

CORPORATE SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 4 February 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	L Fraser (Chair)	
	Councillors	C Teggin K Wood	P Southwood J Keeley
<u>Deputies</u>	Councillors	RL Abbey (in place of J Crabtree) D Roberts (in place of C Meaden)	
<u>Apologies</u>	Councillors	C Meaden	J Crabtree

45 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP

Members were asked to consider whether they had personal or prejudicial interests in connection with any item(s) on this agenda and, if so, to declare them and state what they were. Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, whether they were subject to a party whip in connection with any item(s) to be considered and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of the whipping arrangement.

Councillor L Fraser declared a personal interest in respect of minute 46 (Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review) by virtue of her membership of the Liscard Community Centre Joint Management Committee.

Councillor J Keeley declared a personal interest in respect of minute 46 (Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review) by virtue of his membership of the Liscard Community Centre Joint Management Committee.

Councillor R Abbey declared a personal interest in respect of minute 46 (Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review) by virtue of his membership of the Leasowe Community Centre Joint Management Committee and in respect of the same minute, a prejudicial interest by virtue of his being a Director of Leasowe Community Homes.

46 TRANSFORMING WIRRAL - STRATEGIC ASSET REVIEW

At its meeting on 15 January 2009 (minute 325 refers), the Cabinet, having received a detailed breakdown of the consultation responses on the Strategic Asset Review (SAR) prior to the start of its meeting, considered a report of the Chief Executive, which summarised the response to the consultation and sought the Cabinet's views on the way forward.

In accordance with the procedure adopted for other budget proposals agreed by the Cabinet, the minute had been referred to this Committee for consideration. The report along with its appendices was submitted for the Committee's information.

The Deputy Chief Executive / Director of Corporate Services introduced the item and asked the Committee to consider the decision of the Cabinet in order that their views could be presented to Council on 9 February.

Responding to comments from Members the Director of Corporate Services stated that no promises had been made to Peel Holdings regarding the Guinea Gap site. The Director of Regeneration said that the two year period would allow officers to develop a scheme and seek out potential partners for a regeneration initiative.

With regard to the location of the new build multi-purpose complexes in Liscard and Moreton, Ian Brand, Head of Asset Management, stated that a site had not yet been agreed and that options would be pursued if the SAR was agreed by Council. The size of the complexes would be determined once it was clearer which partners might be involved and local communities would be consulted. The proposed timescale for the new buildings was a four year programme.

Responding to further comments, Ian Brand remarked on strengthened corporate asset management arrangements looking at the whole estate including the extended use of schools and co-operation with partners such as NHS Wirral.

The Director of Regeneration remarked upon the opportunities which could arise from community asset transfers including the involvement of church and faith groups for the provision of facilities. He also stated that there was a need to think about the design of school buildings to enable community access.

In respect of the appendices to the report on the consultation, listing the numbers of letters and emails recorded as having been received with regard to particular proposals, the Committee debated the collation of these figures. The Director of Regeneration assured members that none of his staff were prevented from campaigning on the issues raised by the SAR outside of working hours.

(Councillor Abbey left the room prior to the following matter being discussed.)

Responding to comments on proposed negotiations with Arena / Leasowe Community Homes for the transfer of Leasowe Recreation Centre, the Director of Regeneration said that there was no plan 'B' and the matter would need further consideration if this didn't happen. With regard to proposals to transfer Community centres etc. to community management, where no expressions of interest were received then the facility would close.

It was then moved by Councillor Teggins and seconded by Councillor Abbey, that –

“This Committee recognises the strength of feelings expressed during the consultation period for the Strategic Asset Review. Committee recognises that Cabinet has taken account of many of the issues discussed and, in consequence has amended the recommendations in the SAR with significant reduction in the projected savings.

Further, this Committee recognises that improvements to services have to be funded and the SAR has to be set in the wider context of the Council's limited finances.

This Committee believes that efficiency in the use of assets has to be improved, for example by co-operative working between Council departments and with external partners to promote and improve services to the public.

Finally, once again, this Committee welcomes the considerable and wide ranging efforts Cabinet is making to bring the budget under control, to maintain essential services and to minimise council tax charges to local people.”

It was moved as an amendment by the Chair and seconded by Councillor Mrs Wood, that –

“This Committee welcomes the high level of public participation in this consultation and notes the level of anger and objection to the proposals by the public. This Committee does not agree in principle, or in any other way, the recommendations in the Strategic Asset Review and therefore recommends that Cabinet withdraws its closure programme and any future proposals to close Wirral’s leisure facilities.”

The amendment was put and lost (3:4).

The motion was put and carried (4:3).

Resolved (4:3) – (Councillors Fraser, Keeley and Wood voting against)

That this Committee recognises the strength of feelings expressed during the consultation period for the Strategic Asset Review. Committee recognises that Cabinet has taken account of many of the issues discussed and, in consequence has amended the recommendations in the SAR with significant reduction in the projected savings.

Further, this Committee recognises that improvements to services have to be funded and the SAR has to be set in the wider context of the Council’s limited finances.

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