

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 15 April 2024

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors S Foulkes M Booth
A Ainsworth N Graham
P Jobson J Walsh
V Wilson A Brame

Deputies: Councillors A Gardner

84 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.

85 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillor Davies. Councillor Garner was in attendance as substitute.

86 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.

86.1 Public Questions

The Chair advised that several questions has been received.

Paul Cardin asked why the Council had not made provision to protecting the six mature cherry trees, situated in close proximity to the North Annex, Brighton Street, Wallasey which was being demolished. The Chair responded to state that she shared her concerns regarding the loss of mature trees, it had been determined that successful retention of the trees in such proximity

to the building had not been possible and that the decision had been made to allocate resources towards replacement planting instead of attempting transplantation.

Charlotte Smith asked a question regarding the Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) for Hoylake Beach, noting that a EIA had not been undertaken since 2021, stating that this was unacceptable and has failed the needs of disabled residents especially since Hoylake Beach has deteriorated since 2021.

The Chair responded to state that, following the identification of beach management plan the Council will work with Natural England to gain assent for the option. This engagement and the application for a licence from the Marine Management Organisation (MMO) takes time, in the meantime the Council would ensure Hoylake beach remains accessible and work with the RNLI to ensure their operations can be delivered.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Julien Priest who queried the installation of petrol interceptors to the roadway drainage system that discharges onto the foreshore. Mr Priest asked if these could be installed outside the area covered by environmental protections and if the Chair could confirm that these could be installed prior to the Natural England assent of the Beach Management Plan.

The Chair response to state that the Council would engage with Natural England at the earliest opportunity following Committee's decision this evening and will discuss the installation of the petrol interceptors and required preparation work with them as part of this initial engagement.

The Head of Legal Services read out a question on behalf of Mike Thomas regarding Green Netting, stating that the netting so far has not stopped any sand from reaching the prom and has failed to be maintained in line with the agreement in place when it was put up. Mr Thomas queried if the council had included in their costing the cost of sand removal from the prom and surrounding roads due to vegetation being removed and netting?

The Chair responded to state that sand removal formed part of the street cleansing operation provided for within the current contract with Biffa and the cost of sand removal will be met from established service provision budgets. However it was not envisaged there will be a significant increase in wind-blown sand as a result of the implantation of the identified beach management option.

86.2 Statements and petitions

Charlotte Smith read a statement on behalf of the Hoylake Beach Community Group, regarding the long campaign to return an amenity beach between

Kings Gap and Hoylake Beach Lifeboat Station and asking that the Committee resolves to approve option 2 of the consultation results.

86.3 Questions by Members

The Chair advised that two Members questions had been received.

Councillor Naomi Graham asked a question regarding the Hoylake Beach management plan options and impacts, noting the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) comments within the report and asking for clarity on what assessments had been made of the windblown sand and flooding risks associated with the options and what were the results.

The Chair responded to state that Royal Haskoning had advised there were no adverse additional effects on flooding from either option, and additional windblown sand is not anticipated but will be monitored once the temporary green netting has been removed.

Councillor Jason Walsh asked a question regarding the suitability of flat, grassed 'runways' for lifeboats, kept clear of debris and tall vegetation as an alternative to the fully cleared strips.

The Chair responded to state that The Council had worked closely with the RNLI to develop the beach management options and to clarify and build in their operational requirements for access and egress across the beach. Removing vegetation from the RNLI's access and egress routes is essential as it will grow and further establish over time, impeding rescue operations.

Councillor Allan Brame asked a question regarding the West Kirby Flood Alleviation Scheme asking if the Chair could comment, further to the flood event at West Kirby on April 9th, the effectiveness of the wall in dissipating the energy of the waves, and existing highway drainage.

The Chair stated that the highway gullies had worked effectively once the tide dropped, the draining of the "overtop" water was accelerated when the sliding gates were opened, with the area clear of water within 2 hours after high tide. However, there was some standing water due to some gullies being blocked due to the amount of sand washed over, but these were cleaned, approximately 3 hours after high tide. A full review of the storm dimensions and the performance of the sea defence system would be undertaken jointly with the Environment Agency.

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HOYLAKE BEACH MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Director of Neighbourhoods Services presented the report which provided the Committee with the results of the recent consultation exercise relating to the management of Hoylake Beach. In light of the consultation and progress made thus far with Natural England, Members were asked to determine a preferred position upon which officers could proceed development of a beach

management plan for Hoylake Beach as they had sufficient information to resolve a preference. This preference was used as the basis for Wirral Council's position, although no beach management was to be implemented without Natural England's assent.

Councillors discussed the remit of Natural England with The Deputy Chief Executive confirming that they were a regulatory body and work could not be undertaken on the beach without a beach management plan which had been approved by Natural England. Members commented on the costs surrounding the resolution of the beach management plan and the range of views on the matter.

Also discussed was beach accessibility, both for the public and RNLI as well as the need for a united message, noting the response to the consultation. It was noted that conversations had been had with RNLI about access.

Members considered the need for Natural England assent on the beach options and the need for further work to be undertaken with officers to get an agreement which was as close as possible to the consultation outcome. Assurance was also sought on protecting the Site of Special Scientific Interest, with officers assuring Members that they would ensure that nothing would be breached.

The recommendations within the report were moved as a motion by Councillor Elizabeth Grey, seconded by Councillor Max Booth.

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Consider the content of the Hoylake Beach Management Plan Consultation Report enclosed as Appendix A to this report; and*
- 2. Authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to work with Natural England to develop a beach management plan that approximates as closely as possible the consultees' overall preferred option (Option 2 - Amenity Beach).*
- 3. Authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to*
 - a. progress the items referred to in paragraph 4.4 of this report which are all required to be in place before the beach management plan can be implemented; and*
 - b. finalise and implement the beach management plan subject to assent being in place from Natural England*

Councillor Naomi Graham then moved an alternative motion. This was seconded by Councillor Jason Walsh,

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider the content of the Hoylake Beach Management Plan Consultation Report enclosed as Appendix A to this report; and

2. Authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to work with Natural England to develop a beach management plan that ensures stable, debris-free and managed grassed access for RNLI activities and access for all to the sandy beach beyond the current continuous grassed area.

3. Authorise the Director of Neighbourhood Services to

a. progress the items referred to in paragraph 4.4 of this report which are all required to be in place before the beach management plan can be implemented; and

b. finalise and implement the beach management plan subject to assent being in place from Natural England.

Members then voted on the motion as moved by Councillor Liz Grey and it was,

Resolved (9:2) - that,

1. Consider the content of the Hoylake Beach Management Plan Consultation Report enclosed as Appendix A to this report be noted

2. the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to work with Natural England to develop a beach management plan that approximates as closely as possible the consultees' overall preferred option (Option 2 - Amenity Beach).

3. the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to

a. progress the items referred to in paragraph 4.4 of this report which are all required to be in place before the beach management plan can be implemented; and

b. finalise and implement the beach management plan subject to assent being in place from Natural England

The motion moved by Cllr Graham therefore fell away because it was a negation of the motion that had just been carried.
