

# Public Document Pack

## ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 24 September 2019

Present:

Councillor T Anderson (Chair)

|             |            |                                 |
|-------------|------------|---------------------------------|
| Councillors | C Muspratt | A Hodson                        |
|             | T Cottier  | A Brame                         |
|             | K Greaney  | S Hayes                         |
|             | S Spoor    | J Bird (In place of I Williams) |
|             | C Blakeley | Williams)                       |
|             | H Cameron  | L Rennie                        |

Apologies

Councillors I Williams

13 **MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST / PARTY WHIP**

Councillor Lesley Rennie declared a family interest in item 4 (Minute 18, Hilbre Island) as a member of her extended family owned property on Hilbre Island.

14 **MINUTES**

**DECIDED:**

**that the minutes of the meetings of the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 18 June 2019 and 2 July 2019 be approved as correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

15 **MUNICIPAL GOLF COURSES SCRUTINY WORKSHOP REPORT**

The Chairman introduced this report by thanking everyone who had attended the visits to the four golf courses which had taken place on Tuesday 13 August 2019, including the Councillors, officers, user groups and course members. There had been a Workshop held on Wednesday 28 August 2019 and the report provided a summary of the key discussion points and findings from that Workshop. He thanked everyone who had taken part in that event and those who had given evidence. The Workshop had been convened for Scrutiny Members to have further discussions with officers and relevant stakeholders around the future provision of municipal golf courses in Wirral.

Members had valued the opportunity of visiting the courses and speaking to the staff there. The Members had seen how passionate the staff were about

municipal golf and benefitted from help provided by the Council. They had noted how a lack of suitable equipment – such as suitably sized grass cutters – made their work harder and required extra manpower.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee approve the findings of the Municipal Golf Courses Scrutiny Workshop, and reaffirms its commitment to the four municipal golf courses and recommends to the Cabinet Member that:**

- 1) the municipal golf courses at Arrowe Park, Brackenwood, Hoylake and The Warren courses be retained in-house;**
- 2) the Council commission a ground survey to be carried out at each course and the capital programme be amended to carry out what comes out of the survey over the next eight years to ensure that each of the courses is brought up to standard;**
- 3) e-capital money that was frozen be used in consultation with grounds maintenance staff to provide appropriate equipment;**
- 4) a consultative user group be set up to meet once a quarter with each of the golf courses to discuss issues and problems; and**
- 5) there be no reduction in paying capacity on any of the courses.**

16 **LOCAL PLAN UPDATE**

The Assistant Director for Major Growth and Housing Delivery introduced this report and reminded Members of the timetable, which included: bringing the regulation 18 draft Local Plan to cabinet on 18 November 2019 then taking it to Council on 9 December then, if approved by Council, starting a consultation in January 2020 for 8 weeks.

The work was progressing on schedule, and on 25 September the Local Plan QC was visiting the Council to brief all Members. There were monthly meetings with civil servants, although there was still no formal response from the Secretary of State to the Action Plan which had been submitted. The Local Plan Member Advisory Group met every two weeks and discussed issues, and meetings took place with a range of groups over particular subjects.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the update on the Local Plan be noted and a report be brought to the next meeting about the consultation.**

17 **2018/19 OUTTURN AND QUARTER 1 2019/20 FINANCIAL MONITORING REPORT**

The Senior Manager Corporate Finance introduced the report which covered the 2018/2019 budget outturn and the first quarter of the 2019/2020 financial year and the capital budget. There had been an overspend of £1.2 million in revenue in 2018/2019 and an adverse £1.6 million in Quarter 1.

Members questioned the detail in the report. They noted that the Wirral Growth Company had been slower than expected to generate income and the shortfall had been bridged by reserves, and the Local Plan development had required additional expertise as it developed which increased its cost.

Members were concerned about the garden waste bin use which was much less than budgeted for and requested an additional report from waste and Environment Services on the subscriptions and promotion of the scheme.

**RESOLVED:**

**that the report be noted.**

18 **HILBRE ISLAND - UPDATE**

The Assistant Chief Executive and the Senior Manager, Strategic Asset Management provided an update for Members on recent events affecting Hilbre Island. They detailed the background to the incident – in the 1860s walls had been built in local sandstone to protect the island from erosion by blocking openings in the cliff faces. In 2016 a survey was commissioned looking at the walls and giving risk ratings. At the most seaward corner, one wall covering an island littoral opening and overhang was given a high-risk rating as the sea had created a hole since 2004. The Council had responded and options were considered. The most appropriate option which avoided damage to the beach and required minimal equipment was filling the space with a solidifying foam, which was to prevent collapse, and then reinstating the wall. A contractor had been engaged and this was done but a fire began in the foam which caused the island to be evacuated for safety. An investigation had begun, but was still to conclude, and to date no fault had been identified in the product or personnel. Future work would be undertaken by the Coastal Protection Team and an options report would be presented once realistic options were clear.

Members discussed the event and the alternative options considered before the event and for the future, which included: doing nothing; erecting barriers

and signage; filling the opening; and bringing in protective boulders. Most had drawbacks which introduced risks to the environment or to visitors.

A survey had also been carried out of the three Council properties on the island which were falling into disrepair and may cost considerably more if not upgraded in the shorter term.

**RESOLVED: That**

- 1) the Committee note the report and support the continuation of work with Agencies and the Friends of Hilbre Island Group following the fire on Hilbre Island;**
- 2) the Cabinet Member be asked to allow a full options appraisal to be undertaken for a range of actions to be considered based on previous reports and new inspections being conducted; and**
- 3) a Capital bid be produced to improve the listed properties on the island, including vacant properties to bring them back into use.**

19 **UPDATE ON THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY DECLARATION**

The Lead Commissioner for Environment updated the Committee on work in enacting an all-party resolution to declare a Climate Emergency passed at Council on 15 July. The declaration had become a corporate priority which required realigning resources, priorities and processes.

Actions taken and planned included:

- An initiation plan, with quick wins and future plans.
- Briefings for Cabinet and there were planned workshops for all Members.
- The Climate Emergency Action Plan which set out how the Borough could become climate neutral by 2050.
- A climate section has been introduced on to all Committee report templates so all decisions have some consideration of climate effects.
- A summary of actions (appended to the report but not in any order or priority) would form the Plan
- the climate strategy 'Cool Wirral' ended in 2019 and its successor 'Cool Wirral 2' had a consultation to end in October
- The Council was introducing agile working from home, less desk space and less paper
- There will be a sustainability appraisal tool for all projects

- Planning were commissioning a piece of work on climate emergency on the Local Plan
- The Council were trying to reduce red meat consumption in schools
- A tree strategy would be developed to help carbon capture, including a capital bid for a tree planting scheme, and care would be taken that the trees would not cause future problems because of their position
- Members and staff would be encouraged to make public pledges of lifestyle changes
- There was a cross party Members group
- a major planning event for senior officers was scheduled
- Electric Council vehicles would be encouraged.

Members questioned the detail of the Plan and other subjects not included in them such as allotments, climate strikes, air quality around schools, purchasing services and products locally and making cycling safer.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the contents of this report and the steps being taken to respond to the Climate Emergency Declaration be noted.**

20

**RECYCLING TASK & FINISH SCRUTINY REVIEW**

Councillor Allan Brame presented this report. He had taken part in the Review along with ex-Councillor Adam Sykes and Councillor Christina Muspratt.

Councillor Brame explained that Wirral had a target to recycle 50% of its waste, although it had dropped from 40% to 33%. The report detailed typical waste and the two largest items to bring change were textiles and food waste. The Government was introducing incentives and rules about plastic and food collections. The report made suggestions of schemes to help recycling rates, including using the Bidston plant to sort co-mingled waste, encouraging reuse of items and having recycling hubs.

**RESOLVED: That**

- 1) the contents and recommendations of the Recycling Scrutiny Report be supported; and**
- 2) the report be referred to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.**

21 **2019/20 QUARTER 1 WIRRAL PLAN PERFORMANCE**

Members had been provided with the report on the 2019/20 Quarter 1 (April-June 2019) performance report for the Wirral Plan pledges under the remit of Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

**That the Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the content of the report.**

22 **WORK PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee, in co-operation with the other three Overview & Scrutiny Committees, was responsible for proposing and delivering an annual scrutiny work programme. The work programme was to align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the Wirral Plan pledges which are within the remit of the Committee and was attached to the report.

Members discussed items to be brought back to Committee including allotment provision and PSPO. Members referenced the request at the July Committee meeting to set up a Task & Finish group regarding trees, with agreement that this group be established as soon as possible to review Wirral's draft tree policy and programme of maintenance. A Task and Finish group was planned for 3 October 2019 at 3pm, involving Councillors Tom Anderson, Allan Brame, Helen Cameron, Steve Hayes and Christina Muspratt.

**RESOLVED:**

**With the addition of items on allotment provision, a PSPO and a Tree Strategy, the proposed Environment Overview & Scrutiny Committee work programme for 2019/20 be approved.**