

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes G Davies
A Ainsworth N Graham
G Jenkinson Jason Walsh
P Jobson A Brame
M Booth C Povall (for V
Wilson)

29 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.

30 APOLOGIES

Councillor Wilson sent apologies. Councillor Povall was in attendance as substitute.

31 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. Councillor Steve Foulkes declared a personal interest but not prejudicial interest by virtue of his role as chair of the Liverpool City Region Transport Committee in respect of item 6, the Wirral Road Safety Plan.

32 MINUTES

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 September 2023 be approved as a correct record subject to correction of some typographical amendments

33 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

33.1 Public Questions

The Chair informed Members that a large number of Public Questions had been received and had indicated at the outset that having regard to the Council Procedure Rules she would allow 30 minutes for public questions. Those members of the public unable to ask their question would receive a written response.

Don Naylor asked if Wirral Borough Council expected to liaise with neighbouring Local Highway Authorities, for example Flintshire County Council, in order to cross-reference experiences of successfully implementing 20mph measures.

The Chair responded to state that Wirral Council had liaised with the bordering authority of Cheshire West and Chester, where 20mph speed limits have previously been introduced across all residential areas. Officers had also taken advice from the national "20's Plenty" campaign which referred to data and information from many local authorities that had previously introduced widespread 20mph speed limits.

Janine Pinion asked if there had been any post-implementation feedback or studies from areas which had already implemented 20mph zones – apart from the Belfast study.

The Chair responded to confirm that several outcome studies were available online, including Traffic for London (TfL) Cheshire West and Chester and Edinburgh. Many local authorities in the UK have implemented 20mph speed limits, however best practice suggested that 20mph schemes should be evaluated over a six-year period with three-year worth of before and after data included.

Gillian Homeri asked a question as a victim of a road traffic incident, asking How many lives are lost in Wirral due to road accidents and how many are seriously injured?

The Chair responded to confirm that for the full calendar year of 2022 the collision record is 106 killed or seriously injured, with 5 fatal injured and 101 sustaining very serious injured.

Barbara Gleave asked a question regarding the increase in traffic on our roads and asthma as an increasing health problem, especially in Children. The question asked if the introduction of a 20 mph speed limit will have any impact on air quality and if slower speeds will reduce the harm to children

Mike Comerford noted his concerns regarding the volume and speed of the traffic through Thornton Hough Village, and recent fatality. He asked if the Council would change the speed limit through the village from 30 mph to 20mph in line with its drive to increase road safety and reduce the number of injuries/fatalities on our roads.

The Chair responded to say state that it was proposed to introduce 20mph speed limits on Smithy Hill, St Georges Way and on parts of Thornton Common Road and Manor Road, through Thornton Hough Village as part of area 27 of the scheme proposals. If funding is approved, this is currently programmed to be progressed as part of Phase 3 of the overall scheme.

Rizgar Homeri asked if Merseyside Police and other emergency services fully consulted about 20mph limits and have they given any feedback now the limits are being implemented.

The Chair responded to confirm that Merseyside Police were consulted and are stakeholders in the Merseyside Road Safety Partnership. Alongside Wirral Council, they have worked with Liverpool City Region Combined Authority on the regional road safety strategy and the Wirral Road safety plans align with this work. The Police and Crime Commissioner has issued public statements supporting the 20mph roll out.

Ann Adern asked what the expected effects on fuel consumption are if people drive at 20mph.

The Chair responded to say that Guidance from the Department for Transport issued as part of a 20mph research study published in November 2018, inferred that adopting a smoother driving style and generally driving more slowly at a steady pace saves fuel, unless an unnecessarily low gear is used. Along shorter roads with junctions and roundabouts, limiting acceleration up to 20mph allows for fewer gear changes and reduces fuel consumption.

Sarah Spoor noted that she had asked a question a year ago to raise the issue of the lack of accessible play equipment in Wirral public play areas for children who are wheelchair users, noting that she had asked the council to consider the installation of a wheelchair accessible swing to one of the public park play areas. Further correspondence had noted that whilst the costing had been undertaken for two swings, the Wirral Council, Investment and Change Board had made a decision that capital funding would not be made available to install the two accessible swings, however, the funding would be reconsidered in the next capital budget.

The chair responded to say that The Parks & Countryside Service had continued to seek funding for the two Wheelchair Swings. This included a bid for grant funding to Veolia Environmental Trust, the results of which are only scheduled to be released in early December 2023. It was is still the intention to apply for Capital Funding, from Wirral Council, as a part of next year's Capital Programme.

Rosemary Chandler asked what were the expected benefits of 20mph speed limits.

The Chair responded to state that the greatest benefit from the speed limit change came from unlocking the potential for walking or cycling short distances, instead of driving and making the roads safer and healthier places for all users. Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy had a vision to reach zero road traffic collisions by 2040 and safe speeds were a key element of this strategy.

Stuart Smith asked why the affluent side of the Wirral receiving a better service in respect to the mowing of grass verges and what will the council do to rectify this specific issue.

The Chair responded to confirm that Wirral Council web pages provided information on grass cutting and maintenance schedules for council owned land. While the Council will always seek to deliver against this schedule this can be affected by staff absence, machinery repair and weather conditions. Where an area was identified as being behind schedule the service will seek to redeploy its highway verge teams to bring work back on schedule, but that was not always possible. There is no policy of treating any wards differently from one another, a standardised approach to the frequency of scheduled grass cutting has been applied.

Niamh McGarry-Gibbon asked if the Chair was a member or supporter of Extinction Rebellion.

The Chair confirmed she was not a member of Extinction Rebellion but noted that she was very concerned that the climate emergency is the biggest threat facing humanity right now.

Ken Ferguson on behalf of Reform UK asked why the public consultation on 20 MPH zones revealed that 66% of respondents did not want them yet the Council had unanimously voted in its favour.

The Chair noted that only two petitions against the 20mph speed limit scheme have been received by Wirral council, one with 8 signatures and one with 54 signatures. A further petition has been received in favour of the 20mph speed limit scheme going further and that petition has received 33 signatures so far.

Philip Barton asked a question relating to Conway Street and Europa Boulevard Cycle Schemes noting that that wheelchair and mobility scooter users will suffer as a result of this decision, and asked if the committee could reconsider its decision to permit the introduction of segregated cycleways on Conway Street and Europa Boulevard.

The Chair responded to say that the scheme had been designed in accordance with technical guidance note for the design of cycle routes 'Local Transport Note 1/20' and has been reviewed by Active Travel England who are the Government's executive agency responsible for making walking, wheeling and cycling the preferred choice for people to travel. As per the resolution of this committee at its July meeting, a decision regarding the

scheme will be taken by the Director of Neighbourhoods, who will do this after taking into account all representations submitted as part of the Phase 2 consultation and all other relevant matters. An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed to inform this decision-making process, the outcome of which will be published in due course.

33.2 Statements and petitions

Roland Graham presented a statement on behalf of Roland Graham on Behalf of Merseyside Cycling Campaign, in respect of agenda item 6 Wirral Road Safety Plan. The statement noted that they were disappointed not to be considered stakeholders in the road safety consultation or on the implementation of Wirral Circular Trail and flagged concerns with road safety in respect to Hoylake roundabout.

34 WIRRAL ROAD SAFETY PLAN

The Assistant Director: Infrastructure and Highways presented the report which provided a further update on progress made in planning, funding and implementing the recommendations of the Road Safety Working Group as requested by the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee on 7 September 2021.

This report also set out Wirral's Road Safety Plan 2023 – 2027, following the adoption of the Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy in November 2022.

Members asked how pelican crossings and refuges can be requested in their wards. Members were informed of the process for this and were informed that requests from Members and the public were taken into account as part of the annual review. Members also asked for an update on road safety measures at Spital Crossroads and were informed that the plans were being progressed and were currently on track. Members were informed that the School Streets programme had been operated in several locations and feedback so far was positive, with evaluation continuing and plans to roll the scheme out to further Schools. Members also expressed their gratitude to school crossing patrols in ensuring that children were able to get to school safely.

Also discussed was terminology used in the strategy, equality obligations, road safety training for Members and measuring of air quality. Members also sought reassurance that the Committee will see consultation outcomes on phase 2 of the 20mph zones. The Assistant Director: Infrastructure and Highways confirmed that a report would be brought to a future Committee so that Members could consider the consultation outcomes and next steps.

The Chair noted under the financial implication the economic consequences of fatal road accidents, health related costs of inactivity and positive economic impact of Active Travel.

Resolved – that:

- a. the update on the recommendations of the Road Safety Working Group as set out as appendix A to the report be noted;**
- b. the Road Safety Plan 2023 - 2027 as set out in appendix B to the report be approved; and**
- c. officers be thanked for the significant amount of work undertaken to deliver the Road Safety Plan 2023-2027 and in implementing the recommendations of the Road Safety Working Group.**

35 FESTIVE DISPLAY POLICY

The Chair requested that this report be withdrawn in order that to enable officers to give further consideration to the charging policy.

Resolved – That the report be withdrawn.

36 TREE, HEDGEROW AND WOODLAND STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE

The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment presented the report which had been produced further to the adoption by the Council of a Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy in July 2020.

The overarching 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 to 2020 to 2030. The strategy supported the Wirral Plan 2021-2026 and its priorities for a sustainable environment.

This report provided the second update on the Council's progress in the delivery of the strategy, covering the 2022/2023 planting season. Progress of the actions was summarised within this report.

The report looked ahead to priority actions for the next 12 months, which included a revision to the strategy.

Members noted their thanks to the team, but queried the watering programme and lack of capacity to ensure bigger trees will continue to thrive. Officers informed members of a community tree watering campaign in the borough. Also discussed were social media campaigns, adding tree planting to the volunteering gateway, allowing citizens to fund their own trees and planting trees along streets. Officers informed Members that there was also a memorial tree option.

The Chair noted her thanks that a commitment to natural regeneration was included in the strategy and improved communication work with residents.

Resolved – that:

- 1. the progress of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy 2020 to 2030 be noted; and**
- 2. the priority actions for 2023/2024 be endorsed.**

37 **ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE
BUDGET AND BUDGET MONITORING REPORT**

The Senior Finance Business Partner presented the report which provided an update on the budgets in respect of the in-year position and the anticipated pressures for future years which were being considered within the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

Members were informed that the Medium-Term Financial Plan considered the future pressures and savings options that had been put forward as part of a balanced budget position. The Council faced a challenging financial outlook due to inflationary and demand pressures alongside the previous significant reductions in Government funding and uncertainty around the future financial settlements. At the end of Quarter 1, there was a forecast adverse variance of £0.500m against the Committee's revised net revenue budget of £65.840m, which was equivalent to a variance of 1% from the annual budget.

Members queried the Medium-Term Financial Plan and pressure of removing boats from Heswall Beach, as well as possible enforcement costs and of tracing owners. Assurance was given that officers were confident of finding the funding required to deal with this longstanding problem. Also discussed was the Recycling and Waste and Transport levies and budgeting for increased Levy costs. Members requested that hyperlinks be placed in reports for further detail and requested that further budget reports be placed higher up in the order of business.

Resolved – that the report be noted.

38 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Lead Principal Lawyer presented the report and advised Members that the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is 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.

Members discussed possible items for consideration including food waste and were informed that a workshop was being set up. Also queried was the Winter Service Plan and Grit Bins. Members also noted slippage within the work programme, especially around subjects such as Car Free Day.

Resolved – that the work programme be noted.