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ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE EMERGENCY AND TRANSPORT COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 5 December 2023

Present:

Councillor EA Grey (Chair)

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

50 **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.

51 **APOLOGIES**

There were no apologies for absence.

52 **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.

53 **MINUTES**

It was noted that Councillor Ed Lamb had requested an update on the infrastructure plan in regards to the Active Travel Strategy. The Chair also asked requested that officers be thanked in regards to the Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy and that it had been incorrectly noted that Councillor Gail Jenkinson had presented a petition.

Resolved – that the minutes of the meeting held on 23 October 2023 be approved as a correct record with the above amendments.

54 **PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

Janine Pinion asked a question regarding a marked increase in car stereo noise in her residential area, asking if the chair could provide an update on

the progress of the programme and did she agree that the work needs to begin urgently.

The chair responded to say that council only has statutory powers for stationary vehicles or a vehicle on private land. Noise from a moving vehicle is a matter for the police. The chair also noted that the World Health Organisation recognised traffic noise as a health risk.

Janine Pinion then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

Michael Thomas asked a question regarding the netting along Hoylake prom. He noted that, to date by, 15th November 2023 the netting has not stopped any sand from reaching the prom. He asked if most of the whistling, plastic, ineffective, view blocking, netting leaving could be removed, leaving just a section between Trinity Road and the lifeboat station where there is less vegetation currently trapping the wind-blown sand.

The chair responded to say that the Committee had identified two beach management options for development at the meeting on 30th November 2022. In developing those options, the efficiency of the green netting is considered and recommendations made for an appropriate way forward for each management option.

Ken Ferguson asked if the activities of the Anti20 Coalition over the last eight weeks in mounting 'yellow board' campaigns throughout Wirral had convinced councillors of the depth of feeling of those taking part. He noted that the Prime Minister had that moves to implement 20 mph zones and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods should cease. In the light of this, why was this committee not prepared to pause the implementation of the 20 MPH policy in Wirral.

The Chair noted that Committee was considering a report on its agenda this evening to consider objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme. Two options were put forward within the report for Committee to consider, which will be debated fully during consideration of that item. The report to the Committee references current guidance on 20mph limits. The chair noted that the 20mph zones were a road safety implementation.

Ed Lamb queried the issue of pavement parking, asking if highways officers could be instructed to begin work on a Wirral-wide plan to address the problem of pavement parking, and asked if this could be added to the work programme.

The Chair noted that, the government consulted on pavement parking powers enforcement over three years ago, but there had been no enforcement

legislation put forward to date. Officers could consider enforcement at problem locations using Traffic Regulation orders, however this would be resource heavy and time consuming. The chair suggested that if the parking strategy be agreed then she would add pavement parking enforcement to the work programme.

Catherine Evans asked a question regarding a report on report from the Together Association, 'Clean' Air, Dirty Money, Filthy Politics' which shows how big money from a handful of billionaires is driving anti-car and associated Net Zero policies in the UK. Catherine noted that the public must have transparency into funding and influence on Net Zero policies, and a proper cost-benefit analysis of Net Zero. She asked if this Committee pause the 20mph rollout to fully investigate the impact of big money on local policy making and produce a full cost – benefit analysis of 20mph?

The Chair responded to say that, in response to a previous question, the Committee was considering a report on its agenda this evening to consider objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme. Two options were put forward within the report for Members of the Committee to consider, which were to be debated fully during consideration of that item.

Catherine Evans then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

Julien Priest asked a question noting that at the last meeting of this committee he had asked a question regarding the prospect for additional zebra crossings to make it safer for pedestrians crossing roads, in particular Birkenhead Road in Meols and Hoylake. Julien note that the response to his previous question made it pretty clear that budget constraints and the local safety scheme review meant it is highly unlikely that any additional pedestrian crossings will be implemented any time soon. He asked if officers had determined that it is acceptable, considering pedestrian safety, that Birkenhead Road should remain as a 30MPH limit within a wider 20MPH zone from its outer periphery all the way to its junction with Newton Road?

The chair responded to say that Birkenhead Road is a wide “A” class main distributor road with very little on street parking and good forward visibility. The chair also listed the various reasons why Birkenhead Road has not been put forward as a 20mph zone.

Julien Priest then asked a further supplementary question which the chair confirmed would be answered in 10 working days.

The Head of Legal services road out a question of behalf of Keith Randles queried information obtained via the Freedom of information act 2000, within

an email Dated 2 February 2021 from the RNLI Head office to Wirral Borough Council in regards to operational difficulties being currently endured at the Hoylake RNLI site. He asked why the Council were putting those RNLI volunteers and the members of the public on whom they are sent to rescue at a greater unnecessary risk.

The Chair responded to say that Council officers had been working closely with the RNLI at local, regional and national level to understand, in detail, their operational requirements so that they can be considered within the two beach management options identified for further development by this Committee in November 2022.

55 **2023/24 BUDGET MONITORING FOR QUARTER 2**

The Senior Finance Business Partner introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which set out the financial monitoring information for the Council as at Quarter 2 (30 September) of 2023/24.

The report provided Members with an overview of budget performance, including progress on the delivery of the 2023/24 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 on the performance of those budgets.

At the end of Quarter 2, there was a forecast adverse position of £1.938m on Committee spend which could be largely offset by utilising the corporate contingency budget and expected savings from reduced energy costs.

Members queried the capital programme underspend in energy efficiency building work and Leasow to Seacombe Corridor (as listed in appendix 2). Officers advised they would get this information for Members, but were informed that in regards to energy efficiency, Members had agreed to release 41 assets and it would not be viable to invest in buildings that are earmarked for disposal, but improvements had been made in leisure services, specifically investing in pool covers.

Also discussed was capital spending and queried if the £3.2m allocated for waste in Quarter 2 was due to the statutory requirement for food waste disposal. It was noted as a provisional allocation, however may not be required due to possible burdens funding from central government and would likely slip to 2025/26 as it will not be required this financial year.

Resolved – That

- (1) the Directorate forecast adverse position of £1.938m presented at Quarter 2 be noted.**

- (2) the progress on delivery of the 2023/24 savings programme at Quarter 2 be noted.
- (3) the forecast level of reserves and balances at Quarter 2 be noted.
- (4) the forecast capital position presented at Quarter 2 be noted.

56 **WIRRAL'S AIR QUALITY STRATEGY 2024-2028**

The Environmental Health Officer introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which detailed the Wirral Air Quality Strategy 2024-2028. The report covered all wards and outlined the work that the council would undertake to support the government's long-term air quality goals, including a steep percentage reduction to population exposure to particulate matter (PM2.5).

Members were informed that the risk of moving forward without implementing an Air Quality Strategy, would have meant that the council is not fulfilling the statutory requirement of the Environment Act 1995 as amended by the Environment Act 2021 by publishing an Air Quality Strategy setting out air quality standards, objectives, and measures for improving ambient air quality. This would have had both reputational and service delivery consequences and would have resulted in criticism of the council by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA).

Members discussed the areas around Woodchurch School playing fields, querying the placement of roadside air quality and particulate matter. Also discussed was allotment burning and the guidance distributed on this, domestic log burning, car idling and queried if the Council should be working towards World Health Organisation targets for air quality.

Resolved – That the Wirral Air Quality Strategy 2024-2028 be approved.

57 **20MPH ZONES PHASE 2 - CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS AND OFFICERS RESPONSES**

The Assistant Director of Highways and Infrastructure introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which considered objections and comments of support submitted during the statutory traffic regulation order consultation period for Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme which consisted of 15 proposed areas. In view of the number of objections received to Phase 2 following the implementation of Phase 1 the Committee may wish to consider alternatives to proceeding directly with Phase 2, so two possible options were recommended for consideration.

Members noted that 20mph zones had been debated at the previous nights Council Meeting. A further discussion was held around the various local

campaigns on the topic and clarification was sought over road signs and enforcement. Members also raised concerns regarding the low consultation turnout and the outcome of surveys undertaken by Members in their wards. The focus on road safety was reiterated, noting that Wirral has traditionally underperformed in road safety initiatives.

Councillor Max Booth then moved the below amendment to option 2 of the recommendation, seconded by Councillor Vida Wilson.

The Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to review and re-evaluate the proposed roads within Phase 2 in light of the consultation response. Considering a more targeted approach, for example, restricted to locations near schools and where collision records are highest and to bring back a further report to the Environment Climate Emergency and Transport Committee detailing these proposals.

The amendment was put and lost (3:8)

Councillor Liz Grey then moved option 1 of the recommendations, seconded by Councillor Alan Brame.

It was therefore resolved (8:3) that - the Director of Neighbourhood Services be instructed to introduce all of Phase 2 of the 20mph speed limit programme on those roads or parts of roads shown on the list attached within Appendix A to this report.

58 WIRRAL PARKING STRATEGY

The Lead Commissioner for strategic transport and technology introduced the report of the Director of Regeneration and Place which sought approval for the adoption of a parking strategy proposed to cover public on and off-street parking in Wirral.

Members were reminded that on 19 June 2023 a report was presented to committee detailing work which had been undertaken to support the development of the parking strategy, including surveys and modelling forecasts, reviews of research and best practice from other authorities. The report also provided details of Phase 1 public and stakeholder consultation.

This earlier work, along with the feedback from a second Phase of public and stakeholder consultation, undertaken between 7 August to 25 September 2023, had been used to produce a parking strategy with the aim that it will support the safe and efficient management of traffic, help the local economy and businesses, and contribute to addressing the Environment and Climate Emergency. The parking strategy was intended to provide a clear framework

to manage on and off-street parking in Wirral within a wider context of sustainable economic growth and urban regeneration.

Members noted concerns about car parking charges for employees who may be on low wages, or who work in essential services. Whilst discussing the Parking Strategies to residents, Members queried how they should explain car parking charges. Officers explained that car parking services came with maintenance costs that needed to be covered. Also considered was the concept that paid for parking often means that shopping trips are consolidated, with more money being spent in retail. Free parking can also mean that people park to commute, with no money being spent locally.

Members also queried parking levies, and the Parking Code of Practice Act 2019, discussing the limitations and potential of levies as a way to reinvest in local transportation schemes. Members also asked for clarification on car parking written into Community Asset Transfers, notably Heswall Hall and were assured that these there were no car parks specified in the strategy, but that officers had been notified of limitations written into the lease. For the avoidance of doubt, it was confirmed that future policies deriving from the strategy would be bought back to committee for further decisions.

Resolved – That the parking strategy as set out in Appendix 1 be approved.

59 **EXPERIMENTAL MOTORCARAVAN PARKING RESTRICTION SCHEME**

The Senior Network Operations Manager introduced the report of the Director of Neighbourhood Services which considered direct feedback from local ward Members, a petition signed by 11 people, 36 objections and 9 representations of support submitted during the statutory 6- month consultation period for the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (ETRO) relating to Motorcaravan Parking, that was introduced on Coastal Drive and Kings Parade in July 2022. A plan detailing the measures introduced was attached in Appendix A to the report.

Members queried a strategy for off-road commercial caravan parks in Wirral, noting that this had previously been considered by Members as part of a working group of the Tourism, Communities, Culture and Leisure Committee in 2021. However, Members were informed that the Neighbourhoods directorate had lost the commercial team who were looking at this and the project had now been subsumed by the New Brighton Neighbourhood Framework which is due for further consideration.

On a motion by Councillor Liz Grey, seconded by Councillor Gail Jenkinson it was,

Resolved – That

- (1) the consultation feedback received on the Experimental Traffic Regulation Order relating to Motorcaravan Parking, that was introduced on Coastal Drive and Kings Parade, New Brighton in July 2022. and the officer's responses as set out in Appendix B be noted; and**
- (2) the introduction of a permanent Traffic Regulation Order be approved relating to**
 - (a) the prohibition of overnight Motorcaravan parking for Coastal Drive and Kings Parade, New Brighton in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 5.4 of this report; and**
 - (b) a prohibition on overnight parking by Motorcaravans on all sections of unrestricted carriageway on North Parade and Meols Parade to deal with Motorcaravan parking displacement in accordance with the process set out in paragraph 8.3 of this report.**
- (3) Officers are requested to provide this committee with a future report on the Traffic Regulation Orders, reviewing their effectiveness in line with the new Wirral parking strategy, and analysing environmental, road safety, financial, financial concerns and facilities.**

60 WORK PROGRAMME

The Head of Legal Services presented the report and advised Members that the Committee in co-operation with the other Policy and Service Committees, is responsible for proposing and delivering an annual committee work programme. The work programme should align with the corporate priorities of the Council, in particular the delivery of the key decisions which are within the remit of the Committee.

Members requested that an update to the Air Quality Strategy be added to the work programme for September 2024, and also asked that an outline network infrastructure plan for the active travel strategy also be added.

Resolved – That the work programme be noted with the above additions.