

ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 3 December 2024

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	EA Grey (Chair)	
	Councillors	M Booth G Jenkinson A Brame S Foulkes G Wood	J Williamson R Pitt V Wilson N Graham JE Green (In place of G Davies)
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	P Gilchrist P Stuart	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	G Davies	

37 **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.

38 **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Graham Davies who was deputised by Councillor Jeff Green.

39 **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.

40 **MINUTES**

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that at the last meeting, he had given some incorrect information regarding all Members being advised about changes to residents parking zones and that he had subsequently written to Members to explain and apologised for any confusion.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2024 be approved and adopted as a correct record.

41 PUBLIC AND MEMBER QUESTIONS

41.1 Public Questions

The Chair reported that 7 public questions had been received.

Karl Hunter attended the Committee and asked a question on the rise in the use of log burners and what the Council could do to discourage their use. The Chair responded that it was an offence to emit smoke from a chimney, within a smoke control area. On receipt of a completed log, a letter was sent to the relevant party, giving advice on burning practices and complying with the legislation. If smoke emissions continued, enforcement action would be taken in line with the relevant enforcement policy, to prevent further emissions.

Peter Healey submitted a question about the West Kirby boardwalk and why it had been left in a state of disrepair. The Chair advised that an inspection of the West Kirby boardwalk would be undertaken on 5th December 2024. Any defects would be recorded, and an instruction would be issued to the Term Maintenance Contractor to undertake any necessary repairs.

Dawn Wormell attended the Committee and asked a question on the evidence that supported the Traffic Regulation Orders and whether there was a need for additional paid parking on South Parade. The Chair reported that the proposed Traffic Regulation Orders would help manage the expeditious, convenient and safe movement of vehicular and other traffic, including pedestrians, having regard to factors including the maintenance of local amenities and the need to maintain reasonable access to premises and the provision of suitable and adequate parking facilities on and off the highway.

A supplementary question was submitted on what criteria had been met to show that additional paid parking was needed, and the Chair advised that a written response would be provided.

Iona Horsburgh asked a question about the consultation on proposed parking charges and whether it was worthwhile if the Committee and Council dismissed the objections from residents and business owners. The Chair responded that officers and the Committee had taken note of Appendix 2 which detailed the consultation responses and representations as well as the detailed responses to objections in Appendix 3. The Chair advised that there was considerable research and evidence that demonstrated carefully coordinated pricing charges did not negatively impact businesses.

Ken Ferguson asked a question about the 20mph scheme. The Chair advised that the overwhelming priority in rolling out 20mph had always been reduction

of road danger for all road users. Road users are 5 times less likely to be killed if hit by a car traveling at 20 mph compared with 30mph. Collisions are also less likely to occur in the first place because stopping distances are reduced significantly when speed comes down. Whilst slower speeds may encourage walking, cycling and other activities as well as reducing noise pollution and other environmental impacts, reduction of road danger was the primary reason for 20mph and still is.

Kathryn Morgan asked a question about the data collected to support the parking scheme, noting it was collected in 2019 and 2021. The Chair advised that it was normal practice for research data to take several years to be published. The data referenced in the approved Wirral Parking Strategy had been used to support the policy aims of The Strategy. Therefore, it seemed sensible to refer to the data and the approved strategy when bringing forward the proposed parking schemes for consideration to deliver on those policy aims.

Gary Price submitted a question whether RNLI personnel would be exempt from parking charges when undertaking RNLI duties. The Chair responded that existing arrangement with the RNLI would continue to be honoured.

41.2 Statements and petitions

Gillian Bolt presented a statement on behalf on Wirral 3L's which highlighted how the proposed parking charges would affect their service. The threat of parking charges had caused real concern to members of Wirral 3L's and the potential impact of losing members and therefore funding was a threat to the Charity.

Kathryn Morgan presented a statement in relation to Church Road car park in Bebington and highlighted how imposing charges would drive people to park in surrounding roads causing danger and congestion as well as posing a threat to local businesses who would suffer without footfall as result of the charges being introduced to the car park.

Phil Spencer attended the meeting and presented a petition against the introduction of parking charges in Bromborough Villages main car park.

John Oxtan advised the Committee he had submitted a petition against the proposed car parking charges on Church Road Car Park Bebington.

Kathryn Morgan presented a petition against the proposed car parking charges on Church Road Car Park Bebington.

Councillor Max Booth presented a petition to keep parking free in coastal areas such as Hoylake, Meols and West Kirby.

41.3 Questions by Members

There were no questions by Members.

At the request of the Chair, the order of business was altered to move item 11 2024/25 Budget Monitoring for Quarter two (the period to 30 September 2024) to the first item on the agenda.

42 **2024/25 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER TWO (THE PERIOD TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2024)**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2024/25. The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2024/25 saving programme and a summary of reserves and balances, to enable the Committee to take ownership of the budgets and provide robust challenge and scrutiny to Officers and where appropriate, Committees on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 2, the financial outlook had deteriorated since quarter 1. Current estimates forecast an adverse outturn position of £1.026m on the Committee's revenue budget.

The Chair noted the adverse financial position and that at P&R members agreed that the Council would no longer subsidise non -statutory services from the general fund, and that Members would look for all opportunities to balance the accounts and raise revenue at every legal opportunity.

Resolved – That

- (1) the forecast adverse position of £1.026m presented at Quarter 2 and the urgent need to examine all available options to address the position be noted**
- (2) that the Director of Finance has contacted the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) to make them aware of the Council's financial position be noted**
- (3) the progress on delivery of the 2024/25 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted**
- (4) the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 2 be noted**

(5) the capital position at the end of Quarter 2 be noted.

43 **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED CAR PARKING CHARGES - UPDATE REPORT**

The Senior Network Operations Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which followed on from the Wirral Parking Strategy which was approved in 2023 and detailed the objections received following statutory consultation to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order for the introduction of various car parking charges.

Members noted the overwhelming opposition to parking charges from residents and highlighted the differences between on and off-street parking with off street parking having an income target which had not been met.

Members drew attention to the approach of the proposed charges suggesting that a one size fits all approach was not appropriate, noting that New Brighton already had an overnight charge for campervans and motorhomes, but that West Kirby did not, yet the same parking charges were proposed to be applied to both. It was suggested that a review of car parks should be taken on a case-by-case basis to determine whether parking charges should be implemented.

The effect on residents and local businesses in Bromborough and Eastham was acknowledged, and the issues of parking being displaced into side roads causing congestion and customers choosing to visit large retail parks where parking was free rather than local businesses where they would have to pay for parking were highlighted to the Committee.

The Chair noted that the report contained a detailed list of officer mitigations to objections and Members urged fellow Councillors to work with residents to support them through the options and mitigations and asked for a review of the parking charges to be added to the work programme.

Councillor Allan Brame then proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green. Councillor Max Booth proposed an alternate motion, also seconded by Councillor Jeff Green.

Following a discussion, it was agreed that Councillor Allan Brame would withdraw his motion as it was substantially similar to the Conservative motion but requested a small change which was accepted as a friendly amendment.

The alternative motion was:

The Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee notes public feedback on the proposals via the 3070 online submissions received to the Have Your Say portal and the multiple petitions received and thanks members of the public for their engagement on this important issue.

Committee recognises the shortfall in income and reluctantly agrees the proposed increase in parking charges at current charged for sites including the £1 overnight charge in existing sites and inflationary increases.

In light of significant public opposition, Committee rejects the introduction of car parking charges in New Brighton (86.3% of respondents object), Hoylake and Meols (86.3% of respondents object) and West Kirby (85.9% reject object) (recommendation 2d)

In light of significant public opposition (93.9% of respondents object), Committee believes any introduction of charges to 22 off street council car parks, including Moreton and Bebington, needs to be undertaken on a case-by-case basis with consideration given to the economic impact on nearby shops and businesses, integration with public transport and the potential for displaced parking into nearby residential roads. This case-by-case consideration will be delegated to the Director of Neighbourhood Services in consultation with the Chair and spokes of Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee.

Members voted on the motion with 4 voting for and 7 voting against with no abstentions so the motion was lost.

Councillor Liz Grey moved the officer recommendations, seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes.

Members then voted on the motion moving the officer recommendations with 7 voting for and 4 voting against with no abstentions and so the motion was carried.

It was therefore -

Resolved (7:4) – That

(1) the comments and objections received, following public consultation as part of the necessary traffic regulation order process, together with officer responses be noted; and

(2) the following be approved:

- a) introduction of charges as set out in appendix 1 at off street council owned car parks, that are listed in appendix 1 to this report through the introduction of an amended traffic regulation order;
- b) introduction of a £1 overnight charge at off street council owned car parks, that are listed in appendix 1 to this report through the introduction of an amended traffic regulation order;
- c) an increase of 20p per hour to the car parking charges as set out in appendix 1 at existing council car parks listed in appendix 1 to this report that currently charge through the introduction of a variation to the existing traffic regulation order;
- d) introduction of car parking charges in on street bays at new Brighton, Hoylake and Meols and West Kirby, as detailed in appendix 1 through the introduction of a new traffic regulation order;
- e) a £1 overnight charge in on street parking bays at new Brighton, Hoylake and Meols and West Kirby through the introduction of a new traffic regulation order;
- f) an increase of 20p per hour to the car parking charges at on street bays where fees already apply in the Birkenhead controlled zone through the introduction of an amended traffic regulation order as set out in appendix 1;
- g) a £1 overnight charge in on street parking bays at the Birkenhead controlled zone through the introduction of an amended traffic regulation order.

44

20MPH SPEED LIMIT PROGRAMME PHASES 3 AND 4 - CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS AND OFFICERS' RESPONSES

The Senior Network Manager – Highways and Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which considered objections and comments submitted during the statutory consultation period for Phases 3 and 4 of the 20mph speed limit programme. Phases 3 and 4 consisted of 22 proposed areas and 11 school locations. The proposed 20mph speed limits applied to areas that were predominantly residential, retail, or educational.

Members noted that the 20mph scheme was about changing driving behaviour to reduce the impact of collisions and had discussions about conversations with residents with a majority being in favour of a 20mph limit. Members highlighted objections relating to congestion as a result of the

proposals but felt that one instance of an additional 150 yards of the 20mph limit would not cause congestion and extensive added journey time

Councillor Max Booth then proposed a motion, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green:

Committee welcomes that since the rollout of Phase I - 20MPH schemes in Wirral, public awareness of road safety has increased dramatically.

Committee also requests that the Director of Neighbourhoods and the Environment, Climate Emergency and Transport Committee:

- 1. reviews the public's responses (giving priority to impacted local residents) to the Phase II implementation and considers whether a further consultation and scheme amendment is required**
- 2. with the exception of outside schools, pauses all activity on Phase III and IIII, whilst the review requested in 1 above is undertaken**

Members voted on the motion 3 for and 7 against and so the motion was lost.

Councillor Liz Grey moved the officer recommendations, seconded by Councillor Steve Foulkes.

Members voted on the officer recommendations 7 for and 3 against and so the motion was carried.

It was therefore -

Resolved (7:3) – That the Director of Neighbourhood Services be authorised to introduce Phases 3 and 4 of the 20mph speed limit programme on those roads or parts of roads shown on the list attached within Appendix A to this report

45 **SCHOOL STREET UPDATE AND PRIORITISATION MATRIX**

The Road Safety Strategy Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided an overview of School Streets in Wirral and set out a proposed prioritisation matrix criteria for future school streets schemes and proposed next steps. 53 requests for School Streets had been recorded by the Road Safety Team. The requests had been received from: Schools (23) Councillors (20), Residents (8) Council Staff / Police (2).

In response to a Member concern about the speed of implementation, the Road Safety Strategy Manager advised that it was time consuming to implement correctly but that it was important to ensure proper execution, and

that quality was a large part of the School Streets scheme. It was reported that residents could become unhappy if the implementation was rushed and delivered poorly, and that the Road Safety team considered the proposal a deliverable plan.

Members were advised that drivers who did not comply with the School Streets would receive a warning notice in the first instance followed by an automatic fixed penalty notice should they reoffend.

Members placed on record their thanks to the Road Safety team for their work delivery the scheme.

Resolved – That

- (1) the update on School Streets in Wirral be noted;**
- (2) the School Streets prioritisation matrix criteria and the 2025/26 proposed action plan as set out in appendix 1 of this report be approved.**

46 **BIODIVERSITY & NET GAIN STRATEGY PROGRESS UPDATE REPORT**

The Biodiversity Net Gain Coordinator introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which provided the first annual report on the Council's progress in the delivery of the strategy and identified key priorities for 2025. The overarching objectives of the strategy were to actively enhance and protect biodiversity on Wirral, through strategic collaboration with partners and the local community, leveraging local expertise and knowledge sharing.

Members thanked officers for their work and referenced the motion at Full Council which asked for more recognition of Biodiversity.

In response to a Member query about biodiversity and planning, the Committee were advised that legislation had come into effect earlier in the year that required all planning applications to provide an ecological survey and that officers would be able to bring an update on how effective it had been in the next annual update.

Resolved – That

- (1) the progress of the Biodiversity & Net Gain strategy 2023-2028 be noted; and**
- (2) the priority actions for 2024/2025 for the Biodiversity & Net Gain Strategy outlined in the progress update report be approved.**

47 WEST KIRBY MARINE LAKE MANAGEMENT

The Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the background to interrelated issues at West Kirby Marine Lake and also considered previous work undertaken by consultants to investigate appropriate management actions to address each of these issues. The report considered the current status of the issues, and the risks associated with various methods and potential solutions for the management of the lake.

Members welcomed the investigation into the issues at West Kirby Marine Lake and agreed that the Lake was a fantastic asset and should be looked after. Officers advised that removing the build up of silt would expand the uses of the Lake and would not cause any structural damage.

Members sought assurance that activities on the lake that brought in revenue would not be impeded by the seaweed and silt that had built up in the lake. Officers advised that currently activities were able to go ahead with no impact.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Jeff Green it was -

Resolved – That

- (1) a survey of the West Kirby Marine Lake be approved so that an accurate assessment of the volume of material deposited can be made which can be used to inform an appropriate management action for maintenance of water depth.**
- (2) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to monitor the impact of the invasive non-native species of seaweed sargassum muticum and its impact on lake activities.**
- (3) the Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to continue the inspection regime of the Marine Lake wall assets that is currently in place.**
- (4) consultation of this valued asset be extended to all residents before bringing a report back to chair and spokes of this Committee.**

48 COUNCIL PLAN PERFORMANCE REPORT QUARTER 2 2024-25 THEME: PROTECT OUR ENVIRONMENT

The Director of Neighbourhood Services introduced the report which provided a quarterly performance report in relation to the Council Plan: Wirral Working Together 2023-27 for the theme promoting independence and healthier lives. The report provided a focus on updating on measures that had changed in the Quarter 2 period, June to September 2024.

The Chair noted that at the last meeting, the Committee asked that performance management indicators reflect the workshops held earlier in the year and include the information asked for such as air quality and SSSI data. The Chair advised that a meeting had not yet been scheduled but that the group spokespersons should be invited to this to ensure cross party agreement and collaboration on the performance management indicators.

In response to queries about the number of trees planted, the Chair and the Assistant Director: Climate Change and Environment informed the Committee that 90,000 trees had been planted since 2021 and officers were dedicating time to ensure that the trees survived, and that the Council's tree survival rate was very high because of this work.

Members requested further detail on pavement quality and noted that this is a real issue for residents.

On a motion by the Chair, seconded by Councillor Allan Brame it was –

Resolved – That the content of the report be noted and that the Chair and Spokes are engaged in agreeing performance management indicators that the committee have requested.

49 **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.

Councillor Gail Jenkinson requested that the review of parking charges be added to the work programme.

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