

# ECONOMY AND REGENERATION OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 12 January 2010

## Present:

Councillors	RL Abbey	B Kenny
	W Duffey (In place of K Wood)	AR McLachlan
	G Ellis (In place of J Hale)	S Niblock
	A Jennings	A Pritchard
	P Johnson	A Taylor

## Apologies

Councillors	J Hale
	K Wood

## 28 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

On a motion by Councillor Johnson seconded by Councillor Ellis it was:-

RESOLVED – That Councillor A Pritchard be appointed Chair of this meeting.

(Councillor Pritchard in the Chair)

## 29 MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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.

Councillor Niblock declared a prejudicial interest in respect of minute 31 (Housing Market Renewal Programme– Presentation) by virtue of his mother's property being located within the programme area. He also declared a personal interest in respect of minute 32 (Destination Marketing – Update) by virtue of his involvement in the Wirral Farmers' Market.

Councillor A Taylor declared a personal interest in respect of minute 32 (Destination Marketing – Update) by virtue of his involvement in the Wirral Farmers' Market.

Members were reminded that they should also declare, pursuant to paragraph 18 of the Overview and Scrutiny 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 agreement. No such declarations were made.

30 **MINUTES**

Members were requested to receive the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November, 2009.

RESOLVED – That the minutes be received.

31 **HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL- PRESENTATION**

The Director of Regeneration presented a report supplemented by a presentation to provide Members with an update on the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral for the period April 2009 to December 2009.

Of the total allocation to Newheartlands of £152 m for 2008/2011, Wirral's share was £29.53m, which was matched by £10.7m Regeneration Capital Programme funding and some £60m invested by the private sector, Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). The funding had allowed Wirral to continue its successful HMRI programme which, by the end of 2009 had enabled more than 1140 homes to be acquired, 825 homes cleared and a number of key strategic sites to be assembled. 963 homes had been renovated through the use of grant funding or via the Group Repair Scheme and the "Living Through Change" programme had helped residents to live through large scale change brought about by the HMRI programme. It had enabled the maintenance of neighbourhood stability, community safety and environmental standards in areas of acquisition and clearance.

The HMRI programme for 2008 - 2011 would complete the clearance programmes in Rock Ferry, Tranmere and Egremont and make a major positive difference to local communities, through the building of new homes on cleared sites. The main focus of the clearance programme for 2008-11 would be in North Birkenhead.

The Director gave a presentation detailing the funding allocations for the HMRI Programme for 2010/11, achievements to date and the progress by Area, the future of HMR and longer term challenges in terms of continuing to make the case for funding the various initiatives.

The Director responded to questions from members relating to:

- the use of Council House Building Challenge Funds as a mechanism to bring forward new development
- development agreements and the development of the Construction Employment Integrator to facilitate the use of local labour and training opportunities on major building projects
- job opportunities associated with Neptune Development scheme, New Brighton
- development of the Private Landlord Accreditation Scheme
- measures to improve the efficiency rating of new build housing

RESOLVED – That the report be noted.

32 **DESTINATION MARKETING - IMPLEMENTATION PLAN UPDATE (OCTOBER TO DECEMBER 2010)**

The Director of Corporate Services presented a progress report updating Members on the activities of the Destination Marketing Office, during the last quarter of 2009, detailing plans for 2010 and highlighting the support being provided to Wirral's tourism business community, to help them through the economic downturn.

The Director submitted the Wirral Destination Marketing Plan for 2010 (and beyond) and referred to figures provided by The Mersey Partnership (TMP – Merseyside's Tourism Board) regarding the increased revenue of Wirral's tourism industry which highlighted the importance of the plan to directly support Wirral's tourism businesses through the Wirral Tourism Business Network and its six partnerships. The plan was also linked to the annual Destination Management Plan delivered by TMP, and followed the North West Development Agency strategy objectives.

There was general discussion regarding the estimated tourism revenue figures provided by TMP and the potential benefits to the local economy.

RESOLVED - That the Committee note the contents of this progress report.

### 33 **QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE - PRESENTATION**

The Director of Regeneration gave a presentation and submitted an overview of progress made against the indicators for 2009/2010 in the second quarter and key projects which were relevant to the Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

He gave details of what was working well, including:

- 268 jobs created and 272 jobs safeguarded
- 147 businesses supported through business start up programme continue to operate 12 months after commencement
- Wirral Council will receive over £1m to create 187 jobs in the first six months of the Future Jobs Fund initiative, with more jobs expected to be approved over the next few months
- Wirral Council has worked with partners to develop a structured package of support to businesses in a direct response to the recession resulting in a number of grant awards safeguarding in excess of 67 jobs
- Projects designed and implemented include the Wirral Apprenticeship Programme, Future Jobs Fund and Construction & Employment Integrator
- 1,274 vulnerable households under Warm Front exceeding target
- First mortgage rescue scheme on Merseyside delivered in Wirral
- Invest Wirral have successfully supported 40 indigenous company investment projects due to the introduction of the BIG scheme
- A number of Think BIG grants have also been awarded under the redefined criteria resulting in the creation of 96 new jobs through projects already completed. It is hoped that in excess of 350 further jobs will be created through projects currently in development
- The first phase for Wirral Waters has been given planning approval, offering a unique opportunity to transform derelict brown-field land at Birkenhead Docks, potentially creating 27,000 jobs in one of the country's most deprived areas

- With two leading restaurants featured in this year's "Which Good Food Guide", Wirral is proving that it is continually raising the quality of its food and tourism offers

In his presentation the Director referred to the impact of the recession on the local economy and key performance indicators relating to: the overall employment rate; increases in out of work benefits (in line with City Region trends); the housing market; and local market conditions, resulting in delays to some key regeneration partnership projects. He also referred to some of the planned interventions in response to the economic recession.

In respect of the financial position, there were no variations projected at this stage of the year, and spend was expected to be in line with the allocated budget.

The Director responded to questions from members regarding help and advisory services that were available to assist small business in the retail sector during the recession.

RESOLVED – That the presentation be noted.

#### 34 **EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

That, under section 100 (A) (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act. The public interest test has been applied and favours exclusion.

#### 35 **REGENERATION UPDATE**

The Director of Corporate Services provided an update on major development schemes within the borough.

RESOLVED - That the report be noted