

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Monday, 21 October 2024

Present: Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

Councillors M Booth R Pitt
G Jenkinson V Wilson
A Brame N Graham
S Foulkes J Johnson (In place
J Williamson of G Davies)
P Basnett (In place
of G Wood)

Apologies Councillors G Wood
G Davies

28 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.

29 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Graham Davies who was deputised by Councillor Jenny Johnson and from Councillor Gill Wood who was deputised by Councillor Paula Basnett.

30 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 advised that he was the Chair of the Liverpool City Region Transport Committee and that this did not impair his judgement with regard to any decisions at this committee.

Councillor Janette Williamson declared that she also sat on the Liverpool City Region Transport Committee.

Councillor Naomi Graham declared a non prejudicial interest in item 7 by virtue of her work helping to develop the first Tree Strategy.

31 **MINUTES**

Councillor Gail Jenkinson raised that the content of a public question had been captured incorrectly, the minutes stated that the question had been about clearing grass from West Kirby Lake but that it was actually in relation to clearing grass from the beach.

The Chair noted that the reference to question from Linsdey whittle should read Lindsey Whitley.

With these corrections it was:

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

32 **PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS**

32.1 **Public Questions**

The Chair reported that 8 public questions had been received.

Chris Capstick attended the committee meeting and asked a question about the parking crisis in the Oakfield Road area. The Chair responded that there was more to the issue than constructing an extended parking area and that officers would need to bring a report to the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport committee seeking a decision and the formulation of a policy for converting verges to a parking area.

A supplementary question was asked on whether the option for parking permits was being explored. The Chair informed Mr Capstick that he would receive a written response detailing the options available.

A question had been received from Nick Bower regarding the implementation of blanket 20mph zones in Pensby. The Chair advised that the Council was not implementing blanket 20mph speed limits and that this Committee in March 2021 approved the recommendation of the Road Safety Working Group to request that 20mph speed limits are introduced in all areas that are predominately residential, retail, or educational and resolved a motion that this Committee recognised that a lower speed limit would help reduce the actual and perceived danger on our roads and encourage more people to walk and cycle. Furthermore, the wide-spread 20mph speed limits across the borough would address the priorities of the Liverpool City Region Road Safety Strategy and the Wirral Council Plan 2023-27.

David Byrne submitted a question about the West Kirby Sea Defence breach and results of the enquiry. The Chair confirmed that the Council had been working in partnership with the Environment Agency to understand the magnitude of the storm in April and would be able to publish the investigation once it had consulted upon its finding with relevant Risk management Authorities.

Jackie Gray attended the meeting and asked a question about street cleaning operations and maintenance in the Rock Ferry area. The Chair responded that the Council's environmental maintenance resource was allocated across the borough based on demand. As part of this, the Rock Ferry ward received comparable levels to other similar wards and the same frequencies of street cleansing, weed treatment and gully sucking operations. The Council also monitored levels of cleanliness and the performance of the street cleansing operation across the borough and the standards in Rock Ferry were similar to other parts of the borough.

Sean Martin asked a question about whether the impact of proposed parking charges in New Brighton on the local economy had been considered by the Committee. The Chair advised that as proposed parking charges were still under consultation, the report had not yet been before Committee but that there had been research and evidence which demonstrated that carefully coordinated pricing charges did not negatively impact businesses.

Councillor Graeme Cooper attended the meeting to ask a question as a resident which queried the level of communications sent to residents regarding proposed changes to parking permit charges. The Chair thanked Councillor Cooper for highlighting the issue and reported that resident permit charges had never been part of the formal traffic regulation or the consultation taking place on the Have Your Say site. However, the Council had received a considerable number of comments from residents regarding the notice of variation that was erected in residential areas in respect to the permit charge. As such, it was officers' intention to report this to the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee and seek approval to formally consult on a proposal to increase will standardize the charges for residents parking across all areas.

A supplementary question was asked on whether steps were being taken to ensure that residents received the correct information, and the Chair confirmed that she would request a communication would be made to residents to rectify the incorrect information.

Don Naylor asked a question about the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland Strategy and whether the Council would look for opportunities to align the strategy with Healthy Streets indicators such as 'Shade and Shelter' and 'Clean Air. The Chair responded that whilst the Tree Strategy did not explicitly

reference Healthy Streets indicators, the strategy's overarching goals naturally align with those of Healthy Streets and many other frameworks and that the Council recognised the importance of engaging with local communities, including Tree Wardens and residents.

A supplementary question was asked on whether the Council could provide a position statement regarding government subsidies for Drax and share such a statement with local MP's. The Chair confirmed that a written response would be provided.

A question was received from Gillian Homeri about the expected benefits of parking charges with particular regard to air pollution. The Chair reported that the link between poor air quality, the climate emergency, and emissions from vehicles was widely accepted. An effective car parking charging regime would encourage modal shift away from the private motor car towards cleaner, more sustainable modes of transport would have a positive environmental and climate change impact. Any car parking and transport strategy would link to the Council's climate emergency declaration and active travel agendas

The Chair reported that a supplementary question arising from a question asked at the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee fell within the Terms of Reference of this Committee. The Chair invited Charlotte Smith to ask her supplementary question regarding the state of Kings Gap slipway and other slipways on Hoylake Beach and responded that a written response would be provided.

32.2 Statements and petitions

Chris Capstick attended the meeting and presented a petition on behalf of residents of Oakfield Road which sought sufficient parking bays for residents living in homes around the grassed areas and the houses facing the road.

32.3 Questions by Members

There were no questions by Members.

33 ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY

The Lead Commissioner: Strategic Transport and Technology introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought approval for the adoption of the 'Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy'. It also set out the ongoing work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to access funding to support development and implementation of the EV charging network. The Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy had been developed to provide the Council with a plan for the roll out of charge points within the borough. The strategy supported the transition away from the reliance on vehicles with internal combustion engines.

Members debated whether there was a geographical disparity not in accordance with the need of prospective electric vehicle use as the highest car ownership was on the western side of the borough, yet a high proportion of the proposed infrastructure was on the eastern side of the borough. The Lead Commissioner: Strategic Transport and Technology responded that the western side of the borough had a higher propensity of people more likely to have driveways and be able to charge vehicles off street in comparison to the eastern side which had more areas where on street charging facilities would be needed. It was acknowledged that there would be pockets across the borough where this would not be the case, and these areas would be reviewed individually.

Members raised concerns about space on pavements and sought reassurance that pavement space would not be lost to vehicles being charged as this could be detrimental to disabled pedestrians. The Chair noted that the Council wanted to encourage Active Travel and that pedestrians must be prioritised in pedestrian areas. Further concerns were raised on whether the infrastructure proposed would be sufficient to meet the demand, particularly on roads with terraced housing with multiple vehicle households.

In response to Member queries about the equality implications of the strategy, the Lead Commissioner: Strategic Transport and Technology confirmed that Equality Impact Assessments would be completed for all installations and detailed how residents that need charging facilities but cannot park near to one are able to access them which included permission being granted to lay a cable across the pavement with a protective mat over to reduce any hazards. The Lead Commissioner: Strategic Transport and Technology elaborated and informed Members about trials across the country for gully charging points and that this would be considered once guidance from the Department for Transport had been released.

The Lead Commissioner: Strategic Transport and Technology assured Members that should the strategy be approved, the website would be reviewed and updated with clear information for residents that wished to seek either use of a crossing point across a pavement with a cover or wish to request a charging point.

Resolved – That the draft Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy be approved.

34 **TREE, HEDGEROW AND WOODLAND STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT 2024 AND REVISION**

The Tree Risk Management – Landscape Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided the third update on the Council's progress in the delivery of the Tree Hedgerow and Woodland

strategy. The report also introduced the revised strategy, which had been updated to reflect the insights gained over the past few years and to ensure its continued relevance and effectiveness. The report set out priorities for the next 12 months which included revising parks and woodland management plans and strengthening tree risk operations.

In response to Members queries, the Tree Risk Management – Landscape Manager confirmed that for the third year in a row, free trees would be offered to the community and there would be three hubs across the borough where trees could be collected in January 2025. The Committee were informed that since the strategy had been implemented, over 2000 street trees had been planted and that funding had been applied for from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund so that the Council could focus on replacing any trees lost to storms or disease.

Members drew attention to instances of overgrown hedges and trees in gardens and suggested work could be undertaken with third sector organisations where appropriate to support the strategy and community wealth implications.

Members acknowledged the tragic accident that had occurred as a result of a dangerous tree and expressed that responding to dangerous trees should be a priority.

The Tree Risk Management – Landscape Manager informed Members about training courses offered for residents to become tree wardens, essentially being the eyes ears and voices of local trees. This aligned with one of the priorities of the strategy which was to promote existing trees and would prevent trees being felled incorrectly or prematurely. In response to queries surrounding the opportunity to sponsor a tree in Wirral, it was reported that although the value of a sponsorship scheme was appreciated, the financial risk to the Council was too great as not all trees would establish and would have to be replaced at the expense of the Council.

Members placed on record their thanks to former Mayoress Pauline Cocker MBE and former Councillor Jean Stapleton who had been the driving force behind the Grange Community Garden project which had engaged the local community to create something special.

Resolved – That

- (1) the progress of the Tree, Hedgerow and Woodland strategy 2020 to 2030 be noted.**
- (2) the priority actions for 2024/2025 be endorsed.**
- (3) the strategy revisions be approved.**

35 **COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 1 2024-25 THEME:
PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided a provides a quarterly performance report in relation to the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27 for the Theme promoting independence and healthier lives.

In response to Member queries about the decrease in percentage of household waste recycled in Wirral, the Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment informed the Committee that legislation surrounding waste management was changing with food collections becoming mandatory with further statutory requirements for recycling that the Council and Liverpool City Region would respond to. The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Emergency acknowledged the position wasn't up to standard and that Committee had asked for intermediate improvement.

Members raised concerns that the performance indicators in the report did not reflect the requests made at a working group earlier in the year. Including that there was no raw data for KSI's, SSSI's to be mapped and status' given, active travel and the kilometres of infrastructure that met LTN 1/20 regulations and that air quality was missing from the report. As a result, Members felt unable to accept the recommendations set out in the report.

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

Resolved – That the content of the report be noted and referred to P&R and that the performance management indicators be updated to include those previously agreed by the Committee by Quarter 2.

36 **WORK PROGRAMME**

The Chair introduced the report which enabled Members of the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee to contribute to the delivery of the annual work programme.

The Chair requested that Committee formally add monitoring of forever chemicals to the work programme.

Members highlighted that some items on the work programme did not have a date assigned to them and that this needed to be corrected. The Chair confirmed that this would be resolved at the next Chair and spokes briefing session.

Resolved – That the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee work programme be noted