

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
(REGENERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)**

Overview
& Scrutiny



**MEETING HELD AT ST STEPHEN'S CHURCH HALL,
ST STEPHEN'S ROAD, HIGHTOWN
ON TUESDAY 13TH APRIL, 2010**

PRESENT: Councillor Papworth (in the Chair);

Councillors Barber, Booth, Cluskey, C. Mainey,
S. Mainey, Pearson and Webster.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor J. Fairclough (Cabinet Member –
Technical Services),
Councillors Ibbs and Gibson,
Mr D. Brennan (Formby Civic Society),
Mr D. Warren (Hightown Parish Council),
Mr M. Coles, Mr G. Gaskin and Mr C. Southern
(Formby Parish Council),
Mr G. Ibbs (Formby Resident),
Mr S. Jamieson (Manor Ward Resident),
Mr R. Shirres (Environment Agency).

79. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Weavers.

80. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

81. MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 9 March 2010, be confirmed as a correct record.

**82. FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT FOR THE LOWER ALT WITH
CROSSENS PUMPED DRAINAGE**

The Committee received a presentation from Richard Shirres of the Environment Agency on the Alt Crossens Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) which had been formally agreed by the Agency. The plan had been signed off by the North West Regional Director on 27 August 2008 and subsequently agreed by the North West Regional Flood Defence Committee on 17 April 2009.

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The Alt Crossens CFMP was one of 77 CFMPs for England and Wales which assessed inland flood risk across all of England and Wales for the first time. The CFMP considered all types of inland flooding, from rivers, groundwater, surface water and tidal flooding, but not flooding directly from the sea (coastal flooding), which was covered separately by Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs).

The role of CFMPs was to establish flood risk management policies that would deliver sustainable flood risk management for the long term, inform investment decisions for the future and help prepare effectively for the impact of climate change.

The Alt Crossens CFMP gave an overview of the flood risk in the Alt Crossens catchment and set out the Agency's preferred plan for sustainable flood risk management over the forthcoming 50 to 100 years. The CFMP had been prepared in partnership with regional and local planning authorities, community and environmental groups and other stakeholders.

In addition to the Committee Members, representatives of Formby Parish Council, Hightown Parish Council, Formby Civic Society, local Ward Councillors and local residents attended the meeting and at the invitation of the Chair asked questions regarding the issues raised in the presentation. The following issues were raised:-

- (i) possible opportunities to replace the use of fossil fuels for pumping;
- (ii) issues around ditches at the boundaries of fields;
- (iii) other outside influences on farming practices;
- (iv) protecting high quality agricultural land;
- (v) the effects of changes in the general level of the water table;
- (vi) the influences of bridges and other structures on the efficiency of water flow within the River Alt;
- (vii) the condition of the River Alt "Training bank";
- (viii) maintaining the depth of the River Alt;
- (ix) progress with the Lunt Meadows Flood storage Area; and
- (x) progress on the "modelling" being carried out by the Environment Agency.

RESOLVED:

That Mr Shirres be thanked for his informative presentation.

83. WATERCOURSE MAINTENANCE AND FLOODING WORKING GROUP – ADDRESSING THE RECOMMENDATIONS

Further to Minute 23 of 15 September 2009, the Committee considered the report of the Head of Regeneration and Technical Services advising Members of a proposed way forward to address the recommendations arising from the report of the Watercourse Maintenance and Flooding Working Group which had been approved by the Cabinet on 1 October 2009.

The Final Report of the Working Group had included a number of recommendations and the report submitted set out details of all of them, together with a proposed way forward to address each of them.

Reference was made to the plans to protect the area between the Coastguard Station at Blundellsands and Hightown and the Project Leader Coastal Defence reported on progress of the scheme which would involve the movement of sand along the beach from Crosby to Hightown.

Reference was also made to recommendation E (i) “The Planning Department should look at means of enforcing planning permission for hard landscaping across the Borough (for example flagging front and rear gardens)” and the Senior Planner – Strategy and Information Services reported on the level of enforcement being undertaken by the Department.

Reference was made to the level of staff resources available to address the issues in the report and particular comments were made regarding the post of Drainage Services Manager within Capita Symonds. The Cabinet Member – Technical Services reported that he was aware of the pressures on staffing and that he would investigate the circumstances regarding the post of Drainage Services Manager further.

RESOLVED:

That the report and the actions proposed be noted.

84. LIBRARIES ASSET MANAGEMENT REVIEW WORKING GROUP (PART TWO) - FINAL REPORT

Further to Minute No. 17 of 7 July 2009, the Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive and Final Report of Stage 2 of the Libraries Asset Management Review Working Group.

The Committee had previously, at Minute No. 56 of 14 April 2009, considered the stage one Final Report of the Libraries Asset Management Review Working Group and subsequently resolved that the Libraries Asset Management Review Working Group be re-established to undertake Stage 2 of its review, with a deadline date of spring 2010.

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The Working Group, consisting of Councillor Pearson (Lead Member) and Councillors Booth, Cluskey and Webster, had met during the period October 2009 to March 2010.

During that period the Working Group had received further information and updates regarding the national context, particularly having regard to the outcome of the Public Inquiry into Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council's Library Service and received detailed information in respect of Sefton's Libraries as a whole and individually as regards:-

- (i) Costs;
- (ii) Visits Statistics;
- (iii) Issues Statistics;
- (iv) Demographic Statistics; and
- (v) Summary of identified works.

The Working Group had also carried out site visits to libraries in Salford, St. Helens and Knowsley, to look at examples of good practice and of partnership working, and had met with the School Organisation & Capital Programme Manager to discuss opportunities which might arise from the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Finally, the Working Group had considered a proposed new Sefton Libraries Vision submitted by the Head of Library and Information Services and intended to be a statement of intent for the service and an aid to future development.

The Working Group had made a number of recommendations which were contained within the final report and submitted to Members for consideration.

Arising from the discussion reference was made to the recently opened Maghull Library which had been redeveloped as part of the Maghull Leisure Centre development. The Head of Library and Information Services reported that, to date, the Library had been an outstanding success with issues and visits rising by 40%, whilst nationally and locally the trend was for these to fall. The success of the development suggested that the co-location opportunities which had been viewed by the Working Group could be successfully applied within Sefton, should the opportunity arise.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the statutory requirement for local authorities to provide a comprehensive library service for those who live, work or are undertaking full time education in the authority be noted;
- (2) the Working Group's view that Sefton's Library Service provides a good, value for money service be noted;

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- (3) the Working Group's concern at the low level of funding for the routine maintenance of libraries and poor staff accommodation be noted;
- (4) the recommendations following the Wirral Inquiry and the need to take account of those recommendations in considering any proposed amendment to the existing Library provision in Sefton be noted;
- (5) the need to take account of the recommendations contained in the recently published Government document "The Modernisation Review of Public Libraries: a Policy Statement" when considering future proposals for the Library Service be noted;
- (6) the view of the Working Group that joint developments with other agencies, as observed on the site visits undertaken, represent a significant opportunity to improve existing library provision and re-establish libraries as "hubs" of the community;
- (7) relevant officers be asked to further investigate any opportunities for joint working or the development of joint facilities with partners, for example via "Building Schools for the Future" or the Primary Care Trust, and examine any alternative sites or premises for use by the Library Service;
- (8) the views of the Planning Committee/Director be sought on changing Sefton's UDP, to incorporate consideration of library provision in any future retail/housing development;
- (9) the Sefton Libraries vision, as appended to the report, be supported and recommended to the Cabinet Member - Leisure and Tourism for approval;
- (10) the development of a strategic plan for the delivery of Sefton's libraries over the forthcoming 10-15 years be supported;
- (11) a further "part three" Working Group be established to finalise the work on the Asset Management Review, and present a full report to this Overview and Scrutiny Committee by October 2011, and that, if possible, the existing members of the Working Group continue this work;
- (12) the transfer of the Library Service to the remit of the Strategic Director - Social Care and Well Being be noted; and
- (13) the Working Group Members, and the officers who assisted, be congratulated on the comprehensive report submitted.

85. WORK PROGRAMME KEY DECISION FORWARD PLAN 1 APRIL TO 31 JULY 2010

The Committee considered the report of the Assistant Chief Executive attaching the latest Key Decision Forward Plan which contained all the Key Decisions which the Executive was anticipated to take during the above period. The Committee was advised of its right to pre-scrutinise any Key Decision which fell under its remit.

Councillor Cluskey raised the issue of Planning permission granted, particularly for the conversion of houses to flats and the effect this had on traffic flows in adjacent streets, especially where the developments caused an increase in vehicles parked on the highway. It was suggested that this might be a topic for future debate.

The Chair reminded the Committee that the detailed consideration of “worklessness” with appropriate officers and partner organisations being invited to contribute had previously been proposed as a future Agenda item and suggested that this be arranged for the next meeting if possible.

Members were also reminded of arrangements being made for an Overview & Scrutiny Away Day event to take place to consider how the Scrutiny function might operate in the future in order to best meet its objectives. All Members of the Council would be invited to take part in the event.

RESOLVED: That

- (1) the contents of the Forward Plan for the period 1 April to 31 July 2010, be accepted;
- (2) the progress and actions of the Working Groups to date be approved;
- (3) the Planning and Economic Development Director be requested to submit a report to a future meeting regarding new developments and conversions of properties, and the subsequent effects of those developments on traffic in the surrounding area of the development;
- (4) arrangements be made for the topic of “worklessness” to be considered at the next meeting of the Committee and appropriate officers and partner organisations be invited to the meeting to contribute to the debate; and
- (5) the arrangements for the Overview & Scrutiny Away Day event on 21 June 2010 be noted and Members be requested to support the event.