Colin Roper stated that The Department of Transport plans to close all its managed train companies' ticket offices across the Country. He also stated Mersey Ferries have become cashless, and many of the street parking machines in Birkenhead and beyond have also become cashless. Mr Roper asked what initiatives are the Council taking to protect the use of cash on the Wirral, ensuring the public can use it to travel and park.

The Chair responded to state that she would ask officers to respond to Mr Roper's concerns and that they are shared with the LCRCA, who are responsible for the tunnels, ferries and local trains.

Sandra Richards asked a question relating to 20mph zones, stating that the zones will increase fuel usage and asked as the Committee is charged with environmental matters, how did it justify the fact this decision would adversely affect pollution, or is this a plan to stop private car ownership. Had a risk assessment been undertaken in respect of this and are these risks covered in the Council's public indemnity insurance.

The Chair responded to say that there is evidence that reduced speeds reduce fuel use unless people drive erratically. Risks are assessed for all policy decisions and with evidence that 20mph is much safer than 30mph, the council believe it will be of benefit in reducing risk.

David Felton asked a question relating to 20mph zones, asking what is the exact number of people needed to object, or the exact proportion of respondents required, to stop further MPH zones from being introduced?

The Chair responded to state that the decision to proceed with 20mph was made by elected members of the Council before the recent local elections. It was not raised as a concern at the local elections and many of us received messages of support for 20mph. The Chair noted that the figures showed that

during consultation 0.002% of residents opposed 20mph zones and that consultation objections are always taken seriously and if valid, they are acted upon.

Dermot Bolger stated that numerous surveys, including a recent 2023 IMF survey on Public Perceptions of Climate Mitigation Policies, indicate that the vast majority of everyday people do not want to pay for climate mitigation policies. Mr Bolger asked if the Council planned comprehensively survey the Wirral public to ascertain if they support climate policies and if the public do not support such policies, will the council withdraw from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority Five Year Climate Action Plan.

The Chair responded to confirm that she very much supported the idea of comprehensive engagement with residents on the issue of climate change and climate change policies and asked for greater urgency in communicating with residents across the city region.

Monika Skinner asked if the Council planned to be upfront about the medium to long term target in regard to private car ownership.

The Chair responded to state that Wirral has a close working relationship with the rest of the Liverpool City Region. However, the city region is not alone in wanting to enable as many people as possible to choose to travel by public transport and active travel, noting that the aim was to give people more choice.

Jeremy Cook asked a question relating to 5G, asking if the Council claimed that the real nature of the 5G deployment process underway in Wirral is one of telecommunications only.

The Chair responded to state that the answer was, yes.

The Chair read out a question on behalf of Sally Scott, who asked how many Councillors had undertaken training in environment issues, asking for the list of carbon literate councillors to be made public and that Council consider increasing its climate communications with the public and greater levels of public consultation beyond just 'Have your Say'.

The Chair responded to state that the list will be updated and made available, and the Climate Emergency team will consider your suggestions for increased communications and engagement.

23.2 Statements and petitions

The Chair advised Members that 4 petitions had been received.

Councillor Jason Walsh presented a petition on behalf of residents of Thornton Avenue and the connected Thornton Road slip road, Higher

Bebington, who requested that modal filters are positioned within the avenue restrict traffic flow in both roads. They petitioned for this as a more effective solution to traffic conditions than restricting the speed limit to 20mph.

A petition was received from Amanda Parker in relation to sewage dumping in New Brighton, asking Committee that action is taken by the Secretary of State for Environment to stop the sewage dumps by United Utilities into the local river.

A petition was received from Lee Mathie in regards to restrictions at Kings Parade New Brighton which only referred to motor caravans. The petition asked why such restrictions are not applied to other classes of motor vehicles and requested somewhere designated for motor caravans.

A petition was also received from Mark Skillicorn in relation to the use of weed killer spraying.

23.3 Questions by Members

Councillor Graham Davies asked a question regarding Heswall Primary School and traffic calming measures. Cllr Davies stated that a petition had been submitted by a constituent but no response had been received.

The Chair stated that a response should have been prepared for this and that she would ask officers to look into this further.

24 BIRKENHEAD TOWN CENTRE MOVEMENT SCHEMES

The Lead Commissioner for Strategic Transport and Technology presented the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place, stating that the report provided an update on the Phase 1 consultation undertaken regarding the town centre movement schemes at Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and Grange Road Charing Cross/Grange Road West and sought approval to delegate authorisation to the Director of Neighbourhoods to consider the outcome of the Phase 2 consultation and make the decision regarding the implementation of the schemes.

The report also sought approval for the acceptance of a further allocation of £1,625,000 of Active Travel Tranche 3 funding to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme. The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme and the Grange Road/ Charing Cross/Grange Road West projects are part of the council's Future High Street Fund (FHSF) programme.

The Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme also has an allocation of Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding.

The projects were both critical components of the regeneration of Birkenhead town centre, aiming to make the town centre more attractive through supporting improved accessibility and increasing active and sustainable travel movements.

Members queried various aspects of the scheme, raising some concerns as to schemes being dislocated and lacking in ambition, and were informed that an Active Travel Vision Document would be coming to Committee later in the year, and that a full detailed infrastructure plan was being developed. Members also noted that applications for grants needed to be in line with government policy and criteria in order to be feasible. Members also shared frustration that the deadlines for applying for funding were tight, suggesting that there was less time for consultation.

Members discussed each scheme and car parking, asking if a full assessment for car parking spaces will be undertaken. Also considered was the impact of anti-social behaviour on the scheme as well as making the public realm dementia friendly.

A motion was then put by Councillor Max Booth, Seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson that,

In reference to option 2.1 and in light of the committee not seeing the phase two consultation results, the Director of Neighbourhoods is requested to seek an extension of time beyond the 31st of March 2024 funding deadline. This will accommodate for a time whereby the ECET committee can analyse the phase two consultation responses during the ECET committee meeting scheduled to take place on the 20th of September 2023

A vote was had and the motion was lost (4:8)

On a motion by the chair, seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes. The motion was then voted on and agreed (8:4). It was therefore,

Resolved – that,

1. The outcome of the Phase 1 consultation regarding the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard and the Charing Cross/Grange Road/Grange Road West scheme and associated officer comments which are included with Appendix 1 – 4 of this report be noted;

2. Delegated authority regarding the implementation of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme and the Grange Road/ Charing

Cross/Grange Road West scheme be given to the Director of Neighbourhoods, following consultation with the Ward Members, Chair and Spokespersons of the Economy, Regeneration and Housing Committee and the Environment, Transport and Climate Emergency Committee regarding the objections and expressions of support received during the Phase 2 consultation;

3. £1,625,000 of additional Active Travel Tranche 3 Funding to support the delivery of the Conway Street/Europa Boulevard scheme be accepted.

25 **LIVERPOOL CITY REGION COMBINED AUTHORITY - FIVE YEAR CLIMATE ACTION PLAN 2023/25**

The Chair presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, which contained as an appendix the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority – Five Year Climate Action Plan.

Members were informed that report was approved by the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on 14 July 2023. The report sought Combined Authority approval for the Liverpool City Region Five Year Climate Action Plan, and identified actions for the Combined Authority to lead, enable or champion to 2028. These actions would contribute towards the decarbonisation needed in the Liverpool City Region to reach net zero carbon by 2040 or sooner, as well as delivering multiple co-benefits.

Members discussed various aspects of the plan, including the recycling priority action, food waste and numbers using their cars for short journeys. Use of Hydrogen and innovative technologies for transportation were also debated by the committee.

Members were informed that thought had been put into the language used in the document and how it could be made as easy as possible for residents to get on board. It was noted that the footprint of Liverpool City Region was large and diverse, and queried what could be done as a local authority, noting that more localism and involvement by citizens could be incorporated to deliver the strategy.

Resolved – that the priority actions be endorsed.

26 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER ONE (THE PERIOD TO 30 JUNE 2023)**

The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services, which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 1 (30 June) of 2023/24.

The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, which enabled the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 1, there was a forecast adverse position of £0.500m on the Committee's proposed revised net revenue budget, of £65.840m. The revised net revenue budget included an increase of £0.870m in Quarter 1, which is still subject to Council approval. This position was based on activity to date, projected trends in income and expenditure and changes to Council funding.

Members discussed the impact of the upcoming enforcement policy and love Wirral Policies and the adverse variance due to car parking charges being delayed. Also requested was more detail in the revenue table, which goes down to £6m and a request was made to break this down in future reports. Members also queried the variance due to the West Kirby Wall and were advised that the information contained in the report was the most up to date.

Resolved – that,

- 1.the Directorate forecast adverse position of £0.500m presented at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- 2. the allocation of additional £0.870m funding from the increased council budget of £2.000m, subject to Council approval be noted;**
- 3. the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 1 be noted**
- 4. the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 1 be noted.**
- 5. the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 1 be noted**

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

The Director of Neighbourhood Services presented the report which provided 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 requests have been incorporated into the report presented at this committee meeting.

Members discussed missed bin collections and poor recycling rates and noted that public feedback in regard to highways maintenance was poor. It was

noted that the date reflected a full week of industrial action and poor weather conditions that went into mid-January and that recycling performance is static.

Members were also informed that surveys do tend to get negative results, but that the network is in reasonably good condition, however there is slippage on residential roads and pavements. Member also discussed cycling and car free days, noting that funding had been requested from the City Region to promote car free days. Members also queried the tree strategy and noted the offer of free trees through the garden waste strategy.

Resolved – that the report be noted

28 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Head of Legal Services presented the report of the Director of Law and Governance and advised Committee that they were responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. This work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

The Chair informed Committee that this would be the Director of Neighbourhoods final committee meeting and thanked her for her drive and energy, not just in Wirral but across the City Region. The Director of Neighbourhoods thanked Members for their support.