



Cabinet

Date:	Thursday, 24 June 2010
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

1. MEMBERS' CODE OF CONDUCT - DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet are invited to consider whether they have a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on this agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting have been printed and published. Any matters called in will be reported at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATION: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

CHILDREN'S SERVICES AND LIFELONG LEARNING

3. REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 2: PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FEDERATION UPDATE (Pages 1 - 14)

4. REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES: OPTION APPRAISAL ON SITES FOR A COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BIRKENHEAD (Pages 15 - 62)

5. PRIMARY PLACES REVIEW PHASE 6 (Pages 63 - 106)

6. IMPROVING SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION ON WIRRAL - PROPOSALS FOR THE CO-LOCATION OF A MERGED MEADOWSIDE AND FOXFIELD SCHOOL AND A NEW CLARE MOUNT SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE (Pages 107 - 110)

7. **IMPROVING SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION ON WIRRAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES - THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A 2-19 SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES (Pages 111 - 150)**
8. **LEAD ACCOUNTABLE BODY FOR INFORMAL ADULT LEARNING (Pages 151 - 156)**
9. **AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN - CAPITAL BUDGET PLANS (Pages 157 - 164)**
10. **SCRUTINY REVIEW OF LITERACY LEVELS AT KEY STAGE 2 (Pages 165 - 206)**

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning has requested the inclusion of this item which was considered by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 21 January, 2010. The Committee agreed the following:

'(1) That the contents and recommendations of the Literacy Level Scrutiny Review be supported.

(2) That the Literacy Level Scrutiny Report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting.

(3) That further reports be presented to this Committee to update members regarding the outcomes of the recommendations.'

STREETSCENE AND TRANSPORT SERVICES

11. **DELL UNDERPASS BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT CONTRACT VARIATION (Pages 207 - 210)**

FINANCE AND BEST VALUE

12. **EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS 2009/2010 (Pages 211 - 214)**
13. **MODERNISING ARCHIVES (Pages 215 - 232)**
14. **INSURANCE FUND ANNUAL REPORT 2009-10 (Pages 233 - 236)**
15. **TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT (Pages 237 - 252)**
16. **NORTH WEST IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP EFFICIENCY COMMISSION (Pages 253 - 290)**
17. **FINANCIAL OUT-TURN 2009-10**

18. CAPITAL OUT-TURN 2009-10

19. REDUCTION OF SPECIFIC GRANTS 2010-11

SOCIAL CARE AND INCLUSION

20. FAIR ACCESS TO CARE SERVICES (Pages 291 - 296)

REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY

21. INTEGRATED REGENERATION STUDY FOR BIRKENHEAD AND WIRRAL WATERS (Pages 297 - 414)

ENVIRONMENT

22. COMMUNITY ENERGY EFFICIENCY FUND (Pages 415 - 418)

CORPORATE RESOURCES

23. OFFICE ACCOMMODATION (Pages 419 - 526)

24. GUINEA GAP BATHS, WALLASEY (Pages 527 - 528)

25. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER (Pages 529 - 540)

26. BROMBOROUGH SOCIAL CENTRE, FORWOOD ROAD, BROMBOROUGH (Pages 541 - 550)

27. GRADUATE RECRUITMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (Pages 551 - 558)

28. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL FOR CHIEF EXECUTIVE

29. REVIEWS OF LOCAL GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND COMBATING ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

30. LAND OFF BRIDGE ROAD, WEST KIRBY (Pages 559 - 566)

31. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (PART 1)

To consider any other business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

32. EXEMPT INFORMATION - EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

The following items contain exempt information.

RECOMMENDATION: 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.

FINANCE AND BEST VALUE

- 33. COLLECTION SUMMARY 2009-10 (Pages 567 - 578)**
- 34. SUPPLY OF ADVERTISING SERVICES (Pages 579 - 584)**
- 35. FLEMING CLAIMS - VAT RECOVERY - LEISURE SERVICES (COACHING) (Pages 585 - 588)**
- 36. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (PART 2)**

To consider any other business that the Chair accepts as being urgent.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24th JUNE 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 2: PENSBY HIGH SCHOOL FEDERATION UPDATE

Executive Summary

Following Cabinet's meeting of 1st October 2009, the governing bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys have undertaken a consultation on establishing a hard federation between the two schools. This report updates Cabinet on the governing bodies decision to proceed with a hard federation, the first such between Wirral schools, from 4th May 2010.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 1st October 2009, Cabinet approved the division of Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review into two phases – Phase 2A comprising the Wirral West area and beginning in Autumn 2009, Phase 2B including schools in the Wallasey area, due to begin in Autumn 2010.
- 1.2 As stated in section 9 of that report, the falling secondary roll, whilst impacting on all schools in the Phase 2A area, was particularly acute in the Pensby area. The possibility of a federation was discussed. It should be noted that while there may be benefits and efficiencies to be made by federated schools, federation by itself has no direct impact on surplus places.
- 1.3 The procedure for schools to federate is outlined in the Guidance on the School Governance (Federations) (England) Regulations 2004.
- 1.4 The governing bodies of the two Pensby secondary schools instigated a joint group to investigate the possibilities of various kinds of federation, and held several meetings, including discussions with officers over the following months. This resulted in an agreement that a consultation would be held on a hard federation between the two schools. The outcome of that consultation, and the governing body decision, is the subject of this report.

2.0 The Consultation

- 2.1 The governing bodies, assisted by the Authority, produced and distributed a consultation document in order for all stakeholders to have access to relevant background information and have the opportunity to comment and respond. This document is attached as Appendix A.
- 2.2 The consultation was advertised in the local newspaper, and on-line via the Wirral Learning Grid and both school's individual websites. Consultation meetings were held at Pensby Boys on 24th February 2010, and at Pensby Girls on 25th February 2010, as well as informal drop-in sessions at both schools.

Pensby Boys

- 2.3 The meetings at the Boys school were attended by 4 people. Twenty-four responses to consultation were received, of which 21 were for the proposal, and 3 against.
- 2.4 Of those who were against the proposal, two gave no reason, and one stated they would prefer a mixed (amalgamated) school.

Pensby Girls

- 2.5 The meetings at the Girls school were attended by 4 people. Thirty-five responses to consultation were received, of which 29 were for the proposal and 6 against.
- 2.6 Of those who were against the proposal, concerns were raised about the possibility of a future amalgamation, about mixed sex teaching in Key Stage 4 and potential compromises in single sex education. There were also concerns about loss of experienced staff and about any drop in standards at the Girls school.

3.0 The Decision

- 3.1 Following the closure of the consultation on 19th March 2010, the two governing bodies met separately to discuss the outcome on 20th April 2010, followed immediately by a joint governing body meeting at which the decision was to proceed with the hard federation proposal to dissolve the existing governing bodies and reconstitute a single governing body on 4th May 2010. The governing bodies joint report is attached as Appendix B.
- 3.2 It should be noted that federation between two or more schools is a decision for the governing bodies of those schools, not for the Council.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 Both schools retain their separate budgets, although they may decide to share some proportion of their budgets by agreement of the single governing body.
- 4.2 Federation of these two schools does not remove surplus places, which represent a waste of resources. In 2010, Pensby High School for Boys had 31% surplus places, while Pensby High School for Girls had 11% surplus places. By 2014, both schools are projected to have more than 25% surplus places. The issue of surplus places remains to be addressed through various structural solutions which will be considered as the Phase 2A review continues.

5.0 Staffing Implications

- 5.1 Existing staff of both schools remain employees of the Local Authority, and remain in post at implementation of the federation. The single Governing body expects to move to a single staffing structure over the course of two academic years as opportunities arise.

6.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 6.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils.

6.2 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

7.0 **Community Safety Implications**

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8.0 **Local Agenda 21 Statement**

8.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

9.0 **Planning Implications**

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 **Anti-Poverty Implications**

10.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

11.0 **Social Inclusion Implications**

11.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the forthcoming Building Schools for the Future programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families.

12.0 **Local Member Support Implications**

12.1 Secondary school re-organisation and potential surplus place removal have relevance to all Wards.

12.2 The secondary schools named in this report are located in the Pensby and Thingwall Ward.

13.0 **Background Papers**

Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.
School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DCSF).
School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DCSF requirements.

Consultation Documents

Other data held in Department including that provided by Wirral Health Authority.

14.0 **Summary**

14.1 The two Pensby secondary schools have now entered into a hard Federation, which should enable the two schools to work together more closely under a single governing body, building on the existing joint sixth form arrangements and safeguarding viable secondary education for both girls and boys in Pensby as rolls fall in forthcoming years. It is vital for the Government's Building Schools for the Future (BSF)

programme to begin thinking early how capital funding can be targeted most effectively. The federation by itself does not resolve the surplus place issue in secondary schools in Pensby, however this contribution towards wider secondary school re-organisation in Wirral is also a step towards meeting the challenge of demonstrating Readiness to Deliver for BSF, which is then followed by drawing up a Strategy for Change and an Outline Business Case articulating the Council's vision for transforming secondary school provision.

15.0 Recommendations

That the outcome of the Pensby High School Federation consultation and governing body decision be noted, and that Cabinet's congratulations be given to both governing bodies on their decision to become Wirral's first hard federated schools.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services



Consultation by the Governing Bodies
on forming a Hard Federation between
**Pensby High School for Girls and
Pensby High School for Boys**

February - March 2010



The Governing bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys propose to form a hard Federation and are now undertaking public consultation. Under these proposals, a single governing body would be formed on 4th May 2010.

This document sets out the reasons why we have considered such a possibility and asks for your views. The Governors of each school will review the responses from parents, staff, the Local Authority, Unions, local residents and local schools. At that point the two governing bodies will decide whether to form a Federation, amend the proposal, or take no further action.

This consultation document is divided into a number of sections:

- 1.** The Introduction, which explains more about the two schools, what a Federation is and why we are proposing it
- 2.** The Proposal
- 3.** The Consultation - timeline and meeting dates
- 4.** Some questions answered
- 5.** Having your say - How to respond

INTRODUCTION

About the two schools

Pensby High School for Girls is a single sex, non-selective community secondary school with places for 883 girls aged 11 to 18. In Autumn 2009 there were 785 pupils on roll. The school is a Specialist Business and Enterprise and Science College.

Pensby High School for Boys is a single sex, non-selective community secondary school with places for 867 boys aged 11 to 18. In Autumn 2009 there were 601 pupils on roll. The school is a Specialist Sports College.

The 16 to 18 Sixth Form provision has been provided jointly by the two schools for over 20 years.

What is a Federation?

A Federation is formed when schools remain separate in law, but are managed together by a single Governing Body. They have separate budgets, have separate Ofsted Inspections and report their results separately.

The proposed model maintains Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys as separate schools. The management of the two schools would be brought together under the supervision of a single Governing body. The arrangement would build on the strengths of both schools without losing their individual identities.

Why are we considering this?

What are the benefits?

The formation of a Federation will enable the two schools to work collaboratively, but at the same time the governors of both schools are determined to maintain for the future, a high standard of single sex education in West Wirral.

All lessons at Key Stage 3, and the majority of lessons at Key Stage 4 will be delivered separately. Key Stage 4 courses that would not be viable in one school alone could be run for students in both schools, thus providing greater choice and improving curriculum opportunities. This happens already at sixth form level.

The Governing bodies believe that sharing of good practice between teachers, with departments working, training and developing together will lead to improved academic standards in both schools.

The number of pupils in Wirral secondary schools is falling and will continue to do so for a number of years. Not all areas of Wirral are being affected in the same way, but there are significantly fewer children in the Pensby school community. Both schools are already experiencing falling rolls and with this, decreasing budgets. If this is left unresolved it will result in a narrowing curriculum entitlement and reduced opportunities for pupils.

The Governing bodies view is that Federation will enable the two schools to make best use of their resources, thereby gaining economies and efficiencies of operation and further driving up educational standards.

THE PROPOSAL

- a) The Governing bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys have resolved to consult on a hard Federation under a single governing body. The Federation will be known as The Pensby High Schools Federation.
- b) It is proposed that the federated governing body should consist of 29 governors. This is the maximum allowed by law.
- c) The proposed and current number of governors in each category is set out in the table below.

Type of Governor	Proposed number
Parent	10
Staff including headteacher	6
Local Authority	6
Community	7
Total	29



- d) On establishment of the Federation, the existing staff of both schools, including the Headteachers, will remain in post. Over the course of two academic years, as opportunity arises, the Governors will develop the staffing structure across both schools to ensure continuity and breadth of the curriculum and the most efficient and effective management support structure. Governors will aim to move to the new staffing structure in a flexible way. Economies of scale and best value will be considered for each post within the staffing structure at each stage or as an opportunity arises.
- e) The proposed Federation date is: 4th May 2010.
- f) Pupil admissions will continue to be made to individual schools, determined by Wirral Council as the Admissions Authority. There is no change to this process.
- g) Written representations on this proposal must be sent to one of the Governing bodies by: FRIDAY 19th MARCH 2010

THE CONSULTATION - TIMELINE AND MEETING DATES

Start of Consultation	Wednesday, 3rd February 2010
Consultation meetings	
Pensby High School for Boys	Wednesday, 24th February 2010
Pensby High School for Girls	Thursday, 25th February 2010
End of Consultation	Friday, 19th March 2010
Individual and Joint Governing body meetings to consider responses and vote on whether to proceed	Tuesday, 20th April 2010
If the vote is to proceed, Federation commencement date	Tuesday, 4th May 2010

Consultation meetings begin at 7pm, and are expected to last approximately two hours.

A drop-in session has also been organised for parents, staff, governors and other interested persons who are unable to attend the consultation meeting(s), or who would like to speak to a school representative in person.

The date of the drop-in session is Tuesday, 2nd March 2010 at Pensby High School for Boys and Thursday, 4th March 2010 at Pensby High School for Girls. Both sessions will be from 4-7pm.

Individuals or small groups can make an appointment to attend one of the drop-in sessions by contacting the school directly.

**Pensby High School for Boys:
0151 648 2111**

**Pensby High School for Girls:
0151 648 1941**



SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q. What will this mean for admissions?

A. The admission arrangements for Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys will remain unchanged. This means that pupils will be admitted to a single sex school, just as now.



Q. What will this mean for lessons and classes?

A. For most pupils in most subjects, there will be little change to class arrangements.

At Key Stage 3 - Years 7, 8 and 9
Pupils at Pensby High School for Girls will be taught in separate classes to pupils of Pensby High School for Boys.

At Key Stage 4 - Years 10 and 11
The majority of the curriculum will be delivered in single sex classes. The Governing body will consider mixed classes to ensure maximum curriculum opportunities in some Option subjects.

At Key Stage 5 - Years 12 and 13
The Joint Sixth Form provision and existing collaboration between the Pensby Sixth Form and other local schools and colleges will continue.



Q. How will staff be affected?

A. Existing staff will remain contracted to the school to which they were originally appointed prior to Federation, undertaking duties in that school. But one of the benefits of Federation is that it may sometimes be possible to deploy staff across both schools to support needs identified by the single Governing body. New staff appointed by the single Governing body after Federation could be appointed to work in one or both schools.

Sharing best practice between staff at the two schools, alongside opportunities for training, will ensure high quality professional development to enhance learning opportunities and career development.



HAVING YOUR SAY - HOW TO RESPOND

We aspire to be World Class schools providing World Class learning opportunities for every young person.

The Governing bodies believe that Federation enables the two schools to share best practice, improve curriculum opportunities and share resources, which will have a positive impact in supporting learning to further raise achievement and standards.

Key Features

- Enhanced opportunities
- Flexible curriculum choices
- Professional development opportunities
- Collaboration and partnership
- High quality learning
- World Class education

What do you think?

You can write on your own, or you can join together with other people to write a joint letter. Your comments can be sent by post, through the school, or by e-mail. If you find it helpful, you can complete and return the feedback form provided.

All written representations should be sent to one of the Governing bodies at the address below. Both Governing bodies will read all the responses

regardless of which school they are addressed to so there is no need to send your comments to both Governing bodies.

Either:

**The Chair of Governors
Pensby High School for Girls
Irby Road
Heswall, CH61 6XN
schooloffice@pensbyhigh.wirral.sch.uk**

Or

**The Chair of Governors
Pensby High School for Boys
Irby Road
Heswall, CH61 6XN
schooloffice@pensbysportscollege.wirral.sch.uk**

Written representations on this proposal must be sent to one of the Governing bodies by:

FRIDAY 19th MARCH 2010

The Governing bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys would really like to hear your views. We look forward to seeing you at the meetings and reading your responses.



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Report to Cabinet

The Governing Bodies of Pensby High School for Girls and Pensby High School for Boys have considered the formation of a Hard Federation. This is a response to the falling rolls situation in West Wirral highlighted in the report to Cabinet by the Director of Children Services in October 2009. In this report it was stated that there is a particular issue in the Pensby area.

Each Governing Body has discussed the current and projected situation. A Joint representation group was established consisting of the Chair of Governors, Vice Chair of Governors, Headteacher, and representatives of Parent and Community Governor from each school. The initial role of this group was to consider the variety of Federation solutions available and make proposals for each Governing Body to consider.

Each Governing Body met independently to consider the proposals and two further joint meetings of the full Governing Bodies were held to consider the details of the final proposal. The final proposal was agreed by each Governing Body and in accordance with the regulations related to Federations a proposal for consultation was published.

The proposal was to form a Hard Governance Federation which would produce one Governing Body whilst maintaining the current status related to budget and entry requirements for each school.

All appropriate bodies were consulted regarding the proposal over a six week consultation period. All responses to the consultation were collated and considered by the Governing Bodies of each school at independent meetings held on Tuesday 20th April 2010.

At a joint meeting of the full Governing Bodies held on Tuesday 20th April 2010 the proposal to establish a Hard Federation, with one Governing Body was agreed.

The two Governing Bodies were dissolved and the new Governing Body for the Pensby High Schools Hard Federation was agreed to begin on Tuesday 4th May 2010.

On its establishment the following composition was agreed.

There will be a total of 29 Governors. There is over subscription in the Staff Governor category.

The joint Governing Body meeting agreed that the 3 Staff Governors from Pensby Boys School should reduce their numbers to 2 in the first instance, preferably by the first meeting of the Federated Governing Body on Tuesday 18th May 2010. This was resolved by one of the staff governors volunteering to relinquish their position.

The composition of the Governing Body for the Pensby High Schools Hard Federation is as follows:

Chair	
Vice Chair	
Parent Governors	10
Staff Governors	6
Local Authority Governors	6
Community Governors	7
Total	29

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24th JUNE 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES: OPTION APPRAISAL ON SITES FOR A COMMUNITY PRIMARY SCHOOL IN BIRKENHEAD

Executive Summary

This report advises the Cabinet of the outcomes of the appraisal process carried out in relation to potential sites for a primary school in the North Birkenhead small planning area. The report also explains the potential routes for school re-organisation in this area and makes recommendations with regard to statutory proposals.

1.0 Background

1.1 Following the presentation of the Review of Primary School Places Phase 5 report on 16th October 2008, Cabinet instructed that six Area Reviews be carried out within Phase 5 of the Primary Places Review: Prenton, Beechwood, North Birkenhead, Central Birkenhead, South Birkenhead and Noctorum. These areas equate to the small planning areas in the Authority's School Organisation Plan. The outcomes of these area reviews were reported to Cabinet on 28th May 2009.

1.2 Following consideration of that report, Cabinet agreed that no options would be brought forward for the Prenton, Beechwood, Central Birkenhead, South Birkenhead and Noctorum small planning areas at this time, although numbers and place provision would be kept under review. A number of options for consultation were proposed in respect of the North Birkenhead area.

1.3 In relation to community school provision, the options were:

A1 Closure of Cathcart Street Primary School

A2 Closure of Cole Street Primary School

A3 Amalgamation of Cathcart Street Primary School and Cole Street Primary School at either an existing or a new site.

In relation to Aided school provision the following option was suggested:

B Closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School

These options were approved for consultation with stakeholders and all statutory consultees. Full consultations subsequently took place.

1.4 The options were within the context set out by the Director of Children's Services, of the need to reduce the growing number of primary school surplus places and took account of Audit Commission guidance on surplus places against a continuing fall in the number of primary age pupils, and issues identified in the Joint Area Review. In addition to removing unnecessary surplus places, the options were intended to make more effective use of resources, take account of patterns of parental preference, reflect the additional challenges of maintaining small schools in an urban area and contribute to the wider standards agenda through the more efficient use of resources.

1.5 The results of the consultation were reported to Cabinet on 1st October 2009.

Cabinet approved the publication of statutory notices for the closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School. Statutory processes have been followed, and on 14th January 2010 Cabinet approved the closure of this school on 31st August 2010. No objections were raised by the designated bodies in respect of the closure, and

arrangements are underway to implement the closure on 31st August 2010. This includes transfer of the remaining pupils to alternative schools.

- 1.6 Cabinet also agreed that on 1st October 2009 that a reduction of one community primary school in the area under review was necessary, but requested a further report on options involving either the retention of the Cathcart Street Primary School site (as recommended), or the establishment of a new build primary school on a new site. The 1st October 2009 minute is attached as Appendix A.

2.0 **Site appraisal**

On the basis that one fewer community primary school is required in this area, the Director's recommendation was that Cole Street Primary School would close, with Cathcart Street Primary School retained, and all former Cole Street Primary pupils guaranteed a place at Cathcart Street Primary School. Cabinet has asked that an appraisal be carried out of the merits of a primary school being based at either the Cathcart Street site, or a new site between the two existing schools.

Existing sites

- 2.1 The quality of the Cathcart Street site, the security of the location and its green environment were strongly featured in responses to consultation. Respondents believed that Cathcart Street has scope for expansion and redevelopment if chosen as the site for a combined school, possibly incorporating a Children's Centre and other extended services. The proximity of the site to the Wirral Waters development was also raised.
- 2.2 Cole Street respondents to consultation believed that the Cole Street building, while older, was more suitable for retention as a school due to its solid construction and large classrooms. The restrained site was seen as a positive, as the roof top playground was popular with children, secure, and made the school "special". Suggestions to expand the building and site included: utilising a small strip of grass at the front of the school which could be brought inside the school fence; using the schools car park as playground, reproviding the staff car park either in Birkenhead Park or elsewhere in the neighbouring area; building a conservatory on top of the flat roof; or for the Council to purchase buildings to the rear of the existing school in order to expand the playground.
- 2.3 Comparison of the two existing sites indicates that Cathcart Street is the larger of the two sites, at 7,351 m², compared with 2,698 m² at Cole Street. The proportion of "green" space at Cathcart Street is 52%, compared with 11% at Cole Street. Both schools already utilise Birkenhead Park for outdoor activities which would be expected to continue, whichever option is implemented. Of the two school sites, Cathcart Street is a more recently constructed building, single storey, with more scope for extension, including the possibility of housing additional services on site and embedding the well respected CATS club in a new build or extension, removing the older temporary mobile currently on the site by the CATS after school club.

New site

- 2.4 In January 2010 there were 99 pupils of statutory school age at Cathcart Street Primary School and 113 pupils at Cole Street Primary School, producing a combined roll of 212 pupils, which is almost exactly a single form of entry primary school. The current combined capacity of the two schools is 420 pupils.
- 2.5 Birkenhead Park lies between the sites of the two existing schools. Opened in 1847, the Park was declared a Grade 1 listed landscape by English Heritage in 1995 and was recently subject to an £11.5 million renovation.
- 2.6 There was little support from either school during consultations for a new school based in Birkenhead Park. Concerns were raised about litter, particularly broken glass

and drug paraphernalia, “stranger danger”, general safety of children travelling to and from school, vandalism, security and potential for increased truancy. In general, few consultees from either school were in favour of an amalgamation into a new build primary school on a new site, rather that an existing site should be used, in particular that an existing building be renewed rather than rebuilt.

- 2.7 Following the announcement in October 2009 that the recommended option for change was the closure of Cole Street Primary School, some interest has since been shown from Cole Street related stakeholders in the possibility of a new primary school building in Birkenhead Park.
- 2.8 Preliminary discussions with Dr Hilary Taylor, who is a national lead expert on Joseph Paxton and the Park, and was also the consultant on the recent renovation, indicated that proposals for a primary school on land on the edge of the Park between the internal carriage drive and Park Road East could be viable, as long as the school did not encroach upon the Grand Entrance, and the playing fields remained in public use as part of the Park. This was reported to Cabinet on 1st October 2009. Dr Taylor produced a report setting out her thoughts, which is attached as Appendix B.
- 2.9 In December 2009, officers have met with representatives of English Heritage to discuss the possibility of a primary school in Birkenhead Park. The pre-application advice letter received on 1st February 2010 is attached as Appendix C. Their view, while sympathetic to the Council’s school re-organisation issues, is that the limited benefits of such a scheme were significantly outweighed by negative impacts on the Park and its historic environment.

“...We are not persuaded that it would be feasible to achieve the level of successful integration of built structures and landscape required to realise these benefits. Birkenhead Park is a unique and highly significant historic designed landscape and hence it is imperative that the integrity of its design should be maintained.”

“We consider that the proposed scale of development combined with the necessary enclosure by security fencing will potentially have an unacceptably damaging effect on the significance of the historic asset”.

A new school project on the Birkenhead Park site would be highly unlikely to receive English Heritage approval and planning permission, and therefore it is not recommended to continue with feasibility studies or further consultation with stakeholders on this option.

Primary Capital Programme

- 2.10 The major source of capital funding in the primary school sector at present is the Primary Capital Programme. The Authority has identified a programme for the first two years of the Primary Capital Programme (PCP), the highest priority being projects arising from the Primary Places Review. This was approved by Cabinet on 22nd May 2008. The agreed programme includes:
- A new building to house Park Primary School (see 3.8), currently under construction
 - A new building to house Pensby Primary School (see 3.7) – this project in conjunction with a proposed new co-located building to house Stanley Special School
 - A four classroom extension at Our Lady and St Edward’s Catholic Primary School - completed
 - HORSAs kitchen and dining replacements at Overchurch Infant, Stanton Road Primary and Heygarth Primary Schools (condition-related), of which Stanton Road and Heygarth are complete

- 2.11 The legal decision to reduce the number of schools from two to one, regardless of whether this is carried out by a double or single closure (see section 3 below), must be made and implemented, as in the Park/Poulton and Pensby examples given in this report, before future capital funding can be allocated. It is also significantly less complicated and time-consuming from a practical perspective to work in partnership with a single headteacher and governing body, rather than two.
- 2.12 Primary Capital Programme (PCP) funding for the next new build primary school, regardless of location, will not be available until 2011/2012 at the earliest. As a project arising from the Primary Places Review, capital works at Cathcart Street Primary site would be the highest priority for capital expenditure through PCP. There have been no announcements nationally on future PCP funding.
- 2.13 Cabinet is asked to reaffirm the commitment given in May 2008 for the highest PCP prioritisation for capital works arising from the Primary Places Review. Funding may determine the extent of the final project, however in this area of relatively high deprivation, investment in the Cathcart Street site to provide a substantially renewed and remodelled high quality learning environment must be considered a high priority.

3.0 **Statutory Process**

3.1 There are two legal routes to achieve a reduction by one school.

- A double closure linked to the establishment of a new school
- A single closure

Both routes lead to the same outcome, that is, one fewer maintained institutions, but have different positive and negative impacts and implications.

3.2 **Double closure linked to the establishment of a new school (amalgamation)**

Prior to changes to the regulations, this was the Authority's preferred route where a pair of closely located schools were reduced to a single institution on a single site. Staff from both schools are made technically redundant, and are eligible to apply for posts in the new school. Whilst this is obviously more disruptive, it can be perceived by staff as "fairer". Pupils from both schools are guaranteed a place at the new school on the chosen single site, and those pupils who need to move site can then move with their friendship groups. This was the legal route used in the amalgamation of Vyner Primary School and St Oswald's CE (Controlled) Primary School to form Bidston Village CE (Controlled) Primary School on the former St Oswald's site.

3.3 However, since that time, following the implementation of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, all new primary schools are now subject to a "competition" where the Authority invites bids to establish the best provider for the new school. The Authority has not yet operated a competition, however guidance, as well as experience from other authorities shows that reaching a decision under the statutory competition process is likely to take at least 6 months longer than would be the case without a competition.

The Authority can enter its own proposal into the competition, and in many cases, particularly in primary school competitions, is likely to be the only entrant. Other possible proposers could include faith organisations, businesses, universities, colleges or a charitable organisation. A new school would be a Foundation school, not a community school.

3.4 The Secretary of State can, however, decide to grant permission for Wirral LA to propose a new community school within a competition under certain circumstances. Wirral has an Ofsted Annual Performance Assessment (APA in 2008) rating of 3, meaning good. Consequently, after the invitation to bid, the Authority would have to apply to the Secretary of State for permission to submit a proposal for a community

school within the competition. Guidance indicates that consent may be given if there are more than the average number of Academies, voluntary or foundation schools, and few or no schools in Special Measures, and if a community school would build on existing diversity.

3.5 The differences between community and Foundation schools are as follows:

- In a community school, the Local Authority owns the land, buildings and all the other assets of the school, employs the staff, and decides the admission criteria for the school. The running of the school is delegated to the governing body.
- In a Foundation school, as well as running the school, the governors own the land and buildings, employ the staff, and decide the admission criteria. The governors have greater freedom to spend money on building projects, and can choose to set their own term dates.

Pupils at Foundation schools follow the same national curriculum as those in community schools, and staff are employed on the same nationally agreed terms and conditions. Funding for Foundation schools comes from the Authority in exactly the same way as for community schools. While the governing body of a Foundation school could decide to have different admission criteria, the school still has to follow the same admissions code as community schools.

Other than the land and buildings, which must be conveyed from the Authority to the Foundation governing body or Trustees, other assets in the school (books, equipment etc.) remain the Authority's property. Excellent relationships continue to be maintained with Wirral's Foundation secondary schools, and whilst there is no reason to believe that this position would differ in the case of a Foundation primary school, the potential impact of a change of status must be considered.

3.6 Some alterations to school provision are exempt from the requirement to hold a competition.

- A new Academy
- New 16 to 19 provision, mainstream or special
- A new Nursery School
- Transferring an existing school to a new site
- Rebuilding an existing school on its current site

3.7 An application could also be made to the Secretary of State for permission to establish a new school without holding a competition. Guidance indicates that permission will be given in the following circumstances:

- Straightforward amalgamations of infant and junior schools where a replacement primary school is proposed.
- Where there is to be a reorganisation of religious schools in the area, and schools with a particular religious character are to be replaced by schools with the same religious character
- Where an independent proposer proposes a new school to increase diversity in the area, rather than in response to an LA's need to reorganise.

In recent years exemptions from competition have been successfully received in relation to the amalgamation of Pensby Infant and Pensby Junior (first criteria), and the establishment of a Joint Church school in Leasowe (third criteria).

3.8 **Single closure**

The benefits of a single closure are legal and organisational simplicity. The staff of one school only are made technically redundant and available for redeployment. Disruption to pupils can be further minimised by guaranteeing all the pupils from the closing school a place at the retained school, which provides the same benefits of an amalgamation in terms of pupils moving with their friendship groups. The retained school may, or may not, occupy its existing site.

In the case of Poulton Primary School and Park Primary School in Wallasey, Poulton Primary School was closed, and Park Primary School was expanded to include a nursery (F1) class. All former Poulton pupils were guaranteed a place at Park Primary School. This could have been where the proposal ended, but in this case Park Primary School also relocated into the former Poulton building whilst a new school is being constructed on the old Park Primary site. On completion of the new school, the Poulton building will be declared surplus to requirements.

In Woodchurch, Arrowe Hill Primary School was closed, with all pupils guaranteed a place at Fender Primary School which was retained as the community school for that area on the existing site, with some minor capital works to slightly increase capacity.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

- 3.9 Closure of both Cathcart Street and Cole Street Primary Schools in order to establish a new institution on a single site does not fall into any of the exempt categories in 3.6, and would not meet the guidance criteria for Secretary of State permission not to hold a competition.
- 3.10 Holding a competition will extend the decision making process by at least 6 months, adding to the already increased levels of uncertainty about the future of primary schools in the local area which could have a destabilising effect on primary school rolls, and a case could be made for the need for expediency to resolve community uncertainty, however, it seems unlikely that approval to establish a school without a competition would be granted in this case. Amalgamation, whilst offering an opportunity for the staff in particular, but also the pupils of both schools to start afresh in a “new school”, albeit in existing buildings, may not be the most appropriate solution in this instance.
- 3.11 A new site is not deliverable at this point in time, but it is important to remember that the legal decision to reduce from two schools to one is a necessary precursor for any major capital expenditure whether this is refurbishment, extension or a complete rebuild on an existing or new site.
- 3.12 **Consultation option A2 for the closure of Cole Street Primary School is therefore recommended to proceed as a statutory proposal with effect from August 2011, with a proviso to guarantee all former Cole Street pupils on roll at the time of the school’s closure a place at Cathcart Street Primary School.**
- Former Cole Street parents who did not wish to take up the guaranteed place at Cathcart Street Primary would be offered the opportunity to express a preference for an alternative primary school. Places at these schools would then be allocated based on the admission criteria published in the Authority’s booklets for parents, within the limitations of the Infant Class Size limit.
- 3.13 If approved by Cabinet, the recommended proposal has already undergone consultation, and can proceed directly to statutory proposals, following which there are a further 6 weeks for representations and comments on the proposal. Due to the school summer break, it is recommended to delay publication of the statutory notices until September 2010. The outcome of the representation period would then be reported back to Cabinet in November 2010 for a final decision.
- 4.0 **Implications of the Review Process for Pupils**

Admission Arrangements: present and future pupils

- 4.1 The closure and/or amalgamation of primary schools will have implications for the Authority's admission arrangements. The DFE have advised that there is no requirement to consult separately on any changes to admission arrangements as long as full details are provided to parents in the statutory public notices on the proposed alterations to the school provision. This would include details on how the Authority would propose to manage the transfer of pupils to alternative schools, and also deal with applications from parents living in the areas concerned for places in Foundation 2.

Re-zoning of areas

- 4.2 In the event of any reorganisation, school catchment areas would have to be reviewed. In the case of an amalgamation it might be assumed that the catchment areas of the schools involved could simply be merged but it is likely that we would take the opportunity to consider any other necessary adjustments. In the case of a school closure, zones of neighbouring schools would have to be re-drawn. Changes would need to take into account consideration of home address in relation to nearest appropriate schools, the new capacity of schools in the area, and other factors such as planned housing development.

In relation to the potential transfer of existing pupils to alternative schools, the Authority would invite parents to indicate a preference. If their preference was for a placement in a community or controlled school, then the Authority would seek to meet that preference, within the admission criteria set out in the Authority's booklets for parents.

Pupils with Special Educational Needs

- 4.3 If any pupil has a Statement of Special Educational Needs then the Statement will be amended to reflect the new school, and the provision specified in the Statement will be delivered appropriately. Any pupils who are currently placed in designated special provision such as a Special Needs Class would be transferred to an alternative placement according to parental preference. For all those pupils on the SEN register who are affected, the Authority would deploy an element of any savings to provide enhanced support at their new school. Details of how such a scheme may operate would need to be developed.

5.0 Staffing Implications

5.1 Closure of Schools

If a school closes, staff would technically be redundant. However, the neighbouring schools to which pupils relocate will require additional staff, and these schools would be requested to give prior and preferential treatment to redundant staff.

5.2 Redeployment

In previous years, Wirral has had an excellent record of finding alternative employment for school staff. When posts are advertised in Wirral, schools are requested to give redundant staff who meet the advertised criteria, either a prior and preferential interview or an interview in competition with other candidates.

6.0 Financial Implications and Value for Money

- 6.1 The recommendations contained in this report have capital implications in respect of the re-location of current pupils and the re-allocation of future pupils to schools. The level of capital required will depend upon the final, approved proposals and will require further, detailed development work. An amount of £250,000 is included in the 2010/11 Schools Capital Programme for "scheme development resulting from primary reviews" which is on the same agenda as this report. This will allow schemes to be drawn up,

costed and tendered, with any balance contributing to build costs. The balance of the capital build costs would need to be drawn from the following sources: Primary Capital Programme, Modernisation Grant, council capital including capital receipts from the disposal of surplus assets, Prudential Borrowing and capital forming part of other national initiatives. It is a requirement that funding is clearly identified when proposals are submitted to the decision maker for approval. The capital costs will be dependent on the scale of works carried out which could range from a full rebuild to an extension to house the Children's Centre, Adult Learning and after school club activities.

- 6.2 The recommendations contained in this report include the closure and amalgamation of schools, which in turn will produce revenue savings, to the benefit of other schools as the funding is re-distributed. In the short term the Authority could be required to fund any staff severance costs following closures and amalgamation but they may be partly or entirely offset by savings.

7.0 Risk assessment

- 7.1 Failure to address high levels of surplus places and the issues faced by small schools results in a high risk of wasting resources; consequently less funding would be spent directly on children's education, which could impact on standards.
- 7.2 PCP funding allocations for 2011 onwards have not yet been released. If future levels of PCP funding are reduced, this is a high risk for limiting the scope of future capital projects. This risk could be reduced by combining other funding sources (see 6.1).

8.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

- 8.1 An equality impact assessment will be carried out on this report.

9.0 Human Rights Implications

- 9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

- 10.1 The removal of old, inefficient accommodation contributes to Council principles and targets in respect of Agenda 21.

11.0 Community Safety Implications

- 11.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

12.0 Planning Implications

- 12.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.
- 12.2 Construction of any new classroom provision would be subject to the usual planning permissions.

13.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

- 13.1 The capital investment in refurbished Academy provision is intended to contribute to "narrowing the gap" which is one of the Council's priorities.
- 13.2 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's realignment of the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

14.0 Social Inclusion Implications

- 14.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the Primary Capital programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families.

15.0 Local Member Support Implications

- 15.1 Primary place planning and potential surplus place removal have relevance to all Wards.
- 15.2 The current options affect the Birkenhead and Tranmere and Claughton Wards directly.

16.0 Background Papers

Audit Commission Report: Planning School Places in Wirral September 2004.

LA document "Pursuit of Excellence: Primary Education in Wirral".

School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DFE).

School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DFE requirements.

Consultation Documents

Other data held in Department including that provided by Wirral Health Authority.

17.0 Summary

- 17.1 No one closes schools lightly. However, there is general agreement amongst all stakeholders that action must be taken to address the issue of surplus capacity. Officers are required to offer clear advice as to appropriate action in order to spend public money wisely and ensure all Wirral's children benefit equitably from the funding available. The recommendations below I believe will ensure best value for the future generations of children in the review areas, and more equitable spending for the benefit of all Wirral's pupils, from the savings made.

18.0 Recommendations

- 1) That statutory proposals be published in respect of the following option:
Option A2, closure of Cole Street Primary School from August 2011
- 2) That the Director of Children's Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish this proposal, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including requesting permissions from the Secretary of State and proposals for the re-zoning of schools, in furtherance of the proposal.
- 3) That Cabinet reaffirms the commitment previously given in May 2008 to the high prioritisation of Primary Capital Programme funding for projects arising from the Primary Places Review.
- 4) That should the proposal be approved, a further report be brought to Cabinet at the appropriate time regarding options for the Cathcart Street site.

Howard Cooper

Director of Children's Services

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CABINET

Thursday, 1 October 2009

Present:

Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
Councillors	S Holbrook	M McLaughlin
	G Davies	R Moon
	P Davies	J Quinn
	G Gardiner	J Stapleton
	S Kelly	

138 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest.

Councillor Foulkes declared a prejudicial interest in minute 141 (Review of Primary School Places - Phase 5) by virtue of him being friends with the caretaker at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor G Davies declared a prejudicial interest in minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor Quinn declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 2) by virtue of her husband being a governor at one of the schools referred to in the report.

Councillor P Davies declared a personal interest in minutes 140 (Relocation of Gilbrook Primary School) and minute 143 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of him being a member of the governing body of Gilbrook Primary School and Wirral Metropolitan College.

Councillor Stapleton declared a personal interest in minute 142 (Review of Secondary School Places Phase 1) by virtue of her being a member of the governing body of one of the schools referred to in the report.

139 ANY OTHER BUSINESS - LIBRARIES

The Chair agreed to consideration of this item as a matter of urgent business.

The Leader of the Council made a statement on a proposal to revoke the Cabinet's previous decision on investment in 13 Neighbourhood Centres and the planned closure of 11 libraries. This decision would then be subject to Council.

The Leader of the Council moved a motion which was seconded by the Deputy Leader of the Council and circulated to the Cabinet and members of the public, it was then -

Resolved –

(1) In the light of the national debate now taking place over the future of libraries and the Government's imminent review, this Cabinet endorses the recommendation of the Leader and Deputy Leader to recommend to Council that the original Cabinet decision to close 11 libraries and invest £20m in 13 new and modernised Neighbourhood Centres be revoked.

(2) Cabinet recognises that this decision has serious budgetary implications for the current financial year, which will require the approval of Council to an appropriate in year variation of the budget for 2009/10, and which leaves a gap of at least £830,000 in the revenue budget, as well as the need to find a further estimated £200,000 to cover immediate repairs.

(3) Cabinet further recognises that there are also serious implications for future budgets. Cabinet therefore asks officers to report back to Cabinet setting out the full budgetary implications of this decision, for this year and for future years, as a matter of urgency in order for Cabinet to decide how this gap in the budget is to be filled.

(4) Cabinet wishes to make it clear that this decision is limited to the impact on libraries and planned investment in Neighbourhood Centres alone. It does not affect any other decisions taken on the Strategic Asset Review which the officers are asked to continue implementing with all due speed, including the progression of the Community Asset Transfer process.

(5) Cabinet recognises, however, in the light of the reduced savings, that it is now essential to ensure that the remaining planned savings are made as quickly as possible and therefore requests officers to redirect staff resources in particular to ensure a rapid implementation of the Council Office Accommodation element of the Strategic Asset Review.

(6) Cabinet therefore resolves to:

Revoke paragraphs 7 to 19 (inclusive) of Minute 325, being all those elements of its decision on the Strategic Asset Review taken on 15 January 2009 that related to public libraries or Neighbourhood Centres (multi-purpose complexes); and recommends Council to identify a source of funding to meet the in-year financial consequences (£830,000) of not closing 11 libraries and investing in 13 Neighbourhood Centres.

140 RELOCATION OF GILBROOK PRIMARY SCHOOL - CONSULTATION

The Director of Children's Services reported upon statutory consultations which had been held for the proposal to relocate Gilbrook Special School to the former site of Arrowe Hill Primary School.

The Governing body of Gilbrook School, a special school with 50 places for primary age pupils with emotional and behavioural issues, had expressed an interest in relocating to larger premises with improved facilities to carry out additional behaviour support work to mainstream schools. The school was currently located in a semi-

industrial area on Pilgrim Street, Birkenhead, but served pupils from the entire Wirral area. A Sports Barn was located on the Gilbrook site.

Relocating to the former Arrowe Hill Primary School, Glebe Hey Road, Woodchurch, which had closed on 31 August 2009, as a result of Phase 4 of the Primary Places Review, would increase the net floor area available to Gilbrook by a third, and although the school would no longer have access to the Sports Barn, the total site area available to the school would triple including a substantial increase in hard and soft play area. The Authority would retain the former Infant building for storage purposes.

At its meeting on 28 May 2009 (minute 9 refers) Cabinet had instructed that a formal consultation should be carried out with various stakeholders. Consultation had ended on 31 July 2009 and details of the outcome were given in the report.

The 2009/10 Schools Capital programme approved by Cabinet on 28 May 2009 included £200,000 to facilitate the move to the former Arrowe Hill building.

Resolved –

(1) That statutory proposals be published in respect of the statutory alteration to transfer the site of Gilbrook Special School to the former site of Arrowe Hill Primary School.

(2) That the Director of Children’s Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish these proposals, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed, including requesting permissions from the Secretary of State in furtherance of the proposal.

COUNCILLOR HOLBROOK IN THE CHAIR

141 REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES - PHASE 5 PLANNING AREAS AND COMMENCEMENT OF PHASE 6

(Councillor Foulkes having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 138) left the room during its consideration.)

The Director of Children’s Services advised the Cabinet of the outcome of the consultation process which had taken place in the North Birkenhead planning area in respect of the options for consultation agreed at Cabinet on 28 May 2009 (minute 9 refers). The report described the responses to the various options put forward for discussion, including additional suggestions put forward during the consultation process, and made recommendations with regard to statutory proposals in that area. The Director also introduced the beginning of Phase 6 of the Review and requested approval of an amendment to that phase.

With the permission of the Chair the following speakers addressed the Cabinet on the various proposals within the report:

- Sister Patricia Goodstadt, Assistant Director of Schools for the Shrewsbury Diocese.

- Councillor D Roberts, ward councillor for Claughton.
- Val Chaderton, Headteacher of Cole Street Primary School
- John Cocker, Chair of Governors of Cathcart Street Primary School

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning brought to the Cabinet's attention the views of Frank Field, MP for Birkenhead, in particular his support for a new school while Government funds were available.

The Cabinet Member also remarked that the proposals should not be seen as a questioning of standards at Cole Street, Cathcart Street or St Laurence's Primary Schools, as all three were excellent schools but rather as how best to deploy resources in the most effective way when there were not enough children to justify three schools in this part of Birkenhead. The opportunity should be taken again to look at the possible option of a new build school adjacent to Birkenhead Park to replace both Cole Street and Cathcart Street Primary Schools.

Councillor Holbrook commented that any money saved from the closure of schools would be ringfenced to increase the amount of money available to be spent on all children within the Borough.

On a motion by Councillor Phil Davies, seconded by Councillor Holbrook, it was -

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet agrees with the need to reduce surplus places in the North Birkenhead planning area and that this will require a reduction in the number of community primary schools by one.

(2) That Cabinet asks for a further report at the earliest opportunity which sets out a detailed options appraisal which looks at the relative merits with respect to:

(a) closure of Cole Street Primary School and retention of Cathcart Street Primary School;

(b) amalgamation of Cole Street Primary School and Cathcart Street Primary School in a new build school on a new site;

and seeks the views of parents, teachers and governors via a further short consultation exercise.

(3) Cabinet agrees to the closure of St Laurence's Catholic Primary School from August 2010 and that statutory proposals be published in respect of this.

(4) That amendments be made to Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review:

(a) to move the Leasowe planning area to Phase 8 of the Review, pending the outcome of proposals for a Joint Church school in that area;

(b) to review Manor Primary School following that school's placement in Special Measures by Ofsted.

The Cabinet adjourned at 7.15pm and reconvened at 8.10pm.

COUNCILLOR FOULKES RESUMES THE CHAIR

142 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 2

The Director of Children's Services updated Cabinet on the position in respect of secondary school places in Wirral and described recent developments, the current position, and issues for the future in relation to the proposed Phase 2 of the Secondary Places Review.

As in Phase 1 of the Review, there were four essential elements in looking to plan future secondary school requirements across the Borough. These were, firstly, the numbers of children expected to enter school over the next seven years; secondly the capacity of the current stock of secondary schools, individually and in areas; thirdly the impact of school size on standards, including the National Challenge, and finally various other factors with implications for place provision.

Following various recent developments, he also recommended that Phase 2 of the review be divided into two sub-phases, A to comprise Wirral West and B the Wallasey area.

Resolved -

(1) That approval be given to the division of Phase 2 of the review of secondary school provision into Phase 2A and Phase 2B, beginning with pre-consultation with Headteachers and chairs of governors in schools in Wirral West.

(2) That options arising from this initial consultation be the subject of a further report to Cabinet with the Director's recommendations for option(s) to proceed to wider, formal consultation with all stakeholders.

143 REVIEW OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PLACES PHASE 1

(Councillors George Davies having declared a prejudicial interest in this item (see minute 138) left the room during its consideration.)

Cabinet were given an update of the progress so far with regard to the development of two proposed new Academies in Birkenhead. The Director of Children's Services sought approval for the two Expressions of Interest and for commencement of the statutory consultation process for closure of the three secondary schools affected by the Phase 1 proposals.

With the permission of the Chair, both David Hughes, lead sponsor of the proposed Boys' Academy, and Dr Colin Hankinson, representing the University of Chester, lead sponsor of the proposed mixed Academy, addressed the Cabinet and elaborated on both expressions of interest including their vision, ethos and specialisms for both academies. Both then responded to questions from Cabinet members.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning thanked the lead sponsors for sharing their visions with the Cabinet and remarked that this was

potentially the best opportunity the authority would have to make a step change in the life chances of young people in Birkenhead. He also took the opportunity to pay tribute to staff of Park High, Ridgeway High and Rock Ferry High schools.

The Director, responding to members' comments, stated that the proposed scheme was designed to look in a holistic way at secondary education in Birkenhead and was a single package which could not be split into different parts. Consultation would have to take place over the proposed closure of each of the 3 schools at the same time as consultation on the successor arrangements for the 2 academies.

The Leader of the Council welcomed the opportunity to improve the life chances of children within Birkenhead by the proposed injection of funding for a brand new purpose built academy and for a mixed academy.

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet approves the Expressions of Interest for the two Academies and their submission to the Minister of State for Schools and Learners.

(2) That Cabinet requests that the Director of Children's Services undertake all the necessary formal consultation processes and that these consider the proposals in their entirety, not just the individual elements under review.

144 **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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by the relevant paragraphs of Part I of Schedule 12A (as amended) to that Act.

145 **AIMING HIGHER**

The Director of Children's Services recommended that Cabinet approve the procurement of short breaks services for 2009/11. The proposed services to be commissioned would support the delivery of the Wirral Local Area Implementation programme for Aiming High for Disabled Children in relation to Short Breaks provision. The commissioning and procurement process, resulting in these recommendations, had been robust, multi-agency (including voluntary and community sector involvement) and inclusive of parents, children and young people. Preliminary feedback had been given to both those groups recommended and those not.

Cabinet's approval was also sought to delegate capital spend within the programme to the Lead Member.

Resolved -

(1) That Cabinet approves the procurement of services outlined in section 3 of the report and contract negotiation with the identified services to be provided from 1 October 2009.

(2) That Cabinet confirm delegated powers to the Lead member in relation to the Aiming High capital programme.

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OUTLINE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROPOSED SITES FOR A NEW SCHOOL NEAR BIRKENHEAD PARK

Introduction

Birkenhead Park was designated Grade I, by English Heritage, in 1995. The Park was created largely by Joseph Paxton and it is, arguably, his finest piece of landscape design. Opened in 1847, it was the first publicly-funded public park and it is widely recognised as a model which inspired the design of public parks for many decades thereafter. Most remarkably, it was Birkenhead Park which influenced Frederick Olmsted, when he created Central Park, completed in 1873 in the heart of New York. Above all, what Olmsted admired was the fact that Birkenhead Park was a, 'magnificent pleasure ground ... entirely, unreservedly and forever the people's own'.

In recognition of its importance, in 2008, a ten-year project to restore and develop the fabric of Birkenhead Park reached its conclusion. This included repairing and reinstating railings and gates, desilting and rebuilding all three of the lakes, renewing the paths and planting, re-opening the views and restoring the major ornamental structures on the site - the iconic Swiss Bridge, Roman Boathouse and the lodges which announce the six major entrances to the Park, including the impressive Grand Entrance Lodge. The work was undertaken for Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council (WMBC) by a design team led by Hilary Taylor Landscape Associates Ltd. (HTLA Ltd.), a practice with a national reputation for its work on the conservation and renewal of historic parks and gardens. The project was made possible by the award of grant-aid from numerous bodies, including the Heritage Lottery Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the Wirral Waterfront SRB, English Heritage and the Wolfson Foundation. The WMBC itself also made a considerable investment in the Park, in terms of capital funding and the time of expert staff. Perhaps most important of all, was WMBC's commitment to managing the Park, now and in the future, in a way which ensures that it lives up to Olmsted's description and serves as many people – local, national and international audiences – in as many ways as possible.

Birkenhead Park may be internationally significant – it attracts visitors from many parts of the world – but its key function is to benefit people who live in the neighbourhood. Therefore, WMBC has been actively engaged in pursuing links between the local community and the Park. This has meant that the Park, and its new, glass and steel, Visitor Centre, have provided opportunities and facilities for a vast range of individuals and interest groups, including families, local children, teenagers, retired people, sports men and women, those who want to enjoy simple exercise, to expand their education, or those who simply wish to celebrate their lives and their natural environment. Thus, the rejuvenated Birkenhead Park is fulfilling a vital role at the heart of what is recognised as a deprived area, and is instilling a growing sense of ownership and pride.

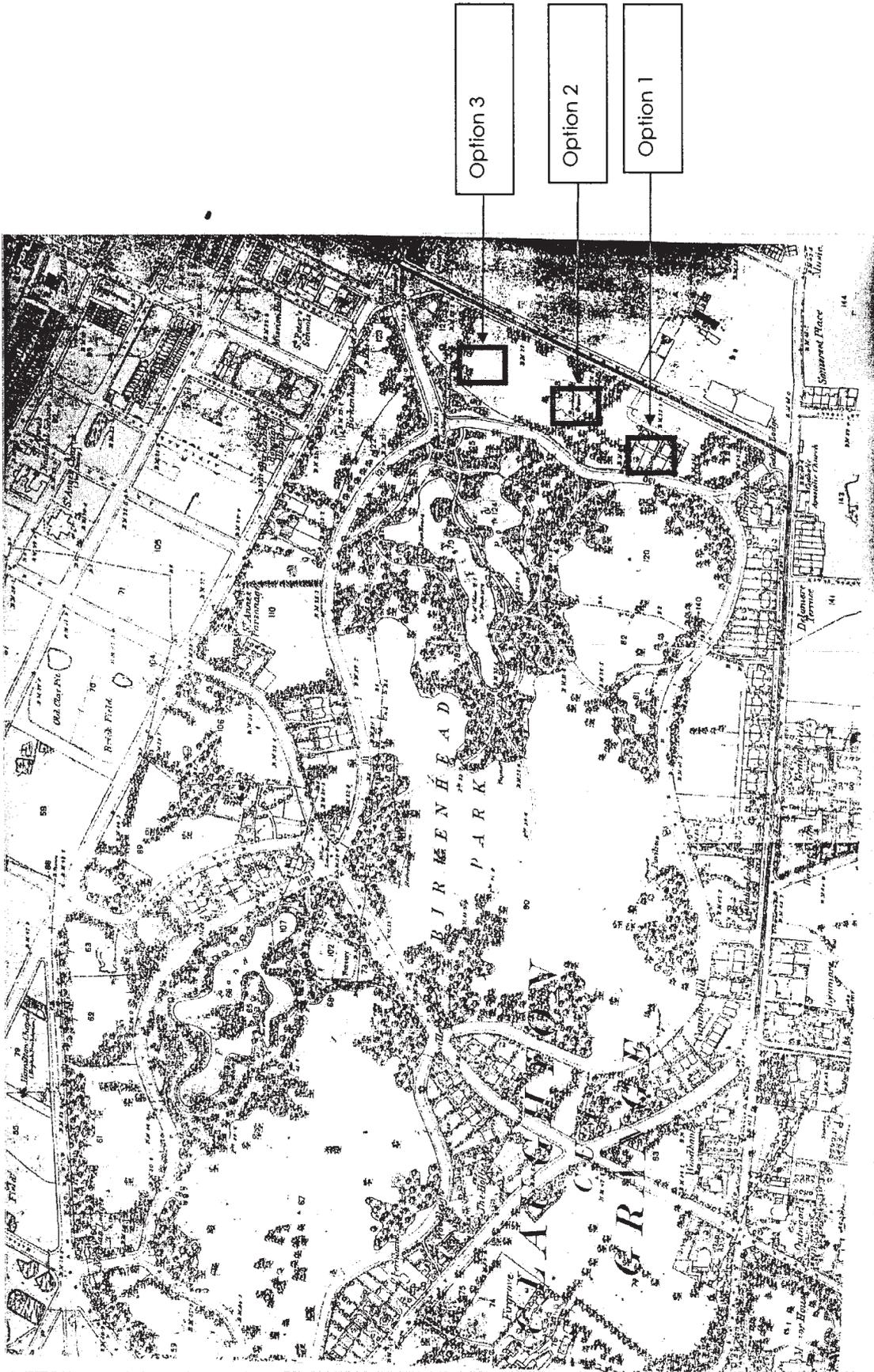
In summer, 2009, as part of its ongoing responsibilities for planning the future educational requirements of its children and young people, WMBC developed options for building a new school (amalgamating two old schools), serving a catchment area adjacent to the north and east of the Park.

The aim is to establish a new school that will develop close links with Birkenhead Park, thus reinforcing the relationship between the Park and its neighbourhood and helping to ensure that, in the future, the families of Birkenhead will feel attached to, and protective of, their remarkable Park.

Numerous options were considered by officers from WMBC for the location of a new school. Three were selected for further consideration. At this point, Hilary Taylor (of HTLA Ltd.) was asked to review the options that were being put forward, in order to offer advice about the advantages and disadvantages of the three possible sites for the new school, insofar as they would relate to, and have an impact upon, the historic fabric and function of Birkenhead Park itself.

Accordingly, on 18th August, Hilary Taylor visited the Park, and was able to consider the potential sites and discuss options with Bryan Gilbert, WMBC's Principal Architect, and Adam King, Birkenhead Park Manager, as well as other members of the team.

Illustration 2, highlighting areas associated with proposed locations for new primary school, Options 1, 2 and 3.



Birkenhead Park – history and character

This Park has a unique and fascinating history. By 1845, it was envisaged that Birkenhead would be a 'City of the Future'. In order to create an environment that provided for every need, the new city was to have opportunities for work, comfortable accommodation, education, worship, good health and exercise: the docks, decent housing, schools, hospital and the public park fulfilled these ambitions.

The Park was to be large and beautiful. Some 90 hectares were laid out and ornamented by Joseph Paxton, the Head Gardener to none other than the Duke of Devonshire, one of the most important landed families of the day. The Park originally comprised two units, the larger, Lower, Park and the Upper Park, the two being divided from one another by the Ashville Road. By the early 20th century, the Boothby Ground was added, fitting neatly into the triangle of land that separated the Lower from the Upper Park.

From the outset, it was envisaged that some of the capital required to lay out the new Park would be provided by selling off land on the periphery for housing, and applying the ground rents to the long-term maintenance of the site. The first auction of such land was held in 1846 and sales continued over the following decades. The requirement was that all the new villas would be built from brick or stone and, though there were to be no gates providing open access between the gardens of the houses and the Park, there were to be open railings, thus allowing an immediate interchange of view between private plot and public park.

Around the Park, separating the development plots from the ornamental landscape, Paxton designed a sinuous carriage drive. This remains one of the most significant features of the Park, providing for the circulation of vehicles and preventing conflict between traffic and pedestrians in the Park proper. This Park Drive also ensures that, for 21st century audiences, the majority of Birkenhead Park is readily accessible to all.

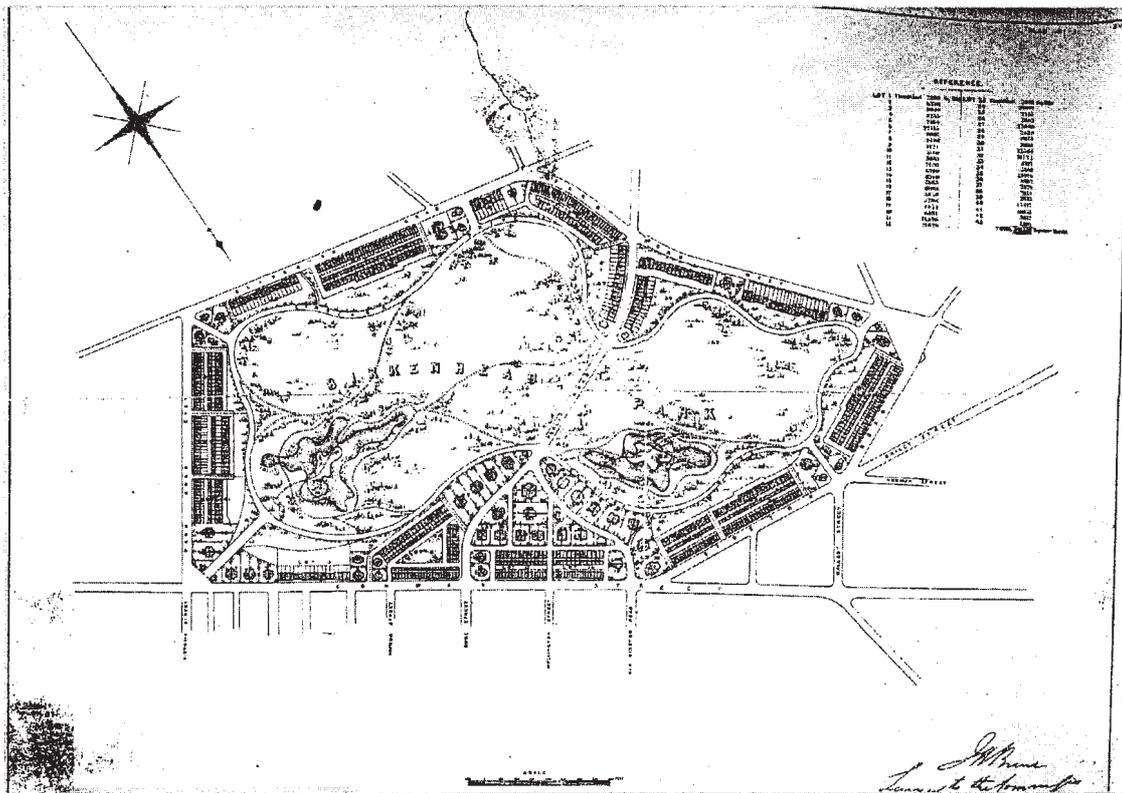


Illustration 3, showing the plan prepared in 1846, to accompany an invitation to purchase plots of land on which to build houses, on the periphery of the Park.

Throughout much of the 20th century, the Park continued to function as the heart of the community. Nevertheless, from the 1980s, investment was restricted and, by the 1990s, Birkenhead Park was beginning to show the impact of decades of reduced investment of funds and skill. The Park was still enjoyed by many people, but there were neither acceptable toilets nor any location to buy refreshments; the Swiss Bridge and Roman Boathouse were neglected and almost derelict; the Grand Entrance Lodge was run down; the trees and vegetation were overgrown and the lakes were damaged and unpleasant. In 1999, Hilary Taylor produced the *Restoration and Management Plan*, which provided the foundation for the successful application to the HLF's Urban Parks Programme, and the subsequent schedule of restoration.

As already noted, one of the most important outcomes of the renewal project was the creation of the new Visitor Centre, providing toilets, refreshments, and new opportunities for leisure and education.

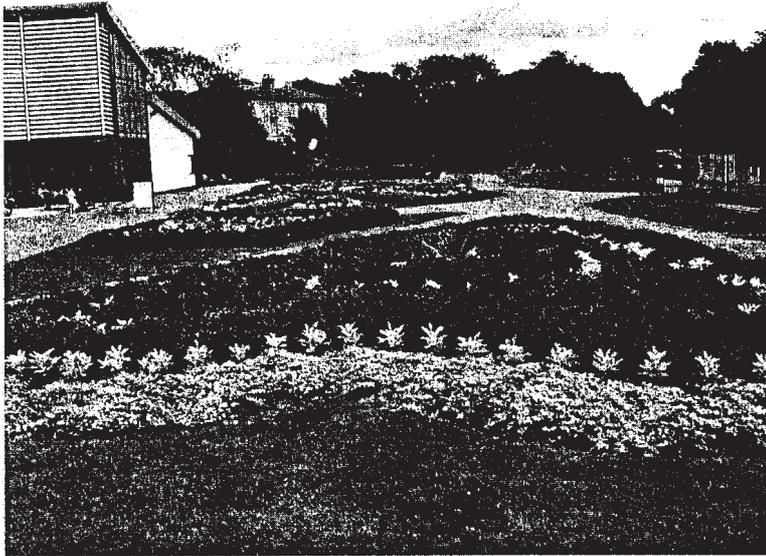


Illustration 4, the Visitor Centre in 2009

This building is located on what was 'Plot 6', on the periphery of the Park; just one of several plots which – despite years of advertising and promotion – had never been purchased for private development and, before 2000, remained open and integrated with the Park. It proved possible to argue for the building of this new Centre, in this spot, because of the historical role of those plots of land that lie outwith the carriage drive. Thus, in 1977, when the Park was designated a Conservation Area, the principal planning objectives were summed up as, 'preserving uninterrupted, tree-lined, open vistas within the 'inner park' as delineated by the route of the Park Drive'. The justification for this was recorded in Policy CH6 (Conservation and Heritage 6).

'The character and appearance of the Area principally derives from its wide and varied collection of period buildings and structures set within and around a mature parkland setting, unified by common features of design such as gate piers, boundary railings and substantial landscaping. Policy CH6, therefore, provides for these features to be retained and restricts new uses which would by their nature or design prejudice the landscaped appearance of the area or detract from the primarily domestic character of period buildings. Policy CH6 also restricts new development falling within the area of open land bounded by Park Drive in order to preserve the open landscaped setting of the central parkland area.'

It is quite clear, then, that the whole area of Birkenhead Park, and all the land which surrounds it, is protected under planning legislation which is framed by the Grade I registration of the historic landscape, the collection of listed buildings, and the boundary of the Conservation Area. There is a presumption against any new building at all within the landscape enclosed by the Park Drive; this also

means that any of those plots – once intended for private residences – on the periphery of the Park are only available for new building under exceptional circumstances and only if the benefit they impart to the Park and its community significantly outweighs the potential for damage to this remarkable heritage asset.

It is in this context that the three Options for the potential location of a new primary school have been considered.

Option 1 Birkenhead Park Primary School

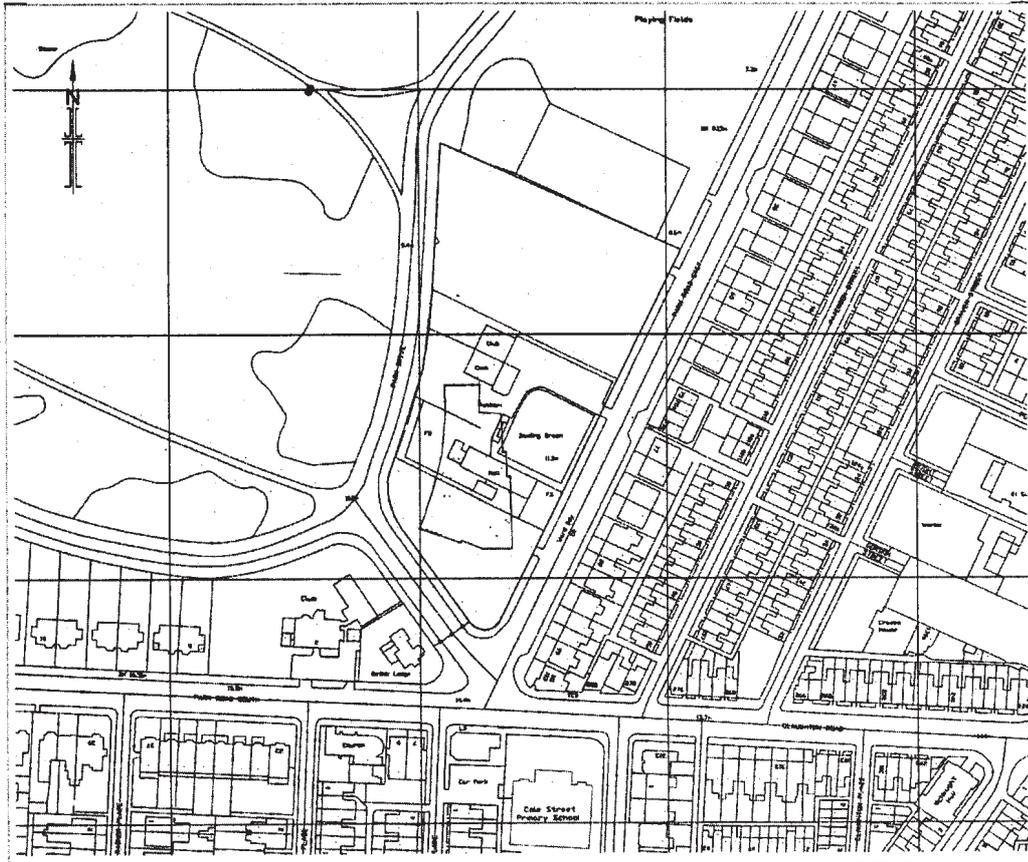


Illustration 5, Option 1.

This proposal locates the footprint of the new school on the eastern, outer edge of the Lower Park. It lies adjacent to the corner where Park Road East meets Park Road South, and is close to the Park entrance which is overlooked by the Grade II Gothic Lodge, gate piers and railings.



Illustration 6, Grade II Gothic Lodge.

At present, this area is in very poor, run-down condition. It includes a plot of undeveloped land, at the corner, opposite to the Gothic Lodge.



Illustration 7, plot of undeveloped land.

To the north of the open land, there is a building of temporary construction, in neglected condition, a meeting place for the local Sea Cadets.

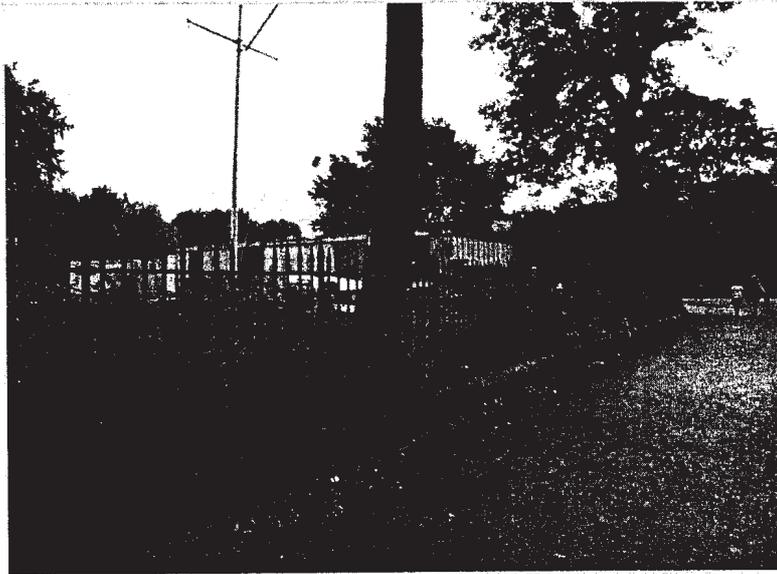


Illustration 8 & 9, Sea Cadets' building.

The latter is adjacent to a substantial building owned by the very first branch of the Royal British Legion, established on the periphery of Birkenhead Park, in 1921. This building comprises a pair of semi-detached houses, unlisted and in very poor condition, but shown as being present by the date of the first edition OS plan of the Park and its immediate surroundings, published in 1875 (see Illustration No.1). Half of this building is let to the Royal Naval Association and a well-maintained bowling green is located nearby.

A new school in this area would require a building which extended across the empty plot of land and over the footprint of the decaying huts used by the Sea

Cadets. The playing fields could reasonably extend to the north, on the assumption that the Victorian semi-detached residences, now the RBL building, could be properly restored and integrated into the site.

Outline Impact Assessment, Option 1

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
A new building in this location could intrude on, the setting of the Grade I registered Park and the Grade II listed Gothic Lodge.	A sympathetically-designed structure, responsive to the local materials specified by Paxton and employed in the semi-detached RBL building, with an open exchange of views between school and Park, could very significantly improve the setting of the Park and the Gothic Lodge.	Palette of scale, materials, character and setting must be established, to secure a satisfactory relationship with the Park and the Gothic Lodge.
The Sea Cadets could lose the building where they hold regular meetings.	The Sea Cadets' accommodation is a temporary structure, in poor and deteriorating condition. Its removal would very considerably improve the setting of the Park and the Gothic Lodge. In turn, the Sea Cadets would also benefit from the exchange of the deteriorating building for another, which could offer more permanent and sustainable accommodation.	The Sea Cadets must be assisted in finding an alternative, sustainable and convenient location to use as their base.
A new building could intrude on the character and setting of what was once a semi-detached, Victorian residence (now the RBL building).	The Victorian residence could be restored and integrated into the proposals for the new school (note access issues).	The character and footprint of the new school must be sympathetically related to the design and layout of the historic residence. The Victorian building should be restored and adapted for appropriate use (associated with the School, if possible).
The mature and historic trees – associated with the Victorian building and/or part of Paxton's plan – could be compromised by the new developments.	The protection and conservation of mature and historic trees, both during any construction period and in the future, would be essential. Their role in providing a setting for the new buildings and enhancing the school environment would be invaluable.	All historic and mature trees should be surveyed on a regular basis and a plan, identifying opportunities for successive planting to secure the long-term tree cover, would be a requirement.

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
<p>The Royal British Legion and the Royal Naval Association could lose their accommodation (though there would be no need to demolish the RBL building with this Option, it would probably be difficult to integrate RBL and RNA uses with the school, in the space available).</p>	<p>The RBL is currently having difficulty retaining members and enlarging the Club. Despite the historic significance of this branch of the RBL, a new location, which incorporated opportunities for improved bar and social facilities, would be likely to bring benefits and attract new members, putting the Branch back on a firm footing.</p>	<p>If it were agreed that the RBL and RNA could not reasonably continue using their building, they would have to be offered opportunities to relocate to another, smaller, sustainable site. This would enable the RBL building to be fully restored and refurbished.</p>
<p>A primary school, located on the outer periphery of the Park, could compromise the largely peaceful, residential character of the Park.</p>	<p>Being located close to Birkenhead Park could bring considerable benefits to local children, who could learn and enjoy much about the natural and historical environment offered here.</p>	<p>There is already a precedent for locating a school adjacent to the Park: Park High School, recently refurbished and extended, is situated on the southern periphery of the Lower Park. The design and management of the new school will be carefully calculated to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the Park. A close working relationship between the school's Head Teacher, the Park Manager and local residents will be essential.</p>
<p>Parking, delivering and collecting children could impose unacceptable pressure on the Park itself or on Park Road East and South.</p>	<p>Park Road East is wide and can accommodate parking.</p>	<p>Bringing vehicles into the Park, to deliver and collect children, must be discouraged by the Park Manager and Head Teacher. Opportunities for school staff parking must be accommodated in the footprint of the new school.</p>

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
The natural biodiversity of the open plot of land, on the corner opposite the Gothic Lodge, and of the stretch of land to the north of the potential footprint of the school (to be employed as playing fields for the school), could be threatened by a new building and new uses.	In the short term, the ecology of this area would be compromised by a new building and associated development. It must be recorded, however, that the area has been used, in the recent past, as a dumping ground for some rubbish, and features ruderal and scrubby vegetation, which appears to be of limited ecological interest.	The plot would be subject to a Phase I ecological survey, to inform any plans for future development. The school children could be encouraged to foster, study and monitor the biodiversity of the very large park, which would be adjacent to the school.

Conclusion

All of these Options have the benefit of creating a situation where primary school children could learn to value, use and respect their magnificent Park.

This Option brings particular benefit to the fabric of an area of the Park which is currently revealing evidence of lack of investment, neglect and decay. It is important to add, however, that the Victorian semi-detached residences, now the RBL building, should not be damaged or unsympathetically altered and that the mature and historic tree cover must be protected and secured for the future.

Option 2 Birkenhead Park Primary School

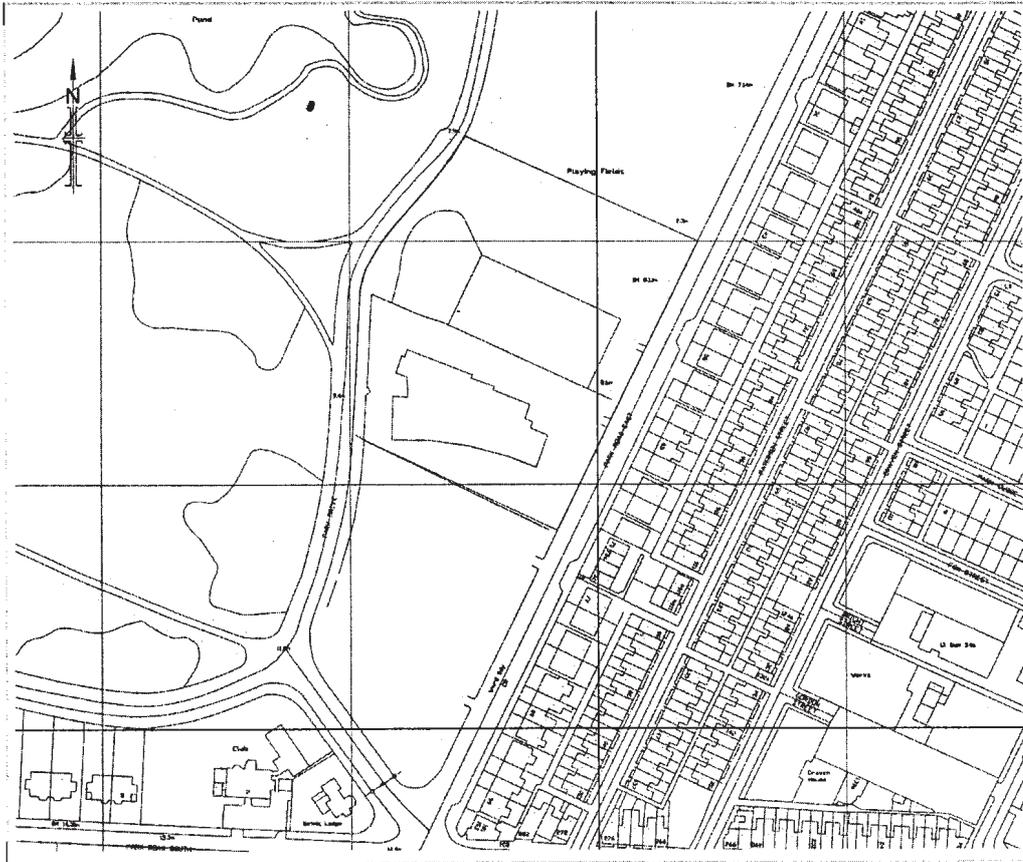


Illustration 10, Option 2

This proposal again locates the new school on the eastern, outer edge of the Lower Park, on a plot that lies just to the north of Option 1. An analysis of the 1875, first edition, OS plan demonstrates that this plot of land had been built on by that date (see Illustration No.1). A pair of semi-detached houses had been constructed – in footprint, identical to the surviving building immediately to the south, which is now used by the RBL. Today, this plot reveals, in the relatively level topography and the occasional mature, ornamental tree, its earlier, private, domestic function. It is also relevant to note that the gate piers – provided to give access to the two pairs of Victorian, semi-detached residences – are still extant.



Illustration 11, plot once accommodated Victorian, semi-detached housing.

Just to the north of the proposed footprint of the school building, there is another stretch of land that is also level – thus revealing the original conception of building land lying outwith the carriage drive boundary. This plot was never built upon, however, and what is manifest, in its cover of strikingly coarse and scrubby vegetation, is an earlier life as a location for Boys' Brigade drill training and a more recent existence as the site for the temporary deposit of silt from the Lower Lake.



Illustration 12, plot which reveals impact of compaction from drill training and subsequent deposit of arisings from the Lake.

A new school, with an associated playing field, would not be an inappropriate purpose for this area of the Park, assuming that the design was responsive to the RBL building to the south and that proper protections were provided for mature trees in the area.

Outline Impact Assessment, Option 2

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
<p>A new building in this location could intrude on, the setting of the Grade I registered Park.</p>	<p>A sympathetically-designed structure, responsive to the local materials specified by Paxton and employed in the semi-detached RBL building, with an open exchange of views between school and Park, could very significantly improve the setting of the Park. The extant historic gate piers and the restored railings should be absorbed as key features of the new layout.</p>	<p>The palette of scale, materials, character and setting must be established, to secure a satisfactory relationship with the Park.</p>
<p>A new building could intrude on the character and setting of what was once a semi-detached, Victorian residence (now the RBL building), to the south of this plot.</p>	<p>A sympathetically-designed structure, translating the design recommendations of Paxton into a modern, sustainable, vocabulary, could help to blend the RBL building into its context more happily than at present, replacing the Victorian semi-detached property that once stood in this spot.</p>	<p>The character and footprint of the new school must be sympathetically related to the design and layout of the adjacent historic residence (RBL building).</p>
<p>The development in this location could have a very damaging effect on the mature and historic trees on the site, which reflect Paxton's design and provide a record of changing uses.</p>	<p>The proper protection and future care of the historic and mature trees on the site must be written into any plan for construction and future maintenance. Children could be involved, at an appropriate level, in monitoring and learning about these trees, and would thus come to understand more about the wider Park and the natural environment.</p>	<p>Proper protection, future conservation and a long-term plan for successional planting, would bring benefit both to the children and to the Park itself.</p>

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
<p>A primary school, located on the outer periphery of the Park, could compromise the largely peaceful, residential character of the Park.</p>	<p>Being located close to Birkenhead Park could bring considerable benefits to local children, who could learn and enjoy much about the natural and historical environment offered here.</p>	<p>There is already a precedent for locating a school adjacent to the Park: Park High School, recently refurbished and extended, is situated on the southern periphery of the Lower Park. The design and management of the new school will be carefully calculated to establish a mutually beneficial relationship with the Park. A close working relationship between the school's Head Teacher, the Park Manager and local residents will be essential.</p>
<p>Parking, delivering and collecting children could impose unacceptable pressure on the Park itself or on Park Road East and South.</p>	<p>Park Road East is wide and can accommodate parking.</p>	<p>Bringing vehicles into the Park, to deliver and collect children, must be discouraged by the Park Manager and Head Teacher. Opportunities for school staff parking must be accommodated in the footprint of the new school.</p>
<p>The natural biodiversity of the open plot of land – the potential location for the new school and associated playing field – could be threatened by a new building and new uses.</p>	<p>In the short term, the ecology of this area would be compromised by a new building. It certainly seems that the site of the former semi-detached house does display an interesting diversity; the part of the plot north of this site, however, has suffered from heavy compaction (former drill area) and it has been enriched by the temporary deposition of arisings from the desilting of the Lake. This background explains its current, coarse, vegetation, with relatively little variation.</p>	<p>The whole plot would be subject to a Phase I ecological survey, to inform any plans for future development. Wherever possible, existing biodiversity will be protected and promoted. The school children could be encouraged to foster, study and monitor the biodiversity of the very large Park, which would be adjacent to the school.</p>

Conclusion

All of these Options have the benefit of creating a situation where primary school children could learn to value, use and respect their magnificent Park.

This Option could bring the benefit of providing an improved setting for the Victorian semi-detached residences (now the RBL building, just to the south of the proposed footprint of the new school), replacing the second pair of semi-detached residences that was on this site by 1875, but has now gone.

This Option would allow children to benefit not only from a playing field laid out within the curtilage of the plot, but also to have direct access to the public playing fields that are already in the Park, immediately to the north (adjacent to the Grand Lodge, already within the ownership of WMBC's Education department).

Option 3 Birkenhead Park Primary School

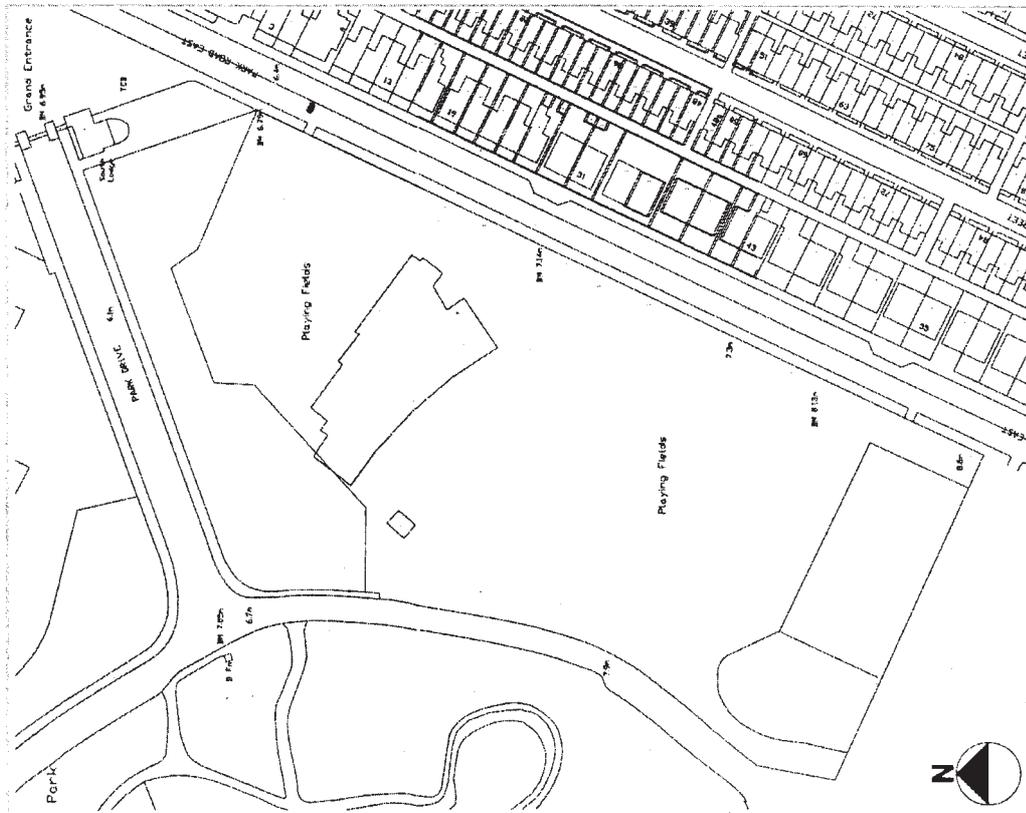


Illustration 13, Option 3

This option locates the proposed school in the playing fields that lie to the south of the Grade II* Grand Lodge. The playing fields could be used by the school, as required, in the day time, and made available to the public at other times.

At present, this whole area is dedicated to playing fields that are fairly regularly used, but which belong not to the Park (in management terms), but to the Education Department of WMBC. The location of the school itself would be framed, to the north and the north-west, by the topographical mounding and the planting associated with Paxton's plan (and renewed as part of the recent project), which is still so striking a feature of the site



Illustration 14, view of location for Option 3.

The most important issue, in relation to this Option, is the impact on the Grand Lodge. Despite the fact that this is no longer the principal entrance to the Park, it remains the most important Lodge and one of the most distinctive heritage assets of the Park. The Grand Lodge was depicted as early as the 1847, when it was the central feature in an illustration of the grand opening.



Illustration 15, the Grand Opening, 1847

The language of Grand Lodge is robustly Classical and on a grandiose scale; it is intended to have an heraldic function. It is hard to envisage a design for a

primary school building which could be responsive to this setting. If the school were embraced beneath a gently-rising, grassy mound, with the building itself being visible only from the south and south-west, one might be able to argue that this would not compromise the setting of the Grand Lodge, and would be a model of 'green sustainability'. Assuming, however, that any building in this location would be subject to close scrutiny, when submitted for Planning and Listed Building Consents, any Impact Assessment must identify that this location raises significant problems.

It would have to be assumed that there would be no opportunities to build a self-contained car park or any other facility, in this area of the Park. The inevitable – and unacceptable – consequence is likely to be that traffic and parking in the Park would become very much worse than it is today.

Outline Impact Assessment, Option 3

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
A new building in this location could intrude on the setting of the Grade I registered Park and the Grade II* listed Grand Entrance Lodge.	The only defensible option for the design for a school in or near the proposed location, would probably be something which was blended into its landscape setting. This would need to be something which was carefully related to the extant tree-covered mounds that distinguish this corner; thus, a new building might effectively 'disappear' when viewed from the north and north-west.	This Option would appear to be the most difficult to develop and defend.
The development in this location could have a very damaging effect on the mature and historic trees on the site, which reflect Paxton's design and provide a record of changing uses.	The proper protection and future care of the historic and mature trees on the site, and on those more recently planted, must be written into any plan for construction and future maintenance. Children could be involved, at an appropriate level, in monitoring and learning about these trees, and would thus come to understand more about the wider Park and the natural environment.	Proper protection, future conservation and a long-term plan for successional planting, would bring benefit both to the children and to the Park itself.
A primary school, located on the outer periphery of the Park, could compromise the largely peaceful, residential character of the Park.	Being located close to Birkenhead Park could bring considerable benefits to local children, who could learn and enjoy much about the natural and historical environment offered here.	There is already a precedent for locating a school adjacent to the Park: Park High School, recently refurbished and extended, is situated on the southern periphery of the Lower Park. It must be added, however, that the current Park High School, though it is situated close to the Grade II Italianate Lodge, does not compromise the setting of this Lodge to the extent that Option 3 might compromise the Grade II* Grand Entrance Lodge.

Threats	Opportunities	Outcomes
<p>Parking, delivering and collecting children could impose unacceptable pressure on the Park itself or on Park Road East and North. It would seem inevitable that building a school in this location would significantly increase the pressure of traffic and parking in the Park itself. It seems unlikely that opportunities for staff parking could be accommodated in the footprint of this new school.</p>	<p>Much of Park Road East is wide and can accommodate parking. Close to the Grand Entrance Lodge, however, there is a very busy junction, which would prohibit both parking and temporary dropping-off, close to the school.</p>	<p>Bringing vehicles into the Park, to deliver and collect children, must be discouraged by the Park Manager and Head Teacher.</p>
<p>The natural biodiversity of this plot of land – the potential location for the new school and associated playing field – could be threatened by a new building and new uses.</p>	<p>Assuming that the extant historic and mature trees were embraced within the setting of the new school, the damage would be minimal. At present, most of this area is dedicated to sports fields. Bringing a school into this location could create opportunities to enhance, and promote, greater biodiversity.</p>	<p>The whole plot would be subject to a Phase I ecological survey, to inform any plans for future development. Wherever possible, existing biodiversity would be protected and promoted. The school children could be encouraged to foster, study and monitor the biodiversity of the very large Park, which would be adjacent to the school.</p>

Conclusion

All of these Options have the benefit of creating a situation where primary school children could learn to value, use and respect their magnificent Park. It should be added, however, that this Option would be successful, in design terms, only insofar as it could be 'hidden' from the Grand Lodge and the immediate setting. Therefore, this would limit the opportunities for children to be fully immersed in, and engaged with, the Park itself.

Perhaps the most difficult problem, here, would be the requirements for parking, dropping-off, emergency access etc. The impact of traffic on the immediate setting of the Grand Lodge could be unacceptable.

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CH44 8ED

Direct Dial: 01904-601970
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Our ref: PA00011988

Your ref:

1 February 2010

Dear Mr Lester

Request for Pre-application Advice

BIRKENHEAD PARK, PARK ROAD EAST, BIRKENHEAD, WIRRAL, CH41 4HD

Thank you for consulting us over the plans for the above site. On the basis of the latest information about the proposals, received by us on 11 November 2009 and detailed below, I offer the following advice.

Summary

Birkenhead Park, a Grade I designated landscape, is internationally significant as a seminal work by Joseph Paxton. It subsequently influenced the design of public parks internationally and, in particular, inspired Frederick Olmstead's layout for Central Park, New York. Birkenhead Park is the only Grade I purpose-designed public park in England.

English Heritage has been invited to comment upon a proposal to construct a new primary school within the Park Road East perimeter of Birkenhead Park. This school would replace two existing local schools which are well below complement, namely Cathcart Street (some 350 metres to the NE of Grand Lodge) and Cole Street (across the road from the Gothic Lodge). The aspiration is to take advantage of the park landscape setting to create a more sympathetic and stimulating environment for educational activities.

In considering these proposals particular attention has been given to the operational



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issues associated with school accommodation, in particular those of security, safety, and vehicle management, all of which can have significant implications in terms of their impact upon the landscape. Three site options have been offered for consideration

Option 1

This lies in the south-east corner of the park just north of the entrance drive at the Gothic Lodge (listed Grade II). The site is currently occupied by the Royal Naval Association and the Sea Cadets in an assortment of temporary buildings and the British Legion who are accommodated in a pair of three storey semi-detached houses contemporary with the park. The southern part of this site is undeveloped and unkempt and there is also a small bowling green fronting onto Park Lane East. The occupied land is not within the ownership of Wirral MBC, but the adjacent land to the north and south is in their ownership.

Option 2

This site lies immediately north of the pair of semi-detached houses on site option 1. Its northern part is managed as playing fields; the southern part is rough grassland and the site of a former pair of semi detached houses which were subsequently demolished.

Option 3

This site lies immediately south of Grand Lodge (listed Grade II*) is an open grass area currently used for playing fields and which provides a simple setting for this grandiose classical structure.

English Heritage Advice

English Heritage appreciates the potential educational benefits that a new school would bring to the area and is sympathetic to the aspiration to take advantage of the park landscape setting to create a more sympathetic and stimulating environment for learning. We do, however, have serious concerns relating to all three options centring upon the choice of appropriate building form and operational demands.

Regardless of location, the proposed school would be a single storey structure with an extended footprint which is at odds with the form of the existing buildings surrounding the park, which tend to be taller (three stories high) but with a relatively compact footprint.

There will be a requirement for dropping-off areas close to the school building, secure



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parking spaces for staff and visitors within the school curtilage, and secure areas for play. Since there will be no vehicular access to the school from within the park and with no additional capacity along Park Road East, green space within the park will have to be given up for these purposes.

There will also be a requirement to enclose the school curtilage with a perimeter security fencing of 2.00 - 3.00 metres high, possibly higher if ball play is required. A primary concern of English Heritage is that the introduction of secure fencing will compromise the fundamentally open historic character of this part of the park which was mostly laid out as recreational open space.

We consider that the proposed scale of development combined with the necessary enclosure by security fencing will potentially have an unacceptably damaging effect on the significance of the historic asset. In light of this the three possible options have been considered in detail:

Option 3

Any development in this area would have an unacceptable impact upon the open character of this part of the historic designed landscape and heavily compromise the setting of the Grade II* listed Grand Lodge.

Option 2

This area was designed primarily as recreational open space within the park linking visually with the more intimate and informal spaces and paths around the lake. Development in this area would annexe this significant open space and erode the integrity of Paxton's design.

Option 1

Of the three options, this site is the only one which might be able to accommodate an appropriate building without significant detrimental impact upon the historic landscape asset. Such a building would need to follow a form which would sit comfortably with its neighbours and make a positive contribution to its landscape setting by resolving the shortcomings of this entrance to the park. This would, however, require a radical approach and a purpose built, high quality design rather than the adaptation of "standard" school models. This would necessitate the appointment of an architect with a proven track record in such projects. The problem of resolving the access, parking and security issues still apply in this case.

Recommendation



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Although we appreciate the potential educational benefits that a new school within the Park might bring, we are not persuaded that it would be feasible to achieve the level of successful integration of built structures and landscape required to realise these benefits. Birkenhead Park is a unique and highly significant historic designed landscape and hence it is imperative that the integrity of its design should be maintained. From our discussions with Wirral MBC we understand that it would be feasible to accommodate a new facility within the existing Cathcart Road site, either by new build or possibly through a combination of conversion and new build. English Heritage recommends that the feasibility of that alternative site is investigated further.

For your information I enclose a copy of our recently published position statement on the future of school buildings entitled Refurbishing Historic School Buildings.

The above advice is the response that we would offer if the same proposals were put forward for statutory approvals. Thank you for involving us at the pre-application stage. We would be pleased to offer further advice on the resolution of outstanding matters if this would be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

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REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

REVIEW OF PRIMARY PLACES PHASE 6: AREA REVIEWS OF GREASBY, UPTON, MORETON AND WALLASEY AND AN UPDATE ON PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN SPECIAL MEASURES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report advises the Cabinet of progress on the Phase 6 Area Reviews of primary school places in the small planning areas of South and Wallasey, Greasby, Upton and Moreton. Following meetings with key stakeholders in each of these areas, this report contains a summary of provision in each area and puts forward recommendations for options for consultation, and comments briefly on some of the issues involved. The report provides an update on two primary schools in special measures, with recommendations for options in relation to these schools.

1.0 Background

- 1.1 At its meeting of 16th October 2008, Cabinet instructed that Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review should comprise South Wallasey, North Wallasey, Leasowe, Moreton, Upton and Greasby. At its meeting of 19th March 2009 Cabinet made an allowance for an amendment to Phase 6:

(404, item 4) Should the Joint Church school be approved and implemented as in (2), the Leasowe area be moved from Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review to Phase 8 accordingly.

The minutes of this meeting are attached as Appendix A.

- 1.2 As in previous phases, the first stage of the Review has been to conduct a process where, on a confidential basis, meetings have taken place with key stakeholders in each of the areas under review. These stakeholders included Ward Councillors as well as officers of the Diocese of Chester and Shrewsbury, headteachers and chairs of governors of schools potentially affected by the Reviews. Following these confidential discussions, recommendations can now be made for options for consultation in the next stage of the review process.
- 1.3 In addition to the options described below there is considerable analytic and background material that was used as the basis for the identification of options; this is available for Members on request. A brief description of this material is included at Appendix B. Numbers on roll provided in this report are from the Annual School Census of January 2010.
- 1.4 At its meeting of 1st October 2009, Cabinet approved the inclusion of Manor Primary School in Phase 6 of the Review, following that schools placement by Ofsted in Special Measures on 3rd June 2009.
- 1.5 Since that meeting, on 9th December 2009, Well Lane Primary School was placed in Special Measures by Ofsted. This automatically triggers a review of the school, which is also reported here.

2.0 Greasby

- 2.1 The Greasby area is served by a single community primary school, a Catholic primary school, and by community Infant and Junior schools on separated sites.
- 2.2 None of the schools in this area have more than 25% surplus places, and just one (Greasby Infant) falls into the Wirral policy definition of a small school. Across schools in the area, surplus places are within the Audit Commission guidance level at 4.9%. There is no Wirral policy of amalgamating Infant and Junior schools, however it is right that this should be examined whenever the opportunity arises.

2.3 While Infant and Junior amalgamations do not automatically remove surplus places, there are educational, organisational and financial benefits to all-through primary education. Parents would no longer have to go through the admission process twice in primary phase. An all-through school helps staff to develop an in-depth knowledge of every child's individual needs and abilities from the start of statutory education. Key Stage 1 and 2 staff will be able to plan together to build on children's prior learning. Assessment of children's attainment and tracking of individual progress from age 4 to 11 is uniform and consistent, and schools can design and plan a whole school curriculum covering the full primary age range.

There would be more opportunities for younger and older children to work together and act as mentors and buddies to each other, which will support their personal and social development. Children would no longer have to change schools at age 7, avoiding the dip in progress which is sometimes seen when pupils transfer from Infant to Junior schools.

Costs associated with maintaining separate institutions would be saved, with the savings being fed into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils.

	Greasby Infant	Greasby Junior	Combined
2009 Net Capacity	180	308	488
2010 Number on roll	180	239	419
2010 Surplus place %	0	22.4	14.1
2015 Number on roll (projected)	180	240	420
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	0	22.1	13.9

2.4 Of the two sites, the Junior site would offer the best location for a primary school – the total site is above the recommended minimum for a school of 420 pupils (the Infant site is about 20% below the recommended minimum), and with a new extension to replace the existing temporary classrooms could accommodate all the pupils from both the Infant and Junior schools. The pre-school playgroup at the Infant site would also need to be relocated.

The question of amalgamation was considered and rejected recently when the most recent change of headteacher occurred, which was the retirement of the Infant headteacher. In this instance, the governing bodies of the two schools have indicated that they do not wish to pursue an amalgamation at this time. While surplus places at the Junior school are relatively high and projected to continue to be so, there may be scope to reduce capacity at the school, which has some temporary mobile accommodation.

2.5 In terms of size, all four Greasby schools are projected to remain at or above the Wirral policy definition of a small school. Surplus places are high at Greasby Junior, although lower than 25% and this will continue to be monitored. Contextual value added indicates that pupils at the community schools made the expected rate of progress in 2009 and over a three year average, whilst at the Catholic Aided school, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average.

Conclusion

2.6 There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

3.0 **Upton**

3.1 The small planning area of Upton contains three schools, a community Infant and

Junior school on a single site, and a Catholic Aided primary school. None are within the Wirral policy definition of a small school, and none have more than 25% surplus places, although surplus places are relatively high at Overchurch Junior School. Across schools in the area, surplus places are just above the Audit Commission's guidance level at 10.7%.

- 3.2 As in the Greasby area, the possibility of amalgamating Infant and Junior schools should be considered. Overchurch Infant and Junior occupy separate buildings on the same site, with shared kitchen and dining facilities. A preschool playgroup, Little Robins, occupies the former caretakers house. The following table provides the capacity, current and projected numbers on roll and surplus places for the two schools.

	Overchurch Infant	Overchurch Junior	Combined
2009 Net Capacity	269	412	681
2010 Number on roll	244	334	578
2010 Surplus place %	9.3	18.9	15.1
2015 Number on roll (projected)	265	350	615
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	1.5	15.1	9.7

As they share a site, no capital works would be required to establish Overchurch primary school. This amalgamation would have little impact on surplus places, but some financial return would be made to the overall school's budget. For example, the new school would receive a single lump sum, and would have one headteacher, not two. Efficiency savings would be fed back into the overall schools budget for the benefit of all Wirral pupils. The other benefits noted in paragraph 2.3 would also apply.

Numbers on roll across the Infant and Junior schools are projected to grow by about 6% over the next five years, but this is well within the capacities of the existing buildings. Based on projected numbers, a primary school would have 615 pupils on roll in 2015. It is right that amalgamation of Infant and Junior schools should be considered. The governing bodies of the two schools have indicated that they do not wish to consider amalgamation at this point.

- 3.3 Over the next five years, numbers on roll across the three Upton schools are projected to remain relatively stable. Pupils attending the schools made the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average.

Conclusion

- 3.4 There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change.

4.0 Moreton

- 4.1 In the Moreton small planning area there are five primary schools. Three are community schools, one is Church of England Aided and the other Catholic Aided. All three of the community primary schools have more than 25% surplus places, and two of these, Eastway and Sandbrook, are also within the Wirral policy definition of a small school. The Catholic Aided primary school has recently made internal adaptations which reduced the Net Capacity of the school to below the 25% surplus place category. Across all the schools in this area, surplus places are high at 20.3%.

The following table provides the capacity, current and projected numbers on roll and surplus places for the two schools.

	Eastway	Lingham	Sandbrook
2009 Net Capacity	240	399	210
2010 Number on roll	174	240	142
2010 Surplus place %	27.5	39.9	32.4
2015 Number on roll (projected)	168	266	162
2015 Surplus place % (projected)	30.0	33.3	22.9

- 4.2 The presence and popularity of Christchurch CE Aided Primary School (Moreton) results in low levels of in-zone retention in community primary schools in this area. Eastway Primary demonstrates the highest degree of overlap with other Moreton schools, but in general mobility in this central Wirral area is highest with schools in the Upton, Hoylake and Meols areas. The following table summarises the key destinations of pupils by community catchment zone.

School	In-Zone retention	Christ Church CE	Other significant destinations (above 5%)
Eastway	31%	24%	10% Overchurch Infant/Junior; 9% Lingham; 9% Sandbrook
Lingham	34%	28%	11% Great Meols; 7% Overchurch Infant/Junior
Sandbrook	32%	35%	17% Overchurch Infant/Junior

- 4.3 Children's Centre satellites have recently been introduced at Eastway (in conjunction with the Salvation Army) and Lingham Primary Schools. Eastway Primary is also the site of a designated Special Educational Needs base, and as in a 5th November 2009 report to Cabinet, will also be the site for a co-located Area team, bringing together children's services professionals in one multi-disciplinary team to deliver services to that particular area. It is expected that the internal alterations to accommodate the Area team will reduce the Net Capacity at Eastway, and therefore surplus places at that school. The building at Lingham may lend itself to alterations or partial demolition, which will be considered in order to reduce surplus places at that school.
- 4.4 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to rise by about 9%. This would still leave at least two of the three community primary schools with more than 25% surplus places. Pupils attending the schools made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009, and over a three year average. At Lingham, in 2009 pupils made more than the expected rate of progress.

Conclusion

- 4.5 The alterations at Eastway are expected to have some impact on reducing overall surplus places in this area, and there is scope to remove accommodation at Lingham Primary School which will be considered. There has been careful consideration of this planning area, the outcome of which is that the opinion of officers is that while there is a case for rationalising existing provision, there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change, although the area will be carefully monitored, and a further review carried out in due course or if circumstances change.
- 5.0 **North Wallasey**
- 5.1 The North Wallasey small planning area contains seven primary schools. Five are community schools, and two are Catholic Aided schools. None of these schools have

more than 25% surplus places, and none are small schools under the Wirral policy definition. Overall there were 4.3% surplus places across all seven schools in 2010, within the Audit Commission guidance level.

- 5.2 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to rise by about 2%. The admission numbers at Greenleas, Mount, New Brighton and Liscard Primary Schools have been raised slightly from 2011 onwards to accommodate the projected additional pupils.
- 5.3 Pupils attending all the community schools and Ss Peter and Paul Catholic Primary School made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009 and across a three year average. At Greenleas, in 2009 and over a three year average, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress. At St Albans Catholic Primary, pupils made the expected rate of progress in 2009, but did not make the expected rate of progress over a three year average.

Conclusion

- 5.4 Occupancy levels in North Wallasey are good, and this is projected to continue. It is too soon to say what the impact of the recently approved Joint Church school in Leasowe will be on pupil numbers in North Wallasey, which at present has no Church of England primary school. The opinion of officers is that there is no need at this stage to proceed with consideration of options for change, although the area will be carefully monitored, and a further review carried out in due course or if circumstances change.

6.0 South Wallasey

- 6.1 The South Wallasey small planning area contains six primary schools. Five are community schools, and one is a Catholic Aided school. Three community primary schools and the Catholic Aided primary school have more than 25% surplus places, and one of these, Kingsway, is a small school under the Wirral policy definition. Across primary schools in the area, surplus places are high at 22.6%. There is also a Nursery school in this area – Brentwood Early Years Centre.

- 6.2 Current and projected numbers on roll at the primary schools in this area are as follows:

School	Net Capacity 2009	Current Roll 2010	Projected Roll 2015	Projected Surplus %
Egremont	399	287	269	32.5%
Kingsway	177	99	92	48%
Park	350	309	330	5.6%
Riverside	307	194	140	54.5%
Somerville	486	459	502	0%
St Joseph’s Wallasey	285	204	224	21.6%

- 6.3 Phase 3 of the Primary Places Review resulted in a reduction by one school in this area – Poulton Primary School was closed, and pupils guaranteed a place at Park Primary School, which is now being rebuilt under the Primary Capital Programme.
- 6.4 Analysis of where children live and go to school shows high levels of mobility in this area. Of the four schools with high surplus places, Kingsway Primary and Riverside Primary have the lowest levels of in-zone retention at 36% and 35% respectively, as shown in the table below.

School	In-Zone retention	Significant alternative destinations (above 5%)
Egremont	40%	28% Liscard; 9% Somerville; 6% Riverside; 5% New Brighton
Kingsway	36%	24% Riverside; 21% Somerville 5% Liscard
Riverside	35%	33% Somerville 14% Egremont 5% Kingsway 5% Liscard
St Joseph's Catholic	69% (Catholic choice pupils only)	22% St Albans (Catholic choice pupils only)

- 6.5 Over the next five years, the total number on roll across all the schools in this area is projected to remain stable. As a new build school, Park Primary is likely to continue to be popular with parents.
- 6.6 Pupils attending all the community primary schools made at least the expected rate of progress in 2009 and across a three year average. At Egremont Primary School, pupils made more than the expected rate of progress over a three year average. At St Joseph's Catholic Primary (Wallasey), pupils made the expected rate of progress over a three year average, but made less than the expected rate of progress in 2009.
- 6.7 Despite school re-organisation resulting from Phase 3 of the review, it is clear that surplus places remain unacceptably high at schools in this area, and that while one school is already very small (Kingsway), another is projected to fall into the Wirral policy definition of a small school by 2015 (Riverside). Options for change should be considered.
- 6.8 **A: Closure of Kingsway Primary School**

In this option, Kingsway Primary School would be closed. Places would be allocated to former Kingsway pupils at other local schools according to parental preference, subject to the availability of places and the Key Stage 1 class size limit.

The closure of Kingsway Primary School was raised as a possible option in the previous review of the South Wallasey area under Phase 3 in 2006, but did not proceed to consultation (see 14th December 2006 minute). At that time, the school had 153 pupils. Four years on, there are now just 99 pupils on roll.

At alternative schools within a one mile radius of Kingsway (excluding those in Birkenhead) there were 437 surplus places in 2010. The catchment zone of Kingsway Primary would be divided between the neighbouring primary schools, Riverside Primary, Somerville Primary and Park Primary. At these three schools there are 181 current surplus places across the age range.

Kingsway has a half-time LA designated Foundation 1 (nursery) class, which in January 2010 was attended by 10 pupils. These places would need to be replicated in the local area, for example Somerville Primary School has a pre-school, but no Foundation 1 class, and consideration could be given to extending the official age range at Somerville to incorporate an F1 class, as was the case at Park Primary when Poulton Primary school closed.

The Kingsway site is Council owned, and future uses of the building and/or site could be considered. Any proposed sale of the site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

6.9 **B: Amalgamate Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary School**

In this option, both Kingsway Primary and Riverside Primary would be closed. A new school would then open on either site. Former pupils at both schools would be guaranteed a place at the new school, although some may choose to transfer elsewhere, subject to the availability of places. In 2006 at the last review, the combined roll of the two schools was around 470 pupils. On current numbers on roll, this has now fallen to around 300 pupils, and is projected to fall further to 232 pupils by 2015.

The closure of both schools to open a new school, regardless of site, is likely to involve a statutory competition to establish the operator of the new school, which is expected to be a Foundation school, rather than a community school. Further information about the statutory process, including competitions and Foundation schools is provided in Section 3 of the Cabinet report on Phase 5 of the Primary Places Review on the same agenda.

- **B1: On the Riverside site**

The Net Capacity at Riverside is 307 pupils – this school could accommodate all the pupils from both schools without any major capital works, although the opportunity could be taken to make enhancements.

- **B2: On the Kingsway site**

The Kingsway building would require a three classroom extension to accommodate all the pupils from both schools.

The existing sites of both schools are below the DFE recommended minimum site area for a new school of 232 pupils (based on the combined 2015 projection), although the Riverside site is closest at 80% of recommended size. The Kingsway site is quite restricted at only half the recommended site size.

6.10 It is important to note that the legal decisions in school re-organisation must be made before any commitment to capital works can be made, whether this is a simple refurbishment, minor or major extension, or a whole new school building.

Both sites are Council owned, and future uses of buildings and/or sites could be considered. Any proposed sale of a site would be subject to the regulations on the sale of school playing fields and the Council's planning regulations.

Brentwood Early Years Centre

6.11 Brentwood Early Years Centre is an LA maintained nursery school with 40 full-time equivalent early years places for three and four year olds. In January 2010 there were 52 part-time pupils attending the school (equivalent to 26 full time pupils). The school is also registered with Ofsted to provide 20 full day care places for children aged birth to 5 years, 48 weeks of the year from 8 am to 6 pm, 10 out of school places for 3 to 5 year olds attending the "main" F1 provision, and 12 term-time only crèche places.

6.12 In 2000, the Foundation Stage curriculum was introduced nationally as a distinct phase of education for children aged 3 to 5, with six statutory areas of learning: creative development; physical development; personal, social and emotional development; mathematical development; knowledge and understanding of the world; and communication language and literacy. Guidance makes it clear the importance of continuity and progression across the Foundation stage between F1 (nursery) and F2 (Reception). Across Wirral, just over half of all infant and primary schools have an LA designated F1 class, which allows this continuity to be managed, and eases the transition for pupils into "big school". Some schools have private pre-school provision on site, which while not part of the school, often allows a close working relationship to develop.

6.13 There are three maintained Early Years Centres in Wirral. Two of these, Ganney's Meadow in Woodchurch, and Leasowe Early Years and Adult Learning Centre, are now designated as Children's Centres for their respective areas. The site of the Children's Centre in the South Wallasey area is Seacombe Family Centre. Brentwood is now the only Early Years Centre not to have become a Children's Centre. The size of the school is equivalent to a single Foundation 1 class within a primary school setting.

6.14 There are sound educational reasons to operate continuous Foundation Stage provision through school-based Foundation 1 settings, and when discussing the future of primary education in the South Wallasey area, it is valid to consider whether the needs of the community currently served by Brentwood Early Years Centre could be equally or better met by early years provision within primary schools. On this basis, the following option is recommended for consultation.

6.15 C: Closure of Brentwood Early Years Centre

This option involves ceasing to maintain Brentwood Early Years Centre as a separate Nursery school, whilst maintaining Early Years provision in the local area.

The Decision Makers guidance on the closure of Nursery schools indicates that closure can only be approved if equivalent Foundation 1 places can be created at other local primary schools. For example, Somerville Primary School, to which the majority of former Brentwood pupils transfer when they reach F2, is the location for a pre-school of 26 full time equivalent places housed in a temporary mobile, and has expressed an interest in extending the school's age range to incorporate a full-size F1 class.

Within this option, consultation should include:

- C1 - Maintenance of the Brentwood site as Foundation 1 for Somerville Primary School – effectively Somerville would operate as a split site.

Foundation 1 pupils who would formerly have attended Somerville Pre-School and Brentwood Early Years Centre would be housed at the Brentwood building under the governance of Somerville Primary School – a combined roll of approximately 106 part time Foundation 1 pupils in 2010 – equivalent to 53 full time pupils.

- C2 - Replacing the Foundation 1 provision on the Somerville site.

This option would replace the existing mobile accommodation in use by the preschool with an extension to house the Foundation 1 pupils currently accommodated by both Early Years providers.

A major outcome of the 2007 consultation was the high value placed by parents on the extended facilities provided at Brentwood, such as affordable day care and crèche places, enabling parents to work or attend college, and any option for change should ensure that this facility is not lost.

6.16 Early Years Centres do not form part of the Authority's surplus place calculation, as they cater exclusively for pupils below statutory school age.

However, the Age Weighted Pupil Unit (AWPU) demonstrates that Nursery school places are significantly more expensive to operate than Nursery class places. The following are 2010/11 AWPU for full time equivalent (FTE) child places:

- Nursery class FTE place = £2,546
- Nursery school FTE place = £5,044

This means there are potential revenue savings to be made from changing this Nursery school into a Nursery class, for example reducing institutional costs, single lump sum, single headteacher salary, which would benefit all schools as the released funding is redistributed automatically through

Conclusion

- 6.17 Surplus place levels in South Wallasey are unacceptably high, and this is projected to continue. The position of Brentwood Early Years Centre, whilst not related to surplus places, should also be considered as part of the re-organisation of primary provision in this area – there are sound educational reasons for school-based nursery classes with enhanced continuity in Foundation provision between F1 and F2, as well as financial savings resulting from maintaining fewer institutions which would be recycled automatically to the benefit of all Wirral's children. The opinion of officers is that consultation on these options for change should be considered, as set out above.
- 7.0 **Primary Schools in Special Measures - update**
- 7.1 **Manor Primary School**
- 7.2 On 3rd June 2009 Ofsted placed Manor Primary School in Special Measures, the most serious category of concern. Schools are placed in special measures if they are deemed to be failing to provide learners with an acceptable standard of education and where the people responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.
- 7.3 Under Section 15 of the Education Act 2005, as amended by Part 1 of Schedule 7 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Local Authority has a duty to provide a Statement of Action within 10 working days of a school being placed into an Ofsted category of concern and has met this requirement. Additional support is being given to the school, governor vacancies have now been filled, and at the most recent monitoring visit Ofsted judged the school to be making satisfactory progress. The monitoring report is attached as Appendix C.
- 7.4 The Local Authority has a duty to consider various intervention options when a school enters Special Measures, accordingly, these have been considered in relation to Manor Primary School during Phase 6 of the Review. In the case of Manor Primary School, this includes the scope for the school to be federated. On this basis, all primary schools within a 1 mile radius of Manor Primary were contacted and asked to express their views on the future of the school, with particular reference to entering into a federation with Manor Primary School. Manor Primary and three other primary schools responded with various degrees of interest.
- 7.5 On 28th April 2010, the governing body of Manor Primary School met to consider the options presented. This was followed by a meeting on 20th May 2010 at which the possibility of entering into a hard federation with one of the two schools who expressed an interest was considered. A hard federation under Section 26 of the Education Act 2002 means that the two schools will share a single governing body, whilst maintaining separate budgets, performance reporting and Ofsted inspections. It should be noted that the Authority cannot propose federations between schools – it is a matter for the two governing bodies to decide.
- 7.6 In 2005 when first reviewed, Manor Primary retained 70% of in-zone community/CE choice pupils. In 2009, the level of in-zone retention had fallen to 47%, with significant proportions attending Bidston Village CE Primary School (19%) and Hillside Primary School (8%). The catchment zone for the school was expanded to incorporate part of the former St Oswald's CE Primary School zone following the amalgamation of Vyner Primary and St Oswald's CE Primary Schools to form Bidston Village CE Primary School, and it may be that parents are continuing to follow their traditional patterns of preference as siblings follow through that school.
- 7.7 Wirral policy says that schools begin to experience difficulties when the roll falls below 180 pupils. In January 2010 there were 117 pupils on roll, projected to fall to 105 by 2015. New housing in the area is expected to generate about 20 total additional community choice pupils, although there is little sign of much impact on rolls from the first phase of housing development in Beechwood. Were the school to close, there are approximately 100 empty places at nearby Bidston Village CE Primary School, and a further 50 places at Hillside Primary School, as well as a small number of places at St Paul's Catholic Primary School.

7.8 Federation, if approved by both governing bodies, may help to resolve standards issues at Manor, but there remain high levels of surplus places, and the school will still face the challenges of operating as a small school. This will need to be monitored closely, with the possibility of further action if standards do not improve.

7.9 Well Lane Primary School

7.10 Another school forming part of Phase 5 of the Primary Places Review, Well Lane Primary School in the South Birkenhead planning area, was placed by Ofsted in Special Measures on 9th December 2009. The inspection report is attached as Appendix D.

7.11 As with any school in Special Measures, the Authority has a duty to consider whether the school should be closed. With one exception, Mersey Park Primary, surplus places are relatively high in schools across this area. The table below shows for each school the current Net Capacity, number on roll and percentage surplus, with the projected number on roll and percentage surplus in 2015. Shaded cells indicate 25% or more surplus places.

School	Capacity	2010 NOR	2010 Surplus %	2015 NOR (projected)	2015 Surplus %
Bedford Drive	406	340	16.3	370	8.9
Mersey Park	399	362	9.2	354	11.3
Well Lane	243	153	37.0	178	26.8
Rock Ferry	329	246	25.2	241	26.7
St Anne's Catholic	243	173	28.8	171	29.6

7.12 As demonstrated above, current projections indicate that surplus places are likely to remain high at three primary schools despite projected additional pupils at Well Lane Primary. Well Lane Primary is the base for an Area team in the stand alone block to the rear of the school.

7.13 During Phase 1 of the Primary Places Review in 2005, consultations on the closure of Well Lane Primary school were carried out with stakeholders in the South Birkenhead area. The outcome of that consultation was reported to Cabinet at its meeting of 18th July 2005. At that time, the closure of The Dell Primary School was considered a higher priority, and there were concerns about implications for class sizes at adjoining schools should both The Dell and Well Lane close at the same time.

7.14 When last considered for closure in 2005, 43% of in-zone community and Church of England choice pupils attended Well Lane Primary School, and the governing body made a strong case for retaining the school in order to serve its specific community. In 2009, however, just 25% of community/CE choice children who lived in Well Lane's zone attended the school, which means that 75% attend other community/CE primary schools. Unlike the situation for Manor Primary School, in the South Birkenhead planning area there are many primary schools within a small easily traversed area, and the patterns reflect an increase in parental mobility and parental choice as rolls have fallen. Almost as many pupils in Well Lane's catchment area now attend Mersey Park (25%), and Bedford Drive (21%), as attend Well Lane. Significant proportions also attend Rock Ferry (10%) and Devonshire Park (5%).

7.15 Despite a reduction in the Net Capacity from 351 pupils in 2003 to 243 from 2008, including the location of an Area team into part of the school, surplus places at Well Lane have been consistently high for many years and are projected to continue to be so. There is little further scope for rationalization of the existing building. The budget share per pupil at Well Lane was £4,087 in 2010/2011, above the Wirral average of £3,217.

7.16 In 2006, Ofsted judged Well Lane to require a "notice to improve" with particular reference to children's standards and achievements, the curriculum and attendance. In 2007, the school was judged by Ofsted as "satisfactory", however two years on in 2009 Well Lane has been judged as **Page 72** Special Measures. The school has been placed in an Ofsted category of concern twice in a four year period. The Key Stage 2

2009 contextual value added measure indicates that pupils were not making the expected rate of progress.

7.17 Paragraph 5.12 of the 1st October 2009 report on the Phase 5 area said as follows:

“Factors involved in the inclusion of the closure of Well Lane Primary School in 2005’s consultation remain an issue, and it is right to consider whether the school should continue to be retained. It is recommended not to proceed to consultation on closure of Well Lane Primary School at this time. Standards at the school have improved in recent years, and projections indicate that the number on roll should increase over the next five years, although remaining a small school. The area will require careful monitoring and will be considered again in due course, or earlier if circumstances require.”

7.18 Well Lane’s placement in Special Measures constitutes a change in circumstances requiring a review. Closure of the school is one of the outcomes that must be considered.

7.19 Guidance to decision makers indicates there should be a presumption to approve proposals for closure of a school in Special Measures, subject only to checking that there will be sufficient accessible places of an acceptable standard in the area to accommodate the displaced pupils and meet foreseeable demand.

7.20 In 2010, compared with 153 pupils on roll, there were 256 surplus places at alternative schools within the South Birkenhead planning area alone and 1,092 surplus places at the 26 schools (excluding St Laurence’s Catholic Primary School and Birkenhead High School Academy, and counting Infant and Junior separately) within a 2 mile radius. A list of the 26 schools, their capacity, current and projected roll and surplus places, plus 2009 and three year average contextual value added scores are given at Appendix E. It should be noted that in addition there is existing scope within the current accommodation to raise the admission number at Mersey Park Primary School (57 to 60).

7.21 The decision makers guidance criteria having been met, it is recommended to begin a consultation with stakeholders regarding a proposal for the closure of Well Lane Primary School. This will take place during Autumn term 2010, the outcome of which will then be reported back to Cabinet later in the year.

8.0 Next steps

8.1 If the Council decides to approve any or all of these options which require consultation, this would involve publishing the options within the areas and inviting comments and suggestions from as wide a range of stakeholders as can be practicably achieved. Most critically this would involve the parents and carers of children in the schools potentially affected. Consultation meetings would therefore be held where views can be expressed directly to LA officers and the Cabinet member. We would also invite written comments. The outcome of these consultations would then be reported back to Cabinet for further consideration, as would any further options that had emerged during the process and the consultation.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The recommendations contained in this report include options for the closure and amalgamation of schools, which in turn produce revenue savings, to the benefit of other schools as the funding is re-distributed. In the short term the Authority could be required to fund any staff severance costs following closures and amalgamation but they may be partly or entirely offset by savings.

10.0 Staffing Implications

10.1 There are none arising as a result of this report. If options are approved for consultation, there will be further detailed reports that will set out all the implications.

11.0 Risk assessment

11.1 Failure to address high levels of surplus places and the issues faced by small schools results in a high risk of wasting resources; consequently less funding would be spent directly on children's education, which could impact on standards.

12.0 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

12.1 It is essential to plan school provision across the Authority so that it is both efficient and effective in the interests of all pupils. Consultations on the options set out in this report will need to address very carefully the impact of any preferred options on pupils which are served by the schools concerned.

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 Rationalisation and refurbishment of schools allow the most vulnerable accommodation to be removed and other security improvements carried out.

14.0 Local Agenda 21 Statement

14.1 The provision of efficient and effective education is a vital part of serving local communities; inefficient use of resources is wasteful both in educational and physical resource terms.

15.0 Planning Implications

15.1 The relationship between housing development policy and school place provision is a factor in considering surplus place removal.

15.2 Any proposals that may arise out of options after the consultation and decision making process for school re-organisation would be subject to the usual planning processes.

16.0 Anti-Poverty Implications

16.1 The redistribution of funding released by school reorganisation, in combination with the Authority's intention to realign the schools budget to give higher levels of funding to schools with high levels of deprivation, as well as improved accommodation, goes towards raising aspirations and narrowing the attainment gap for vulnerable groups.

17.0 Social Inclusion Implications

17.1 School re-organisation and transforming accommodation through the Primary Capital Programme and other schemes, provides opportunities to promote joint agency work to promote co-ordinated solutions for pupils and their families. There is scope for community participation in the design process of any new school buildings, raising the school's profile within the community.

18.0 Local Member Support Implications

18.1 The schools specifically mentioned in the report and appendices, and the Wards in which they are situated, which are Seacombe, Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere and Rock Ferry.

19.0 Background Papers

School pupil number returns, January 2010 (Annual Census return to DFE).

School Net Capacity Calculation, July 2009, to DFE requirements.

DFE guidance on Surplus Place Removal

Pupil and Capacity data held by the LA

Recommendations

(1) That consultations be undertaken regarding the following options for change in the South Wallasey small planning area:

- A - Closure of Kingsway Primary School
- B - Closure of Kingsway Primary School and Riverside Primary Schools in order to open a new establishment on the Riverside site (B1) or on the Kingsway site (B2)

- C – Closure of Brentwood Early Years Centre, to be converted to Early Years provision governed by Somerville Primary School either in situ on the Brentwood site (C1), or in new accommodation on the Somerville site (C2).
- (2) That consultations be undertaken regarding the closure of Well Lane Primary School in the South Birkenhead planning area, following that school's placement by Ofsted in Special Measures.
 - (3) That the governing body of Manor Primary School be supported in entering a federation, with close monitoring and a further review if standards do not improve.
 - (4) That all of the public consultations should provide opportunities for other options to be brought forward, considered and reported back to Cabinet.
 - (5) That the remaining Phase 6 small planning areas be reviewed again as necessary or through the usual review process.

Howard Cooper

Director of Children's Services

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CABINET

Thursday, 19 March 2009

<u>Present:</u>	Councillor	S Foulkes (Chair)	
	Councillors	S Holbrook G Davies P Davies G Gardiner S Kelly	M McLaughlin R Moon J Quinn J Stapleton
<u>In attendance:</u>	Councillors	G Ellis JE Green J Hale	I Lewis L Rennie G Watt

387 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting had been printed and published.

Resolved: That the minutes be approved and adopted.

388 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The members of the Cabinet were invited to consider whether they had a personal or prejudicial interest in connection with any of the items on the agenda and, if so, to declare it and state the nature of such interest. The following declarations were made:

All Members of the Cabinet declared a personal interest in Minute 407 (Asset Management Update) due to membership of Joint Management Committee(s) and/or a user of services;

Councillor Stuart Kelly – a personal interest in Minute 403 (Raising Expectations: Enabling the system to deliver machinery of Government changes) due to his employment;

Councillor Simon Holbrook – a personal interest in Minute 416 (Carbon Reduction Commitment) due to his employment;

Councillor Steve Foulkes – a prejudicial interest in Minute 392 (Interim Planning Policy for New Housing Development) due to his employment;

Councillor Phil Davies – a personal interest in Minute 393 (Working Wirral – Working Neighbourhoods Fund) due to his membership of Wirral Metropolitan College Governing Body and as a non-executive director of Wirral PCT, a personal interest in Minute 401 (Area Youth Forum Awards – Recommendations for funding 2008/9) due to his membership of Charing Cross Youth and Community Centre Joint Management Committee, and a personal interest in Minute 402 (Delivering Improved

outcomes for vulnerable children, informed by the Children's Social Care review) due to his membership of the Board of Tranmere Together;

Councillor George Davies – a personal interest in Minute 391 (Secondary School Review: amended consultation options for Phase 1 schools and school status update) due to his membership of governing bodies of schools mentioned within the report and a personal interest in Minute 393 (Working Wirral – Working Neighbourhoods Fund) due to his membership of Wirral Society for the Blind and partially sighted;

Councillor Jean Stapleton – a personal interest in Minute 401 (Area Youth Forum Awards – Recommendations for funding 2008/9) due to her membership of Charing Cross Youth and Community Centre Joint Management Committee; and

Steve Maddox, Chief Executive – a personal interest in Minute 393 (Working Wirral – Working Neighbourhoods Fund) due to his membership of Wirral Metropolitan College Governing Body and Minute 405 (Connexions Transition) due to his membership of the Board of Connexions (Greater Merseyside) Limited.

389 **PROGRESS TOWARDS THE TRANSFORMATION OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES - FINANCIAL ISSUES**

The Director of Adult Services highlighted to members a number of proposed actions regarding financial issues affecting the Department of Adult Social Services. They included Fair Access to Care; fees payable to Residential & Nursing homes, Supported Living Providers and Domiciliary Care Providers and the transfer to the Local Authority of NHS – Wirral (Primary Care Trust) Funding for Learning Disability Services.

The Leader of the Council indicated that he was minded to recommend deferral of part of the recommendation. The Cabinet Member for Social Care and Inclusion indicated that she had requested further information on a number of matters relating to residential and nursing homes and felt it was appropriate that the matter be brought back to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

Councillor McLaughlin moved an amendment, duly seconded and it was -

Resolved: That

(1) with regards to Fair Access to Care Services, the decision to continue to provide social care services to individuals in Wirral who have critical and substantial needs be endorsed;

(2) with regards to Supported Living, to pay £13.18 per hour rate to all providers who have indicated they would accept the proposal and give 3 months notice to terminate contracts with providers who have refused. Work to be undertaken to establish if there is a business case to implement a detailed banded model of needs and fees during 2009/2010. This work to be carried out in consultation with providers and if proven further proposals be brought to Cabinet in order for the model developed to be introduced on 1 April 2010.

findings of careful scrutiny of services following Baby P; the requirements set out in the Children and Young Person's Act 2008, the Children and Young People's Plan, Local Area Agreement and the Council's Corporate Plan. Cabinet's approval was sought to implement the following changes from agreed budget growth of £690,000.

The Cabinet Member for Children's Services and Lifelong Learning welcomed the report and the measures set out in the report which would strengthen the ability of social workers to spend time with children.

Resolved: - That

- (1) the strategy set out in the report be approved;**
- (2) uncommitted 2008/09 ABG (up to £260,100) be carried forward in to 2009/10;**
- (3) the report be referred to Employment & Appointments Committee; and**
- (4) the Director of Children's Services and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management prepare a further report for Cabinet setting out proposed remodelling of legal support for children, in the light of changed circumstances.**

403 RAISING EXPECTATIONS: ENABLING THE SYSTEM TO DELIVER MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT CHANGES

The Director of Children's Services outlined the current stage in preparing for the transition of commissioning and funding of post-16 provision from the Learning and Skills Council to the Local Authority. The full transfer of commissioning and funding of post-16 funding would take place in 2010.

Resolved: -That

- (1) the Stage 2 Application be approved for submission to Government Office North West; and**
- (2) the Director of Children's Services be requested to report back on staffing and financial implications of these changes as they arise.**

404 REVIEW OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PLACES - OUTCOME OF FURTHER CONSULTATIONS ON A JOINT CHURCH SCHOOL IN LEASOWE

Cabinet were advised of the outcome of the further consultation process which had taken place in the Leasowe and Wallasey areas in respect of the option to establish a Joint Church school in Leasowe. The option was previously consulted upon in Spring 2007 during Phase 3 of the Primary Places Review. The report described the option, the responses to it, and made recommendations with regard to statutory proposals in relation to the option.

Resolved – That

(1) the two Diocesan bodies be given all necessary assistance in submitting an application to the Secretary of State in order to seek a waiver of the requirement to hold a competition;

(2) the Director of Children's Services be authorised to take all necessary steps to publish proposals, ensure the prescribed procedures are followed for the closure of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary School and the establishment of a Joint Church school at the Our Lady of Lourdes site, the exact procedure being dependent on the outcome of the application in (1) above;

(3) the published admission number of the Joint Church school be maintained at 25 pupils for a period of three years from implementation, reviewed and amended if preference popularity is deemed to have increased; and

(4) should the Joint Church school be approved and implemented as in (2), the Leasowe area be moved from Phase 6 of the Primary Places Review to Phase 8 accordingly.

405 CONNEXIONS TRANSITION

The Director of Children's Services presented a report which provided the Cabinet with information on the arrangements for the future commissioning of Connexions Services.

Resolved: - That

(1) the existing contract with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership be amended to cover the period to 30th September 2009, pending the completion of procurement processes;

(2) the new contract for 'connexions services' cover the period 30th September 2009 to 31st March 2012 with an option of an extension to the contract for a further period of up to 3 years, but for the contract to accommodate an appropriate break clause in the event of poor performance or reduced financial capacity to commission the service to the level previously agreed;

(3) Halton Borough Council be the lead Authority for procurement of the new arrangements on behalf of the 6 participating Merseyside Local Authorities;

(4) Halton Borough Council becomes the contract holding Authority on behalf of the 6 participating Merseyside Local Authorities from the City Region for the new contract when awarded with the appropriate cross Authority commitments; and

(5) Wirral Council enter into an agreement with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited to extend the current contract to 30 September 2009 provided the other five Merseyside Local Authorities agree to

APPENDIX B

Contents of background information packs

Section 1 - Overall and Comparative

Overview

- Cabinet Reports and Resolutions
- Aerial photograph of the area
- Map showing schools
- Catchment areas of Community Schools
- Catchment parishes of Aided Schools

Wirral data

- School Organisation Plan – Wirral Summary
- Projected Under-16 population

Comparative data

- School Organisation Plan data for each area
- NOR and Surplus Places 2009
- % Surplus places 2009

Section 2 - Individual School Data

For each school:

- Detail page
- Aerial photograph
- NOR 1976 –2009 (1988 to 2009 for Early Years Centre)
- Pupil plot overlaid with catchment areas
- Parental preference by catchment analysis
- Early Years only – Analysis of pupil zone of residence and destination school
- Room plan(s) of the school

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24 March 2010

Mr Nigel Greathead
Headteacher
Manor Primary School
Beechwood Drive
Greenfields
Beechwood
Prenton
Merseyside
CH43 7ZU

Dear Mr Greathead

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Manor Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 and 23 March 2010, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The visit was the second monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures in June 2009. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – **satisfactory**

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – **satisfactory**

Newly Qualified Teachers **may not be appointed.**

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website.

I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of Governors and the Director of Children's Services for Wirral.

Yours sincerely

Eileen Mulgrew
Her Majesty's Inspector

Special measures: monitoring of Manor Primary School

Report from the second monitoring inspection on 22 and 23 March 2010

Evidence

Her Majesty's Inspector observed the school's work, including eight lesson observations and a visit to the Early Years Foundation Stage to observe provision; scrutinised documents; and met with the headteacher, senior leaders, other members of staff, the School Improvement Partner, the local authority officer, three governors and groups of pupils.

Context

Since the monitoring visit in November 2009 there have been some changes to the staffing structure. A member of staff has been appointed to the role of special educational needs coordinator (SENCO), two teachers are currently on sick leave and supply teachers are taking their classes.

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning

Information collected by the school on pupils' progress shows that pupils make uneven progress as they move through the school. Lesson observations and a scrutiny of pupils' work during the inspection show a similar picture. The amount of progress pupils make is directly linked to the quality of teaching they receive. Progress for pupils in Year 1, Year 2 and Year 6 is accelerating due to the stronger teaching they now receive. In these classes, pupils are making better progress in reading, writing and mathematics. As a result, attainment in writing is starting to rise. Despite this, the school is aware that Year 6 attainment in English and mathematics remains below target. This reflects the legacy of these pupils' slow progress during previous years, especially the progress of potentially higher-attaining pupils. Nevertheless, a marked shift for the better in the school's efforts to make up lost ground is emerging. There is now a clear understanding of how high attainment needs to be in order for the school to claim that learning is effective. The inspector saw evidence of improved progress in key areas of learning such as reading. Improvements of this nature reflect the introduction of more robust approaches to the use of assessment to drive up expectations and outcomes. Class teachers throughout the school are starting to closely track the progress their pupils are making in relation to their targets. Consequently, since the last visit, the school has been developing the assessment procedures that are laying the foundations for improved learning. There is still more to do. Progress is not consistently better for all pupils in all classes. The second of a comprehensive termly assessment of progress has just taken place and school leaders can now start to track the progress all

groups of pupils are making. Teachers are developing a more precise understanding of how to assess pupils' progress and have identified where progress is slower for some pupils.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- raise standards in English, throughout the school, particularly in writing – **satisfactory.**

The effectiveness of provision

Although there is some improvement in the quality of teaching, it is still patchy and the absence of two teachers reduces the effectiveness of learning across the school. Local authority officers have continued to work with individual and groups of teachers and teaching assistants. Staff have been very appreciative of this support and guidance. Professional development activities have included 'talk for write' which has improved skills necessary to support pupils as writers. As a result, attainment in writing is starting to improve. Similarly, guidance in using mental mathematics strategies and the emphasis on using correct mathematical vocabulary are supporting improved progress in this subject in Year 6. Thorough planning continues to be used to plan lessons which highlight the learning needs of groups of pupils across the ability range. Some plans are starting to identify the learning pupils will gain rather than describing the activity the pupils will do. As a result, the planned activity becomes a reality and is leading to each group of pupils receiving learning opportunities which more securely match their needs. However, there is still scope for more-able pupils to be challenged to ensure that they reach the levels of which they are capable. Pupils' progress meetings are held each term between each class teacher and headteacher which leads to a more effective use of the rigorous system now used by the school to check on pupils' progress.

Key aspects of teaching have improved since the last visit. Practical, fun activities are more the norm and pupils appreciate this improvement. More pupils are working independently and taking responsibility for their learning, and there is an increase in the use of effective questioning techniques to explore pupils' understanding. For example, during a mathematics focus session in the Early Years Foundation Stage, the teacher asked one child the reason for giving an incorrect answer to a number problem. In so doing, valuable skills for further learning, such as confidence to have a go and thinking more deeply, were being developed. There is scope to develop staff questioning techniques even further to probe pupils' thinking more precisely. Teaching assistants contribute more effectively to pupils' learning. They more routinely check on pupils' progress in lessons, as well as taking groups and individual pupils for intervention work. In some instances, the skills of the teaching assistants are drawn on in sharing with the class what the group and individuals have achieved or to work with more-able pupils, but this is not characteristically so. Teachers have responded to support from local authority officers and use effective strategies for tackling low level disruption and use prompts to ensure that learning is maintained. The time teachers spend talking to pupils prior to setting the task has decreased although this is inconsistent across the school. Evidence shows that pupils are



expected to use their writing skills in other subjects, for example, to record investigations in science in Year 4. However, in some instances chances for pupils to write are being missed as teachers use photocopied sheets for pupils to complete a task. Through the recent work of the SENCO, there is an awareness of the need to more precisely match provision to support the learning of individual pupils with special educational needs more precisely.

Since the last inspection the school has reviewed its policy on marking and, although it is early days, inspection evidence showed that the policy is being used consistently throughout the school. The method of using pink to highlight what pupils have achieved and green to identify how pupils need to improve their work is understood by pupils. The practice of peer-marking is starting to grow and this supports pupils in their learning as they identify the strengths and 'next steps' in work of their classmates. Pupils know what they are expected to learn as almost all teachers now make this plain at the start of the lesson. The 'steps for success' are now clearer and pupils can refer to them during the lesson. Staff have received training in assessing pupils' progress from the local authority consultants and these skills are stronger than at the last visit. As a result, they have recognised that the system for marking pupils' work and setting targets for improvement needs to be refined in order to ensure accelerated progress for all pupils. The addition of a display of pupils' writing is a timely one to support the assessment systems, as it shows pupils and staff what is needed to achieve National Curriculum levels from 2C through to 4B.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the quality of teaching so that pupils make at least satisfactory progress and continually build on their prior knowledge – **satisfactory.**
- improve the quality of academic guidance so that pupils have a clear understanding of what they need to do to produce better work – **satisfactory.**

The effectiveness of leadership and management

Since the last visit, senior leaders and governors have continued to engage with the local authority in their determination to raise achievement for all groups of pupils. The Chair of the Governing Body meets regularly with the headteacher. Leaders are building on the foundation established at the time of the last visit and have made the focus on the quality of teaching and learning a priority. With the support of the local authority the school has recruited governors to fill the vacancies that existed at the time of the inspection. Governors have attended training in the use of published assessment information in order to enable them to evaluate the achievement of pupils at Manor compared with that of pupils nationally. Training in self-evaluation of the school and in completing the self-evaluation form is planned for later this term. New governors have brought valuable expertise to the school; subject governors have been appointed and meetings between the subject leaders and the allocated governor have taken place. Governing Body meeting minutes show that governors are holding the school leadership more to account for pupils' progress. Governors



will receive the second set of analysis of progress of pupils in March and are eager to use this information to start to plot progress over time. Parent governors have received training in the role of 'critical friend' to the school and in monitoring the effectiveness of the quality of provision. They have been instrumental in canvassing the views of parents and acting upon their comments. As a result, meetings to discuss the school's approach to discipline and to the teaching of writing have been well attended by parents. The school is aware of the need for Early Years Foundation Stage assessment to be completed in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses in children's progress, and to inform planning more effectively to ensure that learning and progress is continuous throughout the Early Years Foundation Stage and into Key Stage 1.

Due to staff absence the planned extension of the development of the subject leader role to other staff has been postponed. However, two subject leaders have continued to develop in their role. The SENCO has worked closely with officers from the local authority to establish clear areas for improvement and to develop partnerships with external agencies, for example, the educational psychologist. Both the SENCO and the leader for mathematics have attended leadership training provided by the local authority. Through this they have increased in confidence and developed vital skills in the process of monitoring and evaluation. Reports to governors have contained information about the progress each leader is making. For example, the mathematics leader, through using the information collected on pupils' progress, has a better picture of whole-school achievement in that subject. Likewise, the SENCO has identified the need to use 'provision-mapping' to meet the needs of vulnerable groups of pupils better and the need to monitor the effectiveness on pupils' progress of intervention programmes. Despite these improvements, the absence of leaders for other subjects reduces the overall effectiveness of middle leaders.

Progress since the last visit on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness and knowledge of governors and subject leaders so that they are able to evaluate accurately the quality of the school's provision and take steps to raise standards and achievement – **satisfactory.**

External support

The school continues to benefit from the guidance and support of local authority advisers and consultants. The priority of evaluating the impact of staff development on classroom practice, through direct observations and working alongside teachers and pupils, is having a positive affect on teaching and achievement. Similarly, the local authority challenges leaders of the school through the termly meetings held with senior officers of the authority.

Priorities for further improvement

The school should continue its work on the priorities identified in the June 2009 inspection.

Well Lane Primary School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	105050
Local Authority	Wirral
Inspection number	336408
Inspection dates	9–10 December 2009
Reporting inspector	Denise Shields

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

Type of school	Primary
School category	Community
Age range of pupils	3–11
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number of pupils on the school roll	177
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mr Steve Blaylock
Headteacher	Mr Michael Mellin
Date of previous school inspection	9 June 2007
School address	Well Lane Tranmere Birkenhead CH42 5PF
Telephone number	0151 6459844
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Introduction

This inspection was carried out by three additional inspectors. The inspectors visited 15 lessons or part lessons, and held meetings with governors, staff, groups of pupils, parents and representatives from the local authority. They observed the school's work, and scrutinised a range of documentation, including pupils' past and present work, assessment and tracking information, monitoring and evaluation records and additional evidence of the support for vulnerable pupils. Inspectors also looked at whether the school meets statutory requirements with regard to safeguarding. In addition, 45 parental questionnaires and a representative sample of questionnaires returned by pupils were scrutinised. No staff questionnaires were returned.

The inspection team reviewed many aspects of the school's work. It looked in detail at the following:

- pupils' attainment and progress in all year groups, to determine whether it is improving quickly enough
- the quality of learning in all classes to establish whether teaching is sufficiently challenging in meeting the needs of all pupils, in particular, the more able
- the impact of revisions to the curriculum in increasing engagement and improving outcomes for pupils
- the rigour of tracking arrangements and the use of assessment information to promote learning and progress for all groups of pupils
- the quality of arrangements to monitor and secure improvements in pupils' attendance
- the effectiveness of monitoring and evaluation by leaders and managers at all levels to drive improvement.

Information about the school

This is an average-sized primary school. Most pupils are White British. Eligibility for free school meals is more than four times the national average. The proportion of pupils who have special educational needs and/or disabilities is well above average and rising. A Nursery and a Reception class form the school's Early Years Foundation Stage. The school has gained the Healthy School status. Since the previous inspection there has been a high turnover in teaching staff and a new headteacher was appointed in January 2009.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

Inspection judgements

Overall effectiveness: how good is the school?

4

The school's capacity for sustained improvement

4

Main findings

In accordance with section 13 (3) of the Education Act 2005, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) is of the opinion that this school requires special measures. This is because it is failing to give its pupils an acceptable standard of education and the persons responsible for leading, managing or governing the school are not demonstrating the capacity to secure the necessary improvement.

Leadership and management at all levels, including governance, are ineffective. The senior leadership, together with subject leaders, work well as a team but their roles are not clearly established. Monitoring, evaluation and review procedures lack both rigour and any links to improvement planning. Priorities identified by the school are largely driven by a range of representatives from the local authority. The school has not tackled all the improvements required from the previous inspection, despite the widespread additional support it is receiving from the local authority. As a result of the weaknesses in leadership and management, the school's capacity for sustained improvement is inadequate.

Children enter the Nursery with skills that are below those typical for their age. They get a satisfactory start to their education in the Early Years Foundation Stage. The indoor learning areas aid the development of children's skills and knowledge in all aspects of the curriculum. In fine weather, the outdoor area is used continuously throughout the day, but the range of resources are limited and this holds back children's learning and progress if they choose to be outside.

As a result of the weaknesses in teaching, the use of assessment and in the curriculum, pupils do not make sufficient progress during their time at school and achievement for all groups is inadequate. By the end of Year 2 attainment is low and has been for the last five years. By the end of Year 6 attainment in English, mathematics and science is significantly below average, although it is rising steadily and has been for the previous three years. The improvement is because teaching and learning are strongest in Years 5 and 6. Nevertheless, throughout the school teaching is too variable and, despite isolated examples of outstanding practice, much teaching is not effective in fully engaging pupils. Teachers' expectations of what pupils can achieve are not always sufficiently high. Assessment does not always make clear to pupils the progress made or the steps required to improve. The curriculum is organised into themes, but is not adapted to meet the needs and abilities of pupils in Years 1 and 2. In all year groups there are too few opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their basic skills in a range of contexts.

All staff provide caring support for pupils and their families, of whom a significant

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

proportion experience considerable difficulties in their lives. The school has a range of links with outside agencies and these are used well to promote pupils' emotional and social welfare. However, the school does not comply with current statutory requirements for safeguarding and child protection. Attendance is well below average. Most pupils enjoy school, but a small minority say they get bored and do not learn much in their lessons. Behaviour is inadequate. The majority of pupils behave well in lessons and around the school. However, in some lessons the behaviour of a small minority is not managed well enough, too much time is wasted dealing with low-level disruption and, on occasions, poor behaviour. This interrupts the learning and progress of other pupils.

What does the school need to do to improve further?

- Build the school's capacity to work independently of external support by improving the effectiveness of leadership and management at all levels and ensuring that:
 - monitoring and evaluation arrangements are rigorous, outcomes are clearly recorded and addressed and clear links made to the implementation of robust improvement planning
 - assessment arrangements are accurate and the system to monitor pupils' progress is robust so that any underachievement is quickly identified and tackled
 - the governing body regularly reviews and evaluates the school's provision and contributes effectively to helping set its strategic direction
 - safeguarding and child protection arrangements comply with current statutory requirements.
- Raise standards in English, mathematics and science by ensuring that:
 - more activities are provided to increase pupils' eagerness to write in all subjects
 - pupils have more opportunities to improve their speaking skills
 - the presentation of pupils' work is improved, in particular, their handwriting
 - there is a consistent approach to teaching mathematical calculation in all classes with regular opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in a range of contexts
 - pupils have regular opportunities to take part in practical science investigations and have more opportunities to discuss their tasks and record their work independently.
- Improve the quality of teaching to a consistently good or better standard by ensuring that:
 - all teachers have high expectations of what pupils can achieve in lessons
 - assessment information is consistently used to match work precisely to pupils' needs and abilities, in particular, those of the more able
 - all teachers use questioning that helps pupils to think more deeply about

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

their learning

- the management of pupils' behaviour consistently matches the quality of the best practice
- pupils are regularly involved in the assessment of their progress, and that marking indicates how they are doing and what they need to do to improve.
- Improve the curriculum by ensuring that:
 - in Years 1 and 2 it meets the needs and abilities of all pupils
 - there are planned opportunities for pupils to practise their basic skills in a range of contexts
 - sufficient resources are available so that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage can choose activities during learning outdoors whatever the weather.
- Improve attendance by ensuring that:
 - arrangements to monitor attendance are rigorous and robust and steps are taken to encourage good attendance and reduce persistent absence.

Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils**4**

Standards are too low and pupils' achievement is inadequate. The vast majority of pupils enter Year 1 with skills that are below those typical for their age. Throughout Key Stage 1 pupils make inadequate progress and by the end of Year 2, attainment is low. In Key Stage 2 progress is patchy. In Years 5 and 6 it is stronger because teaching is more effective. By the end of Year 6, attainment in English, mathematics and science, although steadily rising, is significantly below average because pupils do not make up for the legacy of past underachievement quickly enough. In all year groups, far fewer pupils than average attain the higher levels because they are not always given sufficiently challenging work to enable them to reach their full potential.

In the best lessons, the pace is lively, activities are practical, matched to pupils' interests and new technology is used. Pupils' attention is captured, they become engrossed in learning, apply themselves to their tasks diligently and their progress speeds up. This is not always the case, however, and too many pupils fail to work effectively and tasks are often incomplete. This is because work is either too easy or too hard for them and they lose interest and give up. Many pupils lack the skills to work independently of an adult. Learning and progress are also less effective when low-level chatter and disruptions as well as occasional poor behaviour divert the teachers' attention. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities make inadequate progress because, although the guidance they receive in lessons from teaching assistants is supportive, tasks are not closely enough matched to their needs.

Pupils enjoy tending the school allotment and helping with the redevelopment of the local park, but in school pupils have few responsibilities. There are no effective channels for pupils to express their opinions and bring about improvements and most pupils do not feel they have an effective voice in school. Inspectors agree. Pupils say they feel safe and are confident there is an adult to turn to if required, but a significant minority

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

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do not feel that incidents of bullying are always dealt with effectively enough. Most pupils are friendly and generally have good relationships with adults. A third of pupils who returned the questionnaires did not feel that behaviour is good enough. A significant minority say their learning is disrupted because of the inappropriate behaviour of others, while many say behaviour is too boisterous at lunchtime because they do not have equipment to play with. Inspectors agree and judge that behaviour is inadequate. Attendance is well below average and for a small minority persistent absence is too high and shows no signs of improvement. Most pupils are not developing the skills to prepare them successfully for their future beyond school.

These are the grades for pupils' outcomes

Pupils' achievement and the extent to which they enjoy their learning	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attainment ¹	4
The quality of pupils' learning and their progress	4
The quality of learning for pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities and their progress	4
The extent to which pupils feel safe	3
Pupils' behaviour	4
The extent to which pupils adopt healthy lifestyles	3
The extent to which pupils contribute to the school and wider community	3
The extent to which pupils develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	4
Taking into account:	
Pupils' attendance ¹	4
The extent of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3

How effective is the provision?

In the best lessons, teachers have good expectations of what pupils can achieve and ensure the presentation of pupils' work is neat and tidy. They make good use of interesting resources and new technology; this increases pupils' enjoyment of their activities. Questioning is effective and makes pupils think more deeply about their learning. Good opportunities are provided for pupils to share ideas about their tasks or

¹ The grades for attainment and attendance are: 1 is high; 2 is above average; 3 is broadly average; and 4 is low.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate

Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

to talk in pairs; this successfully promotes speaking and listening. These features, however, are not consistent in every class and too much teaching is inadequate or barely satisfactory and fails to fully engage pupils. The pace of too many lessons is disrupted when teachers do not manage pupils' behaviour effectively enough. The accuracy with which teachers assess pupils' progress is too variable. Although there are examples of good practice, teachers' use of assessment information to adjust lesson planning is patchy. As a result, work is not tightly matched to the needs of individual pupils. In the best practice, marking is helpful and provides constructive comments to help pupils improve, but this is not so in all classes.

The curriculum has recently been revised but it is too early for amendments to impact on pupils learning and development. Pupils do not have enough opportunities to practise their literacy, numeracy, and information and communication technology skills and this limits the development of their basic skills. The curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 in particular is not modified to meet their abilities and needs. There are satisfactory arrangements for the personal, social and health education of pupils. The breadth of the visits and visitors to enrich learning is satisfactory, but the range of activities available beyond lessons is too limited and pupils, especially girls, indicate they would like a more varied choice.

The school provides good levels of pastoral care and support. Teachers know pupils well. There is good support for individuals and vulnerable groups, which has led to noticeable improvements in their self-esteem. Arrangements to help pupils move from year group to year group and then on to secondary school are good. The school does not take sufficiently rigorous steps to monitor and encourage regular attendance, although there has been some success with a few individuals, Safeguarding procedures do not meet requirements.

These are the grades for the quality of provision

The quality of teaching	4
Taking into account: The use of assessment to support learning	4
The extent to which the curriculum meets pupils' needs, including, where relevant, through partnerships	4
The effectiveness of care, guidance and support	4

How effective are leadership and management?

The senior leadership has established a shared vision among staff to bring about improvement. However, responsibilities are not always clearly defined, and this dilutes the capacity of individuals to drive improvement. Management systems to monitor and evaluate the work of the school are insufficiently rigorous. New arrangements to track and assess pupils' progress, so that any underachievement can be quickly identified are not robust. The school is not using target setting well enough to raise pupils'

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
 Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

achievement. As a result, pupils' achievement and progress are held back. Although very supportive, the governing body does not hold the school to account by regularly checking the quality of provision and contributing to driving school improvement. As a result, it has too little impact on the work of the school. The local authority is providing extensive support in the school, for example, best practice to secure improvements in teaching is being shared, but is yet to impact on the quality of education for all pupils. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to promote equal opportunity and tackle discrimination. Relationships with most parents are satisfactory and they are involved in their children's learning, well-being and in the life of the school. There is a suitable flow of information and their views are regularly, although informally, sought. The role of the home/school link officer is underdeveloped. Although some success has been achieved with individual families, a small minority does not engage with the school. Community cohesion has strengths in pupils' involvement in the local community. However, the school does not evaluate or have a clear plan to improve its contribution to the wider and global community. The effectiveness of safeguarding and child protection procedures is inadequate. This is because record keeping and some referral procedures do not fulfil current statutory requirements. Although there is a suitable number of staff and adequate resources, the school provides inadequate value for money because outcomes for pupils are inadequate.

These are the grades for leadership and management

The effectiveness of leadership and management in embedding ambition and driving improvement	4
Taking into account: The leadership and management of teaching and learning	4
The effectiveness of the governing body in challenging and supporting the school so that weaknesses are tackled decisively and statutory responsibilities met	4
The effectiveness of the school's engagement with parents and carers	3
The effectiveness of partnerships in promoting learning and well-being	3
The effectiveness with which the school promotes equality of opportunity and tackles discrimination	3
The effectiveness of safeguarding procedures	4
The effectiveness with which the school promotes community cohesion	4
The effectiveness with which the school deploys resources to achieve value for money	4

Early Years Foundation Stage

The leadership and management of the ~~Page 97~~ Foundation Stage are satisfactory.

Inspection grades: 1 is outstanding, 2 is good, 3 is satisfactory, and 4 is inadequate
Please turn to the glossary for a description of the grades and inspection terms

As a result of careful analysis, there is an accurate view of what to do next to develop the phase further. Recently, actions are being successfully implemented to bring about improvement. Children enjoy learning and have trusting relationships with adults. Satisfactory welfare procedures are in place and children are kept safe. Planned activities have a suitable balance between those that children can choose for themselves and those led by an adult. In the outdoor area the range of resources is limited. Access is not continuously available when the weather is wet and so children cannot choose for themselves if they want to learn outside. As a result, this holds back children's independent learning and progress. As a result of satisfactory teaching, children make satisfactory progress. By the time they enter Year 1, a few children are working within the expected levels for their age, but the vast majority are below. Observation and assessment are satisfactory. Information is used to plan activities; however, these are not sufficiently tailored to children's needs and abilities, especially those of the more able. Satisfactory relationships have been fostered with parents, who say that they feel welcome in the school.

These are the grades for the Early Years Foundation Stage

Overall effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
Taking into account:	
Outcomes for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The quality of provision in the Early Years Foundation Stage	3
The effectiveness of leadership and management of the Early Years Foundation Stage	3

Views of parents and carers

Inspectors received questionnaire responses from 45 parents which represents around 20% of the total. Analysis of responses indicates that in the main parents are happy with their children's experience at school and their children enjoy school. Most parents felt the school encouraged their children to live healthy lifestyles; inspectors endorse this view. The majority indicated that they thought teaching is good, their children are making enough progress and the school keeps their children safe. Inspectors do not agree and judge that teaching could be better and pupils should make more progress. Inspectors also judge that safeguarding and child protection arrangements do not meet current statutory requirements. A few parents expressed concerns about how well the school meets their children's particular needs, the school arrangements to deal with unacceptable behaviour and the effectiveness of leadership and management of the school. Inspectors endorse these views.

Responses from parents and carers to Ofsted's questionnaire

Ofsted invited all the registered parents and carers of pupils registered at Well Lane Primary School to complete a questionnaire about their views of the school.

In the questionnaire, parents and carers were asked to record how strongly they agreed with 13 statements about the school.

The inspector received 45 completed questionnaires by the end of the on-site inspection. In total, there are 177 pupils registered at the school.

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%	Total	%
My child enjoys school	24	53	18	40	1	2	1	2
The school keeps my child safe	26	58	16	36	1	2	1	2
The school informs me about my child's progress	26	58	16	36	1	2	1	2
My child is making enough progress at this school	28	62	13	29	2	4	1	2
The teaching is good at this school	29	64	11	24	1	2	2	4
The school helps me to support my child's learning	29	64	12	27	2	4	1	2
The school helps my child to have a healthy lifestyle	29	64	12	27	1	2	1	2
The school makes sure that my child is well prepared for the future (for example changing year group, changing school, and for children who are finishing school, entering further or higher education, or entering employment)	23	51	16	36	0	0	1	2
The school meets my child's particular needs	25	56	14	31	2	4	2	4
The school deals effectively with unacceptable behaviour	22	49	16	36	3	7	2	4
The school takes account of my suggestions and concerns	22	49	19	42	1	2	1	2
The school is led and managed effectively	23	51	17	38	3	7	1	2
Overall, I am happy with my child's experience at this school	29	64	11	24	2	4	1	2

The table above summarises the responses that parents and carers made to each statement. The percentages indicate the proportion of parents and carers giving that response out of the total number of completed questionnaires. Where one or more parents and carers chose not to answer a particular question, the percentages will not add up to 100%.

Glossary

What inspection judgements mean

Grade	Judgement	Description
Grade 1	Outstanding	These features are highly effective. An outstanding school provides exceptionally well for its pupils' needs.
Grade 2	Good	These are very positive features of a school. A school that is good is serving its pupils well.
Grade 3	Satisfactory	These features are of reasonable quality. A satisfactory school is providing adequately for its pupils.
Grade 4	Inadequate	These features are not of an acceptable standard. An inadequate school needs to make significant improvement in order to meet the needs of its pupils. Ofsted inspectors will make further visits until it improves.

Overall effectiveness of schools inspected between September 2007 and July 2008

Type of school	Overall effectiveness judgement (percentage of schools)			
	Outstanding	Good	Satisfactory	Inadequate
Nursery schools	39	58	3	0
Primary schools	13	50	33	4
Secondary schools	17	40	34	9
Sixth forms	18	43	37	2
Special schools	26	54	18	2
Pupil referral units	7	55	30	7
All schools	15	49	32	5

New school inspection arrangements were introduced on 1 September 2009. This means that inspectors now make some additional judgements that were not made previously.

The data in the table above were reported in The Annual Report of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills 2007/08.

Percentages are rounded and do not always add exactly to 100. Secondary school figures include those that have sixth forms, and sixth form figures include only the data specifically for sixth form inspection judgements.

Common terminology used by inspectors

Achievement:	the progress and success of a pupil in their learning, development or training.
Attainment:	the standard of the pupils' work shown by test and examination results and in lessons.
Capacity to improve:	the proven ability of the school to continue improving. Inspectors base this judgement on what the school has accomplished so far and on the quality of its systems to maintain improvement.
Leadership and management:	the contribution of all the staff with responsibilities, not just the headteacher, to identifying priorities, directing and motivating staff and running the school.
Learning:	how well pupils acquire knowledge, develop their understanding, learn and practise skills and are developing their competence as learners.
Overall effectiveness:	<p>inspectors form a judgement on a school's overall effectiveness based on the findings from their inspection of the school. The following judgements, in particular, influence what the overall effectiveness judgement will be.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The school's capacity for sustained improvement.■ Outcomes for individuals and groups of pupils.■ The quality of teaching.■ The extent to which the curriculum meets pupil's needs, including where relevant, through partnerships.■ The effectiveness of care, guidance and support.
Progress:	the rate at which pupils are learning in lessons and over longer periods of time. It is often measured by comparing the pupils' attainment at the end of a key stage with their attainment when they started.

This letter is provided for the school, parents and carers to share with their children. It describes Ofsted's main findings from the inspection of their school.



11 December 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Well Lane Primary School, Birkenhead, CH42 5PF

Thank you for welcoming us when we came to inspect your school. I enjoyed talking to you all and watching the youngest pupils prepare for their nativity concert. I listened carefully to what you had to say about your school. It is good that most of you enjoy school and know there is an adult who you can ask for help if you are troubled or sad.

We have judged that the school needs additional help to give you a better education and so we have placed your school in 'special measures'. This means that the school will get extra help and support. Inspectors will return regularly to check that the school is making progress. The school should:

- help you all do better and reach higher standards in English, mathematics and science
- improve the work of leaders and managers, including governors, so that they carefully check the school's work and take action quickly to improve matters if they find that something is not right
- improve teaching so that more of it is good or better, make sure you have lots of opportunities to learn new things and ensure younger children are given more outdoor learning activities
- ensure that the teachers help you know what you need to do to improve your work
- look and find ways to work with pupils and their families where their attendance is not good enough
- ensure that some very important pieces of paperwork designed to help keep you safe are completed quickly.

You can all help by trying your best in lessons and coming to school regularly.

Yours sincerely

Denise Shields

Lead inspector

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APPENDIX E SCHOOLS WITHIN A 2 MILE RADIUS OF WELL LANE PRIMARY

	admission number	Net Capacity	ROLL		SURPLUS PLACES			
			Actual 2010	Projected 2015	2010 unfilled	2010 occupancy	2015 unfilled	2015 occupancy
BEDFORD DRIVE	58	406	340	370	66	84	36	91
BRACKENWOOD INFANT	60	196	167	177	29	85	19	90
BRACKENWOOD JUNIOR	65	240	215	237	25	90	3	99
CATHCART STREET	30	210	99	100	111	47	110	48
CHRISTCHURCH CE	34	238	172	188	66	72	50	79
CHURCH DRIVE	40	280	259	256	21	93	24	91
COLE STREET	28	210	113	127	97	54	83	61
DEVONSHIRE PARK	60	420	314	323	106	75	97	77
GROVE STREET	53	402	337	372	65	84	30	92
HIGHER BEBINGTON JUNIOR	80	342	330	307	12	96	35	90
MERSEY PARK	57	399	362	354	37	91	45	89
OUR LADY & ST EDWARDS CATHOLIC	45	315	251	321	64	80	0	102
OTTON ST SAVIOURS CE	37	262	245	251	17	94	11	96
RENTON	60	420	394	400	26	94	20	95
ROCK FERRY	47	329	246	241	83	75	88	73
ST ANDREWS CE	30	210	196	208	14	93	2	99
SANNES CATHOLIC	34	243	173	171	70	71	72	70
ST JOHNS CATHOLIC INFANT	59	180	189	189	0	105	0	105
ST JOHNS CATHOLIC JUNIOR	58	239	216	252	23	90	0	105
ST JOSEPHS B'Head CATHOLIC	59	413	406	411	7	98	2	100
ST WERBURGH'S	30	210	186	204	24	89	6	97
THE PRIORY CE	28	196	195	199	1	99	0	102
TOWN LANE INFANTS	70	214	229	229	0	107	0	107
TOWNFIELD PRIMARY	60	420	403	422	17	96	0	100
WOODCHURCH ROAD	71	497	440	459	57	89	38	92
WOODLANDS PRIMARY	44	308	254	250	54	82	58	81
TOTAL	1297	7799	6731	7018	1092	829		
WELL LANE PRIMARY SCHOOL	41	243	153	178	90	63	65	73

Capacity cells **shaded** indicate 25% or more surplus places.

Schools whose roll exceeds Net capacity count as zero surplus places.

Note that raising the admission number at Mersey Park to 60 will create an additional 21 places at that school.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - JUNE 24th 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

IMPROVING SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION ON WIRRAL – PROPOSALS FOR THE CO-LOCATION OF A MERGED MEADOWSIDE AND FOXFIELD SCHOOL AND A NEW CLARE MOUNT SPECIALIST SPORTS COLLEGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2009 Cabinet gave approval to the merging of Meadowside and Foxfield special schools and their replacement with a new build single special school built on split sites. A new 11-16 provision would be co-located with a local mainstream secondary school and a new 16-19 provision would be co-located with a local further education college – Wirral Metropolitan College.

The re-building of Clare Mount Specialist Sports College is included in the first phase of the authority's Building Schools for the Future Programme.

This report identifies the progress made so far in implementing these proposals and makes recommendations for future action specifically in relation to consulting on potential sites for co-locating the two new schools. Approval of the recommendations will facilitate the scheme remaining within the time scales for the next stage of Wirral's Building Schools for the Future Programme (BSF) – the Readiness to Deliver documentation due later this year.

1. Background

- 1.1 Meadowside and Foxfield are Wirral's two secondary special schools for young people, who experience complex learning difficulties (CLD). CLD describes a range of learning difficulties and disabilities including severe to profound learning difficulties, autism and physical, sensory, motor and medical difficulties. They, therefore, represent some of the most vulnerable young people on Wirral and a group, who will require considerable support during both their school and adult years.
- 1.2 Between them the schools provide for approximately 200 pupils, 65 of whom are in the sixth form. Whilst both schools are well regarded by OFSTED and the local authority the buildings, which they occupy, are not conducive to providing the modern educational facilities the pupils deserve. Also, because of the small size of each sixth form, both schools find it difficult to provide the range of educational and vocational experience demanded by the 14 – 19 curriculum. Hence the decision to merge the two schools and accommodate them in new and purpose built premises.
- 1.3 The proposal to provide split facilities, each co-located with mainstream provision was guided by two main principles 1) the promotion of inclusion and 2) the creation of a developmental pathway for learners through school and into further education, training and, where possible, work. Co-location with Wirral Metropolitan College is particularly key to the latter.
- 1.4 Clare Mount Sports College is the authority's secondary special school for young people with moderate learning difficulties. It is designated for 190 pupils though currently has 204 on role. This is due to increasing numbers remaining on in the sixth form. The authority is working with the school and local college provision to address

this issue.

- 1.5 Over recent years the authority has been working with Clare Mount to seek a re-profiling of its pupil population. This is allied to an increase in resource based provision for pupils with moderate learning difficulties in four of our local mainstream secondary schools, thereby enhancing parental choice, and a desire to reduce significantly the authority's reliance on out of authority provision for some of our more complex youngsters, particularly those with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). It is intended that in the future Clare Mount will provide approximately 100 places for the most vulnerable pupils with moderate learning difficulties and 50 places for pupils with ASD, who previously would have been educated out of authority.
- 1.6 The school building at Clare Mount has been identified as one of the worst of Wirral's secondary school stock and is no longer fit for purpose. Building Schools for the Future (BSF) gives the opportunity to remedy this. Again the authority would wish for any new Clare Mount school to be co-located with a mainstream secondary school. This is partly to do with the criteria laid down within BSF but is more to do with the aspirations for the pupils themselves. The vast majority of Clare Mount's pupils, both now and in the future, will be expected to fully integrate within mainstream society upon leaving school. Co-location will offer opportunities through enhanced inclusion for the pupils to develop the skills they will need in this transition.
- 1.7 For co-location to be effective and for it to achieve the aims set it was needed to be ensured that any mainstream secondary school, which was to be involved would have to do so voluntarily and to share the values and aspirations of the project. To achieve this and in close collaboration with the head teachers and governors of Foxfield, Meadowside and Clare Mount all head teachers of Wirral's mainstream secondary schools were invited to submit expressions of interest in one of the two new special schools being co-located with their own. In all five such expressions of interest were received, which was later reduced to four. These were then considered by a panel consisting of officers of the Children and Young People's Department, the head teachers and chairs of governors of the three special schools and an advisor from the council's planning department. Following this it was to decide to further explore the co-location of Clare Mount with Wallasey School and Meadowside/Foxfield with Woodchurch High.
- 1.8 Further discussions have taken place with the head teachers and governors of all the schools involved and these have now reached the point where this a need to consult more widely, especially with parents/carers, staff and local residents before progressing the projects further.
- 1.9 Discussions regarding the co-location of a 16-19 CLD provision, co-located with Wirral Metropolitan College are still ongoing.

2. Risk Assessment

- 2.1 The most significant risk to both projects, as they are both intended to be funded via the authority's BSF programme, is the withdrawal of central government funding. Work is about to begin on the first stage of the submission/approval process with Partnerships for Schools, which is the production of Readiness to Deliver Document, for which the council has allocated development funding. Progress will be dependent upon the time taken locally to secure agreements and on national timescales and any changes in the BSF programme. Without BSF funding it is difficult to see how these major schemes could be funded.

BSF funding for new projects is currently frozen pending review. The outcomes of this review will guide future action but it is important at this stage that momentum is not lost.

- 2.2 There are further risks associated with obtaining the necessary planning permissions on both sites though current advice is that these are not insurmountable. Before addressing these issues, however, it seems prudent to assess whether there is broad support from key stakeholders for the project through public consultation.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The costs associated with the recommendations of this report are contained within current budgets.

4. Staffing Implications

- 4.1 Whilst there may be staffing implications associated with the reconfiguring of the pupil profile at Clare Mount Specialist Sports College there are none associated directly arising from this report.

5. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

- 5.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

6. Community Safety Implications

- 6.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

7. Local Agenda 21 Implications

- 7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8. Planning Implications

- 8.1 The Woodchurch site may have implications regarding the use of green belt and the maintenance of playing fields. The Wallasey site is identified as lying on a flood plane and issues would need to be resolved with the Environment Agency. Early advice from the planning department would indicate that these issues are not insurmountable.

9. Anti-poverty Implications

- 9.1 The free meals schools index for pupils at all three of the special schools involved in these projects is significantly higher than both the local and national averages. The creation of new build 21st Century co-located schools has the potential to enable pupils to overcome many of the disadvantages they face.

10. Social Inclusion Implications

- 10.01 All three of the special schools work hard to provide inclusion opportunities for their students but are often impeded by the logistics involved. Co-location would greatly enhance the opportunities for inclusion.

11. Local Member Support Implications

11.01 Clare Mount, Foxfield and Meadowside Schools accept pupils from across the borough. Wallasey School and Woodchurch High lie within the wards of Leasowe and Moreton East and Upton respectively.

12. Background Papers

12.01 Improving Primary and Secondary Special School Provision for Pupils with Complex Learning Difficulties 23rd April 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

- (1) Cabinet approve the conducting of a public consultation regarding the potential co-location of an 11-16 new build CLD school on the site of Woodchurch High School, as part of the merger of Meadowside and Foxfield schools, and the potential co-location of a new build Clare Mount school on the site of Wallasey School and approve any subsequent development of the projects through outline scoping and design and addressing of any planning issues.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

IMPROVING SPECIAL SCHOOL PROVISION ON WIRRAL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCE COMPLEX LEARNING DIFFICULTIES - THE FEASIBILITY OF CREATING A 2-19 SPECIAL SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, WHO EXPERIENCE PROFOUND AND MULTIPLE LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In April 2009 Cabinet, amongst other decisions, gave approval for a feasibility study to be undertaken into the possible creation of a 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). This has now been completed and the main findings are as follows;

The study has identified that there are currently 54 children and young people, in the age range 2-19, on Wirral, who might benefit from such a provision. This is in line with national incidence rates.

Whilst the proposal received strong support from parents of children, who attend The Lyndale School, there is little if any support from parents whose children attend the authority's other special schools for complex learning difficulties (CLD).

Given this lack of broad support and the fact that the authority is planning to significantly improve the provision it makes for PMLD children in all its CLD schools it would make the creation of a 2-19 school for PMLD a high risk option, which would be highly unlikely to represent value for money.

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2009 Cabinet received a report on proposals for the development of Wirral's special schools for children and young people who experience complex learning difficulties (CLD) – Elleray Park, Stanley and The Lyndale School at primary and Foxfield and Meadowside at secondary.
- 1.2 CLD refers to those pupils with severe to profound learning difficulties many of whom also experience additional medical/physical difficulties, communication problems, autism and sensory problems. All of these pupils require highly specialised teaching and teaching support as well as therapeutic input from various medical and paramedical services. Many of these children and young people and their families also require social care support.

The report detailed the excellent work being carried out by our 5 CLD schools but also highlighted the limitations placed upon them by the inadequacy of their buildings and put forward proposals as to how this situation might be remedied.

The proposals put to Cabinet were based upon a lengthy and detailed consultation process with all key stakeholders. At the April 2009 meeting Cabinet approved the following;

1. The rebuilding of Elleray Park and Stanley schools, with each new school to be co-located with a mainstream primary school:

2. The merger of Foxfield and Meadowside schools into a new rebuild secondary school with an 11-16 provision being co-located with a mainstream secondary school and a 16-19 provision being co-located with a local FE college – Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC), and;
3. The undertaking of a feasibility study, into the possible creation of an all age, (2-19), school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Proposals 1 and 2 are being progressed and this report relates to action taken on proposal 3.

- 1.3 A feasibility study was undertaken into the creation of a 2 –19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties by a senior officer of the Children and Young People's department, who has extensive experience in this area and a background in research methodology. The study was conducted, in liaison with staff, governors and parents from The Lyndale School, who originally put forward this option, between June and December 2009. The full report of the study is available to members as part of the background papers but the essential findings were as follows.
- 1.4 Following the achievement of an agreed definition of profound and multiple learning difficulties between all interested parties some 72 Wirral pupils who might benefit from such a provision were identified. This figure was later moderated by the application of more finely tuned criteria to 54.
- 1.5 Parents of the 72 children and young people initially identified were invited, either by attendance at consultation meetings or by written submission, to express their views regarding the creation such a provision. Only 14 (22%) of parents responded and the majority of these (70%) were of Lyndale children i.e. those who had made the original proposal.
- 1.6 Whilst Lyndale parents remained supportive of the proposal, other parents who responded were either opposed to it or were equivocal and it was determined that there is little parental support for the creation of a 2-19 provision for PMLD.
- 1.7 Nationally 2-19 provision for such a narrowly defined cohort (PMLD) is highly unusual and a literature research does not reveal any compelling arguments in its favour. Whilst the needs of this extremely vulnerable group require a high degree of specialism, expertise and additional support to ensure that they are adequately met it is by no means clear that they are significantly different from the broader group of CLD pupils in this respect.

In order for such a provision to be educationally viable, 54/55 pupils would be a minimum number i.e. representing approximately 8/9 pupils per key stage (though there would still be significant concerns regarding curriculum delivery, especially in the older age groups, and age appropriate groupings). Current evidence would suggest that this would be difficult to achieve, especially when set against the context of the improvements intended for the rest of the CLD sector. Indeed Lyndale is currently funded for 45 pupils and for the past few years pupil numbers have been in the low 30s. This raises financial concerns, which are detailed in Appendix 1. Enacting such a proposal would, therefore, constitute a high-risk option and would not represent good value for money especially when set against the developments already being progressed in respect of Stanley and Elleray Park Schools.

It is not the view, therefore, of the Children and Young People's Department that the creation of a 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties should be proceeded with.

However, a number of issues have been raised during the course of the feasibility study, which do need to be addressed. Specifically these relate to the provision we make for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties, particularly at secondary level, and the arrangements we have in place for the management of successful transitions.

2. Risk Management

- 2.1 The major risk for the authority in considering the establishment of a 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties is that of making a considerable financial investment in a project, which is then substantially underused. The most appropriate action in this case is, therefore, that of not proceeding.
- 2.2 However, as a consequence of this action there is an associated risk to The Lyndale School in terms of its continuing financial viability and subsequent concerns for parents and staff. In order to manage this risk the authority's officers are in ongoing discussions with the head teacher, governors and parents at The Lyndale regarding its future place within the authority's provision for children and young people with complex learning difficulties.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 Wirral is currently planning to spend approximately £34 million on improving the special education provision it makes for pupils with complex learning difficulties, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties. On current evidence, the additional £4.5-5 million required for the 2-19 option cannot be justified.

4. Staffing, Equal Opportunities/Health Impact Assessment, Community Safety, Local Agenda 21, Planning, Anti-Poverty, Social Inclusion Implications

- 4.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

5. Local Member Support Implications

- 5.1 All of the council's CLD schools accept pupils from all of the Wirral

6. Background Papers

- 6.1 Cabinet report and minutes from April 2009.

Report into "A Feasibility Study into the Creation of an All Age Special School (2-19) for Children and Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD)."

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

1. Cabinet accept the outcomes of the feasibility study, and the advice of the Director of the Children and Young People's Department, that there is no case to be made for the creation of a 2-19 school for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
2. The Lyndale School continues to operate as primary school for children with complex learning difficulties.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

Appendix 1

A Financial Analysis and Forecast regarding the establishment of a 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

In completing the following financial analysis and forecast a number of assumptions have been made viz;

The new 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) would be based upon the current Lyndale School;

That such a school would grow over time from being a primary school for pupils with complex learning difficulties to an all age school for PMLD, and;

Pupil places would reflect the numbers of such pupils identified in the recent feasibility study i.e. approximately 37 at primary age and 17 at secondary age.

The Lyndale School is currently funded for 45 places for children with complex learning difficulties. The annual school budget is:	£ 771,117
Pupil numbers over the past 3 years have been in the low 30s and are currently at 32. This means that the predicted cost per pupil per annum is-	£17,136
Whereas the actual cost is -	£24,097
This represents an annual place funding in excess of pupil numbers of-	£222,767
This excess enables The Lyndale School to provide significantly improved teacher and teaching assistant to pupil ratios – teacher:pupil ratio at Lyndale 1:4.8 and Elleray Park 1:6.8 and TA:pupil ratio at Lyndale 1:1.5 and Elleray Park 1:3.	
If pupil numbers at The Lyndale School were increased to 55 all age PMLD, at a ratio of 2:1 primary:secondary (in line with feasibility study findings) the annual school budget would rise to -	£935,937
If all places were filled then this would equate to an annual cost per pupil of-	£17,017
However, again on the basis of the feasibility study, only approximately 25 places could be guaranteed to be taken up, which would equate to an annual cost per pupil (accrued over time) of -	£37,438
And an increase of the annual place funding in excess of pupil numbers to-	£510,522

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Clearly the above could be mitigated if steps were taken to ensure that all PMLD pupils in future would attend the proposed 2-19 provision. Such steps would, however, fly in the face of expressed parental opinion, would reduce parental choice and potentially contravene the Disability Discrimination Act.

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**Improving Special School
Provision on Wirral for Children
and Young People who
experience Complex Learning
Difficulties**

**A Study into the Feasibility of
Creating a 2-19 Special School for
Children and Young People, who
Experience Profound and Multiple
Learning Difficulties**

Improving Special School Provision for Children and Young People with Complex Learning Difficulties

A Feasibility Study into the Creation of an All Age Special School (2-19) for Children and Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD).

This study was commissioned by the Director of the Department for Children and Young People following a decision made by Wirral Council Cabinet April 2009.

The study was conducted by GP Mount, B.A. Hons. M.Ed. (Educational Psychology). Graham is a registered Practitioner Psychologist (Health Professions Council), and is currently employed as Strategic Development Manager, Participation and Inclusion Branch, Wirral Children and Young Peoples Department. The study was carried out between June and December, 2009.

1. Introduction and Background

Wirral currently maintains five special schools, three primary and two secondary, for children and young people who experience complex learning difficulties. These are Elleray Park, Stanley and The Lyndale at primary and Foxfield and Meadowside at secondary.

Between them these schools provide for a little under 400 pupils, evenly split between primary and secondary. Complex learning difficulties (CLD) is a broad definition and, whilst all of the pupils so described would experience severe to profound learning difficulties, many also experience additional disabilities e.g. autism, physical, health and mobility problems, epilepsy and other medical conditions.

This provision is currently under review as, whilst the physical state of the schools varies, all are old and are finding it difficult to provide modern environments within which the children and young people can learn and develop. Of the 5 only two (Elleray Park and Meadowside) were purpose built as special schools and even then for a range of pupils whose needs were far less complex than those for whom they provide today.

The secondary schools in particular are finding it difficult to respond to the demands of the 14-19 agenda particularly at post 16 and one of the primary schools (Stanley) is not accessible to children who are wheelchair users. Whilst all of the schools work hard to include their children and young people in mainstream environments, in the majority of cases this is hampered by logistical problems, as only one school is currently co-located with a local mainstream school (Stanley School is co-located with Thingwall Primary).

The review of the provision began approximately three years ago with discussions between local authority officers, chairs of governors, head teachers, parents and staff in the five schools. These discussions led to a number of options being considered, which were subjected to public consultation and a subsequent report to Wirral Council's Cabinet in April 2009.

The decision of Cabinet was to approve;

1. The rebuilding of Elleray Park and Stanley schools, with each new school to be co-located with a mainstream primary school:
2. The merger of Foxfield and Meadowside schools into a new rebuild secondary school with an 11-16 provision being co-located with a mainstream secondary school and a 16-19 provision being co-located with a local FE college – Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC), and;

3. The undertaking of a feasibility study, into the possible creation of an all age, (2-19), school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Children and young people, who experience profound and multiple learning difficulties comprise a group within the overall complex learning difficulties cohort who experience the most significant needs. In addition to profound learning difficulties, which means that their developmental progress will be both slow and limited throughout their lives, they also have significant medical, physical, communication and, often, sensory needs, which further inhibit their progress.

Options 1 and 2 (above), where each new school would be purpose built to provide for the full range of learning difficulties and disabilities found within the complex learning difficulty range were put forward as a means to address previously identified limitations of current premises and to maximise parental choice within the bounds of achieving value for money. The creation of fully inclusive CLD schools, accessible to and able to meet the full range of needs found within this group was the Department for Children and Young People's preferred option.

Option 3 was put forward at the request of parents, staff and governors at The Lyndale School as part of the original consultation process but at that time received little support from the wider CLD community. Nonetheless it was not felt to be without merit and it was determined that it should be investigated further.

This report seeks to address the issues raised by option 3.

Background and Rationale for the Creation of a 2-19 School for Children and Young People with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties.

This proposal was put forward by parents, staff and governors of The Lyndale School, as part of the early and informal consultation process.

The Lyndale School was established as a school for primary aged children with complex learning difficulties in September 1999 following the closure of Clatterbridge School. It occupies the site of the previous Glenburn Infants, Eastham, which had been extensively refurbished for the purpose.

Over time the school has moved from being one, which provided for the broad range of children with complex learning difficulties, to one, which has sought to specialise in those with the most complex difficulties. The school is still designated by the Department for Children and Young People as one catering for the full range of CLD pupils.

Similarly over time, whilst overall pupil numbers in the school have reduced, the proportion of those with profound and multiple learning difficulties within the school has increased. In 1999 overall pupil numbers were 59 and the percentage of PMLD pupils (number of pupils = 12) was 20%. In 2008 overall pupil numbers were 33 and the percentage of PMLD (numbers = 24) was 73%. These figures have continued into 2009. The school is funded for 45 pupils and currently has 33 on roll. This change, not entirely supported by the local authority, may cause the school funding problems in the forthcoming consultations regarding the next 3 year funding cycle from 2011 to 2014.

The reasons for this change in pupil profile are complex and due to a number of factors. The number of PMLD pupils has increased nationally over the past decade but has begun to stabilise at approximately 8/9 per 10,000 children. Lyndale's decision to specialise with a particular group of

children has led them to be cautious in admitting the more active and challenging CLD children. As a consequence overall numbers have decreased and the proportion of those with more complex needs has increased. This is also partly due to direct parental preference and to factors noted below.

Stanley School, with 71 pupils on roll and situated in Thingwall, is not physically able to allow access to children with the most complex needs and, therefore, parents within its catchment area may express a preference for The Lyndale School. Stanley currently has one or two pupils who experience profound learning difficulties but who do not experience the additional significant physical and medical needs evinced by many of the Lyndale pupils. As an corollary to this Stanley has tended to take more pupils, who experience autistic spectrum disorders and, as a consequence, has tended to specialise in meeting their needs in addition to meeting the needs of the broader range of children with complex learning difficulties .

Elleray Park School in Wallasey has 75 pupils on roll, 23 of whom who could be described as PMLD. They also have a significant number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and, as such, provide for the full range of pupil need within the broad definition of complex learning difficulties.

As part of the process of how it has developed over the years The Lyndale School have, for some, time been proposing that they should specialise in meeting the needs of Wirral pupils, who experience profound and multiple learning difficulties.

During the complex learning difficulties consultation process, this proposal focused on the creation of a 2-19 school for children and young people with such difficulties. It is envisaged that this school, as proposed by The Lyndale School, would be co-located, provide extended services and, by preference, residential/respice facilities .

The key reasons advanced for this proposal, as compared to the Local Authority's preference for the creation of two new purpose built special schools designed to cater for the full range of need, including PMLD, within the CLD population, were, that it would facilitate;

- The creation of a learning environment, which would be specifically tailored to the needs of pupils with PMLD and which focuses upon their needs for safety, security, and access to additional adult support and medical intervention as and when necessary;
- The creation of a learning environment where children are free to explore and learn beyond the confines of their mobility aids without risk of danger and one which has the capacity to develop their full potential;
- A care environment, which would be sensitive to the individual needs of the children and young people and affords them the dignity to which they have a right; and,
- An holistic environment which would provide the children and young people access to the full range of expert professionals and services targeted at fully supporting them and their families.

The purpose of this feasibility study was to discover whether these aims, with which the Authority does not disagree, can be best achieved by the proposal put forward by the parents, staff and governors of The Lyndale School, i.e. by the creation of a 2-19 school for PMLD, or whether they can be achieved by different means e.g. within an all inclusive CLD school.

Scope and Methodology of the Study

The study set out to answer a number of questions in order to establish whether the creation of a 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties would be;

- Feasible;
- Desirable; and,
- Viable.

These questions sought to address the issues of;

1. Identified potential need – i.e. how many such children and young people are there on Wirral who might benefit from such a provision;
2. Identified potential demand – i.e. of these children and young people how many of their parents would be likely to seek placement in such a provision for their children;
3. What are the educational, social and other arguments for the creation of such a specialist provision?
4. What would be the costs involved in creating and maintaining such a provision. What would be its long-term viability and would it represent value for money for the local authority?
5. Are there other ways in which the aims of The Lyndale School may be achieved.

In order to seek answers to the above questions a number of steps were employed;

Question 1.

To identify potential need it was first necessary to clearly define the range of pupil need it would be intended for the proposed new school to provide, i.e. by the establishment of clear criteria for admission to such a school.

This was achieved by reference to national and local definitions of profound and multiple learning difficulties and by consultation with the head teachers of the five schools for children and young people with complex learning difficulties. These criteria were then discussed and agreed with the governing body of The Lyndale School as the basis for the study, as were its parameters.

The head teachers of the 5 CLD schools were then asked to identify the pupils currently on their role who would fit these criteria.

Question 2.

In order to identify potential demand consultations were held with the parents and carers of the children and young people, who would potentially fall within the criteria for the proposed new school.

Question 3.

To answer question three a literature research was undertaken alongside discussions with the head teachers of the five CLD schools, our local experts, as well as senior researchers from the University of Birmingham and University of Bangor.

Question 4.

With respect to question four, reference was made to the other decisions made by Cabinet for improving special education provision for CLD pupils

on Wirral, the current model for funding of special schools, research into future projections for the incidence of PMLD and into other proposed relevant developments.

Finally, with respect to question four, regard was given to the records of our current CLD schools, comments made by parents and carers regarding their positive points and their shortcomings and ways the latter of these could be addressed through our proposed development programme for the CLD sector.

Question 5

Potential answers here emanated from the totality of the information gained throughout the study, both local and national, and the context of developments planned within Wirral's other CLD schools.

Outcomes of the Study

Identifying Potential Need

The following definition for the proposed new provision was reached by reference to The PMLD Network website, a national organisation, which represents the needs and interests of children, young people and adults with PMLD, national guidelines issued by the DCSF, local definitions which inform the pupil census and special school funding model and consultations with the head teachers of Wirral's five special schools for children and young people who experience complex learning difficulties.

Finally the definition was agreed with the Chair of Governors, Head Teacher and parent representatives of The Lyndale School as the representatives of the parents, teachers and governors from whom this option arose.

Definition/criteria of profound and multiple learning difficulties and disabilities for inclusion within potential cohort for proposed 2-19 provision:

The children and young people who might benefit from or be admitted to a 2-19 school for profound and multiple learning difficulties were agreed to be those who;

- Experience profound or severe to profound learning difficulties i.e. are likely to be functioning at P levels 1-4 throughout their school life. P scales are a means of charting children's early developmental progress prior to entering into national curriculum levels. P1 to P4 represents developmental levels approximately equivalent to 3-18 months. NB The criteria for development as measured by P Scale attainments was deliberately set a level higher than would normally be the case (i.e. from 1-3 to 1-4) to avoid excluding potential pupils.;
- Experience severe communication difficulties
- Experience significant mobility difficulties and/or complex and long term physical disabilities/medical conditions;
- Experience extremely low levels of independence and will require high levels of adult support and care;
- May experience additional sensory difficulties, and;
- Would benefit from a highly specialised learning environment, which provides continuity of education, support and care throughout their school lives.

Children and young people, who present severe and challenging behaviour, whilst they are usually included within the definition of profound and multiple learning difficulties, were excluded.

The last of these criteria, put forward by The Lyndale School as a means of safeguarding the interests of many of the young people for whom they cater, who often have severely limited mobility and may be physically and medically vulnerable, did not meet with universal agreement. This issue will be referred to again later.

A pro-forma listing these criteria was distributed to the 5 CLD schools in September 2009 and head teachers were asked to list those pupils currently on their rolls who might meet the criteria. From the returns the following profiles were obtained.

Number of Pupils per School as of September 2009, who potentially met the criteria.

School	Nos. on roll – school census Oct. 2009	Nos. potentially meeting criteria	Percentage
Elleray Park	75	23	30.7
Stanley*	71	0	0
The Lyndale	33	24	72.7
Foxfield	123	15	12.2
Meadowside	78	10	12.8
TOTAL	380	72	18.9

*This figure is zero because Stanley School is not yet fully accessible to children with the full range of disabilities.

From the above it will be seen that there is a possible need for a specialist provision for children and young people with PMLD for some 72 places, 47 at primary and 25 at secondary, based on current figures.

It is not clear why there is such a discrepancy between the primary and secondary figures and accordingly the returns were further analysed by year group to ascertain whether this had something to do with natural variation within a low incidence population or some other feature e.g. rate of progression of pupils identified early in their lives as PMLD, variations in incidence etc.

Incidence of PMLD by Year Group

Yr	F1	F2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Nos	7	6	8	3	6	3	10	4	1	3	5	4	2	4	4	2

For further comparison the incidence rates over years 7 – 10 were also examined for the previous 5 years with the following results.

Year	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	Total
2008	5	4	1	4	2	5	5	2	28
2007	3	1	4	2	5	7	2	3	27
2006	1	4	2	5	6	2	4	5	29
2005	4	2	5	6	2	4	5	6	34
2004	2	4	6	2	5	5	6	4	34

The above results would suggest that, given the overall low incidence rate, we are looking at a relatively stable population where prevalence diminishes as the children and young people become older.

Consultation with Wirral CYPD Early Years Service indicates that there are potentially 5 PMLD pupils who will be entering the CLD schools over the next year.

Overall these figures would accord with a national reported incidence rate of approximately 8/9 per 10,000 children.

Moderation of Returns

Following receipt of the above data a moderation exercise was undertaken in order to exclude those pupils who did not or would not meet the agreed criteria. Reasons for exclusion were as follows;

Pupils who were described as presenting severe and challenging behaviour;

Pupils who were already achieving above Level P4;

Young pupils, whose current development, would suggest that they would exceed Level P4 within their school career.

This moderation exercise led to the following results;

School	Nos. on roll	Nos. potentially meeting criteria	Percentage
Elleray Park	75	14	18.7
Stanley*	71	0	0
The Lyndale	33	23	69.7
Foxfield	123	8	6.5
Meadowside	78	9	11.5
TOTAL	380	54	14.2

Figures per year group as follows;

Yr	F1	F2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Nos	6	5	8	3	3	2	8	2	0	3	4	3	0	2	3	2

Following moderation it is clear that we are dealing with a potential cohort of some 54 pupils overall, 37 in primary and 17 in secondary.

Thus we currently have approximately 54 pupils on Wirral, who might benefit from a 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

Whether this identification of potential need would convert into a viable school population is, at least in part, dependent upon whether there is a potential demand, i.e. would sufficient parents wish to opt for a 2-19 educational provision for their children.

Identifying Potential Demand

In order to address this question all the parents and/or carers of the children and young people (i.e. 72) identified in the first school based census were invited, via their child’s school, to meetings held in four of the five special schools involved – Elleray Park, The Lyndale, Foxfield and Meadowside.

Parents/carers could attend any meeting they wished and, as the main questions to be addressed were notified to them before hand, they were able to submit their views in writing, attend the meetings, or both. Parents were, therefore, given every opportunity to express their opinion regarding the proposal.

Fourteen parents/carers attended the meetings; 11 at Lyndale, 3 at Elleray Park and none at either Foxfield or Meadowside. These

parents/carers represented 10 children who attend The Lyndale School, 2 who attend Ellera Park and 1 each from Foxfield and Meadowside i.e. approximately 22% of the overall cohort of which 70% were Lyndale parents/carers. Each meeting was facilitated by a senior officer of the CYPD – the author of this report. Five parents/carers submitted their views in writing. Four of these parents also attended one of the arranged meetings.

After an introduction giving the purpose and context of the meeting discussions took place around the following questions, which had been notified in advance to the parents/carers. Each of the meetings lasted between one and one and a half hours.

Questions Raised

These were notified in advance to parents and were:

Wirral Council's Cabinet has asked the Children and Young People's Department to undertake a feasibility study into the possible creation of a 2-19 special school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

1. If the authority created a school for children with such difficulties would you choose such an option for your child?
2. If so, why?
3. If not, why?
4. Most children and young people with PMLD are currently educated within a mixed ability (CLD) school. What do you think are the benefits/ advantages/disadvantages of this arrangement?

5. We are currently intending to build new schools to meet the full range of needs within the complex learning difficulties community, including PMLD. What do you think we need to do to meet any of the concerns you have noted above?

6. Understandably, one of the major concerns for the parents/carers of our most vulnerable children and young people is about transitions – entering school, moving from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to college etc. – do you think these transitions are important, if so what can we do to make these transitions easier for you and, more importantly, your son or daughter?

7. Are there any other points that you feel we should take into account when the Director makes his recommendations to the Council?

Whilst recognising that the sample of parents/carers attending the meetings or returning the questionnaires was not representative of parents/carers as a whole it is still important to report their views as expressed.

At The Lyndale meeting attended by 10 parents/carers of children who attend Lyndale and 1 whose child attended Elleray Park the responses were as follows;

If the authority created a school for children with such difficulties would you choose such an option for your child?

If so, why?

There was almost 100% support for this proposal. The reasons given included:

Issues to do with health and safety for a number of children who are extremely vulnerable

BUT it goes beyond this as, because they are safe, the focus can be on providing them with the most appropriate education with teaching geared to their level of difficulty – without more able children's progress being impeded

Also children have full access to all parts of the school – there is no need for them to be isolated

Developmental progress doesn't match (arbitrary) transition ages.

Allows the creation of a specific and particular ethos and environment, which matches the needs of the children e.g. allows the creation of a multi-sensory environment which wouldn't be possible if too many active children.

If not, why?

Comment that it is possible to meet all children's needs within a 'mixed ability' class but takes great teacher skill.

Response – it may be but I haven't seen it or been convinced.

Most children and young people with PMLD are currently educated within a mixed ability (CLD) school. What do you think are the benefits/advantages/disadvantages of this arrangement?

Would offer no advantages for the children in The Lyndale School. Could possibly see some advantages of being with children with moderate learning difficulties, who are more mature and know how to behave.

Would question at secondary school whether the practice of moving from class to class is appropriate for our children

We are currently intending to build new schools to meet the full range of needs within the complex learning difficulties community, including PMLD. What do you think we need to do to meet any of the concerns you have noted above?

No specific responses to this question. Solution seen as the continuation of Lyndale school as an all age school for PMLD.

Understandably, one of the major concerns for the parents/carers of our most vulnerable children and young people is about transitions – entering school, moving from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to college etc. – do you think these transitions are important, if so what can we do to make these transitions easier for you and, more importantly, your son or daughter?

Transitions at arbitrary ages are not relevant for our children.

Discussed the possible benefits of developmentally rather than chronologically led transitions.

Comments that Wirral's secondary schools are not able to meet the needs of Lyndale children whereas a 2-19 Lyndale would

Are there any other points that you feel we should take into account when the Director makes his recommendations to the Council?

Lyndale works for the children it provides for and the needs of the children should come first.

Just because there are few other 2-19 PMLD schools in the country does not mean it is a bad idea. More of these children are coming through the system and we need to provide for them.

At the Elleray Park meeting which, because only three attended and all were parents from children at different schools, was more informal. The main points raised were;

Only one of the three favoured the 2-19 option and even then her opinion was equivocal.

Whilst fully understanding the views of parents at Lyndale i.e. aiming for an holistic approach to education not curriculum bound, more personalised learning etc. I'm not sure I'd want it for my child. She may be PMLD now but she may progress and I'm happy with Elleray Park.

Given the small number of pupils in the school and in each year group how relevant would the curriculum be. There would be no positive role models who promote progress and no real 6th form.

The primary schools work well but the secondary schools are not so good. My child often got babysat and I question the need to keep moving around.

Transitions need to be managed much better. People need a greater knowledge of the conditions, which affect our children and we need schools of excellence run by experts for all our children.

As stated, 5 written submissions were received. Four were from parents who attended one of the arranged meetings, 3 were from parents of children at The Lyndale School and two from parents with children at Elleray Park.

Responses from the 3 parents of children at The Lyndale School very much followed the themes identified at the meeting held at the school i.e. that the needs of PMLD children are highly specialised and they therefore need to be taught and cared for by specialised staff in a specialised environment. Similar concerns were expressed regarding PMLD children being placed alongside more active and challenging pupils and the risks this might bring to both the children's welfare and learning opportunities.

Of the two parents with children who attend Elleray Park School one was supportive of the idea of a 2-19 special school but would see it as catering for a much broader range of pupils than just PMLD as she felt her daughter benefited from contact and interaction with more able and mobile pupils. The other, whilst appreciating some of the merits of the proposal expressed concerns regarding the lack of opportunities for transition, interaction with more able peers, the absence of positive role models and questioned the dignity of older pupils being educated alongside those who are considerably younger, even if developmentally they are at similar levels.

Interpretation of the outcomes of the parental consultation, with such a low and skewed response rate, is clearly problematic. However, it is typical that when responses to such a consultation/survey are voluntary, responses from those with strong opinions in either direction tend to predominate. It is clear from the outcomes that the majority contribution comes from parents/carers of children attending The Lyndale School, who were, not surprisingly, in favour of the proposal. There was little if any clear support from any of the parents/carers of children and young people who attend the other CLD schools. This mirrors the response received by the Children and Young Peoples Department during their original consultation in the winter of 2008/09.

What are the educational, social and other arguments for the creation of such a specialist provision?

Children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties do, however, present significant challenges to educational, health and social care services in meeting their complex needs.

Whilst developmentally they remain very young throughout their school and adult lives they also experience a range of other complex medical and physical conditions, which may be either chronic or acute. The nature of the children and young people's needs, can, put considerable extra pressure on their families. For these reasons this group of children and young people and their families require highly specialised and well co-ordinated services if they are to progress.

Additionally, as their needs are due to wide range of causes, interventions frequently have to be highly individualised and bespoke thus requiring a high degree of expertise and experience from the staff who work with them. From an educational standpoint a fine balance needs to be struck between attending to medical, physical and care needs and promoting their overall learning and development.

PLMD children and young people are not simply operating at a very low level of development from which they will develop, albeit slowly, along the normal developmental pathways. In addition to their profound learning difficulties, they also experience significant cognitive and neurological difficulties, which can impact upon the way they process information, the way they store and retrieve information, their ability to control their own actions and to make associations between those actions and external events etc. Additionally, like young infants, their arousal and awareness levels may be limited and they may only be receptive to learning at brief and sporadic times. Typically many PMLD children often experience complex medical and care needs, which need to be addressed within whichever educational setting they are placed.

Children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties are, however, still capable of learning and making progress. They learn from their environment, both physical and social, by observation and interaction, and from direct intervention. Approaches such as environmental management (especially using ICT), intensive interaction, adult-infant simulated interaction, multi-sensory stimulation and teaching and motor control programmes have all been shown to be potentially effective ways of promoting development and learning. The impact of these approaches is, however, not specific to this group of children and young people and they are also applicable to children with severe learning difficulties, autism and other conditions, which impede their developmental progress. Moreover, and importantly, all these approaches need to be underpinned by a detailed knowledge of early child development if they are to have maximum effect.

The option for the creation of a 2-19 special school for children and young people, who experience profound and multiple learning difficulties but who do not present challenging behaviours, was put forward by parents, governors and staff at The Lyndale School.

They would argue that the most effective way of creating the level of specialism – environmental, educational and multi-disciplinary – required to fully meet the needs of these pupils is to create a specialist school which provides for such children and young people throughout their school lives.

This is not a view that is shared by others, within the Wirral complex learning difficulty community, nor by the Local Authority. The majority of pupils with PMLD on Wirral are currently educated within the broader CLD schools and indeed the majority of year 6 Lyndale pupils have, over recent years, transferred to either Foxfield or Meadowside, without either parents expressing significant dissatisfaction or the needs of the children and young people being compromised. In recent years both these schools

have been rated good with outstanding features by OFSTED and are well regarded by parents.

Elleray Park, also a school rated as outstanding by OFSTED, consistently has about 80 pupils on roll, approximately 20% of whom are considered the most vulnerable i.e. PMLD. This school accommodates for the needs of PMLD pupils both alongside and within the general CLD population. Again Elleray Park is well regarded by parents.

Identifying other schools in the country, which would be similar to that which is proposed has been difficult. Only three have been identified thus far, one independent and two local authority maintained. One of these has been visited by head teacher colleagues and was not found to be a model we should follow as leadership was poor and the needs of the pupils were not well met.

Whilst many authorities maintain 2-19 special schools these are usually for children and young people exhibiting a much greater range of need e.g. from complex to moderate learning difficulties, including children with autism and difficult behaviours and others with emotional problems. The reasons for creating such schools are often to do with geographical location, economic viability or particular local circumstances.

Educational research regarding the preferred organisational arrangements best suited to meeting the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning is not easily identified. Whilst there is much evidenced based research around effective teaching methodologies e.g. multi-sensory approaches, the use of intensive interaction, approaches to improve motor co-ordination and control and the impact of effective environmental management, there is little, if any, regarding particular organisational arrangements. As noted above both The Lyndale and Elleray Park, who both meet the needs of primary aged children with PMLD, though in rather different ways, are both rated as outstanding by

OFSTED indicating that the aims of The Lyndale School may be met in different ways.

Locally the proposal put forward by The Lyndale School has met with little support from the head teachers or parents of the other four schools for children and young people with complex learning difficulties.

Whilst appreciating the additional needs that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties might present they feel that these can be, and are, met within a broader and more inclusive complex difficulties environment. They feel that it is important for all children and young people to benefit from the presence of other children and young people with a range of abilities and also to benefit from the gains made from moving on to newer and more challenging environments.

They fully recognise parental anxieties regarding change and transition but feel that these can be addressed via a process of improved person centred planning and transition management.

A particular concern was expressed by head teachers of the other CLD schools regarding the proposal to exclude pupils who are particularly active or who present challenging behaviours from the proposed 2-19 provision. This was felt to be in contravention of The Disability Discrimination Act, to be against parental choice and to potentially skew the intake of the other primary CLD schools.

Further concerns expressed by the head teachers of the other four schools were how, on a prediction of a 2-19 school catering for 45-55 children young people across 5 key stages and 15 year groups, appropriate age related groupings could be achieved to the benefit of the children and young people involved. Also, the different incidence rates between the primary and secondary phases would suggest that, some children identified early as PMLD may well make sufficient progress to

transfer to an all ability CLD school at a later but unpredictable time. Such variable transfers could be problematic.

Costs, Viability and Value for Money

Wirral’s Cabinet has already agreed to the rebuilding of Stanley and Elleray Park schools within the primary CLD sector and to the merger of Foxfield and Meadowside Schools into a single 11-19 school built on separate sites. The 11-16 provision to be co-located with a mainstream secondary school and the 16-19 provision co-located with Wirral Metropolitan College.

All these new schools will be built to cater for the full range of special needs found within the complex learning difficulties sector, including PMLD. Thus it may be that any parental anxieties, which are currently felt regarding the provision for PMLD pupils within the CLD sector, will diminish.

In planning for, but not pre-empting any future Cabinet decisions, the new schools will be designed to cater for the current number of pupils within the CLD sector i.e. approximately 200 at primary and 200 at secondary. If it is agreed to build a 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties then the capacity of the new schools can be reduced accordingly whilst assuring that they remain fully accessible to all children and young people within the CLD sector.

All new builds will be completed in accordance with the requirements of Building Bulletin 102, which would require building footprints of;

School	@ approx. £2k per sq. m
Elleray and Stanley	approx. 3500 square metres £ 7,000,000 each
Secondary (11-16) CLD	approx. 5500 square metres £11,000,000
Secondary (16-19) CLD	approx. 4500 square metres £ 9,000,000

More importantly the new builds will incorporate the most modern thinking in terms of creating specialist, learning environments for some of our most vulnerable children and young people and staff will be encouraged to use this opportunity to re-think their approaches to teaching, learning and care. They will, of course, be built with the full range of pupil need in mind.

These build costs are based upon all the current CLD pupils being provided for within the four new provisions. If a decision were made to also create an 11-19 provision for PMLD pupils, approx. 45 –55 places, the cost reductions on the above would be marginal as they would mainly represent a reduction in classroom space i.e. approximately 500 sq. ms @ £2k per sq. m = approx. £1m over the four schools.

To build a new 2-19 special school for PMLD would cost, at a minimum, approximately £4.5 - £5 million. Additional running costs would also be incurred by the creation of duplicate provision, especially at secondary level, over and above that already agreed by The Council's Cabinet.

On current planning a new 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties would be behind the schedule for the other three schools, which would be open and operating in advance of any additional provision – between 2012 and 2014/5. As these schools will be purpose designed and built to cater for the full range of learning difficulties and disabilities within the complex learning difficulty domain, this would be likely to impact upon parent's preferences for The Lyndale School in the future and also any proposed 2-19 provision.

This may particularly be so since the new Stanley School, subject to consultation and approval, will be the first to open, probably in September 2012. Whilst parents of children with PMLD within the catchment area of Stanley are currently more likely to opt for The Lyndale this situation may well change.

This may impact further on the potential numbers for a 2-19 provision.

Are there other ways in which the aims of The Lyndale School may be achieved.

It is clear that the needs of children and young people who experience profound and multiple learning difficulties are complex and require specialist skills and approaches to meet them. What is less clear is the extent to which these needs are unique to pupils with PMLD or general to the broader CLD population.

Equally clear is that The Lyndale School has over a number of years developed many of these specialist skills and approaches and is, rightfully, well regarded by the parents of its pupils and by OFSTED. However, this is also the case for Wirral's other schools who meet the needs of PMLD pupils. Where there are deficits these are more commonly due to the physical environments within which the schools operate rather being down to any lack of staff expertise and experience.

The proposed developments for Wirral's CLD schools will enable the removal of any barriers to the establishment of an excellent range of provisions for all CLD pupils, including those with PMLD, and the creation of specialist learning environments designed to maximise the attainment of each child and young person's potential.

Summary and Conclusions

The Local Authority currently maintains 5 special schools for children and young people with complex learning difficulties, 3 at primary and 2 at secondary. All these schools have, in recent years, been recognised as either outstanding or good with outstanding features by OFSTED.

The Authority has determined that these schools no longer provide the kind of physical environment and amenities appropriate to the needs of

this particular population and, as a result, undertook a public consultation regarding a range of options for future provision.

Included within this range of options was one put forward by parents, staff and governors of The Lyndale School for the creation of a 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

In April 2009 the Council's Cabinet approved the replacement of Stanley and Elleray Park schools for primary aged children with complex learning difficulties with two new build schools, each co-located with a local mainstream primary school. They also approved the merger of the two secondary CLD schools, Foxfield and Meadowside, and the creation of a new build school for children and young people with complex learning difficulties created on two sites. The 11-16 provision is to be co-located with a local mainstream secondary school and the 16-19 to be co-located with a local F.E. (Wirral Metropolitan) College.

The Cabinet also approved the undertaking of a feasibility study into the creation of a 2-19 school for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties. During the Consultation this proposal met with little support from the broader CLD community but was recognised by Cabinet as having merit and deserving of further investigation.

This investigation is now complete and has identified that;

Following a review of the criteria for children and young people, who may be described as experiencing profound and multiple learning difficulties (excluding those with challenging behaviours) the Authority has identified 54 such pupils across its 5 CLD schools.

Twenty three of these pupils currently attend The Lyndale School, 14 Elleray Park, 8 Foxfield and 9 Meadowside. If **all** these and future pupils were to attend a specialist school for PMLD **and** this trend continued into the future then it would be potentially viable.

However, there continues to be little support outside of The Lyndale School for this option. The majority of parents/carers appear satisfied with the provision being made for their children within the all ability CLD schools. The head teachers of these schools, whilst sympathising with the rationale, do not agree that this is the best way to provide for children and young people with PMLD. The low level of attendance from parents/carers of children attending the other schools at the consultation meetings and the small number of written responses would tend to support this view;

Whilst there is strong evidence that pupils with PMLD require a particular and specialised approach to meeting their needs and promoting their development, it is not clear that this is uniquely different from that required by many pupils with complex learning difficulties or that this needs to take place within a separate environment. Indeed local and national evidence would suggest that PMLD pupils make equally good progress and are no more at risk in a mixed ability CLD environment as they do/are within a more specialist setting;

Pupils, who are identified as experiencing difficulties early in life do indeed grow and develop. The reduction in the incidence of PMLD over age would suggest that some children and young people so described, may have to move out of the proposed specialist setting, possibly at unpredictable times, thus providing unnecessary disruption.

Given these findings the creation of a 2-19 school for children with profound and multiple learning difficulties, involving considerable capital investment, would appear to be a high-risk option as for the following reasons;

Less than half of the parents/carers of PMLD children currently attending our CLD schools have indicated that this would be their preferred option, whereas the option, in order to be financially viable, would require almost unanimous support;

This represents the views of current parents. Over the next 3-5 years the provision made for children and young people with complex learning difficulties, including those with PMLD, is likely to improve significantly. This inevitably will impact upon parental preference for schools and is likely to reduce the desire for a 2-19 option even further;

Where concerns have been expressed by some parents, regarding the broader PMLD provision on Wirral, this information may be used by the Authority to enhance this provision without recourse to the provision of additional facilities e.g. by reviewing curriculum, teaching and learning and transition strategies.

It should be noted here that if, subject to recommendations from The Director of Children's Services, Cabinet do not decide to proceed with the creation of a 2-19 school for children and young people with PMLD then this decision, in of itself, will not impact upon the future of The Lyndale School as a 2-11 provider for such children.

Supplementary Conclusions and Recommendations

The above represents the main conclusions in respect of the agreed scope of the feasibility regarding the potential creation of a 2-19 special school with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

However, irrespective of any decisions made in respect of that proposal, a number of issues have been raised during the course of the study, which would merit attention;

Parents have expressed greater satisfaction with the way the needs of their PMLD children are met at primary rather than secondary school. Although this is based upon a small sample and based mainly on perceived futures, this is an issue, which needs to

be addressed, as it impacts upon the confidence that parents have when it comes to secondary transfer;

Transitions, especially between primary and secondary and post 19 need to be re-examined, again to build confidence and certainty;

Wirral, as an whole, does not have a comprehensive policy regarding the best ways to educate, support and care for children and young people with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the broader complex learning difficulties community.

Addressing these issues would serve to build confidence amongst parents regarding the provision made by Wirral for pupils with CLD and PMLD and improve the services delivered to such children, young people and their families. Development of a strategic plan to address these issues should, therefore, be given high priority.

GP Mount

Strategic Development Manager

Participation and Inclusion

December 2009

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

LEAD ACCOUNTABLE BODY FOR INFORMAL ADULT LEARNING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report outlines the role of the Local Authority as Lead Accountable Body for Informal Adult Learning.

1. Background

- 1.1 Informal Adult Learning was funded by the Learning Skills Council, (LSC). In April 2010 the LSC was dissolved and adult learning will now be managed by the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service (WL&FLS) received funding from Learning and Skills Council for Adult Safeguarded Learning split into categories of personal and community development learning, neighbourhood learning for deprived communities and family learning, approximately £876k per year. Wirral Metropolitan College also receives funding for personal and community development learning, approximately £206k per year. All Adult Learning funding comes via the SFA, from April 2010.
- 1.2 In March 2009 a White Paper, *the Learning Revolution* was published. This provides a new vision for Informal Adult Learning, which uses as a catalyst the £210 million (national) Learning and Skills Council funds called Adult Safeguarded Learning with the intention to join with other existing national and local lifelong learning budgets, for example, health, culture.
- 1.3 Local Authorities are invited to take responsibility for the local agenda for this type of learning by becoming a Lead Accountable Body (LAB). This puts them in a key position to be advocates for and facilitators of a local strategic vision for this non-skills learning and build it more effectively into local priorities. The wider benefits of learning are well documented: the new agenda gives us an opportunity to look at informal adult learning and link it to well-being for all. This includes developing a culture of learning in families, responding to demographic changes in the community such as helping older people to keep mentally and physically active and fit, supporting communities through the after-effects of the recession, targeting activities to engage people in local democratic processes, engaging people in new digital technologies, learning for a green future. Informal Adult Learning can often be a stepping stone to gaining new skills and qualifications and complements vocational learning. It is part of a broader learning and skills continuum that can enable citizens to keep learning throughout their lives.
- 1.4 Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service was inspected by OFSTED in January 2010. The overall judgement was "Good", with "Outstanding" for Equality and Diversity. Inspectors commented that "WL&FLS is committed to providing high quality provision for the local community and to widening participation within the borough. The service provides a wide choice of courses in a variety of locations, many in areas of deprivation and are good at meeting the range of interests and needs in the community. The service is very effective at supporting innovative projects that engage

hard to reach learners. Learners are making a very positive contribution to community cohesion. They develop good skills to improve their contribution to family life and employability and skills that benefit the community. Many gain a qualification, often for the first time. Learners praise the impact of their learning and describe warmly the difference it has made to their lives. The learning programmes play a crucial part in enhancing the life experiences and chances of learners. WL&FLS has effective partnerships, particularly with community groups, support organisations and other learning providers.” This demonstrates the wider impact that adult learning has in the local area and shows the value of working in partnership.

- 1.5 A lead accountable body (LAB) will pull together all the partners in the area and develop a local plan for all types of informal adult learning. The key is that the learning meets local needs and supports a range of social and economic priorities of elected bodies. Lead Accountable Body will provide vision and leadership to innovate, by promoting a culture of learning through life. They will lead a strong local partnership ensuring participation actors a wide range of organisations to meet local needs and ensure the local plan secures value for money and levers in additional resources from fees and other sources. The Skills Funding Agency will agree the headline targets in the annual delivery plan, with the LAB.
- 1.6 The LAB will manage all the funds for Informal Adult Learning going into the area. This currently does not happen as some of the budget is paid directly to Wirral Metropolitan College. There is a commitment from the Department of Business Innovation and Skills (BIS) to deregulate this area. This means increased flexibility in how the funding can be used, non-accredited learning will be looked at differently by Ofsted and there are discussions about the type of qualifications needed for those facilitating the informal learning activities. The LAB will have to show how it is leveraging in extra funds in addition to those from the Skills Funding Agency, either in kind, such as through opening up new spaces, or through other means. It will also need to show both targeted activity for those with the most needs and an increase in overall learner numbers. Any increase in provision will have to pay for itself eg through course fees.
- 1.7 In Spring 2010 local authorities were invited to become Lead Accountable Bodies and Wirral has provisionally accepted the role. From 2011-12 funding for Informal Adult Learning will go through the LABs. Throughout 2010-11 the LAB will work with other partners in an area, including those currently receiving this funding, to develop a plan. Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service Steering Group would be best placed to take on the strategic role of the Lead Accountable Body. The Steering Group, which is chaired by Head of Branch Learning and Achievement, currently has strategic oversight of the Lifelong and Family Learning Service and is responsible for monitoring and evaluating the work of the service. The Steering Group would agree the local plan for delivering Informal Adult Learning, evaluate the effectiveness of the IAL plan and ensure that IAL fits into Wirral's longer term strategy. The Steering Group would act as commissioners of IAL if required. The plan will be presented to the Children's Trust for approval.
- 1.8 To support the development of a coherent plan for IAL there needs to be partnership working. Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service already works closely with a diverse range of local partners and leads an established partnership that works well together to identify and meet the needs of adult community learning in Wirral. The Personal and Community Development Learning (PCDL) Partnership has a wide range of members and is chaired by the Principal Manger for Lifelong Learning, who manages Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service. The partnership links into the Wirral Economic Development and Skills Group (WEDS). Members include Lifelong and Family Learning, Colleges, WEA, voluntary and community groups, PCT,

libraries, extended schools, Link Forum, Older People's Parliament and community centres. Partners have successfully bid together for Learning Revolution Transformation Funds for the Cascade engagement project which was very successful and for Community Learning Champions. The partnership aims to include all existing and newly funded providers and key stakeholders of informal adult learning in Wirral.

- 1.9 The PCDL Partnership could inform the planning of Informal Adult Learning at an operational level, by identifying local needs and what the partners already provide. The members of the PCDL Partnership are well placed to identify gaps and how best to work together locally to plan the delivery of Informal Adult Learning. This will contribute to the wider planning of learning and support for communities in Wirral. Some joint planning has taken place between colleges and the Lifelong and Family Learning Service eg discussion around curriculum and priorities. It would help the area to share planning processes and work in partnership to ensure the best use of available funds covering engagement activity and progression routes. A networking event in Adult Learners Week May 2010 will enable partnership working to be further developed.
- 1.10 The Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Steering Group and the PCDL Partnership would have distinct and complementary roles in the planning of Informal Adult Learning
- The PCDL Partnership would propose priorities for an Informal Adult Learning plan based on the needs of the local area.
 - The Wirral Lifelong and Family Steering Group as the Lead Accountable Body will agree the strategy for Informal Adult Learning, commission provision and ensure provision is delivered, monitored and evaluated.
 - The Steering Group will present a report to the Children's Trust recommending the IAL plan and outcomes of commissioning.

2. Financial implications

- 2.1 The Lifelong Learning Service is funded by grant from the Skills Funding Agency.

Funding Aug 2010- July 2011	£
Adult and Community Learning	382,762
Family Learning	314,315
Neighbourhood Learning in Deprived Communities	179,181
<hr/> Total Adult Safeguarded Learning	<hr/> 876,258

- 2.2 From April 2010 funding for Adult Learning will come from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). They will continue to fund existing contracts for their duration. The Lifelong and Family Learning Service is fully funded from the LSC/ SFA grant.
- 2.3 The service works closely with schools, children's centres and other local providers to identify economies that can be made through shared use of premises and shared delivery to meet common goals and has been able to continue to provide adult learning to more learners in targeted areas. Additional funding for the service has been sought from project funding and tenders, although these are more tightly focussed on employment outcomes than the general adult learning provision. The Learning Revolution guidance expects both targeted use of public funds for informal adult learning and an increase in numbers of adult learners across the area. Any increase in provision will have to pay for itself through course fees. Course fees may need to be increased to ensure they cover costs of delivery.

3. Staffing implications

Any additional workload will have to be accommodated from within the existing staff team.

4. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

Adult learning play a valuable contribution to improving the skills of Wirral residents. Much of the provision is located in disadvantaged communities and encourages people back into learning and employment. The OFSTED inspection of Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service judged the service to be outstanding for equality and diversity, with particularly effective initiatives to support people from diverse backgrounds. A diverse range of adult learning opportunities will be maintained to meet local needs. Involvement in learning has a positive effect on health and is particularly beneficial to the well being and good mental health.

5. Community safety implications

No implications.

6. Local Agenda 21 implications

Adult learning plays a valuable role in the well-being of the community through developing the skills and confidence of adults to become involved in their communities.

7. Planning implications

No implications.

8. Anti-poverty implications

Much of the provision is located in disadvantaged communities and encourages people back into learning and employment. Adult learning has a major impact on child poverty and there are clear links between areas of deprivation and those with low levels of adult qualifications.

9. Social inclusion implications

Adult learning contributes to social inclusion and community cohesion in Wirral as reported by OFSTED.

10. Local Member Support implications

Lifelong learning can benefit adults in all wards.

11. Background Papers

“The Learning Revolution” White paper DBIS March 2009

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that

1. Wirral Council acts as the lead Accountable Body and commissioning body for Informal Adult Learning (IAL) in Wirral.
2. The PCDL Partnership supports the planning of Informal Adult Learning in Wirral.
3. A plan for Informal Adult Learning is drawn up, linked into wider planning and local priorities.
4. The final plan is presented back to Cabinet.

Howard Cooper
Director of Children's Services

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CABINET – 24th June 2010

REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES

AIMING HIGH FOR DISABLED CHILDREN- CAPITAL BUDGET PLANS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report makes recommendations to Cabinet for approval for the proposed plans for the Capital Budget as part of the delivery of Aiming High for Disabled Children Project. As part of the Short Breaks element of the project the local authority were awarded a capital grant. The purpose of this grant is to directly support the local areas short break service plan for transforming their short breaks service. This report details the proposed spend for this allocation.

1. Background

- 1.1 For 2009/10 the grant was £252,200 from which £152,363.85 was carried over to the 2010/11 financial year. The award for 2010/11 was £588,500. Therefore the total budget for 2010/11 was £740,863.85; this must be spent by March 2011.
- 1.2 The spend of the capital grant so far has been awarded to organisations who have applied through the small grants process- round one. This is for sums of £2500-£40,000. The assessment process and decisions have been presented and approved through delegated authority.
- 1.3 There is a capital working group that oversees the planning for the capital grants. They make recommendations for the spend that are then ratified by the executive group. The working group consists of:
 - Aiming High for Disabled Children- Project Manager
 - Children and Young People's Department- Capital Programme Manager
 - Medical and Physical Needs Coordinator
 - Children's Centre Programme Manager
 - Principal Administration Officer Special Education Transport
 - Special Headteacher
 - Principal Leisure Manager
 - Service Manager- Children with Disabilities Team
 - 2 parental representatives
- 1.4 It was decided that even though the small grants process is resulting in the development of a lot of worthwhile short breaks the agreed short break strategy included the explicit desire to invest capital funds in to a larger scale initiative to provide a sustainable legacy for short breaks provision on Wirral. Two proposals have been discussed that emerged from early consultation with stakeholders. One was a Resource Centre in partnership with WIRED and one was forming a partnership with Barnstondale Outdoor Centre making developments to their site.

- 1.5 The Resource centre was discussed with WIRED and a draft outline was produced they were asked to submit a formal proposal to Service Manager, Children with Disabilities Team. This proposal was never received. Discussions at an executive group level and with the Wirral Family Consultation Forum concluded that the Resource Centre was a needed requirement for parents but it was not best placed to be funded through the Aiming High for Disabled Children as it does not directly develop short breaks.
- 1.6 The Barnstondale proposal has been discussed with the capital working group, the executive group and with the Wirral Family Consultation Forum and recommended as the preferred option as it is a much needed requirement and directly develops short breaks for families. Appendix One summarises the planning process followed to conclude this recommendation following guidance issued by Together for Disabled Children which includes needs assessment, planning and sustainability.
- 1.7 The summary of the proposals for the capital budget for 2010/11 are as follows:
- (a) Round Two of small grants process- this application process has gone through all stages and been approved by Delegated Authority. The total amount of awards was £165,037.07
- (b) Round Three of small grants process- the closing dates for these applications is 12th July 2010. An estimated figure for spend due to projects deferred from previous rounds and interest so far is £80,000, this will follow same decision making process as previous rounds with final approval being sought via delegated authority.
- (c) Alterations to contract carers homes. The contract carers scheme is a new service that has been developed through the revenue stream of the project. Some of these carers will require alterations to their homes. The estimation for this has been £50,000. Final approval will be sought via delegated authority.
- (d) An investment into the agreed developments at Barnstondale Outdoor Centre. The estimated overall cost of the project is £510,000 and the local authority would contribute a maximum of £450,000. The procurement and project management of these developments will be led by local authority officers, governance arrangements is listed in Appendix One.

These costs are estimated but an overall view of the indicative spend of the capital budget.

2. Financial Implications

Allocation for 2010/11	£588,500
Carry Over from 2009/10	£152,363.85
Total	£740,863.85
Proposed Spend (estimate costs)	
2 nd Round of Small Grants	£165,037.07
3 rd Round of small grants	£75,000
Adaptations to contract carer scheme homes	£50,000
Barnstondale Developments	£450,000
Total	£740,037.07

3. Staffing Implications

No specific implications emerging from this report.

4. Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

4.1 The capital budget must be spent to develop services above and beyond the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

4.2 The legacy of the larger project will provide the Wirral with a fully accessible and inclusive outdoor adventure facility within the borough.

5. Community Safety Implications

5.1 Safety Implications will be covered through the management of the project which will be led by the Local Authorities Technical Services Team.

6. Local Agenda 21 Implications

No specific implications emerging from this report.

7. Planning Implications

Planning permission will be required for the developments at Barnstondale.

8. Anti-poverty Implications

No specific implications emerging from this report.

9. Social Inclusion Implications

All of the proposals funded through the capital budget will enhance short breaks for young people with disabilities and therefore improve social inclusion.

10. Local Member Support Implications

Disabled Children live in all wards.

11. Background Papers

Full Service Offer <http://www.togetherfdc.org/Topics/Fullserviceoffer.aspx>

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To note the thorough consultation and planning process that has been undertaken to devise the indicative spend of the budget.
2. To approve the main areas of spend detailed within the report.

Dawn Tolcher
Project Manager- Aiming High for Disabled Children

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Appendix One **Capital Spend- Barnstondale Proposal**

Together for Disabled Children issued guidance with a set of prompts to support the planning of the capital element of the project.

This has emphasised the need for a '**Strategic approach to needs and provision**', for which they have listed 8 key elements to. By considering each of these elements will assist each local authority with planning how to spend their allocation appropriately.

BACKGROUND

The agreed short break strategy included the explicit desire to invest capital funds in to a larger scale initiative to provide a sustainable legacy for short breaks provision on Wirral, developing a short breaks provision to meet the needs of young people and their families.

PROPOSAL

The Barnstondale Centre became a registered charity in 1988. It provides residential and recreational centre which, in particular, seeks to enrich the lives of socially disadvantaged young people.

The proposal is to develop a third 'log cabin' on the site which will contain bedrooms for young people who require a carer to be present with them during the night, appropriate changing facilities for those with a high level of personal care needs and development of a soft play/sensory area.

Below is an account of the planning process taken in order to reach this proposal following the 8 elements listed in the guidance from Together for Disabled Children.

1. Needs Assessment

Barnstondale is the only facility of its kind based in the Wirral. The site is currently used for some activities for disabled children including activity days, over night stays and school residential trips. This usage by groups of young people with disabilities has increased significantly over the past few years, this has however identified areas of need for developments.

Elements of the facility are not fully inclusive. In particular the changing facilities are not appropriate. A young person with specific personal care needs cannot attend Barnstondale as the facilities would not enable them to be changed in a safe and dignified way.

There is no accommodation that can be used for a young person who requires an over night carer.

The are also limited activities for young children (aged 0-5) and children with complex disabilities and limited mobility; a soft play would be ideal for both groups.

2. Long Term Sustainability

The advantage of investing in this facility is the sustainability it can offer. The charity has evidenced the ability to provide a high quality service with a robust

financial model. The local authority will contribute a maximum of £450,000 to the proposal and Barnstondale will contribute the remaining figure (to be confirmed). All maintenance and running costs will be their responsibility and of no further charge to the local authority. The Aiming High for Disabled Children project will support with the advertisement and promotion of the facility/services and the usage development group will devise a clear usage strategy to ensure it is utilised to full capacity and the model is sustainable. This will enable Barnstondale to build up a core market of users.

3. Link with Revenue Funding

Through the commissioning process for the revenue allocation we awarded a contract to Crossroads for Carers to deliver 6 residential weekends per year at Barnstondale. The feedback from families has been excellent. These weekends have identified two needs:

1. More of these are needed- They have been extremely popular and currently capacity can't meet demand.
2. As detailed above the need for improved changing facilities and accommodation for young people with high personal care requirements is needed to ensure the site is fully inclusive and the weekends can be offered to all young people. At present some young people have not been able to attend.

Some of the feedback from young people has been:

'I done things I thought I could not do'

'I have a rocking time and I wont to come back'

'It was a great experience I got myself a girlfriend'

Cost/Benefit analysis

A further design meeting has confirmed that Barnstondale trustees are agreed to do further fundraising to create the best possible facility to meet the needs assessment. This will exceed the original expectations of this proposal.

A full cost/benefit analysis can not be done at this point but the the £450,000 investment from the Aiming High for Disabled Children capital grant will achieve maximum benefits as the facility will be solely used to offer short breaks to young people with disabilities.

Expenditure must enhance Short break provision

This proposal clearly develops short breaks. The usage development group will finalise this but the original ideas are to offer a portfolio of short breaks, offering choice and range. This will include a mixture from 2 hour sessions to full residential weekends. There will also be mixture of young people attending

independently for which appropriate care will be provided and the opportunity for families to partake in activities as a whole.

Timescales

Timescales for the project have been discussed with the management of Barnstondale Centre and the Local Authority Technical Services team who will manage the project delivery. Both parties are confident developments would be completed by March 2011.

Consultation

Three stages of consultation have been carried out for this proposal:

Phase One- initial outlines

The need for outdoor and residential provision such as available at Barnstondale was first highlighted as a priority for families during the planning phase of the overall project. Families highlighted the following key points:

- Local Authority residential provision is not always appropriate depending on the age, ability and interests of the young people.
- Families find it difficult to find residential stays that can accommodate all of the family.
- The benefits of the site as in location, it is on the Wirral and very near to the local hospital.

Phase Two- Family Fun Day

In July 2009 we held a family Fun day at Barnstondale, at which a total of 55 families and 94 children attended. The feedback on the facility was very positive but highlighted some of the needs for development. Some of the key comments included:

- Well laid out, easily accessible.
- Wonderful, easy to access, well kept and well designed for all abilities.
- Excellent facilities
- 77% of people thought the venue was very good.
- This is an excellent place

- Childs name would like to live here.
- A few more activities for 0 – 5 years old children, soft play would be good.
- More activities for those with more complex disabilities, for example soft play.

Also on this day it was required to transport equipment including hoists and changing beds to the site as some of the care needs of the young people were not available.

Phase Three- Wirral Family Consultation Forum

After a meeting with Barnstondale and the Capital working group an outline of the proposed development was presented to the Wirral Family Consultation forum. The minutes from that meeting stated:

'It was felt that the Barnstondale development best fitted the funding criteria, was an appropriate use of capital and best met children's and families needs.'

On going consultation

This consultation will continue ensuring the key stakeholders are involved in this development through the governance.

The proposed structure to oversee these developments is:

Design Planning Group, members will be:

- Local Authority Technical service representative
- Occupational Therapist from children with Disabilities team
- Local Authority Access Officer
- Special School Headteacher representative
- Parent representative
- Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Manager

Usage Development Committee, members will be:

- Representatives from Barnstondale
- Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Manager
- Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Development Officers
- Special School Headteacher representative
- Parent representative
- Extended Schools representative
- Young person representatives

These two committees will feed into an overall project management committee which will consist of:

- Business manager for Barnstondale
- Aiming High for Disabled Children Project Manager
- Project Manager from Technical Services team

This committee will report to Barnstondale Board of Trustees and Aiming High for Disabled Children Executive Group.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE -
21st JANUARY 2010

REPORT OF THE LITERACY LEVEL SCRUTINY REVIEW PANEL MEMBERS

SCRUTINY REVIEW OF LITERACY LEVELS AT KEY STAGE 2 - FINAL REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides background information regarding the Final Report of the Literacy Level Scrutiny Review.

1. Background

At the meeting of Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th September 2008, the Work Programme for the Committee was agreed. One item on the programme was Literacy levels at the time of the children leaving primary schools (end of Key Stage 2).

At the meeting of Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th November 2008, the Scope Document for the review was agreed. The three spokespersons, Councillors Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle and Tony Smith were also appointed as the members of the Literacy Level scrutiny panel. The panel has been supported by a Scrutiny Support Officer, Alan Veitch.

2. Focus for the Review

The main issues for the review were identified in the Scope document as:

- the review will include both reading and writing.
- why are levels of achievement so much lower in writing than in reading?
- why are there a number of primary schools below the national average for the percentage of children reaching Level 4 for reading at Key Stage 2?
- why are there a larger number of primary schools below the national average for the percentage of children reaching Level 4 for writing at Key Stage 2?
- what interventions are in place in schools where a significant number of children do not reach Level 4?
- what interventions are in place in schools where only one or two children do not normally reach Level 4?
- are schools satisfied with the support that is available?
- is there a gender issue regarding attainment levels?
- how do deprivation levels affect the attainment levels of children?

3. Evidence Gathering

The Panel have used a number of methods to gather evidence for the review:

School visits
School questionnaire
Individual meetings with key officers
Written evidence

The Panel expresses its thanks to all those who have assisted the review by so readily giving their time, experience and suggestions.

4. The Final Report

The Final Report, which includes twenty-four recommendations, is attached for consideration by the Committee.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the contents and recommendations of the Literacy Level Scrutiny Review be supported;
- (2) that the Literacy Level Scrutiny Report be presented to the next appropriate Cabinet meeting;
- (3) and that further reports be presented to this Committee to update members regarding the outcomes of the recommendations.

Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle, Tony Smith
Panel Members
Literacy Level Scrutiny Panel
Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Committee
05/01/2010

**SCRUTINY REVIEW
of
LITERACY LEVELS AT KEY STAGE 2**



**A REPORT PRODUCED BY
THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

WIRRAL BOROUGH COUNCIL
‘LITERACY LEVELS AT KEY STAGE 2’
SCRUTINY REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

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1. **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Over a number of years, councillors have recognised the concern regarding the number of young people who start secondary school without the apparent literacy skills to adequately further their learning. Anecdotal evidence from the secondary school community suggested a significant and stubborn percentage of young people who fail to reach the expected level. This anecdotal evidence was substantiated by the Borough's SATs results which consistently show almost 20% of children not attaining Level 4 in literacy at Key Stage 2. It was, therefore, decided that further scrutiny work should take place to identify the key issues affecting literacy levels of children during their years in primary education.

The bulk of the evidence for the review was gathered from visits to five schools in the Borough plus a questionnaire which was sent to the head teachers of all remaining primary and junior schools in the Borough. The schools are identified in Section 5, 'Methodology for the Review', page 9. The evidence from the schools was supplemented by meetings with key officers and by written submissions / reports.

The initial brief for the Scrutiny Review was to review literacy levels at Key Stage 2. However, it very quickly became apparent to the Panel members that key issues arise not only when a child is in Years 5 or 6 but much earlier in their development. This drove the review towards an investigation of issues from babyhood to Early Years to Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1 and finally to Key Stage 2.

As a point of principle, the Panel believes that the needs of the child should be paramount. This principle should be incorporated into future decision-making processes, which must be based on the assessment of the child's needs. The recommendations incorporate this underlying principle.

During this Review, the visits to schools highlighted excellent work being done by both schools and the Local Authority to raise standards in literacy. The Panel members acknowledge that head teachers of primary schools see this as one of their priorities. The Panel would like to place on record their appreciation to staff in all schools in Wirral and the Local Authority officers who are dedicated to raising the standards in literacy. The Panel members recognise that much has already been achieved and that the Key Stage 2 results for pupils in Wirral are above the national average. However, the Panel members remain concerned regarding the tail of underachievement that affects approximately 20% of Key Stage 2 pupils.

The Scrutiny Panel has made a total of 24 recommendations in this Report, all of which are listed in Appendix 3. However, the Panel consider that the following recommendations are those which should be given the highest priority.



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

A. Measuring the effectiveness of interventions

The Local Authority and schools are jointly encouraged to provide further evidence regarding the success of specific intervention techniques by greater use of objective criteria.
(Reference Recommendation 23, Section 6.6, page 31)

B. The statementing process for Special Educational Needs

A review of the statementing process should take place with a view to the system becoming more flexible and quicker, whilst maintaining integrity. There is a need to identify children at a younger age. Consideration should be given to the development of guidelines which would enable children to be allocated places at Orrets Meadow without having to go through the full statementing process.
(Reference Recommendation 13, Section 6.5.1, page 24)

C. Looked After Children and Literacy

Among Foster Carers, Social Workers and in Residential Homes, a higher priority should be given to literacy. Taking into account the Councillors' role as a Corporate Parent, the Panel members urge that the Child's Annual LAC (Looked After Children) review should emphasise the importance of literacy progress.
(Reference Recommendation 19, Section 6.5.4, page 29)

D. Refresher training for teachers

Greater access to refresher training for established teachers in speaking, listening and reading skills should be provided. Particular support could also be given to newly qualified teachers and Teaching Assistants. This additional training could be provided through twilight sessions organised in School Cluster Groups.
(Reference Recommendation 22, Section 6.6, page 31)

E. Community Involvement in one-to-one reading support for children

The Local Authority should provide guidance and support to schools who would like to encourage greater involvement of parents, businesses and older people in providing one-to-one reading support in schools. In return, schools are encouraged to participate in the scheme.
(Reference Recommendation 5, Section 6.3.1, page 19)

F. Inclusion of Literacy activities in Extended Services

Extended Services should be encouraged to give a higher priority to literacy-based activities.
(Reference Recommendation 9, Section 6.3.6, page 21)

Continued...

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS RELATING TO THE FOLLOWING AREAS (CONTINUED):

G. The Speech and Language Therapy Service

The Panel welcomes the current review of the Speech and Language Therapy Service and encourages greater use of therapists in training and consultancy roles.

(Reference Recommendation 16, Section 6.5.2, page 26)

The Panel strongly supports the principle of the Speech and Language Service being available either in Children's Centres or School Cluster Groups, whichever is most appropriate.

(Reference Recommendation 17, Section 6.5.2, page 26)

Consideration should be given to joint funding (between Wirral NHS and Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council) of the specialist Children's Speech and Language Therapists. The day-to-day management of the Speech and Language Therapists should be within the Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council.

(Reference Recommendation 18, Section 6.5.2, page 26)

H. Improved multi-agency working

The Council is encouraged to promote more multi-agency working, specifically by improving protocols for the sharing of information between health, social care and education professionals. This should apply particularly to 'hard to reach' families.

(Reference Recommendation 12, Section 6.4, page 23)

I. The relationship between Health Visitors and Children's Centres

Health Visitors are a key contact for many families with young children. Wirral NHS and Wirral Borough Council are encouraged to enhance the role of Health Visitors in providing early identification of 'hard to reach' families and subsequent signposting to other services, particularly in Children's Centres. The delivery of the 'Healthy Child Programme' in Wirral provides an opportunity for agencies to work together.

(Reference Recommendation 3, Section 6.2, page 17)

2. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The main objective behind this Scrutiny Review was to ensure that as many children as possible leave primary school with adequate reading and writing skills. Evidence has been sought from both Council officers and the wider school community in order to guide the deliberations of the Panel members. The Panel hopes that this Scrutiny Review has, in a small way, enabled some of the views of those involved in the education of the Borough's children to be heard and to be reflected in future decision-making.

The aspirations for our children and their literacy standards are demonstrated by the following quote from one head teacher:

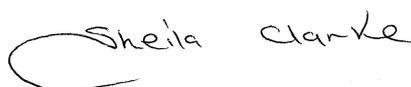
"We understand that we have a duty to improve the life chances of all, especially those who are unable (or unwilling) to help themselves. This has to be the priority".

The Panel would like to thank all those people who willingly agreed to contribute and to provide information to this Review. A special 'thank you' is extended to those officers of both Wirral Borough Council and Wirral NHS who contributed positively to the Review, attended interviews or provided information in other ways. In particular, the Panel members record their thanks to all the head teachers, staff, governors and pupils at the five schools which were visited during the course of the Review:

- Cathcart Street Primary School, Birkenhead - head teacher: Rosemarie Bishop
- Higher Bebington Junior School, Higher Bebington - head teacher: Rick Austin
- Hillside Primary School, Prenton - head teacher: Margaret Steele
- Orrets Meadow School, Moreton - head teacher: Sandra Blythe
- Rock Ferry Primary School, Rock Ferry - head teacher: Jan Lambeth

In addition, the head teachers of 22 schools took the time to complete a questionnaire during the course of the Review. The Panel members have endeavoured to take those views into account during the writing of this Report. The involvement of all of the schools was important as they brought a "non-council" perspective to the Review.

Thank you to all for your participation and contributions to this Review.



Councillor Sheila Clarke (Chair)

5th January 2010

3. PANEL MEMBERSHIP

The Literacy Level Scrutiny Panel was appointed by the (now decommissioned) Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2008. The purpose of the Panel is to carry out a Scrutiny Review of literacy levels at Key Stage 2 in Wirral and make any relevant recommendations for improvements.

The members of the Panel are:

Councillor Sheila Clarke (Chair)



Councillor Tony Smith



Councillor Frank Doyle



4. BACKGROUND AND ORIGINAL BRIEF

For some time, councillors have received officer reports explaining the issues relating to school performance at Key Stages 1 and 2. Throughout that time, the Borough's SATs results have consistently shown almost 20% of children not attaining Level 4 (or better) in literacy at Key Stage 2. It was, therefore, decided that further scrutiny work should take place to identify the key issues affecting literacy levels of children during their years in primary education.

At the meeting of the, now decommissioned, Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16th September 2008, the Work Programme for the Committee was agreed. One item on the programme was Literacy levels at the time of the children leaving primary schools (end of Key Stage 2). It was recognised that the 2008 Key Stage 2 SATs results for English (including Reading and Writing) in Wirral were above the national average. Clearly, there were many examples of good practice in Wirral, which is contributing to the attainment of these results. However, there remained a number of children who do not achieve the 'expected' minimum standard of Level 4 in reading and writing.

At the meeting of the Children's Services & Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 11th November 2008, the Scope Document for the Review was agreed. A copy of the Scope Document is attached as Appendix 1 to this Report. The three party spokespersons (Councillors Sheila Clarke, Frank Doyle and Tony Smith) were also appointed as the members of the Literacy Level Scrutiny Panel.

Among the key issues that members chose to investigate were the following:

- the review will include both reading and writing.
- why are levels of achievement so much lower in writing than in reading?
- why are there a number of primary schools below the national average for the percentage of children reaching Level 4 for reading at Key Stage 2?
- why are there a larger number of primary schools below the national average for the percentage of children reaching Level 4 for writing at Key Stage 2?
- what interventions are in place in schools where a significant number of children do not reach Level 4?
- what interventions are in place in schools where only one or two children do not normally reach Level 4?
- are schools satisfied with the support that is available?
- is there a gender issue regarding attainment levels?
- how do deprivation levels affect the attainment levels of children?

The Panel commenced work in attempting to find answers to these questions.



5. METHODOLOGY FOR THE REVIEW

The Panel has employed a number of methods to gather evidence:

5.1 Visits to Schools

The following schools were visited:

- Cathcart Street Primary School, Birkenhead
- Higher Bebington Junior School, Higher Bebington
- Hillside Primary School, Prenton
- Orrets Meadow School, Moreton
- Rock Ferry Primary School, Rock Ferry

During these visits, issues have been discussed with head teachers, teachers, school governors and school councils. Each of the visits took half a day. All of the visits were very constructive and highlighted issues relevant to the Review.

5.2 'Questionnaire' responses from Schools

Panel members wanted to enable other schools to have an input into the Review. Therefore, a short questionnaire was sent to the head teachers of all remaining primary and junior schools in the Borough. A copy of the questionnaire is attached as Appendix 2 to this Report. In total, responses were received from the following 22 schools:

Barnston Primary	Our Lady of Pity Catholic Primary
Bedford Drive Primary	Pensby Primary
Black Horse Hill Junior	St Albans Catholic Primary
Cole Street Primary	St Peter's Catholic Primary
Dawpool C E Aided Primary	Saints Peter & Pauls Catholic Primary
Devonshire Park Primary	St Werburgh's Catholic Primary
Fender Primary	Sandbrook Primary
Grove Street Primary	Thingwall Primary
Irby Primary	West Kirby Primary
Mendell Primary	Woodchurch Road Primary
New Brighton Primary	Woodlands Primary

5.3 Meetings with Officers

A series of individual meetings has taken place at which the Panel members could discuss relevant issues with key officers from within the Children's Services Department of Wirral Borough Council and Wirral NHS. Prior to the meeting, each officer prepared a short briefing paper.

Meetings were held with the following officers:

- **Pauline Cunningham**, Communications Language & Literacy Development for Early Years, Wirral Borough Council
- **Rosemary Curtis**, Head of Integrated Children's Services, NHS Wirral
- **Sarah Howarth**, Manager of Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service, Wirral Borough Council
- **Catherine Kerr**, Principal Manager for Early Years, Wirral Borough Council
- **Ann Kotwal**, Curriculum Leader for Family Learning, Wirral Lifelong and Family Learning Service, Wirral Borough Council
- **Sue Lang**, Study Support, Wirral Borough Council
- **Marie Lawrence**, Early Years & Primary Education Strategic Service Manager, Wirral Borough Council
- **Jennie Richmond**, English Consultant for Key Stage 1 and 2, Wirral Borough Council
- **Bridie Sharkey**, Principal Manager for English 0–19, Wirral Borough Council
- **Deirdre Smith**, Principal Manager, Study Support, Wirral Borough Council

5.4 Written Evidence

Written evidence was received from a variety of sources including the following:

National evidence

The Rose Report – Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum: Final Report

A World First for West Dunbartonshire – The Elimination of Reading Failure: Tom Burkard

Raising attainment at Key Stage Two – Medway Council Scrutiny Review

Influences and levers on low levels of attainment: A Review of Literature and Policy Initiatives (DCSF Research Brief, April 2009)

Wirral Evidence

'Early Years Provision in Wirral' - Report of the Director of Children's Services to the Children's Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 16th March 2009

Wirral Parenting and Family Support Strategy 2008-2011

Wirral Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, Wirral NHS, September 2008

Annual Performance Assessment of Wirral Borough Council by Ofsted, 17th December 2008

One-to-One Tuition, Report to School standards Sub-Committee, Wirral Borough Council, July 2009

Wirral Borough Council Website – Various pages

Statistical Evidence

Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council (data regarding Key Stage attainment relevant to Wirral, Statistical and Geographical Neighbours and England)

Asset Management Team, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council (data regarding Orrets Meadow attendees)



6. EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction – Wirral in the National Context

The most recent Annual Performance Assessment of Wirral Borough Council's service for children and young people, issued by OFSTED on 17 December 2008, awarded an accreditation of Grade 3 ('Good') for 'Enjoying and achieving'. The letter includes the comment that:

"Good outcomes have been maintained in the area of enjoying and achieving and educational outcomes at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 remain above those of similar councils".

Further comments include:

"Results at Key Stage 2 have (also) improved, particularly in English and Science".

"The Council has maintained the steady improvement of educational results in Key Stage 2,3 and 4.....".

However the report also notes that:

"Key Stage 1 results in reading, writing and mathematics declined in 2007 but at a faster rate than nationally".

A key indicator is the number of children achieving the 'expected' level of 4 at Key Stage 2. Table 1 shows the percentage of children achieving Level 4 (or better) in English, Reading and Writing. (In SATs results, the English result is a combination of the Reading and Writing results). The table compares statistics for Wirral with the national average as well as the performance of a number of statistical neighbours and geographical neighbours.

Table 1: Statistical Neighbours and Geographical Neighbours, Key Stage 2, English, Level 4 and above

All pupils	English %L4+		
	2007	2008	2009 (provisional)
National	80	81	80
Wirral	82	84	83
Statistical Neighbours			
Bury	83	85	84
Darlington	79	80	84
Halton	82	84	80
Lancashire	81	82	81
Leeds	81	81	78
Sefton	85	86	83
St Helens	81	84	83
Stockton-on-Tees	81	84	81
Tameside	81	83	81
Telford and Wrekin	78	77	77
Geographical Neighbours			
Halton	82	84	80
Knowsley	77	80	79
Liverpool	77	80	78
Sefton	85	86	83
St Helens	81	84	83
Wigan	81	83	81

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

On this evidence, Wirral is not the top achiever, but is significantly above average.

Table 2 (below) shows the percentage of children attaining each level at Key Stage 2. This data reports the provisional results for 2009. Again, the Wirral scores are above the national average for each of the English, Reading and Writing classifications. However, it should be noted that the table highlights the differential in attainment in both Wirral and at a national level in reading as opposed to writing.

The lower half of Table 2 also shows a gender split for Wirral children and highlights the difference in the attainment of boys and girls; the differential being higher in writing than in reading. The relative performance of girls and boys is discussed in further detail in Section 6.5.3 (page 27) of this report – ‘The Gender Issue’. It should be noted that the percentage of Wirral girls achieving Level 4 at Key Stage 2 for reading is 6.4% higher than for boys. The differential for writing is even larger at 13.7%.

Table 2: Percentage of pupils achieving each Level, Key Stage 2, English, Reading and Writing, 2009 (provisional) data, National and Wirral comparison

Wirral 2009 (provisional) data		Percentage								Percentage	
		A	D	N	B	L2	L3	L4	L5	L4+	L5+
All pupils Wirral											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.5	3.2	0.5	12.0	49.0	34.0	83.0	34.0
	Reading	0.7	0.1	1.9	3.2	0.0	6.8	36.6	50.8	87.4	50.8
	Writing	0.6	0.1	0.6	3.2	0.0	24.2	46.9	24.4	71.4	24.4
All pupils National											
	English	1	N/A	1	4	1	14	51	29	80	29
	Reading	1	N/A	3	4	0	7	38	47	86	47
	Writing	0	N/A	1	4	0	27	48	19	67	19
Boys Wirral											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.7	4.1	0.7	15.5	50.9	27.4	78.4	27.4
	Reading	0.7	0.1	2.4	4.1	0.0	8.4	38.9	45.4	84.3	45.4
	Writing	0.6	0.1	0.8	4.1	0.0	29.8	45.8	18.9	64.7	18.9
Girls Wirral											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.3	2.3	0.3	8.4	47.0	41.0	87.9	41.0
	Reading	0.6	0.1	1.3	2.3	0.0	5.0	34.2	56.5	90.7	56.5
	Writing	0.7	0.1	0.4	2.3	0.0	18.2	48.1	30.3	78.4	30.3

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Key to columns:	
A	pupils who were absent
D	pupils disapplied from teacher assessment
N	pupils who took the tests but failed to register a level
B	pupils who were working below the level of the test
L2-5	pupils attaining those Levels in the test
L4+	pupils attaining Level 4 or better
L5+	pupils attaining Level 5 or better

The performance of Wirral’s children can be put into further perspective by Table 3, which shows the absolute numbers of children achieving each Level. The table compares statistics for 2008 and the provisional results for 2009. It is worth noting that, of the total cohort of 3,534 in 2009, 2,934 children achieved the ‘expected’ level (or better) in English. For those children and their schools, this is a considerable achievement. However, it should also be noticed that, for a variety of reasons, 600 children did not reach this level. Indeed, this worrying aspect is more pronounced in writing where 1,012 children did not achieve the ‘expected’ level in 2009. In this respect, 2009 is little different from previous years. **It is for this reason that much of the deliberations of the Panel and the focus for the remainder of this Report seeks to identify why the number achieving Level 4 is not higher and what can be done to boost this number in the future.**

Table 3: Numbers of pupils achieving each Level, Key Stage 2, 2008 and 2009 (provisional) data

All Wirral Pupils		Pupil Numbers								
		A	D	N	B	L2	L3	L4	L5	L4+
2008										
	English	35	2	25	100	15	424	1909	1199	3108
	Reading	29	2	71	100	0	214	1403	1886	3289
	Writing	23	2	60	100	0	899	1754	867	2621
2009 (provisional)										
	English	25	2	17	113	18	425	1731	1203	2934
	Reading	24	2	67	113	0	239	1294	1795	3089
	Writing	22	2	21	113	0	854	1658	864	2522

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Key to columns:	
A	pupils who were absent
D	pupils disapplied from teacher assessment
N	pupils who took the tests but failed to register a level
B	pupils who were working below the level of the test
L2-5	pupils attaining those Levels in the test
L4+	pupils attaining Level 4 or better
L5+	pupils attaining Level 5 or better

An historical perspective of the Key Stage 2 results is displayed in Table 4. The percentages achieving each Level are shown for English, Reading and Writing over the previous six years (2004 to 2009). The results show a consistent improvement until the provisional 2009 results which show a decline in the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 or better in English for the first time since 2005.

Table 4: Percentage of pupils achieving each Level, Key Stage 2, English, Reading and Writing, Wirral, Historical comparison (2004-2009)

All Wirral pupils		Percentage									
		A	D	N	B	L2	L3	L4	L5	L4+	L5+
2009 (provisional)											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.5	3.2	0.5	12.0	49.0	34.0	83.0	34.0
	Reading	0.7	0.1	1.9	3.2	0.0	6.8	36.6	50.8	87.4	50.8
	Writing	0.6	0.1	0.6	3.2	0.0	24.2	46.9	24.4	71.4	24.4
2008											
	English	0.9	0.1	0.6	2.7	0.4	10.9	50.7	33.7	84.4	33.7
	Reading	0.9	0.1	1.9	2.7	0.0	5.7	37.8	51.0	88.8	51.0
	Writing	0.7	0.1	0.9	2.7	0.0	23.6	47.8	24.3	72.0	24.3
2007											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.6	3.6	0.5	12.7	48.2	33.6	81.8	33.6
	Reading	0.6	0.1	2.5	3.6	0.0	7.5	36.1	49.6	85.7	49.6
	Writing	0.5	0.1	1.1	3.6	0.0	26.8	48.8	19.1	67.9	19.1
2006											
	English	0.7	0.1	1.2	2.4	0.7	13.7	46.5	34.7	81.2	34.7
	Reading	0.6	0.1	2.9	2.4	0.0	9.1	35.6	49.3	84.9	49.3
	Writing	0.6	0.1	2.2	2.4	0.0	24.8	52.0	17.8	69.8	17.8
2005											
	English	0.8	0.0	1.7	2.5	0.7	13.3	51.5	29.3	80.9	29.3
	Reading	0.6	0.0	3.7	2.5	0.0	7.0	40.6	45.6	86.2	45.6
	Writing	0.7	0.0	2.6	2.5	0.0	29.6	47.9	16.6	64.5	16.6
2004											
	English	1.0	0.1	1.3	2.6	0.8	12.3	50.4	31.5	81.8	31.5
	Reading	0.8	0.1	2.6	2.6	0.0	7.0	43.4	43.4	86.8	43.4
	Writing	0.8	0.1	2.5	2.6	0.0	23.8	49.0	21.2	70.2	21.2

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Key to columns:	
A	pupils who were absent
D	pupils disapplied from teacher assessment
N	pupils who took the tests but failed to register a level
B	pupils who were working below the level of the test
L2-5	pupils attaining those Levels in the test
L4+	pupils attaining Level 4 or better
L5+	pupils attaining Level 5 or better

While the percentage of children attaining Level 4 (or better) is a key target, the percentage achieving lower than Level 3 is of concern. Government statistics show that, every year, around 6-7% of eleven year olds in England leave primary school with very poor literacy skills (below Level 3 in English). This represents a literacy level equivalent to that of the average seven or eight year old.

The proportion of children leaving primary school with very poor literacy skills has remained largely static over time, although the results in Wirral have been better than the national average. This is supported by Table 5 below:

Table 5: Percentage of pupils achieving below Level 3, Key Stage 2, English, Historical Comparison (2004-2009), England and Wirral comparison

English below Level 3		2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009 (prov)
England	Percentage	7.0	7.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0
Wirral	Percentage	4.8	4.9	4.3	4.8	3.7	4.2

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Note: 'Below Level 3' equates to a combination of Levels 2, B and N, where:
 B pupils who were working below the level of the test
 N pupils who took the tests but failed to register a level

Information on the profile of these very low-attaining children is available from an analysis of national data conducted by the Primary National Strategy:

- a very high proportion (68%) of the children with very poor literacy skills are boys. This over-representation is much greater for literacy than for mathematics, where only 55% of the very low achievers are boys.
- more of the children than would be expected from total population figures are summer-born – 40% in the low attaining group compared to 34% of the total cohort.
- the children are much more likely to be living in poverty than their better-reading peers. 38% of those attaining below Level 3 in English are eligible for free school meals, compared to 17% of all children.
- they are more likely to be learning English as an Additional Language (EAL) than the population as a whole (15% compared to 10%).

In the national context, the Rose Report, 'Independent Review of the Primary Curriculum', published in April 2009, is likely to set the context for primary education in years to come. In addition, the announcement by the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families that the policy of national strategies for schools will come to an end, will force further change. The new vision foresees the establishment of new networks of school-to-school support whereby neighbouring schools can procure their own advisers to help them drive up teaching standards and examination results. The forthcoming General Election, due by June 2010, adds further uncertainty to the national picture.

In the local context, one head teacher commented to the Panel that:

"When assessing the success of a school regarding literacy levels, it is important to look at the bigger picture; not just at curriculum, intervention strategies, and so on. The ethos of the school is far more important than a reading or writing scheme".

It is the case that every school is different with its own practices and culture. However, every school in each community has a variety of different challenges. The Report will now explore some of those challenges and will investigate some of the reasons why greater numbers of children are not reaching the 'expected' Level 4 at Key Stage 2.

6.2 Integrated Services – The Early Years and the role of Children's Centres

This Scrutiny Review started by investigating literacy levels in primary schools. However, it quickly became clear from the evidence that a child starts to develop literacy skills in Early Years and pre-school.

"Many children have an impoverishment of language at Foundation Stage".
 Head teacher

One professional commented that:

“Literacy is an issue that needs to be looked at from babyhood onwards”.

Another officer commented that:

“Good verbal communication and listening skills are essential to children being able to develop good literacy skills – if you are unable to express yourself well verbally, you are unlikely to be able to express yourself well in writing”.

While another added:

“If children are not confident communicators, they will not be confident readers and writers”.

One of the fundamental issues identified during the school visits is the concern relating to the quality of language skills of many children on entry to Foundation Stage. One head teacher commented that:

“Most of the children are below the expected floor level at Foundation Stage, especially with respect to language. Many children have an impoverishment of language at Foundation Stage”.

This was a comment also echoed in the Rose Report:

“The perception of primary schools visited by the review (The Rose Review) is that more children are entering primary schools with impoverished language and poor social development. This issue was also highlighted in the Bercow Report”.

The responses from schools in the questionnaire provided further evidence. When asked ‘What are the key issues affecting literacy development in your school?’, a significant number of head teachers responded with comments such as:

“Children entering school well below the age-expected development in speaking and listening.”

“Weak speaking and listening skills.”

“Below par language skills prior to attending Foundation 1.”

“Language acquisition levels on entry to school.”

“Low levels on entry. Pre-school experience in story and language is limited.”

“Entering school with low levels of ability.”

“Some children enter Foundation Stage 2 with poor language skills.”

“On entry to Foundation Stage 2 pupils’ average development levels are often below national averages.”

“Low level of speaking and listening for many children on entry.”

“Increasing levels of children entering school with speech and language delays or difficulties.”

This evidence from professional staff and from head teachers convinced the Panel members that the quality of Early Years education does have an impact on later literacy skills. The same head teachers often referred to a lack of parental involvement and support at home for the child. For many children, though not all, there is a common thread. This is clearly an important issue for many schools.

The advent of SureStart and the growth in the number of Children’s Centres has widened the opportunity for pre-school provision to be offered to a larger number of children. The number of Children’s Centres in Wirral has now risen to 18, with a further eight satellite centres. It is appreciated that the development of Children’s Centres is an ongoing programme and progress to date is welcomed. However, there is little available evidence to prove that the service is reaching all of the target groups. For instance, the Panel members have been unable to obtain attendance figures for the Children’s Centres and the profile of those attendees.

A consistent issue for those schools in the more deprived areas of the Borough was the difficulty in connecting with the 'hard to reach' families in their community. The same families are less likely to make use of the Children's Centres. Whilst it is acknowledged that great effort is made to achieve this objective and that attendance at Children's Centres is not statutory, more needs to be done. One professional commented that:

"Further work needs to be done to get more families in to the Children's Centres".

A number of issues were raised with respect to access to services in the Children's Centres:

- **Level of provision**

There are different levels of provision in the Children's Centres. The level of provision differs depending upon whether the centre provides the 'full core offer' or is a satellite centre. Some of the centres have joint managers, which also affects the level of provision. Therefore, there is a variety of effectiveness in provision. In the future, it would be useful to look at the uniformity of provision and at the relationship with the school where the centre is on a shared site.

- **Organisational teams**

In some areas, the Children's Centre teams do not coincide geographically with the Area teams. One senior officer suggested that there may be some mileage in bringing those boundaries together. This will support cohesion in the communities.

- **Distance to some centres within the cluster**

The distance from some 'target' communities to the nearest Children's Centre can be significant in some cases where public transport does not make the journey easy.

- **Website information**

The Panel members are pleased to acknowledge that, during the course of the Review, information regarding more Children's Centres has become available on the Council website. (All of this information had not been available in August 2009). However, the information on the website does not give specific details of the facilities / sessions available at each Children's Centre.

- **Publicity**

Some evidence has been found of residents finding it difficult to find information regarding the facilities at their nearest Children's Centre.

- **Summer opening hours**

The opening hours at some Centres appeared to reduce during the summer holidays at a time when families may need additional support.

"Children's Centres are not just a building; it is services".
Officer

"Money is not the key issue. It's the service – re-design it".
Officer referring to the Early Years Service

A future challenge for the Children's Centres is the increased hours of free provision that have been announced by the Government. In the future, three and four-year old children will be entitled to 15 hours (rather than 12.5) free education per week. This may well create capacity issues for some Children's Centres.

It has already been suggested at an earlier meeting of the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee that the operation Children's Centres in Wirral would be a suitable topic for an in-depth scrutiny review in the future. The Panel members fully endorse that view.

Recommendation 1 – The evidence gathered shows that successful interventions in the Early Years do impact on literacy skills. A Children and Young People Departmental review should be carried out to ensure that easy access and an appropriate offer of service is provided in all Children's Centres.

Recommendation 2 – In order to ensure that more families engage with Children's Centres, information available through websites should be improved and be timely. There should be better promotion of specific activities, including pre-reading programmes, available at each Centre. Publicity could also be improved through a variety of outlets such as GP surgeries, local organisations and community groups.

An issue relevant to both Early Years and to Schools were the perceived limitations in joined-up or multi-agency working. Recognition of improvements since the creation of the Children and Young People Department was apparent. However, again, more needs to be done. As previously said, the service offering in Children's Centres is varied. Some centres offer a wider service, the delivery of which requires greater joined-up working between the agencies. It was apparent that some centres have been more successful in developing a close working relationship with Health Visitors. In turn, this has enabled the Health Visitors to provide early identification of families, who otherwise, may have been reticent to make use of Children's Centre facilities. However, as one professional commented:

"With reference to the involvement of Health Visitors in Children's Centres, there is nothing formally in place. Some Centres seem to do their own thing."

Nevertheless, in some cases, due to the longstanding close working relationship between Health Visitors and some of the Sure Start Local Programmes, the Health Visitors promote the Children's Centre and make lots of referrals. As a result, in some areas there are fewer vulnerable families who are not included, but too much depends on the individual Health Visitor. From the perspective of the family, the Health Visitor provides a very accessible service. There is no stigma attached to a visit from the Health Visitor. As the 'Healthy Child Programme' is developed and implemented by NHS Wirral, further opportunities will arise for the identification of more vulnerable families and children. It is important that integrated working enables these children to gain maximum access to the Children's Centres.

In addition, the programme launched from September 2009, to offer free nursery places to 142 of the most disadvantaged two year olds in the Borough offers a real opportunity for integrated working between the Health Visitors and the Children's Centres. The Health Visitors will help to identify the children and then to ensure that, along with a family support worker, wrap-around support is provided to ensure good quality play and learning experience. Indeed, the progress that has already been made on schemes such as this provides evidence that some good joined-up work is taking place.

Nevertheless, one education professional commented:

"We talk about joined-up thinking; but we need joined-up action."

Further examples where more integrated working would be beneficial are explored in greater detail in other sections of this Report. Reference is made to social workers in Section 6.4 ('Social Issues and engagement with parents'); while the Speech and Language Therapy Service is covered in Section 6.5.2 ('Speech and Language Therapy').

In general, a strong case can be made for as many services as feasible being provided in one building. A 'One Stop' provision for children's services would undoubtedly improve the accessibility of those services to many families. This is in line with the reference in the Executive Summary that "As a point of principle, the panel believes that the needs of the child should be paramount". In terms of breaking down perceived barriers between organisations and departments, joint training sessions may help to remove obstacles.

Recommendation 3 – Health Visitors are a key contact for many families with young children. Wirral NHS and Wirral Borough Council are encouraged to enhance the role of Health Visitors in providing early identification of 'hard to reach' families and subsequent signposting to other services, particularly in Children's Centres. The delivery of the 'Healthy Child Programme' in Wirral provides an opportunity for agencies to work together.

Recommendation 4 – Professional barriers need to be broken down. Multi-agency services should be provided via Children's Centres, for example, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Dental Service, Speech and Language Therapists, School Nurse, Hearing and Sight Specialists, Paediatricians, Early Years Specialists, and so on.

6.3 Learning Strategies – Foundation Stage to Key Stage 2

The Panel members were struck by one particular comment by a head teacher:

"Literacy is in all subjects".
Head teacher

"Endless hours are spent on maintaining data systems. However, although that is important, it is not as important as the impact of teaching".

In describing the basic pre-requisites for successful reading as basic skills, confidence and motivation, an officer reflected that:

"Many children can get by, but by Year 8 when asked to do research, they can't do it".

There are a number of reasons for some children not progressing as well as they might, including:

- not skilled in phonics strategies;
- not confident in reading / writing;
- not enough practice.

The visits to the schools and the questionnaire responses provided many examples of good teaching and initiatives regarded by the Panel members as good practice. These included the use of peer mentors / peer readers, reading champions in schools, topic learning, personalised learning and the extensive use in many schools of the 'Big Write' which engaged many young people very effectively. Many schools have successfully adapted the concept of the 'Big Write' to meet the requirements of their locality. Indeed, the suggestion has been made that the Council could develop a Local Authority Writing Week to build on the experiences of the 'Big Write'. With respect to personalised learning, some interesting examples were identified where the pupil's writing book includes a detailed assessment of their written work. Therefore, children can see what they are doing well and what they need to improve. In one case, a school had developed a personal laminated book marker which identified similar information with respect to the pupil's reading progress and providing individual targets.

6.3.1 One-to-One Support

The impact of One-to-One learning is an interesting development.

When asked 'What other support would you like for the challenges that face your school?', one head teacher responded:

"More of the 1:1 tuition schemes and other funding streams to allow schools to personalise learning".

While another commented that:

"1:1 tuition has a positive impact on lower attainers".

Another requested:

"More 1:1 tutoring for boys out of and within school time".

And another commented that a barrier to learning was:

"Need more individual support on a 1 to 1 basis for some children".

The Panel welcomes the forthcoming evaluation of the initiative to provide one-to-one tuition being carried out in Wirral through the 'Making Good Progress' Pilot. Early indications from schools would suggest that the scheme is providing positive results. It is envisaged that by 2010-11, 300,000 pupils a year, nationally, will receive one-to-one tuition in English. The support is aimed at those pupils who are deemed to be capable of achieving Level 4 in Key Stage 2 but need additional support to do so.

In addition, the use of one-to-one support in schools, using evidence from such schemes as the 'Successful Reading Partnership', has shown an encouraging impact on both the children and the parents / grandparents who deliver the support. Such programmes can encourage the deliverers to improve their skills and improve their confidence in working with children.

While the 'Successful Reading Partnership' is a specific scheme aimed at boosting pupils who are just below average, the principle of schools using outside help in order to boost their activities is applauded. Interesting projects, such as the Reading Buddies scheme in Peterborough and the Ablaze project in Bristol have engaged businesses in supporting primary children to read on a one-to-one basis. While this support is clearly not an alternative to trained teachers, it could enable some schools, particularly those who struggle to engage parents in school activities, to give pupils additional one-to-one reading time. In addition, it may be possible to involve groups such as the Older People's Parliament in helping to organise a scheme. Indeed, a recent scheme in Chester aimed to promote intergenerational understanding by encouraging older people to become more involved in school life.

Recommendation 5 – The Local Authority should provide guidance and support to schools who would like to encourage greater involvement of parents, businesses and older people in providing one-to-one reading support in schools. In return, schools are encouraged to participate in the scheme.

6.3.2 Moderation

As discussed in Section 6.2, there is considerable concern regarding the level of language skills at the time of entry to Foundation Stage. The accurate assessment of children at significant time points is essential in order to measure progress. The Panel appreciates that the Local Authority has done a lot of work on moderation and progress has been made. However, this issue continues to be highlighted as an issue by schools and, therefore, more work needs to be done. Procedures to support consistent assessment procedures for Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 are essential. This is a particular issue where children change schools, especially where Infant schools feed into Junior schools. One head teacher responded to the Panel with the comment: *“The school’s base line assessment highlights a mismatch with the Key Stage 1 SATs results, which is nothing short of dramatic”.*

Referring to the intake from Infant schools, another head teacher commented that: *“The number of children reaching Level 3 at Key Stage 1 has now halved over recent years. This is not because the children are performing any worse; it is due to more rigorous marking of the tests by the teachers. As a result, the marking of Key Stage 1 has got more realistic”.*

A further head teacher added: *“The school has suffered greatly from inaccurate teacher assessment for a number of years. However, it is now much more accurate”.*

While further work is required for Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2, a similar focus also needs to be applied to the transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Indeed, some head teachers commented that stronger emphasis should be placed on speaking and listening skills throughout the assessment processes.

Recommendation 6 – The Local Authority is encouraged to build on the moderation work that has already been carried out at the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. This consistent approach should also be applied to the transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Schools are encouraged to work with each other and with the Local Authority to deliver the consistent approach.

6.3.3 Quality First Teaching

The Rose Report observes that: *“Nowhere is an entitlement to ‘quality first teaching’ more necessary or important than in equipping every child with a command of reading and writing skills”.*

A Wirral officer also commented that: *“A lot of time and money is invested in one-to-one interventions. However, there has also to be an emphasis on ‘Quality First Teaching’ in order to minimise the number of children who need further help”.*

The maximum use of high quality trained practitioners working in low ratios is a goal to be aimed for.

6.3.4 Speaking and Listening

A major strand of the Rose Report is the emphasis on speaking and listening. Recommendation 9 of the Rose Report reads:

“Primary schools should make sure that children’s spoken communication is developed intensively within all subjects and for learning across the curriculum. In so doing, schools should capitalise on the powerful contributions of the performing and visual arts, especially role play and drama”.

The Rose Report continues:

“For the purposes of this review literacy is regarded as covering speaking, listening, reading and writing. Discussion of reading and writing in primary education sometimes fails to recognise the central importance of developing children’s spoken communication”.

Followed by:

“Better progress is being made in this respect through government-funded initiatives such as Time for Talk and Every Child a Talker. However, schools would do well to take stock of how effectively they provide opportunities, for example, for children to enlarge their vocabulary, listen attentively and talk confidently and intensively about their work and experiences across all aspects of the curriculum to a range of audiences”.

In the local context, one officer commented that:

“With regard to the Rose report, listening and speaking are central, which is very heartening”.

While another added that:

“The Rose review has emphasised ‘speaking and listening’ and the importance of children having word recognition. Weak communication skills have been identified as a major issue”.

It is welcome that Wirral has become a funded authority for the ‘Every Child a Talker’ programme, the focus of which is to encourage children to start talking earlier. Although an Early Years Programme, it is in this context that the Communications, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme seems to be particularly important. Although a relatively new programme which has been rolled out progressively into targeted Children’s centres / schools, it is essential that a comprehensive evaluation of that programme takes place and, if deemed successful, adequate long-term funding should be identified.

Recommendation 7 – The Local Authority should evaluate the success of the Communications, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme and plan ahead to embed good practice in schools currently involved in the programme and promote that good practice to other schools.

6.3.5 Phonics

The Rose Report makes the following argument:

“...the main obstacles have been long-standing systematic confusion and conflicting views, especially about the teaching of phonics. As more research and practice now converge in strong support of high-quality, systematic phonic work, schools can be confident that their investment in good-quality phonics training for teachers and in good systematic phonic programmes, whether commercial or provided by the national strategies, will yield high returns for children”.

This was certainly a view supported in the local context by officers who were encouraging the greater availability of training for teachers in phonological awareness. In this perspective, perhaps the detailed working knowledge and application of phonics at Orrets Meadow could be used as a source of trainers which can be more widely utilised across the Borough.

Recommendation 8 – The Local Authority is encouraged to provide further in-school training in phonological awareness and schools are encouraged to fully participate in the training opportunities.

6.3.6 Extended Services

Extended Services has now established a more prominent role in the relationship with schools. It is important that these out-of-school activities give as high a priority as possible to literacy. A 2009 Wirral Council report on Extended Services comments that:

“As a result of the lead for Extended Services being within the Learning and Achievement Branch, the Extended Services work is being linked with a whole range of other activities, especially:

- *School improvement and raising standards work*
- *Early Years and Children’s Centres work*
- *Family and Lifelong Learning work*
- *Narrowing the Gap work”.*

Inclusion of literacy activities should, therefore, be extended where possible. However, it should be recognised that as Extended Services are expected to be self-funding, charging for services may act as an inhibitor. This may impact on the take-up among some of the 'target' groups. In order to combat the 'hard to reach' issue, at least one Extended School cluster has allocated funding towards the cost of transport. This is specifically aimed at trying to involve those young people who otherwise would be less likely to participate.

Recommendation 9 – Extended Services should be encouraged to give a higher priority to literacy-based activities.

6.4 Social Issues (and Engagement with Parents)

For some schools in the more deprived areas in the Borough, the biggest barriers to learning are the social problems and issues faced within the community. At one school that was visited by the Panel members, the head teacher spent eight hours during the previous week dealing with social issues directly affecting pupils at the school. One head teacher commented that:

“The biggest problem is the inconsistency in children’s lives that impact on their learning”.
Head teacher

“I feel that I am an advocate for the children.”

While another said that:

“As a school, we understand the barriers of social deprivation but we do not see it as an excuse”.

And another added that:

“The children are greatly impacted by the aggression that they see outside of school”.

Meanwhile an education officer commented that:

“We can’t influence deprivation but we can influence parental attitude towards education”.

A snapshot on the impact of deprivation on literacy levels can be provided by Table 6. This shows by District and Area in Wirral, the percentage of pupils receiving free school meals and the percentage of pupils achieving Level 4 (or better) in English at Key Stage 2. As would be expected, a broad correlation can be noted. The statistics suggest that an area with a lower percentage of free school meals is more likely to achieve higher Key Stage results.

Table 6: Comparison of pupils receiving Free School Meals and pupils achieving Level 4 or above, Key Stage 2, English, 2009 (provisional) data, by District and Area in Wirral

District / Area	Number of pupils	% Free School Meals	English, % Level 4+, 2009 (provisional)
Birkenhead District	997	43.2	76.5
Bidston & St James / Claughton	382	51.0	77.7
Prenton / Oxton	250	15.2	85.6
Birkenhead and Tranmere / Rock Ferry	365	54.2	69.0
Wallasey District	1001	34.6	81.4
Liscard / Seacombe	362	43.9	78.7
New Brighton / Wallasey	349	24.9	83.7
Leasowe & Moreton East / Moreton West & Saughall Massie	290	34.5	82.1
Wirral South District	627	17.4	86.3
Clatterbridge / Bebington	310	11.0	89.0
Bromborough / Eastham	317	23.7	83.6
Wirral West District	861	13.6	90.2
Pensby & Thingwall / Heswall	277	7.6	91.7
Hoyle & Meols / West Kirby & Thurstaston	252	8.3	95.2
Greasby, Frankby & Irby / Upton	332	22.6	85.2

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

A key issue for a significant number of schools is how to engage more effectively with parents especially the hard-to-reach?

Involvement of parents in supporting their children through school is patchy and some have low aspirations and live dysfunctional lives. As a consequence, there is an outcome of children facing a poverty of experience outside school. The problem can often be compounded by there being a significant number of young parents who have never moved off particular estates. Their parenting skills mirror those with which they were brought up. Therefore, early intervention is vital to support parenting skills. Wirral's Parenting Strategy is an impressive document. The difficulty comes in its application on the ground.

"Many of our children live in dysfunctional homes".

Head teacher

The Family Learning Service "offers parents, carers and children the chance to improve the literacy, language and numeracy skills in safe, welcoming environments". The fun activities, such as 'Literacy through Sport', which is aimed at dads and children, appears to bring positive benefits. Some schools expressed their satisfaction with the Family Works programme. However, whilst meeting the needs of a relative few (because the criteria being used is determined by the funding structure of the Learning Skills Council) more families would benefit if the service was more universally available. There are some cases where a child's literacy skills are severely hampered by poor parenting skills and, in some cases, their parents' literacy skills. It is in these cases that Family Works can deliver tangible benefits.

Analysis of data in the Family Works Programme (2007-8) showed that the reading scores of children (in the Free School Meals cohort) were on average 6% higher than children (again in the Free School Meals cohort) whose parents did not attend the programme. A similar comparison showed a 10% differential in writing scores. The evidence from one school where use is made of the Family Works programme during Foundation Stage was encouraging. Parents are invited in and worries about children can be discussed. Parents are encouraged to develop 'learning activities' at home for their children. Although there were twelve participants during 2008-9, it was judged to be very difficult to get parents to participate. However, the school reported a big impact on those who do take part.

A specific issue for the Family Learning Service, as it is for all agencies, is the identification and targeting of the 'pockets' of vulnerable families outside the most deprived areas. It is important that these families are reached. Greater partnership working, for example, by services linking closely to the Health Visitors may help improve the identification of families and the subsequent delivery of specific services.

Recommendation 10 – The impact of the Family Learning Service is welcomed. With the forthcoming changes to Learning Skills Council arrangements, the Local Authority should consider how the service could be made more universally available.

Within the school environment, some schools struggle to get involvement of parents either in directly supporting school activities or by encouraging their children at home. Indeed, one school is simply unable to foster a culture of homework being done and returned. There is significant evidence of some children never having the opportunity to read books in their home environment.

One head teacher reported that:

"There is a culture that homework doesn't matter to many parents or children".

Another school reported significant issues with attendance and punctuality.

With respect to the care of vulnerable children, there was evidence of some frustration regarding the relationship between schools and the Children's Social Services Department of Wirral Borough Council. This frustration could be heard in the words of one head teacher:

"There is a desire for people from different departments (education, social care and health) to work together but there are still barriers. Sometimes people can be reluctant to open out and work together. There are lots of little islands".

It has been suggested that the relationship would be improved if a school (or cluster of schools) was allocated a named social worker with whom issues could be discussed on a consistent and confidential basis. There was evidence suggesting that there are too many agencies working with the same families. Again, improved multi-agency working should help. It is acknowledged that much preliminary work is being undertaken to establish greater locality-based working in Wirral. However, the new structure will not be fully implemented until 2011.

Recommendation 11 – Greater emphasis should be given to the provision of a consistent link between schools and Children’s Social Care Services. A Social Worker should be allocated to either a Children’s Centre or a School Cluster Group, wherever is most appropriate.

Recommendation 12 – The Council is encouraged to promote more multi-agency working, specifically by improving protocols for the sharing of information between health, social care and education professionals. This should apply particularly to ‘hard to reach’ families.

The Panel members recognise the additional pressures that social problems bring to local communities and specifically to schools. A head teacher commented that:

“An aspiration is the provision in the school of a Learning mentor, who would support children in such aspects as their emotional well-being, goal-setting, anger management and raising aspirations”.

The allocation of additional resource to assist schools in supporting such aims and in managing attendance / punctuality problems, supporting relationships with parents and so on would be beneficial.

“There is a constant struggle to manage trailing-edge children with apathetic parents”.
Head teacher

6.5 Targeted Services for Specific Groups

6.5.1 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

“A child has to have dire problems in order to get a statement”.
Head teacher

When children are assessed as requiring Special Educational Needs (SEN), school based provision of School Action and School Action Plus is available. School Action could include further assessment, additional teaching materials or a different way of teaching. If a child is deemed not to have made adequate progress during School Action, School Action Plus enables a school to seek outside advice from the Local Authority’s support services or from health and social work professionals.

If a child’s needs cannot be met through School Action Plus, the Local Authority may consider the need for a statutory assessment. Following the assessment, the Local Authority may decide to make a Statement of Special Educational Needs setting out the child’s needs in details. However, beyond the statementing process, there are a considerable number of children who are viewed by their school as requiring additional support.

For many schools who responded to the Panel, the requirements of children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) provide a significant challenge. For several schools, a significant part of the school budget is used to support SEN children.

One head teacher responded to the Panel by explaining:

“One in five pupils in school is on the SEN register – mostly specific literacy problems. The constant challenge is trying to provide extra targeted support for these children”.

Concerns were raised regarding the statementing process. Some head teachers expressed frustration regarding the speed and lack of flexibility of the process. As an example, of those children who are admitted into Orrets Meadow, the majority arrive in Year 5 and some in Year 6. Some of these children arrive at the school with a reading age as low as 4.3 years. By the time of admission, the child has often become frightened, frustrated and their self-esteem has been damaged.

While it is accepted that many children are supported through the interventions at their ‘primary’ school, culminating in Wave 3, the quicker identification of children with significant problems would be beneficial to child and school alike. In general, quicker access to outside agencies to support children where Wave 3 intervention highlights specific learning difficulties (for example, speech therapy, educational psychologist, or any other agencies) would be beneficial.

Recommendation 13 – A review of the statementing process should take place with a view to the system becoming more flexible and quicker, whilst maintaining integrity. There is a need to identify children at a younger age. Consideration should be given to the development of guidelines which would enable children to be allocated places at Orrets Meadow without having to go through the full statementing process.

Responses from schools provide evidence that access to services at Orrets Meadow is not as available as some schools would wish.

“We need flexibility for access to provision”.
Panel member

One head teacher reported that:

“The school is unable to have Orrets Meadow support this year” (due to financial pressures).

A measure of the inflexibility within the system can be illustrated that, in July 2009, Orrets Meadow School reported that there were sixteen spare places at the school for the forthcoming September. As of the first week in October, nine spare places remained. This is not an efficient use of resources. As the recent Ofsted report for Orrets Meadow categorised the school as ‘Outstanding’, it is hard to imagine that parents would not wish to use the school. The Panel members are concerned that those resources are available to those children in greatest need and not necessarily to those families who live nearby or are able to push hardest for their child. Table 7 illustrates, by ward, the number of children living on each ward who attend Orrets Meadow.

Table 7: Number of pupils living in each ward who attend Orrets Meadow, Historical Comparison (2007-2009)

Number of pupils attending Orrets Meadow, By ward	2007	2008	2009
Bebington	3	3	4
Bidston and St James	5	4	3
Birkenhead and Tranmere	6	6	4
Bromborough	4	4	3
Clatterbridge	2	3	3
Cloughton	4	7	6
Eastham	6	4	3
Greasby, Frankby and Irby	1	1	1
Heswall	5	2	2
Hoylake and Meols	4	3	5
Leasowe and Moreton East	7	2	1
Liscard	0	0	1
Moreton West and Saughall Massie	2	2	5
New Brighton	1	3	2
Oxton	2	2	4
Pensby and Thingwall	1	5	2
Prenton	1	3	3
Rock Ferry	2	3	3
Seacombe	3	3	1
Upton	1	3	3
Wallasey	2	2	1
West Kirby and Thurstaston	5	4	3
Out of Borough	1	0	0

Source: Asset Management Team, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

The responses from the school’s questionnaire also highlighted a desire from a number of schools for greater access to Orrets Meadow Outreach Services. There is a perception that the ability of a child to access these services is dependent upon the address of that child and the budget of his or her school. As with all of the schools that were visited, the Panel members were extremely impressed with the work that is done at Orrets Meadow.

Recommendation 14 – The funding arrangements for the Orrets Meadow Outreach Services should be reviewed to ensure consistent opportunity of provision to every child in need.

Recommendation 15 – At the next School Funding Review (2011-14), the Schools Forum should be requested to look again at the funding formula for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, with a view to provision being based on a broader framework which includes Free School Meals.

6.5.2 Speech and Language Therapy

One of the most consistent points raised throughout the review by both officers and particularly by head teachers and governors was the role of the Speech and Language Therapy Service. There was a repeated request for the service to be available in the school setting rather than in remote clinics.

“Regarding the speech and language service, there is an issue with the liaison between the NHS and education. This results in children becoming lost in the system”.

Head teacher

One teacher commented that:

“Under the current referral system, including form completion, there can be delays in the child seeing a speech therapist. In addition, some parents do not take the child to the therapist”.

Another head teacher argued that:

“The availability of speech and language therapists in schools would be preferable. When children visit a clinic they are in a false environment where the sessions are contrived. The service would be far better if the sessions were provided in the school. In addition, a large number of appointments are not kept”.

And another head teacher responded:

“Many parents do not take their children to therapy. Therefore the child goes to the bottom of the queue again”

Nevertheless, another professional commented:

“There are limitations to what Speech and Language therapy can do for children who live in an impoverished language environment. That is more an issue of improving the home learning environment and supporting Early Years workers to improve children’s social and communication skills”.

Whilst it is recognised that some professionals and parents do consider that there is a shortage of Speech and Language support, there is also a case that the issue is not necessarily about the number of Speech and Language therapists that there are. The key issue may involve service approach. There is currently a clinic approach with a triage. The child will be allocated to the nearest clinic to their home. As of May 2009, the number of qualified paediatric therapists was 12.89 full time equivalents, with 5.23 assistants. However their current caseload was 5,436 children aged 0-19 years. Perhaps one issue worthy of consideration is that in the context of Wirral NHS, paediatric speech & language therapy is a little service in a big organisation.

Recognition should be made that the service to specialist groups, such as the hearing impaired, special schools and those with complex needs is good. However, the service for children with lesser problems may not be delivering the benefits that education professionals would like to see. Once referred, it appears that information is not always passed on to the school. The school does not understand what is required of them. There is a need to provide a more cohesive service. However, a further issue appears to be getting the first referral at the right time. Some children appear not to have been referred early enough. The early identification of speech and language problems is important. This will include the pre-school stage. The Joint Strategic Needs Assessment published by Wirral NHS in September 2008 concluded:

“In the area of Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN) we appear to be under identifying the number of pupils we have across the Borough. Nationally, 12.4% of pupils have been identified. In the Wirral we have recorded much lower numbers (around 5%)”.

The service as it is organised at the moment is not as accessible to disadvantaged and vulnerable groups as it needs to be; 'universal services' are clinic based, and require the parent/carer to 'opt in' to the service. This often results in parents who do not understand the system (who may be those with language and literacy problems themselves) not opting in, not being able to get to the clinic, having to take a child out of school for an appointment, or not perceiving that any benefit is to be gained from accessing the service for their child. As a result, there are reports of a significant number of missed appointments. The individual therapist will not be aware of the reason for non-attendance. As a comparison, a Health Visitor has continuing responsibility for their caseload and consequently will follow-up each case.

One head teacher told the panel that:

"The problem of missed appointments could be overcome if the service came to the child".

An officer commented that:

"It can often be the case that the patient and family leave a clinic-based service none the wiser. What did they say?"

The Panel members very much welcome the service review that is planned by NHS Wirral.

It would be helpful if the service review was to take the following criteria into account:

- Accessibility – How easy is it to obtain an appointment? How are children identified? How quickly are referrals managed? How easy is it to travel to an appointment? Does the system have an ethos of openness?
- Benefit – Does the therapy confer a lasting improvement in functioning? It may be the case that the therapy does not necessarily benefit those receiving it. There is currently no follow up to check for benefit as the child gets older.
- Experience – Even if the service was good, the patient / family will not come back for more if they felt that it was not a good experience.

One professional suggested that roles that could be considered by the Review may include the following:

- therapists as trainers – Therapists are relatively expensive. They could have a role in training other professionals (for example, teachers) so that they are able to recognise problems for themselves and undertake basic techniques.
- consultancy role – Therapists could be available to staff delivering universal services (for example, teachers) to be called on in a consultancy role when required. They would be able to give advice on the best way to support individual children. This may then become a formal referral to the Speech and Language Therapy service.
- specialist service – individual interventions aimed at those children who will benefit from Speech and Language Therapy.

Recommendation 16 – The Panel welcomes the current review of the Speech and Language Therapy service and encourages greater use of therapists in training and consultancy roles.

Recommendation 17 – The Panel strongly supports the principle of the Speech and Language service being available either in Children's Centres or School Cluster Groups, whichever is most appropriate.

Recommendation 18 – Consideration should be given to joint funding (between Wirral NHS and Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council) of the specialist Children's Speech and Language Therapists. The day-to-day management of the Speech and Language Therapists should be within the Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council.

6.5.3 The Gender Issue

A number of head teachers responded to the panel with the view that gender imbalance was not a consistent issue in their school. Of those, some argued that the gap is due to a maturation issue and that many boys will naturally catch up with the standard of girls by the time of 'A' Levels. An analysis of the 2008 Key Stage 2 results in Wirral show that, in English, more boys than girls achieved Level 4 (or better) in only 31 schools as opposed to girls achieving higher scores in 53 schools. A similar comparison in writing results revealed more boys than girls achieving Level 4 (or better) in only 25 schools as opposed to girls achieving higher scores in 62 schools.

“There are a significantly higher proportion of boys who are classified as SEN. Boys tend to be lazy speakers”.
Head teacher

The majority of head teachers in the questionnaire sample took the view that there was a gender issue in their school and this is certainly supported by the statistical analysis based on Key Stage 2 results. Indeed, Table 8 also confirms that this is a national, as opposed to a specifically Wirral, issue. Nevertheless, based on the provisional 2009 SATs results, the gap in attainment of Level 4 in English is greater in Wirral than in many statistical or geographical neighbours.

Table 8: Statistical Neighbours and Geographical Neighbours, Key Stage 2, English, Level 4 and above, 2009 (provisional) data, Boys and Girls comparison

2009 provisional results	English %L4+		
	Boys	Girls	All
National	75	85	80
Wirral	78	88	83
Statistical Neighbours			
Bury	82	87	84
Darlington	80	88	84
Halton	76	85	80
Lancashire	77	85	81
Leeds	74	83	78
Sefton	79	88	83
St Helens	80	87	83
Stockton-on-Tees	76	86	81
Tameside	76	86	81
Telford and Wrekin	72	84	77
Geographic Neighbours			
Halton	76	85	80
Knowsley	74	84	79
Liverpool	74	83	78
Sefton	79	88	83
St Helens	80	87	83
Wigan	76	86	81

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Table 9 compares, for the 2009 Key Stage 2 provisional results, the relative attainment of boys and girls both at the national level and in Wirral. The higher success rate of girls at both the national and local level is apparent.

Table 9: Percentage of pupils achieving each Level, Key Stage 2, English, Reading and Writing, 2009 (provisional) data, National / Wirral comparison for Boys and Girls

2009 provisional results		Percentage								Percentage	
		A	D	N	B	L2	L3	L4	L5	L4+	L5+
Boys National											
	English	1	N/A	1	5	1	17	52	23	75	23
	Reading	1	N/A	3	5	0	9	41	41	82	41
	Writing	1	N/A	1	5	0	33	46	15	60	15
Girls National											
	English	1	N/A	0	2	0	11	50	35	85	35
	Reading	0	N/A	2	2	0	6	36	54	89	54
	Writing	0	N/A	1	2	0	22	51	24	75	24
Boys Wirral											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.7	4.1	0.7	15.5	50.9	27.4	78.4	27.4
	Reading	0.7	0.1	2.4	4.1	0.0	8.4	38.9	45.4	84.3	45.4
	Writing	0.6	0.1	0.8	4.1	0.0	29.8	45.8	18.9	64.7	18.9
Girls Wirral											
	English	0.7	0.1	0.3	2.3	0.3	8.4	47.0	41.0	87.9	41.0
	Reading	0.6	0.1	1.3	2.3	0.0	5.0	34.2	56.5	90.7	56.5
	Writing	0.7	0.1	0.4	2.3	0.0	18.2	48.1	30.3	78.4	30.3

Source: Information Section, Children and Young People Department, Wirral Borough Council

Key to columns:	
A	pupils who were absent
D	pupils disapplied from teacher assessment
N	pupils who took the tests but failed to register a level
B	pupils who were working below the level of the test
L2-5	pupils attaining those Levels in the test
L4+	pupils attaining Level 4 or better
L5+	pupils attaining Level 5 or better

Locally, one head teacher commented:

“There is a gender imbalance in achievement. For instance, at Foundation stage there is a real issue with boys, who, in some cases, cannot talk as they have no vocabulary. This is usually as a result of the child being part of a dysfunctional family”.

During the school visits, however, there was significant comment received from those who access the Tranmere Rovers Study Centre. Although fully accessible to both genders, many boys, who were met during the school visits, were particularly enthusiastic about this experience. This is perhaps the type of activity that can be used to encourage boys to actively participate in literacy activities. A nationally funded project, it provides out of school study support for pupils identified by their school as requiring a boost in literacy or numeracy. It is based at Tranmere Rovers and its aim is to increase attainment in literacy and numeracy through a context of football and ICT. The support consists of 10 sessions for selected pupils on a rolling programme for Wirral primary schools. Literacy levels are identified at the beginning and end of the course, thus ensuring a basis for measuring the impact of the intervention.

A whole range of suggestions were made by head teachers with respect to ‘What can be done to improve the gender imbalance in achievement?’. The suggestions included the following:

- personalised targets and incentives for achievement.
- use of writers, poets and authors in schools.
- more use of positive male role models for boys who may not see men reading, writing, etc..
- family training to focus and engage males.
- school to deliver sessions for dads - supporting reading at home.
- more one-to-one tutoring for boys out of and within school time.
- appoint a male Teaching Assistant to work with Key Stage 1.
- adapt the curriculum to suit the gender make-up of the class.
- improved use of a creative curriculum to support different learning styles.
- continue to start with play based learning and enhance the provision.

- practical experiences for pupils to write about.
- active learning.
- small group focus.
- ensuring tasks set for writing engage boys' imagination.
- more use of drama.
- extended use of the 'Big Write' and 'Every Child a Writer'.
- more use of the 'Boys into Books' project.
- resources appropriate for boys.
- choice of books for boys.
- greater use of non-fiction texts.
- reading clubs with access to sports papers, newspapers and non-fiction.
- choice of writing materials for boys.

Interesting evidence from two different schools raised the issue of passive Year 5 / 6 girls. This was reflected in their role in class, lack of confidence and self-esteem, which resulted in a great impact on their achievements, despite strategies being employed to support them.

6.5.4 Looked After Children

For some schools, Looked After Children (LAC) can be an additional usage of resources. As an example, one primary school in Wirral includes thirteen Looked After Children out of a total roll of approximately 240 pupils. While some funding (£500 per child) is received by the school, it could be argued that this amount does not meet the real needs of the child.

“The outcomes for our Looked After Children is of great concern”.
Panel member

It is widely recognised that the outcomes of Looked After Children is a cause for concern. However, the Panel welcome the closer integration of the old LACES team into the Learning and Achievement branch of the Children and Young People Department. The Panel would like to encourage the authority to raise the profile of literacy specifically for Looked After Children in order to enhance their life chances. This could involve greater support for foster parents specifically to help them assist their fostered children in improving their literacy skills.

Recommendation 19 – Among Foster Carers, Social Workers and in Residential Homes a higher priority should be given to literacy. Taking into account the Councillors’ role as a Corporate Parent, the Panel members urge that the Child’s Annual LAC (Looked After Children) Review should emphasise the importance of literacy progress.

Recommendation 20 – Training courses for Foster Carers and staff in Residential Homes should include a module on literacy and raising standards.

6.5.5 English as an Additional Language

There has been a rise in the number of pupils with 'English as an Additional Language' (EAL) in Wirral in the last four years. It is recognised that 'English as an Additional Language' affects only a relatively small number of children in the Borough. In Wirral as a whole, it is estimated that almost one thousand pupils have English as an Additional Language. However, a number of schools report an increasing demand for this service. In particular, albeit in a small number of schools, the use of the school's resources in providing additional support for these children is significant. Indeed, one school reported that 22% of their Key Stage 2 cohort are EAL pupils.

“The number of children with English as a Foreign Language is becoming an increasing issue in Wirral as a whole”.
Head teacher

In the future, perhaps more resources may need to be available in this area if the number of EAL pupils in the Borough continues to grow. A challenge for the Local Authority is to help schools to develop capacity to meet this growing demand. There is likely to be an increasing need for schools to improve staff knowledge and expertise in this area, using exponents of good practice for advice and support.

Recommendation 21 – The Panel recognises the growing number of pupils with ‘English as an Additional Language’ (EAL). Wirral Council should enable schools to build additional capacity to further improve knowledge and expertise.

6.6 Use of Resources

Funding was highlighted by all of the schools which were visited and it was also an issue that was consistently raised by those schools that completed the questionnaire. The exact comments varied as responses to questions relating to ‘Key Issues’, ‘Barriers to raising literacy attainment’, ‘Improving gender imbalance’ or requests for ‘Other support’ in the future. The Panel fully recognise that funding is a key issue for many schools. It has already been agreed by the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Committee that a further scrutiny review of school funding should be held.

“Money talks. And reads and writes too”.
Head teacher

This new scrutiny review will focus specifically on ‘Narrowing the Gap’ and the impact of the Deprivation Funding review, the results of which were implemented for the 2008-9 academic year. The intention is that the scrutiny review will investigate both positive and negative aspects of that Funding Review. Therefore, many of the funding issues will be covered in that review rather than this Review of Literacy Levels. However, it is fully recognised by the Panel members that the ability of a school to employ an additional teacher / Teaching Assistant or to provide additional resources can determine whether an intervention strategy can be successfully utilised in a school.

While there was much positive feedback and many complimentary comments from schools regarding the support that schools receive from the Local Authority, there were also suggestions for ways in which the service could be enhanced. Some of these have already been covered in other sections of this Report. A number of other issues are worthy of further comment at this stage.

There was generally positive feedback regarding the physical state of buildings and infrastructure. One head teacher commented:

“The ICT facilities are a wonderful motivator for children. The school is physically now in a good state”.

However, further use could perhaps be made of shared services and facilities, such as books and libraries or the use of professional staff, for example, speech and language therapists, in schools or Children’s Centres.

The targeted support that is available from the Local Authority to individual schools is often resulting from the School Improvement Strategy. Under the strategy, schools are categorised, enabling schools to be targeted with specific support where it is needed and, therefore, most likely to be beneficial. A possible revision of the strategy to enable more detailed categorisation aligned to the five aspects of care should provide a more accurate profile of schools and facilitate more accurate targeting of support.

With respect to the use of resources within schools, some head teachers have taken the view that, although more expensive, the use of part-time teachers is a more effective use of resources than the employment of additional Teaching Assistants. As an example, one school provides two sessions per week with a part-time teacher for the lowest banded group in each year. These sessions are offered as an alternative to assembly. This appears to be a very proactive use of resources by the school.

An officer informed the Panel that:

“Qualified teachers need to oversee literacy development”.

A head teacher made a similar point when remarking that:

“There is a general concern that Teaching Assistants are put into schools as ‘an extra pair of hands’ without proper training”.

Teaching Assistants are used to provide support for interventions in many schools. Although Teaching Assistants are clearly trained, for example, to deliver phonics teaching, the comment was made by one officer that:

“A key to success is teacher knowledge.”

Although the take-up of training is dependent on specific schools, access to additional training should be available if required. Although staff from Orrets Meadow already provide some training sessions, it may be that this service could be extended.

Recommendation 22 – Greater access to refresher training for established teachers in speaking, listening and reading skills should be provided. Particular support could also be given to newly qualified Teachers and Teaching Assistants. This additional training could be provided through twilight sessions organised in School Cluster Groups.

The point was made clearly during visits that while initiatives and interventions are largely welcomed by both schools and officers, there can sometimes be too many initiatives and some can be too short-term with funding streams that are not sustainable in the long-term. There is a danger that provision can be come too fragmented with pupils receiving too many interventions and consequently missing consistent provision. It can also be the case that ring-fenced ‘pots of money’ become available at very short notice which inhibits head teachers in using that funding in the most creative and effective manner.

One head teacher noted that:

“New initiatives provide funding in the short-term but are not sustainable”.

Meanwhile, an officer suggested that:

“Initiatives can be too short-term”.

It is equally important that the effectiveness of interventions is measured. Too often it appears that initiatives are introduced without there being adequate data provided to prove that the process is beneficial to pupils. It is essential that the Local Authority is able to gather information regarding the variety of interventions taking place in schools in order to provide guidance regarding their success. The Local Authority should aim to provide further evidence of the coordination with regard to interventions and the impact on the lowest 20%.

Recommendation 23 – The Local Authority and schools are jointly encouraged to provide further evidence regarding the success of specific intervention techniques by greater use of objective criteria.

Based on the evidence found during this Review, there is an on-going debate regarding the impact of class size on the literacy outcomes of pupils. One possible strategy for schools in the most deprived neighbourhoods and with the lowest Key Stage 2 results may be to try to provide class sizes in the order of fifteen as opposed to twenty-five or thirty. One option for the future could be for some of the Deprivation Funding resource to be targeted, on a pilot basis, in particular areas over a two or three year period to cover children aged between four and seven, with the Early Years children being supported by qualified teachers, as opposed to Teaching Assistants. Evidence suggests that teacher input is the most important factor in driving up attainment. One example came to light of a school whose class sizes had reduced due to a falling roll and subsequently experienced a significant improvement in results. An option could be for a pilot project to be employed to assess the impact of this strategy in Wirral.

Recommendation 24 – Consideration should be given by the Local Authority to using the Deprivation Funding to pilot a scheme to assess the success of small class sizes in raising literacy attainment.

This report was produced by the Literacy Level Scrutiny Panel.

Appendix 1 : Scope Document for the Literacy Levels (Key Stage 2) Scrutiny Review

Date: 27th October 2008
 Review Title: Literacy Levels at Key Stage 2

Scrutiny Panel Chair: Cllr Sheila Clarke	Contact details: 0151 608 1154
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Other Key Officer contacts:	
<p>1. Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</p> <p>1.1 To raise the aspirations of young people —Raise overall educational attainment, particularly lower achieving young people.</p>	
<p>2. What are the main issues?</p> <p>2.1 The review will include both reading and writing. 2.2 Why are levels of achievement so much lower in writing than in reading? 2.3 Why are there a number of primary schools below the national average for % of children reaching Level 4 for reading at Key Stage 2? 2.4 Why are there a larger number of primary schools below the national average for % of children reaching Level 4 for writing at Key Stage 2? 2.5 What interventions are in place in schools where a significant number of children do not reach Level 4? 2.6 What interventions are in place in schools where only one or two children do not normally reach Level 4? 2.7 Are schools satisfied with the support that is available? 2.8 Is there a gender issue regarding attainment levels? 2.9 How do deprivation levels affect the attainment levels of children?</p>	
<p>3. The Committee's overall aim/objective in doing this work is:</p> <p>3.1 To ensure that as many children as possible leave primary school with adequate reading and writing skills.</p>	
<p>4. The possible outputs/outcomes are:</p> <p>4.1 Better understanding by members of the issues relating to literacy levels at Key Stage 2. 4.2 Agreement that adequate interventions are available and are used by schools. 4.3 Determination that underachieving individuals and groups have access to the appropriate support. 4.4 Confirmation that the Council achieves value for money from the current intervention plans.</p>	
<p>5. What specific value can scrutiny add to this topic?</p> <p>5.1 To recommend any changes which would lead to the outcomes listed in section 4 above. 5.2 To raise the overall standards of literacy in primary schools.</p>	

<p>6. Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?</p> <p>6.1 Cabinet.</p> <p>6.2 Other councillors.</p> <p>6.3 Primary school head teachers / governors.</p>	
<p>7. Duration of enquiry?</p> <p>Final report to be submitted to Children Services and Lifelong Learning Overview and Scrutiny Committee during the current municipal year (that is, by 16th March 2009).</p>	
<p>8. What category does the review fall into?</p> <p>Policy Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y Policy Development <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>External Partnership <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Y Performance Management <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Holding Executive to Account <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>9. Extra resources needed? Would the investigation benefit from the co-operation of an expert witness?</p> <p>The Review will be conducted by councillors with the support of existing officers. However, the Panel are looking for advice from people with expertise on this topic.</p>	
<p>10. What information do we need?</p> <p>10.1 Secondary information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc).</p> <p>10.1.1 Need KS2 SATS results for 2003-8 for each primary school (reading and writing) in order to track where improvements have occurred.</p> <p>10.1.2 Ofsted reports - How do other councils compare?</p> <p>10.1.3 Comparative information with the national average and with Statistical Neighbours</p> <p>10.1.4 Relevant reports into literacy issues</p> <p>10.1.5 Previous Committee / Cabinet reports regarding literacy levels / strategies</p> <p>10.1.6 Scrutiny reports from other councils into similar issues.</p>	<p>10.2 Primary/new evidence/information</p> <p>10.2.1 Briefing paper to cover the major issues</p> <p>10.2.2 Interviews with key officers</p> <p>10.2.3 Interviews with head teachers, teachers, governors at selected schools</p> <p>10.2.4 Feedback from parent governors.</p> <p>10.2.5 Feedback from school councils.</p>
<p>10.3 Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet portfolio holder, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc). Council officers to include:</p> <p>Marie Lawrence, Early Years & Primary Education Strategic Service Manager, WBC.</p> <p>Bridie Sharkey, Principal Manager for English 0 - 19, WBC.</p> <p>Jenny Richmond, English consultant for Key Stages 1 and 2, WBC.</p> <p>Catherine Kerr, Principal Manager for Early Years, WBC.</p> <p>Pauline Cunningham, Communications Language & Literacy Development for</p>	<p>10.4 What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <p>10.4.1 What lessons can be learned from the many examples of good practice that already exist? Does the authority have the processes in place to facilitate the spread of good practice?</p> <p>10.4.2 What intervention packages are available to schools?</p> <p>10.4.3 What else can be done to help improve literacy levels in primary schools?</p>

<p>Early Years, WBC.</p> <p>Bev Greathead, Head teacher / Coordinator of the Poulton Lancelyn Writing Network (initially a written report)</p> <p>Deirdre Smith, Principal Manager, Study Support, WBC (possible) Sarah Howarth, Lifelong Learning Advisor (+ Family Literacy project), WBC (possible)</p> <p>Statistical Neighbours</p> <p>Head teachers / governors of four selected primary schools</p>	
<p>11. What processes can we use to feed into the review? (site visits / observations, face-to face questioning, telephone survey, written questionnaire, etc)</p> <p>11.1 Individual meetings with key officers listed in 10.3 above.</p> <p>11.2 Visits to a number of primary schools (head teacher, teachers, governors).</p> <p>11.3 Desk research.</p>	
<p>12. In what ways can we involve the public and at what stages? (consider whole range of consultative mechanisms, local committees and local ward mechanisms).</p> <p>12.1 School councils will be invited to comment</p> <p>12.2 Parent governors will be included in the review</p> <p>12.3 There is no plan to involve public meetings or Area Forum meetings.</p>	

Appendix 2 : Questionnaire Issued to Schools

EVIDENCE FROM HEAD TEACHERS OF PRIMARY AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS

Name of Head teacher
Name of school
What are the key issues affecting literacy attainment in your school?
What are the barriers to raising literacy levels at your school?
What interventions are in place in your school?
What can be done to improve the gender imbalance in achievement?
What are the strengths of the support that you receive from the Local Authority?

What other support would you like for the challenges that face your school?

Have you any suggestions that would help to further improve literacy levels?

Any other comments

Many thanks for completing this form. The Panel members very much appreciate your input.

Appendix 3 : Reference list of Recommendations

Recommendation 1 – The evidence gathered shows that successful interventions in the Early Years do impact on literacy skills. A Children and Young People Departmental Review should be carried out to ensure that easy access and an appropriate offer of service is provided in all Children’s Centres.

Recommendation 2 – In order to ensure that more families engage with Children’s Centres, information available through websites should be improved and be timely. There should be better promotion of specific activities, including pre-reading programmes, available at each Centre. Publicity could also be improved through a variety of outlets such as GP surgeries, local organisations and community groups.

Recommendation 3 – Health Visitors are a key contact for many families with young children. Wirral NHS and Wirral Borough Council are encouraged to enhance the role of Health Visitors in providing early identification of ‘hard to reach’ families and subsequent signposting to other services, particularly in Children’s Centres. The delivery of the ‘Healthy Child Programme’ in Wirral provides an opportunity for agencies to work together.

Recommendation 4 – Professional barriers need to be broken down. Multi-agency services should be provided via Children’s Centres, for example, Health Visitors, Social Workers, Dental Service, Speech and Language Therapists, School Nurse, Hearing and Sight Specialists, Paediatricians, Early Years Specialists, and so on.

Recommendation 5 – The Local Authority should provide guidance and support to schools who would like to encourage greater involvement of parents, businesses and older people in providing one-to-one reading support in schools. In return, schools are encouraged to participate in the scheme.

Recommendation 6 – The Local Authority is encouraged to build on the moderation work that has already been carried out at the transition from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2. This consistent approach should also be applied to the transition from Foundation Stage to Key Stage 1. Schools are encouraged to work with each other and with the Local Authority to deliver the consistent approach.

Recommendation 7 – The Local Authority should evaluate the success of the Communications, Language and Literacy Development (CLLD) programme and plan ahead to embed good practice in schools currently involved in the programme and promote that good practice to other schools.

Recommendation 8 – The Local Authority is encouraged to provide further in-school training in phonological awareness and schools are encouraged to fully participate in the training opportunities.

Recommendation 9 – Extended Services should be encouraged to give a higher priority to literacy-based activities.

Recommendation 10 – The impact of the Family Learning Service is welcomed. With the forthcoming changes to Learning Skills Council arrangements, the Local Authority should consider how the service could be made more universally available.

Recommendation 11 – Greater emphasis should be given to the provision of a consistent link between schools and Children’s Social Care Services. A Social Worker should be allocated to either a Children’s Centre or a School Cluster Group, wherever is most appropriate.

Recommendation 12 – The Council is encouraged to promote more multi-agency working, specifically by improving protocols for the sharing of information between health, social care and education professionals. This should apply particularly to ‘hard to reach’ families.

Recommendation 13 – A review of the statementing process should take place with a view to the system becoming more flexible and quicker, whilst maintaining integrity. There is a need to identify children at a younger age. Consideration should be given to the development of guidelines which would enable children to be allocated places at Orrets Meadow without having to go through the full statementing process.

Recommendation 14 – The funding arrangements for the Orrets Meadow Outreach Services should be reviewed to ensure consistent opportunity of provision to every child in need.

Recommendation 15 – At the next School Funding Review (2011-14), the Schools Forum should be requested to look again at the funding formula for Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, with a view to provision being based on a broader framework which includes Free School Meals.

Recommendation 16 – The Panel welcomes the current review of the Speech and Language Therapy service and encourages greater use of therapists in training and consultancy roles.

Recommendation 17 – The Panel strongly supports the principle of the Speech and Language service being available either in Children’s Centres or School Cluster Groups, whichever is most appropriate.

Recommendation 18 – Consideration should be given to joint funding (between Wirral NHS and Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council) of the specialist Children’s Speech and Language Therapists. The day-to-day management of the Speech and Language Therapists should be within the Children and Young People Department of Wirral Borough Council.

Recommendation 19 – Among Foster Carers, Social Workers and in Residential Homes a higher priority should be given to literacy. Taking into account the Councillors’ role as a Corporate Parent, the Panel members urge that the Child’s Annual LAC (Looked After Children) review should emphasise the importance of literacy progress.

Recommendation 20 – Training courses for Foster Carers and staff in Residential Homes should include a module on literacy and raising standards.

Recommendation 21 – The Panel recognises the growing number of pupils with ‘English as an Additional Language’ (EAL). Wirral Council should enable schools to build additional capacity to further improve knowledge and expertise.

Recommendation 22 – Greater access to refresher training for established teachers in speaking, listening and reading skills should be provided. Particular support could also be given to newly qualified teachers and Teaching Assistants. This additional training could be provided through twilight sessions organised in School Cluster Groups.

Recommendation 23 – The Local Authority and schools are jointly encouraged to provide further evidence regarding the success of specific Intervention techniques by greater use of objective criteria.

Recommendation 24 – Consideration should be given by the Local Authority to using the Deprivation Funding to pilot a scheme to assess the success of small class sizes in raising literacy attainment.

Appendix 4 : List of Tables

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4	Percentage of pupils achieving each Level, Key Stage 2, English, Reading and Writing, Wirral, Historical comparison (2004-2009)	6.1	13
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6	Comparison of pupils receiving Free School Meals and pupils achieving Level 4 or above, Key Stage 2, English, 2009 (provisional) data, by District and Area in Wirral	6.4	21
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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES

DELL UNDERPASS BRIDGE REFURBISHMENT CONTRACT VARIATION (BROMBOROUGH AND ROCK FERRY WARDS)

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report advises Members that the contract for the refurbishment of the Dell Underpass Bridge has had to be varied for technical reasons to ensure the successful delivery of the contract pursuant to Contract Procedure Rule 16.2.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Dell Underpass is a 3-span reinforced concrete bridge carrying the A41 dual carriageway Rock Ferry Bypass across The Dell in the Rock Ferry District. The bridge has been affected by leaking expansion joints leading to corroded steel reinforcement and spalling concrete in the crosshead supports.

2.2 Maintenance works to the bridge estimated to cost £117,000 were identified in a Principal Inspection report carried out by Babtie Consulting Engineers, Maintenance Agent of the Highways Agency, in 1999, when the A41 was a trunk road.

2.3 A bid was made by Wirral Council in 2007 as part of the LTP2 Primary Route Network (PRN) structures maintenance block for £261,000 (representing the 1999 cost estimate plus an allowance for inflation, contract preliminaries, design fees and risk/contingency). Grant funding was subsequently received from DfT for 2009/10, ring fenced to this structure.

2.4 A further Principal Bridge Inspection and Feasibility report conducted for Wirral Council by Scott Wilson Consultants in 2009 concluded that the bridge could be repaired at an estimated works cost of £230,000 providing that independent temporary support was not required, which could only be verified by further assessment calculations when the extent of concrete removal was ascertained. However, it was expected that the risk of independent supports being required would be reduced if the concrete patch repairs could be carefully phased.

2.5 Tenders were invited by the Council and a contract was awarded to Volkerlaser Limited in April 2009 under delegated Authority in the sum of £274,318.22.

3.0 VARIATION TO CONTRACT

3.1 Once concrete removal for repair had commenced on site it became evident that the south crosshead was so badly degraded that the capacity of the bridge to support its own weight might be compromised if all affected concrete on the upper surface was removed, even if concrete removal was phased as originally proposed under the contract.

3.2 Independent structural calculations by the Council's project engineer, Atkins Limited, have confirmed that temporary supports are required during the repair operations.

3.3 Prior to commencement of the works on site, the need for temporary supports could not have been reasonably foreseen. The provision of temporary supports is essential to the successful delivery of the contract.

3.4 A contract variation order has been issued by the Engineer for the temporary support works which will result in the contract price exceeding the contract sum by

more than 10% or £50,000 and the Director of Finance has been informed pursuant to Contract Procedure Rule 16.1.

4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The required variation works will involve a complex arrangement of temporary steel supports and jacking equipment supported on the existing concrete bridge columns in areas of sound concrete. The works are currently being designed and costed by the contractor and the Engineer will determine a fair valuation for the works in due course.
- 4.2 The likely current estimated contract final account outturn, having regard for the probable cost of the temporary support works, together with other minor contract variations and omissions, is now expected to be approximately £475,000 representing an increase to the contract sum of £200,681.78, or 73%. This is inclusive of prolongation costs for approximately 6-8 weeks delay to the contract.
- 4.3 Members should note that, had the scheme been originally tendered as a contract requiring temporary supports, the likely costs would have been no greater than those currently anticipated. Alternatively, had the variation order not been issued and the scheme re-tendered at a later date, the total costs would have been expected to be greater than those currently anticipated.
- 4.4 The Director of Technical Services has written to the Department for Transport requesting supplementary approval for additional funding towards the current LTP PRN structures allocation and is hopeful of a positive response. However, if this application is not approved, provision exists within the current year's Highways Capital Programme to fund the additional works and associated costs including staff time and consultancy fees.

5.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The contract will continue to be managed by existing staff in the Technical Services Department supplemented by assistance from the Council's Framework Consultant, Atkins Limited.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 There are no implications under this heading.

7.0 HEALTH IMPLICATIONS/IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 7.1 There are no implications under this heading.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Repairing the bridge will ensure its continued safe use as a vital strategic infrastructure asset. Carrying out the temporary support works during the contract will enable the repairs to be undertaken in a safe manner without compromising the structural capacity of the bridge.

9.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no implications under this heading.

10.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no implications under this heading.

11.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no implications under this heading.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no implications under this heading.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The bridge is located on the border of the Bromborough and Rock Ferry Wards.

14.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1 No background papers have been used in the preparation of this report.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That Members note that the contract has been varied for technical reasons to ensure the successful delivery of the contract pursuant to Contract Procedure Rule 16.2.

DAVID GREEN, DIRECTOR
TECHNICAL SERVICES

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

EARLY RETIREMENT COSTS 2009/10

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report informs Cabinet of the cost of funding the Early Voluntary Retirement Scheme in 2009/10 and indicates the future costs relating to those retirements approved up to 31 March 2010.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Cabinet on 9 February 2006 received a report on 'Contributions to the Merseyside Pension Fund' that set out the implications for Wirral Council based upon the policy for the treatment of early retirement costs.
- 2.2. Employers are required to meet early retirement costs either by immediate lump sum payment of the capital cost or by instalments for up to five years with an appropriate interest adjustment for the deferred payment.

3. FUNDING OF EARLY RETIREMENTS – THE 2001 VALUATION

- 3.1. Following the 2001 actuarial valuation of the Pension Fund employers were allowed to agree an early retirement allowance figure, the cost of which was built into the employers' contribution rate. For the three years to 31 March 2005, an early retirement allowance of £5 million was built into the contribution calculation for Wirral. However, this was part of moving to a position, in common with other local authority pension funds, whereby such costs would be paid by the Council separate from the Pension Fund employer contribution.
- 3.2. Over the three years to 31 March 2005 the actual value of early retirements exceeded the allowance by £1,782,422 and this was repaid over a period of five years which commenced in 2005/06. The costs were apportioned to Departments and met from the sum included within the budget for pension costs equating to £413,000 per year from 2005/06 to 2009/10.

4. FUNDING OF EARLY RETIREMENTS – THE 2004 AND 2007 VALUATIONS

- 4.1. The Merseyside Pension Fund - Funding Strategy Statement is updated regularly and includes the policy on recovery of early retirement costs. In 2004 this stated

that for retirements after 31 March 2005, no early retirement allowances would be granted and that all such costs should be financed either by lump sum capital payments or annual instalments over a maximum of five years with the appropriate interest factor added. This policy has been re-affirmed in subsequent Funding Strategy Statements.

4.2. The Pension Fund now calculates the capital cost of early retirements granted each quarter and issues an account to recover this by instalments over five years. These instalments commence in the period following the retirement rather than in the following financial year. The costs are met by Departments as they result from decisions taken by Departments on the restructuring and realignment of services.

4.3. For 2009/10 the early retirements granted by Departments were as follows:-

Department	Number	Total Costs	Average Annual Cost
Adult Social Services	53	770,500	154,100
Children & Young People	20	469,400	93,880
Corporate Services	1	20,600	4,120
Finance	2	103,100	20,620
Law, HR & Asset Mgt	8	299,800	59,960
Pension Fund	1	25,900	5,180
Regeneration	14	837,700	167,540
Technical Services	3	125,300	25,060
Totals	102	2,652,300	530,460

5. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Costs incurred by the Council on early retirements prior to April 2005 were apportioned in line with pension costs across departments and the costs of £413,000 per annum up to 2009/10 were reflected in the budget for increased pension costs.

5.2. From 1 April 2005 the costs of the Early Voluntary Retirement Scheme are charged directly to Departments. Therefore, whilst provision has been made within the budget for increased pension contributions any additional costs arising from the early retirement decisions are met by Departmental employee budgets.

Early retirements	Annual costs
2005/06	£358,000
2006/07	£196,000
2007/08	£283,000
2008/09	£234,000
2009/10	£530,000

5.3 Appendix 1 summarises the ongoing costs for each department based on retirements agreed to 31 March 2010.

5.4. There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report as these costs relate to employees who were granted early retirement in 2009/10.

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

6.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

7. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

8. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

10 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are none arising directly from this report.

11. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

11.1. There are no particular implications for any Members or wards arising out of this report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1. Merseyside Pension Fund – Funding Strategy Statement - November 2007.

13. RECOMMENDATION

13.1. That the cost of funding early retirements be noted.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/80/10

Estimated ongoing pension costs					
	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Adult Social Services	398,300	398,300	376,400	310,200	55,200
Children and Young People	349,500	312,700	246,100	130,200	84,400
Corporate Services	57,400	57,400	55,500	11,300	1,000
Finance	113,300	81,100	50,700	20,600	10,300
Law, HR & Asset Management	71,600	68,500	65,200	61,100	54,800
Pension Fund	5,200	5,200	5,200	5,200	5,200
Regeneration	199,100	183,000	173,300	170,200	156,700
Technical Services	97,100	83,800	62,600	32,600	20,800
Total	1,291,500	1,190,000	1,035,000	741,400	388,400

The table in paragraph 4.3 reflects the full annualised cost whereas the above reflects the actual quarterly payment profile e.g. for an employee retiring in November 2009 the department would pay one quarter of the annual cost in the 2009-10 financial year.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

MODERNISING ARCHIVES

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the development of Wirral Archives Service since its reopening in September 2008. The report details the improvements that have been made, the challenges currently faced and recommends strategies to ensure that the Archives continues to meet expectations.
- 1.2. The recommendations outlined in sections 4-8 were put forward by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) and The National Archives (TNA) in the Government policy: 'Archives for the 21st Century', presented to Parliament by the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice in November 2009. The report can be read in full at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/documents/aft21c/archives-for-the-21st-century.pdf
- 1.3. The policy 'sets out the strategic vision for the sustainable development of a vigorous, publicly funded archives sector across England and Wales'. It outlines how the world in which archive services operate has changed over recent years, with the rapid increase in the amount of electronic information being created and held. It sets out a vision for archives to aspire to in the way they deliver services; outlines the challenges currently faced; sets out five key recommendations in order to create 'a more vibrant and sustainable archive sector'; and, highlights the need for concerted action by all parties in order to secure a sustainable future.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1. Established in 1974 following local government reorganisation, the Archives preside over a rich set of holdings reflecting the outstanding contribution to global economic development throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – most notably the Cammell Laird shipbuilding archives.
- 2.2. By 2007 the quality of service being experienced by the people of Wirral was at a disappointing level. The Archives was failing to exploit the potential of its collections. Restricted to a public opening timetable of only thirteen hours per week, and with staffing resources of less than two full-time equivalents, a substantial appraisal and cataloguing backlog had built up. With holdings dispersed across multiple remote storage locations, retrieval was time consuming and many collections were suffering damage resulting from unsuitable environmental conditions. Direct access to collections failed to reach the desired standard, and remote enquirers were being let down, with enquiries typically turning round in an unacceptable timeframe of three months.

- 2.3. The Archives re-opened in a new state of the art facility based at Cheshire Lines Building on 1 September 2008. The move followed a major relocation from Birkenhead Town Hall and nearby archives storage in Wallasey.
- 2.4. The new facility, comprising a spacious and attractive search room, temperature and humidity controlled strong rooms and modern information technology and conference facilities, is ideally situated in central Birkenhead, with excellent bus and rail links. The premises offer optimum environmental storage conditions for the collections and ensure immediate access to the varied resources. Visitors are now able to take advantage of radically improved opening hours and the staff are welcoming school and community groups, in an effort to engage with new community groups and expose them to the rich archival heritage.
- 2.5. The Archives include those of the world-famous Cammell Laird Shipbuilders, as well as local schools, cemeteries, hospitals, local government and Poor Law records. The amalgamation of these collections into one site supports the delivery of a new educational programme, including themed workshops for a range of community groups on a variety of family and local history topics. The service began a promotion and outreach programme with the launch of revamped information leaflets and online resources.
- 2.6. The facility was designed, built and populated in close consultation with The National Archives Advisory Services, who conducted periodic visits to Birkenhead throughout the process. Their supervision has ensured that the new facility was granted status as a Place of Deposit, following an inspection in 2009.

3. ARCHIVES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

- 3.1. The National Archives, alongside the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, have put forward five key recommendations to create an archive sector fit for the 21st century:
 - (i) Develop bigger and better services in partnership – working towards increased sustainability within the sector;
 - (ii) Strengthened leadership and a responsive, skilled workforce;
 - (iii) Co-ordinated response to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future;
 - (iv) Comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitized archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them;
 - (v) Active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.
- 3.2. This report examines each of these recommendations in turn and considers the implications for Wirral Council of each.

4. DEVELOP BIGGER AND BETTER SERVICES IN PARTNERSHIP

- 4.1. The aim is to move towards a collaborative and innovative culture for archive services whereby greater efficiency and effectiveness is achieved through the establishment of new partnerships within or between funding authorities. These partnerships could be with other cultural services, such as libraries and museums; or with partners outside of the organisations, such as Universities or other local authorities.
- 4.2. The Archives has made a number of real improvements in this area over the last two years, developing and establishing a number of key partnerships both within and outside of the local authority.
- **Local businesses** - The Archives work closely with the Invest Wirral team who help identify local businesses that may benefit from a closer collaboration with the service. One recent success was the development of a commercial partnership with Birkenhead Press.
 - **Schools** – The Archives target is to host at least two school visits per month, ensuring as many children as possible from the Borough are able to experience history brought to life through access to our heritage. Since opening in September 2008, The Archives has successfully hosted 15 visits, with more than 180 children visiting. A series of educational packs has been drafted to improve the learning outcomes for all pupils and assist teachers in meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. Examples of collaboration with local schools include the Heritage Lottery Funded 'Rewind' project at Mosslands School and the "Parks for People" project, involving a link up between local young people, studying the history of Birkenhead Park, and young people in Central Park, New York.
 - **Higher Education** - The Records Manager is a member of the University of Liverpool Centre for Archive Studies' (LUCAS) Executive Committee. A number of events have been held in collaboration with the University of Liverpool, including 'Parks and Gardens in the Archives'; an annual tour and presentation for students; and a yearly two week cataloguing placement for two postgraduate students within the Archives.
 - **Tourism** - The Archives is a member of the Wirral Attractions Partnership. Membership ensures regular communication with other tourism and heritage attractions throughout Wirral, opportunities to participate in events and use shared resources for promotional activities. The Archives has been present at the national 'Who Do You Think You Are? Live exhibition at London's Olympia, for the last two years. Upcoming events arranged by the Partnership, which Wirral Archives Service will also be present at, include the Port Sunlight Village Festival in July 2010 and the Birkenhead Park 'Festival of Transport' in September 2010.

- **Cultural Services** – The Archives has established a number of valuable partnerships within the cultural sector, including the Lady Lever Art Gallery (recently collaborating on the ‘An Edwardian Family Album’ exhibition and events); Port Sunlight Museum; local family and history societies; Birkenhead Rotarians; and the University of The Third Age (U3A). Each of these partnerships presents opportunities for the Archives to promote itself as widely as possible, as well as delivering a service that not only meets the needs of our users but also exceeds them.
- 4.3. The Archives has made improvements in relation to this recommendation, it also continues to source new and innovative partners thus broadening the scope of the partnerships as much as possible.
- 4.4. Despite all efforts, the Archives is currently not meeting the target of two school visits per month, as a result of logistical problems for schools as well as difficulty in securing appropriate conference facilities to accommodate the children whilst they are on site.
- 4.5. In order to further improve in relation to this recommendation, it is intended that The Archives will:
- (a) seek out new strategic partnerships with a range of organisations in the North West in order to explore opportunities for shared resources, skills and promotional events;
 - (b) facilitate school workshops at schools throughout the Borough, in order to avoid the logistical problems currently faced at Cheshire Lines.

5. STRENGTHENED LEADERSHIP AND A RESPONSIVE, SKILLED WORKFORCE

- 5.1. This recommendation aims to raise the profile of the profession and demonstrate the role and importance of archives at a strategic and national level. Active promotion; benchmarking; and making the best use of skilled, professional staff can all help to build a sustainable future for archive services.
- 5.2. A number of improvements have been made in this area and staff have embraced opportunities to widen their skill sets and attend training, not only within the professional sphere but also internally.
- **Organisational structure** - Wirral Archives Service and the Records Management Service relocated to the Information Management Section of the Finance Department in 2007. This has resulted in a number of clear benefits for the Archives Service. Records identified as having long term historical value are now transferred directly to the Archives for accessioning. Both the Archives and the Records Management Service benefit from the essential storage conditions of controlled temperature and humidity, as well as sophisticated fire detection and suppressant systems. Furthermore, there are now intrinsic links with Knowledge Management and the development of the electronic document management system.

- **Benchmarking** – The National Archives’ Self-Assessment programme enables archive services to judge the adequacy of their services and compare their service provision to others in the UK, on an annual basis. The assessment looks at governance and staffing; documentation of collections; access services; preservation and conservation; and buildings, security and the environment. In 2007, Wirral Archives Service was identified as one of the most poorly performing in the UK, with an overall rating of 0* out of a possible 3*. Just two years later, the service was recognised by The National Archives for its development and achievement, and was given a rating of 3* out of a possible 4*.
- **Active Collection Policy** - The Archives seeks to pursue an active rather than a passive Collections Policy. It aims to build up a range of collections which reflect all of the activities to be found on the Wirral, balancing its already strong holdings of local government and business records with collections representing leisure, sport and cultural activities. This will achieve a balanced and varied archive of historical documents, available to present and future researchers.
- **Website** – There has been a complete redesign of web resources, recognising not only the importance of the web for existing users, but also in connecting to new target audiences. A new suite of information leaflets has also been created and made available online for users to download.
- **Professional Groups** - Staff within the section are active members of a number of professional groups in the region, including the Merseyside Archives Liaison Group (MALG), the North West Region of the Society of Archivists; the Records Management Society North Group; and the North West Digitization Consortium. Attendance and regular consultation with such groups, not only offers opportunities for further partnership working but also regular training in order to keep abreast of all developments within the profession.
- **Training** – All staff working for the Archives have attended and completed a variety of training modules over the last couple of years. Such training has included Customer Care, Leadership, Management, Equality and Diversity, Copyright and Strategic Thinking.

5.3. Although the Archives has made improvements in relation to this recommendation, it continues to actively pursue the Collections Policy in order to ensure survival and authenticity of key collections.

5.4. In order to further improve in relation to this recommendation, it is intended that The Archives will:

- (a) seek out new transfers of records, in particular from sport and leisure organisations, in order to enhance collections and ensure they represent the history of Wirral, to its fullest;
- (b) continue to research and create additional web content to be uploaded to the website.

6. CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE TO THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF MANAGING DIGITAL INFORMATION

- 6.1. This recommendation aims to ensure archive services have the skills and technology required in order to face the ever-growing challenge of managing digital information, in order to guarantee that it remains accessible both now and in the future. It is recommended that this is best achieved through the establishment of close working relationships with existing Information Management functions within the organisation, to ensure key digital records are identified and transferred to the archives in a timely manner, as they would in the paper environment.
- 6.2. With Council business records increasingly produced in the electronic environment, The Archives needs to focus on the capacity to manage digital archives and continue to make these available.
- 6.3. One of the core functions is the provision of public access to local government records. Access should be provided to the records held in the centralised Council repository for electronic information (Documentum), while at the same time ensuring that information security and integrity are not compromised.
- 6.4. In order to improve in relation to this recommendation, it is intended that the Archives will:
- a) work alongside Records Management staff to develop a comprehensive migration strategy;
 - b) develop a digitization strategy to identify collections at risk of becoming inaccessible due to technological obsolescence;
 - c) develop a user interface solution, in collaboration with Wirral IT Services in order to allow public access to electronic records across the internet.
- 6.5. In embarking on a digitalisation strategy the Archives recognise the increasing expectation that traditional, paper records be made available digitally, first on computers in the search room, and ultimately via remote access over the internet. Wirral is currently negotiating for digital access to local street directories and parish registers. Wirral has joined with other archives to form the North West Digitization Consortium, a group which aims to negotiate with some of the major record providing websites.
- 6.6. Ultimately, the Archives aims to provide digital access to all collections. As the official repository, the Archives must be equipped to provide public and internal access to Council digital records of archival value.
- 6.7. Success in relation to this recommendation is dependent upon the capacity to manage these requirements of the Archives Service alongside those of the rest of the Authority.

7. COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE ACCESS FOR ARCHIVE DISCOVERY

- 7.1. The aim of this recommendation is to meet user expectations for resources to be made available online and to set priorities for the digitization of collections. Partnerships with the private sector and charitable trusts are recommended as the best way to co-ordinate the mass transfer of paper records into digital format.

- 7.2. There is currently a large backlog of uncatalogued material and some material that has been catalogued has been poorly structured. Only a fraction of the catalogued material has been inputted onto the archive software "Calm". The priority is to input all catalogues into Excel or Word, using international standards for archival description, improve the text to create a consistent and clear house style, and then block import into Calm (and also upload to the website). This will substantially improve the intellectual control over the holdings of the Archives, as well as facilitate quicker and more efficient access to collections for users.
- 7.3. The catalogues will be complemented by a comprehensive system of indexes according to subject, name and place. This will allow searching to become more productive.
- 7.4. As a result of the release of the 'Archives for the 21st Century' policy, a new professional group has formed under the direction of the Association of Chief Archivists in Local Government. The group proposes, with support from The National Archives, to undertake large-scale digitization projects, involving large numbers of archive services throughout the UK. It is hoped that this will encourage services to participate and lead to the mass digitization of collections for availability online. The first project is to focus on the digitization of Schools Admissions Registers from 1870-1914 and Wirral Archives intends to fully participate in this project.
- 7.5. In order to further improve in relation to this recommendation, it is intended that the Archives will:
- (a) tackle the backlog of uncatalogued collections and ensure all material is fully detailed on Calm;
 - (b) transfer paper catalogues into electronic format and upload onto the website;
 - (c) submit a funding bid for a National Cataloguing Grant to catalogue the Cammell Laird collection. The bid will be for a two year period and will total £40,000.
 - (d) develop a comprehensive set of subject, place and name indexes in order to further facilitate research;
 - (e) identify priorities for digitization within collections and resources to assist in scanning these items.
- 7.6. Success in relation to this recommendation is dependent upon the outcome of the National Cataloguing Grant funding bid; the number of volunteers available to assist with this major project; and the availability of adequate funding to digitize collections identified as a priority. Informal talks regarding submitting an application have received favourable feedback.

8. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL AND LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

8.1. The aim of this recommendation is to ensure archive services are 'capable of making an important contribution to improving the quality of life for local people, assisting the understanding of identity, building bridges across social and cultural divides and generally shaping better places to live'. This is best achieved through the delivery of key local government policy goals including:

- education and learning
- empowering and engaging communities
- supporting regeneration and growth
- facilitating volunteering opportunities

8.2. The Archives has made improvements in relation to this recommendation:

- **Education and Learning** – free monthly Saturday morning workshops are delivered to members of the community on local history topics. The Archives regularly delivers presentations to local and family history societies, and educational groups; and a programme of exhibitions has been rolled out. More formal learning is also represented, by hosting school visits; and facilitating work experience placements from schools and universities.
- **Empowering and Engaging Communities** - Through the establishment of the Friends Group, users are provided with a regular forum to discuss and offer feedback on the services offered by Wirral Archives. Users are therefore empowered to directly feed into the delivery of services.
- **Supporting Regeneration and Growth** - Wirral Archives is an active member of the Wirral Attractions Partnership, to increase tourism to Wirral. The Service works closely with the History and Heritage Association in order to market Wirral as a destination for heritage tourism. For example, archaeological work will shortly be underway to determine whether Bromborough was the site of the Battle of Brunanburh in 937, and Wirral Archives intends to be fully involved in promoting this project. Guided tours of Birkenhead Priory are also offered as part of the annual Heritage Open Days.
- **Facilitating Volunteering Opportunities** – The Archives currently runs a successful Volunteer Programme offering placements to students interesting in pursuing archives as a career, members of the community who are interested in contributing to the delivery of the archive service to others; and work experience placements from local schools.

8.3. In order to further improve in relation to this recommendation, it is intended that the Archives will:

- (a) continue to offer work experience placements for children attending schools in the Borough;

- (b) facilitate the publication of a quarterly newsletter, on behalf of the Friends of Wirral Archives
- (c) offer advice and research guidance to heritage groups regarding the history of key places of interest in the Borough;
- (d) broaden the Volunteer Programme to accommodate those who have been long-term unemployed and offer them the opportunity to increase their confidence in returning to the workplace

8.4. Success in relation to this recommendation is dependent upon the capacity to accommodate as many work experience placements and volunteers as possible.

9. NEXT STEPS

9.1 It is proposed to implement the various recommendations as set out in section 4 to 8 above and in particular:-

- (i) Work with colleagues and partners to develop the Archives in line with the Archives for the 21st Century guidance document.
- (ii) Implement the Archives Service Strategy – see Appendix 1.
- (iii) Submit a Heritage Lottery bid to secure funding to facilitate the cataloguing of The Cammell Laird collection.

10. ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no asset management implications in this report.

11. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 A successful Heritage Lottery Bid would fund a fixed term post, of an experienced Cataloguer, over a two year period. The bid will be for £20,000 funding for year 1 and £20,000 for year 2.

12. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1. The Archives is fully accessible from Canning Street under the terms of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA).

12.2. There are no Equal Opportunities implications in this report relating directly to women, the elderly or people from racial minorities.

13. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

13.1. There are no Development Control implications in this report.

14. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14.1. There are no community safety implications in this report.

15. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. The proposals will ensure the Council is successful in meeting all statutory obligations with regards to the retention of and access to the information it creates, uses and maintains. This will include the rights of access to information afforded to citizens under the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.

16. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 16.1. There are no Local Agenda 21 implications in this report.

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1. Archives for the 21st Century - Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice - November 2009.
- 17.2. Archives for the 21st Century In Action - The National Archives and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council - March 2010.

18. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

- 18.1. Wirral Archives Service is situated in the Birkenhead and Tranmere ward.

19. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 19.1. That the Cabinet consider this report in the context of the Archives for the 21st Century policy and agree the recommendations as outlined in paragraphs 4 to 8.
- 19.2. That the Cabinet endorse the Wirral Archives Service Strategy 2010/2011.
- 19.3. That the Cabinet agree to the submitting of a bid for the cataloguing of The Cammell Laird Collection,

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/81/10

WIRRAL ARCHIVES SERVICE - STRATEGY 2010-2011

Scope and Purpose

This strategy sets the vision and direction for Wirral Archives Service (The Service) as it continues to build on the improvements made since its reopening in September 2008. The strategy links with the wider strategies of the Finance Department and the Council as a whole. The strategy will be reviewed and updated annually or earlier if deemed necessary.

This, the third strategy produced by The Service, has been written to reflect the five recommendations of the government policy: '*Archives for the 21st Century*', presented to Parliament in November 2009:

1. Develop bigger and better services in partnership – working towards increased sustainability within the sector;
2. Strengthened leadership and a responsive, skilled workforce;
3. Co-ordinated response to the growing challenge of managing digital information so that it is accessible now and remains discoverable in the future;
4. Comprehensive online access for archive discovery through catalogues and to digitized archive content by citizens at a time and place that suits them;
5. Active participation in cultural and learning partnerships promoting a sense of identity and place within the community.

The Vision

The vision for Wirral Council is to provide a first class archives service, which promotes the highest levels of customer service and customer satisfaction from the largest number and widest range of users. These users will comprise a diverse and inclusive group, from family historians and school parties to academics and enthusiastic members of the public, who have an interest in archives. The Service will be a useful resource for other professional researchers including in-house researchers.

The Service will provide an excellent professional service with high customer standards, whether they visit in person or choose to utilise our services remotely. The Service is not only available to residents of Wirral but to worldwide enquirers as well. We offer a complete Service to all, including answering enquiries, a research facility and the active promotion of the archive collections.

The Mission

To stimulate the excitement of historical discovery for the communities of Wirral and beyond, inviting and encouraging all ages and all users, demonstrating our inclusive Service for all.

1. DEVELOP BIGGER AND BETTER SERVICES IN PARTNERSHIP

The Service aims to move towards an increasingly collaborative and innovative culture whereby greater efficiency and effectiveness is achieved through the establishment of new partnerships within or between funding authorities.

The Service will look to focus on the following two key areas over the next twelve months:

Strategic Partnerships

The Service will actively seek out new strategic partnerships with a range of organisations in the North West in order to explore opportunities for shared resources, skills and promotional events.

The Service, in consultation with other Record Offices, and the Invest Wirral team; will continue to investigate all possible commercial partners, both locally and nationally throughout 2010.

School Visits

The Service will aim to meet its target of facilitating two school visits per month and avoid the current logistical problems currently faced at Cheshire Lines; by visiting schools throughout the borough, and facilitating educational workshops at the schools.

2. STRENGTHENED LEADERSHIP AND A RESPONSIVE, SKILLED WORKFORCE

The Service aims to continually raise its profile and demonstrate the role and importance of archives at a strategic and national level. Active promotion; benchmarking; and making the best use of skilled, professional staff within the Service will all play a part in helping to build a sustainable future.

The Service intends to focus on the following five key areas over the next twelve months:

Active Promotion

The Service will extend the current range of information leaflets, with three new leaflets, to be made available by the end of 2010. The titles are:

1. Birkenhead Park
2. Cammell Laird Shipbuilders
3. Local Newspapers of Wirral

Website developments are also underway. The Service will continue to liaise with the Press and PR department over the next year, to research and create additional content to be made available online.

Research Service

A Research Service was introduced to researchers from May 2010. Terms and Conditions have been approved and promotion of this new service is currently underway.

Active Collection Policy

The Service has collated details of potential depositors and will continue its programme of contacting them throughout 2010-2011. In this way, the Service can actively seek out collections

to be added to current holdings, and in doing so ensure that the holdings reflect the social history of Wirral in the widest possible way. It is also necessary to actively pursue the Collections Policy in order to ensure survival and authenticity of key collections in Wirral.

Benchmarking

The Service will complete the annual The National Archives Self-Assessment questionnaire in July 2010, with a view to highlighting improvements made by the Service over the last twelve months. Results will be published in early 2011.

Staff Training

Staff will continue to represent Wirral on a range of professional groups in the region. Staff will also look to attend any relevant training courses in order to ensure that they remain aware of all current professional developments.

3. CO-ORDINATED RESPONSE TO THE GROWING CHALLENGE OF MANAGING DIGITAL INFORMATION

The Service aims to ensure it has the skills and technology required in order to face the ever-growing challenge of managing digital information, in order to guarantee it remains accessible both now and in the future.

The Service intends to focus on the following four key areas in relation to the management of digital information:

Migration Strategy

The Service is increasingly required to manage digital records, both those created internally by the Council and those from external depositors. Currently, digital files from depositors are generally stored on storage media such as CDs or DVDs. In order for the digital information on these formats to remain accessible through available hardware and software, it must periodically be migrated to new storage media, and even new data formats. Archives staff will work alongside Records Management staff to develop a comprehensive Migration Strategy during 2010, in order to ensure that this information remains accessible in the future.

Digitization/Digital Records Strategy

The Service has an active presence on the North West Digital Preservation Group, which pools local professional experience to meet administrative challenges associated with archival records created digitally. The group's central objective is to consider how digital issues impact on all archive-tasks, and to produce guidelines, not only for professional archivists, but also for external record creators. Without such active, immediate consideration of digital preservation issues, there is a real danger that important records will not survive.

A Digitization Strategy will be researched and drawn up in order to identify collections at risk of becoming inaccessible due to technological obsolescence. It will also detail the challenges currently faced by The Service and how it intends to meet them.

Management of 'Born Digital' Records

The Service will submit a business case for the effective management of 'born digital' records within the organisation, to the project staff responsible for developing and rolling-out Documentum across the organisation. This will ensure records that have long-term historical value, but are created in the electronic environment, are appropriately transferred to The Service for long-term preservation.

Public Access to Electronic Information

As well as developing strategies to effectively manage 'born digital' records within the organisation, it will also be necessary to develop a user interface solution, in collaboration with Wirral IT Services, in order to allow public access to electronic records across the internet, whilst also ensuring information security and integrity are not compromised.

4. COMPREHENSIVE ONLINE ACCESS FOR ARCHIVE DISCOVERY

The Service aims to meet ever-increasing user expectations for resources to be made available online at a time that suits them, and to set priorities for the digitization of its collections.

The Service intends to focus on the following three key areas in order to meet these expectations:

Cataloguing

The Service will begin to tackle the backlog of uncatalogued collections and ensure all material is detailed on Calm. The immediate aim will be to transfer all existing catalogues into Excel or Word, using international standards for archival description, and then upload them to the website. This will substantially increase the amount of resources we have available for users online whilst at the same time allowing staff to begin cataloguing the remaining collections.

Each catalogue will be provided with a full Collection Level Description, comprising a summary history of the organisation or individual, and a description of how the catalogue is arranged. Research into the development of a comprehensive subject, place and name index will also continue in 2010, in order to complement the improved catalogues.

Examples of best practice and house style for entries onto Calm will be added to the Office Manual, in order to ensure all information made available online is done so in a consistent and clear manner.

Box listing of all accessioned and unaccessioned material will continue throughout 2010. This will substantially improve the intellectual control over the holdings of The Service, as well as facilitate quicker and more efficient access to collections for users.

Digitization

The Service is currently negotiating for digital access to local street directories and parish registers, both major collections used heavily by local and family historians. If negotiations are successful, it is intended that users will have search room computer access to digitized versions of these records by the end of 2010.

The Service has also joined with many of the region's other archives to form the North West Digitization Consortium, a group which aims to negotiate with some of the major record providing websites from a position of size, and therefore advantage. The Consortium is currently undertaking a project to have school registers digitized.

Priorities for digitization within collections and resources to assist in scanning these items will be identified throughout the year.

Funding

Owing to the Cammell Laird Shipbuilding Company Ltd's overwhelming local and national importance, it is intended that the Service will apply for a National Cataloguing Grant in order to catalogue this collection and make it available to as many users as possible, online. If successful, the aim will be to employ a full time, experienced cataloguing archivist, funded by the Grant, on a fixed term contract, for two years. The deadline to the first stage of the application process is 11 June 2010.

5. ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN CULTURAL AND LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

In order to ensure that The Service continues to make a real contribution to the lives of Wirral citizens, it aims to further assist with the delivery of key local government policy goals over the next twelve months, including:

- Education and Learning
- Empowering and Engaging Communities
- Supporting Regeneration and Growth
- Facilitating Volunteering Opportunities

The Service will maintain and aim to further increase its number of visitors and enquirers, including group visits by family and local history societies, school visits to the archives and Saturday morning workshops. It will also look to support tourism and regeneration opportunities throughout the borough and expand the successful Volunteer Programme.

Education and Learning

The Service intends to produce a series of education packs for use during school visits. Each education pack will include a lesson plan, copies of documents drawn from our holdings, and guidance for activities.

The following education packs will be available by September 2010:

- Medieval Wirral
- Tudor and Stuart Wirral
- Victorian Childhood
- Wirral during the Agricultural and Industrial Revolution
- Wirral and the First World War
- Wirral and the Second World War

Empowering and Engaging Communities

A Friends Group was established in April 2010, with clear aims to provide special events for users who wish to be associated with the historical archives of the Wirral; act as a forum for users to discuss and provide feedback on the services offered; and act as a focus for fund raising.

The Friends Group, alongside The Service, will publish a quarterly newsletter, to contain news of:

- service improvements
- the latest National Archives self assessment results
- newly completed catalogues
- significant new acquisitions
- recently conserved items
- upcoming exhibitions, events and workshops; including activities of volunteers
- staff changes, including introductions to new staff and goodbyes to leaving staff

It will also contain special features, including:

- interesting extracts from the archives
- 'on this day' extracts from newspapers
- articles on types of record, periods of Wirral's history, topics for research, etc.

Supporting Regeneration and Growth

The Service is a member of the Wirral Attractions Partnership. Membership ensures regular communication with other tourism and heritage attractions throughout Wirral, opportunities to participate in events and use shared resources for promotional activities, including the publication of a Wirral Attractions leaflet. The Service will be present at the following events this year:

- The Port Sunlight Village Festival in July 2010
- The Birkenhead Park 'Festival of Transport' in September 2010

The Service will also continue to work closely with the History and Heritage Association in order to market Wirral as a destination for heritage tourism. This year, The Service will once again offer guided tours of Birkenhead Priory as part of the annual Heritage Open Days and will seek to promote Wirral as the site of the important battle of Brunanburh (Bromborough) in 937.

Facilitating Volunteering Opportunities

The Service will continue to liaise with the Council's Learning and Achievement Branch to continue to offer work experience placements for children attending schools in the borough.

The Service will also investigate the possibility of broadening the Volunteer Programme to accommodate those who have been long-term unemployed and offer them the opportunity to play a key part in delivering some of the aims and objectives outlined in this Strategy.

Challenges facing the Service

1. To tackle the backlog of uncatalogued collections and increase the amount of resources available online, using existing resources.
2. To successfully gain a National Cataloguing Grant in the present financial climate.
3. To facilitate access to archival records held within an electronic environment, without compromising information security and integrity.
4. To manage the challenges posed by 'born digital' records whilst at the same time, meeting the requirements of the rest of the authority.
5. To identify adequate funding in order to digitize collections that have been identified as a priority.
6. To accommodate as many work experience placements and volunteers as possible.
7. To meet the target of facilitating two school visits per month, in order to ensure as many children as possible, experience history brought to life through access to their heritage, in light of the logistical problems currently faced.

May 2010

Next Review Date: May 2011

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

INSURANCE FUND ANNUAL REPORT

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides a review of the Risk and Insurance activity during 2009/10 and the plans for 2010/11. It also details the current status of the liability, fire and motor claims fund and the impact of measures taken to improve the management of risk.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Since 1988 the Authority has self-insured a significant proportion of its legal liability both to members of the public and to other organisations for injury or damage to property that it may cause in carrying out its business. It also self-insures damage to Council buildings and damage to, and third party liability for, Council vehicles.

2.2 Self-funding losses to a certain level is part of the overall Risk Management Strategy as it provides a greater incentive to deal with risk more effectively given that any reduction in claims directly benefits the Authority. The level of self insurance is set with reference to both the availability of a stable long term Insurance Fund and with regard to the appetite for risk.

2.3 Claims are met from the Insurance Fund with the Fund being maintained through annual contributions from all departments.

3. REVIEW OF LIABILITIES

3.1 The sums required for meeting the cost of Fire and Motor claims can be readily calculated. However the position with liability claims is more complex and every two years an external actuarial study is commissioned to assess the amount needed to fund anticipated liabilities for previous years. The study also provides an indication as to the scale of the contributions needed to fund liabilities expected for the forthcoming financial year.

3.2 In the intervening years a self-evaluation is undertaken which was the case at the end of March 2009. An external study has been commissioned for 2010 and the outcome of the study will be reported to Cabinet. For the purposes of completing the 2009/10 accounts an internal exercise considered the funding required for claims relating to financial years 1988/89 to 2009/10 based upon claims data as at the end of March 2010.

- 3.3 Based on an 80% degree of actuarial certainty this self-evaluation suggests that a sum of £10.88 million was required as at 31 March 2010 to meet outstanding liabilities for the years in question.
- 3.4 The table below compares the actual amounts held as at the end of March 2010 in respect of all three classes of business with the figures based upon the self-evaluation.

Class	Actual Provision 31/03/10	Revised Provision 31/03/10	Difference
	£	£	£
Combined Liability	13,353,110	10,882,145	2,470,965
Property	2,251,970	2,251,970	0
Motor	260,830	260,830	0
Total	15,865,910	13,394,945	2,470,965

- 3.5 The surplus of £2.47 million in respect of the Liability section of the Insurance Fund could be returned to the General Balance in 2009/10.

4. INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT 2009/10

- 4.1 Throughout 2009/10 regular progress reports on Risk and Insurance Management were presented to the Audit & Risk Management Committee.
- 4.2 Improvements reported in previous years have been sustained through the continuing efforts of departments to manage their liability risk more effectively. Allied to this are the 'firm but fair' stance on liability; the continuing active involvement in claims handling; and the counter-claims fraud strategy. The claims handling and legal services contracts continue to assist in reducing both claims numbers and the overall cost to the Council of this area of risk.
- 4.3 The Insurance Fund budget for 2010/11 was presented to Cabinet on 14 January 2010. In agreeing the budget Cabinet noted the savings to the General Fund of £420,000 and to Schools of £350,000. The latter is largely a consequence of the extensive work undertaken by the Risk & Insurance Team with the Schools.
- 4.4 Throughout the year significant time was spent in preparing for the tendering of contracts for Liability and Computer Insurance and Litigation Defence Services. The outcomes were reported to Cabinet on 14 January 2010 and 18 March 2010 respectively. These exercises resulted in annual savings of approximately £170,000.
- 4.5 Following the refresh of the Corporate Plan an exercise was undertaken with Chief Officers to review the Corporate Risk Register and a draft document was submitted to Cabinet on 3 September 2009. The Corporate Risk Management Strategy was reviewed and presented to Cabinet on 24 September 2009.

- 4.6 In relation to partnerships enhanced risk management arrangements were introduced to support the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). Improved processes for producing and managing risk registers for individual thematic partnerships and for the LSP as a whole were introduced.
- 4.7 Guidance for officers on the inclusion of information on risks and opportunities in reports to Members was introduced. Regular quality checks on those reports presented to Cabinet have been undertaken and feedback provided to departments to help ensure continuous improvement.
- 4.8 In association with Zurich Municipal the Risk & Insurance Team conducted risk ranking surveys on secondary schools and provided each school with an individual report on good practice and areas where improvements could be made.

5. INSURANCE AND RISK MANAGEMENT 2010/11

- 5.1 For 2010/11 regular reports on the progress of Insurance and Risk Management will continue to be presented to the Audit and Risk Management Committee. There will also be regular updates on significant risks as part of the quarterly Performance and Financial Review reports presented to Cabinet.
- 5.2 The most significant area of work will be a project to review the Risk Management Strategy and several of the tasks listed below relate directly to this project. In terms of individual tasks to be undertaken during the year the table below shows the principal areas and the target dates for completion.

Task	Target Date
Negotiate annual renewal of the Property, Money, Fidelity Guarantee and Personal Accident insurance contracts	June 2010
Conduct a risk management maturity survey	June 2010
Review of funding for insured liabilities	July 2010
Conduct business context interviews with Members and Chief Officers	August 2010
Audit of external liability claims handlers' performance	August 2010
Conduct risk ranking surveys of primary, secondary and special schools	September 2010 (start date)
Support Chief Officers in reviewing the Corporate Risks	October 2010
Present the 2011/12 Insurance Fund budget	November 2010
Review of key departmental risks for 2011/12	February 2011
Negotiate annual renewal of the Liabilities, Motor, Computer and Engineering insurance contracts	March 2011
Produce proposals for a new approach to risk	March 2011

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The continuing effective and pro-active approach to managing insured risk has been reflected in the assessment of the amounts required in the Insurance Fund to meet current and future claims.

- 6.2 The surplus in the Insurance Fund at 31 March 2010 was £2.47 million.
- 6.3 The Insurance Fund budget for 2011/12 is to be presented to the Cabinet in November 2010. This should be subject to less uncertainty than in previous years because all insurance contracts are now the subject of Long Term Agreements.

7. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no direct staffing implications arising out of this report.

8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct equal opportunities implications arising out of this report.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising out of this report.

10. LOCAL MEMBER SUPOPORT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 The risk management initiatives apply to all wards.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 11.1 Risk & Insurance Section claims Database.
- 11.2 Working papers for the 2010 internal study – actuarial data and funding analysis.

12. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are no direct planning implications arising out of this report.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 13.1 That the transfer of £2,471,000 from the Insurance Fund to the General Fund balance be agreed.
- 13.2 That regular updates on the progress in Insurance and Risk Management continue to be presented to the Audit & Risk Management Committee.
- 13.3 That the Insurance Fund budget for 2011/12 be presented to Cabinet in November 2010.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/87/10

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

TREASURY MANAGEMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report presents a review of Treasury Management activities in 2009/10 and confirms compliance with treasury limits and prudential indicators. It has been prepared in accordance with the revised CIPFA Treasury Management Code and the revised Prudential Code.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Treasury Management in Local Government is governed by the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management in the Public Services and in this context is the “management of the Council’s investments and cash flows, its banking, money market and capital market transactions; the effective control of the risks associated with those activities and the pursuit of optimum performance consistent with those risks”.
- 2.2 In November 2009 CIPFA released the revised Code of Practice for Treasury Management in the Public Services and accompanying Guidance Notes and the revised Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) also issued revised Guidance on Local Authority Investments for English local authorities. The revised Codes/Guidance re-emphasise an appropriate approach to risk management, particularly in relation to the security and liquidity of invested funds.
- 2.3 The Treasury Management Code requires public sector authorities to determine an annual Treasury Management Strategy and as a minimum, formally report on their treasury activities and arrangements to full Council mid-year and after the year-end. These reports enable those tasked with implementing policies and undertaking transactions to demonstrate that they have properly fulfilled their responsibilities, and enable those with responsibility/governance of the treasury management function to scrutinise and assess its effectiveness and compliance with policies and objectives.

- 2.4 Cabinet approves the Treasury Management Strategy at the start of each financial year. This identifies how it is proposed to finance capital expenditure, borrow and invest in the light of capital spending requirements, the interest rate forecasts and the expected economic conditions. At the end of each financial year Cabinet receives this Annual Report which details performance against the Strategy. The Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee has received quarterly monitoring reports in 2009/10 as part of the General Financial matters report. From 2010/11 there will be a separate quarterly Treasury Management report to Cabinet.
- 2.5 The Council has adopted the Treasury Management Code of Practice and has revised its treasury policy and practices documentation to take account of the requirements and changes in the revised Codes and Guidance.

3. ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR 2009/10

- 3.1 At the time of determining the Treasury Strategy Statement for 2009/10, in February 2009, the outlook for the economy and interest rates was as follows:
- 3.2 The UK, Eurozone and US economies were contracting; globally economies faced a prolonged recession or period of weakness following the financial market meltdown in the autumn of 2008. Availability of credit was restricted as banks undertook to repair their balance sheets. This exacerbated the slowdown as finance for small businesses effectively came to a standstill.
- 3.3 Asset values were falling and were forecast to drop further, particularly those which related to commodities and housing. The increase in food and energy inflation which impacted on real incomes in 2008 was, however, expected to fade in 2009. Wage inflation was forecast to remain low and the labour market to remain weak with the threat of unemployment likely to influence consumers to scale back spending and save instead.
- 3.4 The UK Bank Rate had been cut to 0.5% and in March 2010 the Bank of England announced its initial £75 billion of Quantitative Easing (QE). There remained a sizeable gap between short-dated LIBOR rates (i.e. the rates at which banks are willing to borrow from other banks) and the Bank Rate with this gap forecast to narrow. Gilts were expected to benefit from QE, resulting in lower yields.

4. THE ECONOMY AND EVENTS IN 2009/10

- 4.1 The economic recession and downturn in growth extended into 2009. The Bank of England forecast UK growth to fall by 3.9% in 2009, whilst inflation was forecast to be heading lower and staying lower for longer. The depth of the recession was borne out by the 5.9% year-on-year fall in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) recorded in the second quarter of 2009. The service sector - the dominant element of the UK economy - stalled despite optimistic surveys to the contrary. The recovery began in the final quarter of 2009 with growth registering 0.4%.

- 4.2 In order to stimulate growth, the Bank of England maintained the Bank Rate at 0.5% throughout the year. The Bank also took extreme measures on an extraordinary scale to revive the economy through its Quantitative Easing (QE) programme. Financed by the issuance of central bank reserves QE, which was initially announced at £75 billion was extended in stages to £200 billion.
- 4.3 The Bank appears to have successfully staved off the real risk of deflation. The increased supply of money in the system due to QE did not, however, translate into an increase in the movement of money in the system as banks were still unwilling to lend, and consumers were unwilling to borrow at pre-crisis levels. The housing market showed some signs of stability but increases in house prices were modest with house prices nationally registering a year on year growth of 9% at the end of March 2010.
- 4.4 Consumer Price Inflation, having hit a high of 5.2% in September 2008, began the year at 3.2% (February 2009), fell to a low of 1.1% in September 2009 as oil, commodity, utility and food prices (the main drivers of high inflation in 2008) fell out of the year-on-year statistical calculations. Thereafter, inflation pushed higher with rising oil and transport costs and VAT reverting to 17.5%. CPI at year end was 3.0% (February 2010).
- 4.5 Companies and households on the whole reduced rather than increased their levels of debt. Credit remained scarce and at a premium compared to that of two years earlier. As businesses retrenched, rather than hiring workers, unemployment rose to just under 2.5 million and wage growth was muted.
- 4.6 The November 2009 Budget was primarily about public debt. The Chancellor's forecast for net public sector borrowing in 2009/10 was £175 billion or 12.4% of GDP. Gross gilt issuance was expected to hit £220 billion in 2009/10. The credit rating agency, Standard & Poor's responded to the debt that the UK Government was building up and lack of a credible plan to reduce the debt by changing the UK rating outlook from stable to negative.
- 4.7 The outlook for 2010 was, therefore, for a period of slow and patchy growth in the economy accompanied by high unemployment. The UK fiscal deficit remained acute. Cuts in public spending and tax increases were becoming inevitable and a credible plan to reduce the deficit was urgently required after the May General Election.
- 4.8 LIBOR and LIBID rates (i.e. the rates at which banks are willing to borrow from and lend to other banks) which had been high in early 2009, slowly moved down towards the Bank Rate of 0.5%. UK Government Gilts were the main beneficiary of the economic downturn (it is an asset class that responds positively to poor economic news); they also formed the significant bulk of the QE purchases and are thought to have pushed gilt yields, and consequently the cost of borrowing, lower by 0.5%.

4.9 A summary of the changes that have occurred in the various Interest Rates are in Appendix A.

5. BORROWING: STRATEGY AND OUTTURN

5.1 The Council borrowing requirement for 2009/10 and that of two succeeding financial years was estimated at £79 million of which Unsupported Borrowing amounted to £61 million.

5.2 Capital expenditure levels, market conditions and interest rate levels were monitored during the year in order to minimise borrowing costs over the medium-to-longer term without compromising the longer-term stability of the loan portfolio. The Council had sufficient scope within its debt maturity profile to undertake borrowing in the most appropriate maturity periods.

5.3 During the first half of the year, the rate of return from investments was low and the perceived risk of investments was relatively high making it more appropriate to reduce the level of investment. By not reinvesting as investments matured the Council was able to use this money to fund capital expenditure. This, temporarily, reduced the need to undertake new long term borrowing and also alleviated the difficulty and risk in finding a safe counterparty to invest with. This approach also helped generate savings as borrowing money long term to fund the capital programme would have incurred an interest rate of approximately 4.5% while investments were only earning approximately 0.5%. It is recognised that utilising investments in lieu of borrowing clearly has a finite duration; investments are not permanent surplus money but, rather, money set aside for a specific future reason. Future borrowing would be required to support capital expenditure.

5.4 During the second half of the year borrowing conditions improved. PWLB borrowing rates were relatively “steep” (rates for short-dated maturity loans were much lower than for longer-dated maturities) reflecting sharply lower official interest rates of just 0.5% and the reasonably optimistic expectations for inflation. The demand for gilts generated by QE more than offset the supply of new gilts issued to reduce the deficit; resulted in lowering gilt yields by around 0.7% and, therefore, lowered borrowing costs. However, it was expected that QE would be withdrawn over time and, coupled with the prospect of a downgrade to the sovereign rating from the increasing burden of the fiscal deficit, the risk of higher interest rates could not be ruled out. Against this outlook, the Treasury Management Team viewed long term rates of 4% or below to be prudent and affordable borrowing opportunities. Equal Instalments of Principal (EIP) loans also reflected the steepness exhibited in the borrowing curve. EIP loan principal is repaid evenly over the life of the loan and thus avoids adding to specific peaks in the maturity profile of debt.

5.6 Considering all these factors the Council undertook the following long term borrowing in 2009/10:

Date	Lender	Amount £000	Fixed/ Variable	Rate (%)	Final Maturity	Terms
10 Feb 10	PWLB	5,000	Fixed	3.04	19 Dec 2019	EIP
03 Mar 10	PWLB	5,000	Fixed	2.94	19 Dec 2019	EIP

5.7 In 2009/10 two PWLB long term loans matured and were repaid:

Date	Lender	Principal £000	Rate %
15 Jun 09	PWLB	10,000	4.160
15 Mar 10	PWLB	4,000	8.625

5.8 The opening and closing external borrowing portfolio (excluding PFI):-

	Balance at 01/4/09 £000	%	Maturing loans £000	New Borrowing £000	Balance at 31/3/10 £000	%
<u>Long-term Borrowing</u>						
Fixed rate loans - PWLB	110,529	37	(14,000)	10,000	106,529	38
Fixed rate loans – Market	173,600	59	0	0	173,600	62
<u>Other Public Bodies</u>	283	0	(36)	0	247	0
<u>Temporary Borrowing</u>	11,800	0	(11,800)	0	0	0
TOTAL EXTERNAL DEBT	296,212		(25,836)	10,000	280,376	

5.9 The average rate of interest payable on the Council debt portfolio remains at 5.9%. The average remaining life of the debt within the portfolio is 18 years.

5.10 Following consideration of the Capital Programme against the stringent definitions of what constitutes capital expenditure Cabinet on 14 January 2010 approved the transfer of £3.96 million of capital schemes to departmental revenue budgets. This reduction in the previously planned Capital Programme together with the savings generated from the revised borrowing strategy enabled the funding to be transferred from the Treasury Management capital financing budget to meet the costs that were now within the departmental revenue budgets.

- 5.11 The actual borrowing costs of £10.8 million were in line with the revised budget. The need to borrow in accordance with Council requirements will be kept under review in 2010/11.

6. DEBT RESCHEDULING ACTIVITY

- 6.1 The main objectives of debt rescheduling are to reduce the overall exposure to the risk of interest rate movements, to lower the long-term interest charges paid on debt, to smooth the maturity profile without compromising the overall longer-term stability or to alter the volatility profile (i.e. exposure to variable rate debt).
- 6.2 Debt rescheduling has become more challenging and places greater emphasis on the timing and type of new borrowing. No debt rescheduling took place in 2009/10.
- 6.3 The portfolio continues to be reviewed by the Treasury Management Team and our advisors, Arlingclose, for debt rescheduling opportunities.

7. INVESTMENTS: STRATEGY AND OUTTURN

- 7.1 The Council held average cash balances of £102 million during the year. These represent general working cash balances / capital receipts as well as the reserves and provisions which are maintained for specific purposes.
- 7.2 The DCLG Guidance on Investments, revised during 2009/10, reiterated security and liquidity as the primary objectives of a prudent investment policy. Although the Guidance became operative on 1 April 2010, the principal recommendations are similar to the credit risk management requirements in the revised Treasury Management Code. In the revised Guidance, Specified Investments are those made with a body or scheme of "high credit quality". Both the Guidance and the revised Code emphasise that counterparty credit criteria should not rely on credit ratings alone but should include a wider range of indicators. The revised Code nonetheless requires that ratings assigned by all three rating agencies – Fitch, Moody's and Standard & Poor's – be taken into account and the lowest rating be used.
- 7.3 In determining suitable investment counterparties, the Council was already taking into consideration economic and financial information as well as evaluating alternative assessments of credit strength. For example, potential sovereign support, sovereign strength as evidenced by the ratings and GDP, sovereign and counterparty credit default swaps.
- 7.4 Managing counterparty risk continued to be the overwhelming investment priority. Financial markets remained unstable, particularly at the beginning of 2009/10, and against this background investments were placed with a small, select list of counterparties.

- 7.5 'Specified' and 'non-specified' investments were determined for use having assessed their risks and benefits, risk threshold and investment objectives (see Appendix B). New investments were restricted to the Debt Management Office (DMO), AAA-rated Money Market Funds, Gilts, AAA-rated supranational bonds, investments with banks and building societies which were Eligible Institutions under the UK Government 2008 Credit Guarantee Scheme and with a long-term AA- (AA minus) rating. The reduced investment return from investing with highly rated counterparties was viewed as an acceptable risk-reward trade-off.
- 7.6 The UK Bank Rate was maintained at 0.5% from March 2009 onwards. Money market rates soon fell to, and remained at, historic lows. Whilst existing investments provided some insulation against falling rates, new investments could only be made at the prevailing lower rates of interest and an adjustment was made in the 2009/10 Budget to reflect this impact.
- 7.7 The investment income for the year was £2.4 million which compared favourably with the budget of £1.2 million. The variance is principally due to:-
- Average investment balances during the year being £12 million higher than originally budgeted which was mainly due to slippage in capital expenditure.
 - Historically held unit trust investments were sold at the year-end which generated a one off profit of approximately £0.4 million.
 - Continuing proactive daily cash flow management by the Treasury Management Team.
- 7.8 The opening and closing investment portfolio is summarised below.

	Balance at 01/4/09 £000	%	Balance at 31/3/10 £000	%
INVESTMENTS				
<u>Current Assets (Short Term)</u>				
Loans and Receivables – Specified	49,550	58	91,300	86
Available for sale financial assets – Specified	24,231	29	6,000	6
Available for sale financial assets – Non- Specified	466	0	0	0
<u>Long-term investments</u>				
Loans and Receivables – Non Specified	10,000	12	0	0
Available for sale financial assets – Non Specified	919	1	8,477	8
TOTAL INVESTMENTS	85,166		105,777	

- 7.9 The average return on investments for 2009/10 was 1.34%. To place this figure in context, in 2009/10 the average Bank of England base rate was 0.5% and the average three month interbank lending rate (LIBOR) was 0.91%.
- 7.10 All investments made during the year complied with the agreed Treasury Management Strategy, Prudential Indicators, Treasury Management Practices and prescribed limits. Maturing investments were repaid in full and in a timely manner.
- 7.11 In terms of Icelandic investments the Council had £2 million deposited with Heritable Bank and Members have received regular updates regarding the circumstances and the latest situation. In March 2009 an Audit Commission report confirmed that Wirral Council had acted, and continues to act, prudently and properly in all its investment activities.
- 7.12 The latest information from the Administrator projects a base case return to creditors of between 79-85p in the £ and the final recovery could be higher. To date £0.7 million has been received with further payments due in 2010/11. If Heritable Bank is unable to repay in full I have also made a pre-emptive claim against Landsbanki Islands HF for the difference. When the original investment was made it was with Landsbanki Islands HF providing a guarantee to reimburse the Council should Heritable be unable to repay. It should be noted that Landsbanki Islands HF is also in administration.

8. MINIMUM REVENUE PROVISION (MRP)

- 8.1 The Local Authorities (Capital Finance and Accounting) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 (SI 2008/414) place a duty on local authorities to make a prudent provision for debt redemption. The four MRP options available are:
Option 1: Regulatory Method
Option 2: CFR Method
Option 3: Asset Life Method
Option 4: Depreciation Method
- 8.2 Options 1 and 2 can be used on all capital expenditure incurred before 1 April 2008 and on Supported Capital Expenditure on or after that date. Options 3 and 4 are considered prudent options for Unsupported Capital Expenditure on or after 1 April 2008 and can also be used for Supported Capital Expenditure whenever incurred.
- 8.3 The MRP policy for 2009/10 was approved by Cabinet on 21 March 2009 when it was agreed that Option 1 would be adopted for Supported Borrowing and Option 3 for Unsupported Borrowing.

8.4 Under Option 3, the asset life method, the funding of an asset with a life greater than 25 years a default asset life of 25 years is used in keeping with the Regulations. MRP in respect of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and leases which are now on the Balance Sheet will, in accordance with International Financial Reporting Standards and the 2009 Statement of Recommended Practice, also be calculated using Option 3.

9. COMPLIANCE WITH TREASURY LIMITS AND TREASURY-RELATED PRUDENTIAL CODE INDICATORS

9.1 The Treasury Management Strategy is within the limits and parameters set in the Treasury Policy Statement and Prudential Indicators against the prevailing market opportunities.

9.2 Cabinet on 21 March 2009 approved the recommended Prudential Indicators for 2009/10. (See Appendix C).

(a) Authorised Limit for External Debt

This is the maximum amount of external debt that can be outstanding at one time during the financial year. The limit, which is expressed gross of investments, is consistent with the existing commitments, proposals for capital expenditure and financing and with the approved treasury policy and strategy and also provides headroom over and above for unusual cash movements. This limit was set at £475 million for 2009/10.

(b) Operational Boundary for External Debt

This limit is set to reflect the best view of the most likely prudent (i.e. not worst case) levels of borrowing activity and is based on the Authorised Limit excluding the headroom for unusual cash movements. For 2009/10 the limit was set at £460 million.

The levels of debt are measured on an ongoing basis during the year for compliance with the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary. Total external borrowing and other long-term liabilities were within both limits.

(c) Upper Limits for Interest Rate Exposure

These indicators allow the Council to manage the extent to which it is exposed to changes in interest rates. The exposures are calculated on a net basis, i.e. fixed rate debt net of fixed rate investments. The upper limit for variable rate exposure allows for the use of variable rate debt to offset exposure to changes in short-term rates on investments.

	Estimated %	Actual %
Upper Limit for Fixed Rate exposure	100	159
Upper Limit for Variable Rate exposure	100	-59

The negative percentage for variable rate exposure demonstrates that there were more variable rate investments than variable rate debt in 2009/10.

(d) Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate borrowing

This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates. It is calculated as the amount of projected borrowing that is fixed rate maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate.

	Upper limit %	Lower limit %	Actual Borrowing at 31/3/10 £m	Percentage of total at 31/3/10 %
under 12 months	100	0	16	5.7
12 months and within 24 months	100	0	14	5.0
24 months and within 5 years	100	0	57	20.4
5 years and within 10 years	100	0	28	10.0
10 years and above	100	0	165	58.9

The limits were set to ensure there were no restrictions on the length of borrowing that could be undertaken thereby providing maximum flexibility to capitalise on beneficial opportunities that may arise during a period of financial uncertainty. The actual maturity structure reflects a balanced maturity structure.

(e) Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

This indicator is set in order to manage the risk inherent in investments longer than 364 days. For 2009/10 this limit was set at £30 million and at their peak, these investments totalled £12 million.

10. OTHER ITEMS

- 10.1 During the year Internal Audit carried out a review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Treasury Management system controls. The Treasury Management control environment was assessed as being 'excellent'.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 In the financial year 2009/10 the treasury management activities resulted in £1.2 million of additional receipts from investment income and this sum has been returned to balances in 2009/10.

12. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 There are none arising out of this report.

13. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are none arising out of this report.

14. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are none arising out of this report.

15. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There are none arising out of this report.

16. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

16.1 There are none arising out of this report.

17. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

17.1 There are none arising out of this report.

18. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

18.1 There are none arising out of this report.

19. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

19.1 There are none arising out of this report

20. BACKGROUND PAPERS

20.1 Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services – CIPFA 2009.
Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities – CIPFA 2009.

21. RECOMMENDATIONS

21.1 That the Treasury Management Annual Report be agreed.

21.2 That it be noted that the additional investment income of £1.2 million in 2009/10 has been transferred to the General Fund balance.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/91/10

APPENDIX A

INTEREST RATE COMPARISONS 2009/10

PWLB Borrowing rates %

	1 year	4½-5 years	10-10½ years	19½-20 years	29½-30 Years	39½-40 years	49½-50 years
Low	0.68	2.47	3.30	4.01	4.10	4.13	4.17
Average	0.90	2.89	3.93	4.45	4.50	4.52	4.52
High	1.23	3.29	4.42	4.84	4.80	4.83	4.84

PWLB Repayment rates %

	1 year	4½-5 years	10-10½ years	19½-20 years	29½-30 years	39½-40 years	49½-50 years
Low	0.43	1.83	2.93	3.74	3.84	3.79	3.73
Average	0.65	2.47	3.68	4.19	4.24	4.15	4.07
High	0.98	2.88	4.17	4.59	4.55	4.47	4.40

Bank Rate, Money Market rates

	Bank Rate	O/N LIBID	7-day LIBID	1-month LIBID	3-month LIBID	6-month LIBID	12-month LIBID	2-year SWAP Bid	3-year SWAP Bid	5-year SWAP Bid
Minimum	0.50	0.200	0.250	0.250	0.350	0.490	0.830	1.517	2.050	2.808
Average	0.50	0.368	0.390	0.470	0.695	0.928	1.283	1.914	2.540	3.254
Maximum	0.50	0.750	0.520	1.050	1.500	1.800	2.150	2.447	3.117	3.770
Spread		0.550	0.270	0.800	1.150	1.310	1.320	0.930	1.068	0.963

APPENDIX B

SPECIFIED AND NON-SPECIFIED INVESTMENTS DETERMINED FOR USE BY THE COUNCIL

1. Specified Investments (these will have a maximum maturity of 1 year)
 - Deposits in the Debt Management Office Account Deposit Facility
 - Deposits with UK local authorities
 - Deposits with banks and building societies
 - * Certificates of deposit with banks and building societies
 - * Gilts: (bonds issued by the UK government)
 - * Bonds issued by multilateral development banks
 - Money Market Funds, i.e. 'AAA' liquidity funds with a 60-day Weighted Average Maturity (WAM)
 - Other Money Market Funds – i.e. credit rated funds which meet the definition of a collective investment scheme as defined in SI 2004 No 534

2. Non-Specified Investments

	Maximum maturity	Max % or limit (£) of portfolio	Capital expenditure?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Deposits with banks and building societies ▪ Certificates of deposit with banks and building societies 	<i>5 years</i>	<i>40%</i> in aggregate	No
Gilts and bonds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gilts ▪ Bonds issued by multilateral development banks ▪ Bonds issued by financial institutions guaranteed by the UK Government ▪ Sterling denominated bonds by non-UK sovereign governments 	<i>10 years</i>	<i>40%</i> in aggregate	No
Money Market Funds and Collective Investment Schemes (pooled funds which meet the definition of a collective investment scheme as defined in SI 2004 No 534 and SI 2007 No 573) but which are not credit rated	These funds do not have a defined maturity date	<i>50%</i>	No
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Government guaranteed bonds and debt instruments (e.g. floating rate notes) issued by corporate bodies -Non-guaranteed bonds and debt instruments (e.g. floating rate notes) issued by corporate bodies -Collective Investment Schemes (Pooled funds) which do not meet the definition of collective investment schemes in SI 2004 No 534 or SI 2007 No 573 	<i>10 years</i> <i>10 years</i> These funds do not have a defined maturity date	<i>£10M</i>	Yes

COMPLIANCE WITH PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2009/10

1 Estimated and Actual Capital Expenditure

This indicator is set to ensure that the level of proposed investment in capital assets remains within sustainable limits and, in particular, to consider the impact on the Council Tax.

Prudential Indicator	2009/10	2009/10
	Estimated £m	Outturn £m
Capital Expenditure	80	64

2 Estimated and Actual Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream

This is an indicator of affordability and demonstrates the revenue implications of capital investment decisions by highlighting the proportion of the revenue budget required to meet the borrowing costs associated with capital spending. The financing costs include existing and proposed capital commitments.

Prudential Indicator	2009/10	2009/10
	Estimated %	Outturn %
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	7.04	5.43

3 Capital Financing Requirement

The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) measures the underlying need to borrow for a capital purpose. In order to ensure that over the medium term net borrowing will only be for a capital purpose, the Council ensures that net external borrowing does not, except in the short-term, exceed the CFR in the preceding year plus the estimates of any additional CFR for the current and next two financial years. The Authority had no difficulty meeting this requirement in 2009/10 and no difficulties are envisaged for future years. This view takes into account current commitments, existing plans and the proposals in the approved budget.

4 Affordable Borrowing Limit, Authorised Limit and Operational Boundary for External Debt

The Council has an integrated Treasury Management Strategy and manages its treasury position in accordance with its approved Strategy and practice. Overall borrowing will therefore arise as a consequence of all the financial transactions of the Council and not just those arising from capital spending reflected in the CFR.

Authorised Limit: This is the maximum amount of external debt that can be outstanding at one time during the financial year. The limit, which is expressed gross of investments, is consistent with existing commitments, proposals for capital expenditure and financing and with the approved treasury policy and strategy and also provides headroom over and above for unusual cash movements. This limit was set at £475 million for 2009/10.

Operational Boundary: This is limit is set to reflect the best view of the most likely prudent (i.e. not worst case) levels of borrowing activity and was set at £460 million for the financial year.

The levels of debt are measured on an ongoing basis during the year for compliance with the Authorised Limit and the Operational Boundary. The Council maintained its total external borrowing and other long-term liabilities within both limits.

5 Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions

This is an indicator of affordability that shows the impact of approved capital investment decisions on Council Tax when the budget for the year was set.

Prudential Indicator	2009/10 £
Incremental Impact of Capital Investment Decisions	
Increase in Band D Council tax	24.87

There is no variation to Council Tax once it has been set prior to the commencement of the financial year.

6 Upper Limits for Fixed Interest Rate Exposure and Variable Interest Rate Exposure

These indicators allow the Council to manage the extent to which it is exposed to changes in interest rates. The exposures are calculated on a net basis, i.e. fixed rate debt net of fixed rate investments. The upper limit for variable rate exposure allows for the use of variable rate debt to offset exposure to changes in short-term rates on our portfolio of investments.

Interest Rate Exposure	Fixed Rate of Interest	Variable Rate of Interest	Total
Borrowings	£280 m	£0 m	£280 m
Proportion of Borrowings	100%	0%	100%
Upper Limit	100%	50%	
Investments	£4 m	£102 m	£106 m
Proportion of Investments	4%	96%	100%
Upper Limit	100%	100%	
Net Borrowing	£276 m	£-102 m	£174 m
Proportion of Total Net Borrowing	159%	-59%	100%

7 Maturity Structure of Fixed Rate borrowing

This indicator is to limit large concentrations of fixed rate debt needing to be replaced at times of uncertainty over interest rates and is designed to protect against excessive exposures to interest rate changes in any one period, in particular in the course of the next ten years.

It is calculated as the amount of projected borrowing that is fixed rate maturing in each period as a percentage of total projected borrowing that is fixed rate.

	Upper limit %	Lower limit %	Actual Borrowing at 31/3/10 £m	Percentage of total at 31/3/10 %
under 12 months	100	0	16	5.7
12 months and within 24 months	100	0	14	5.0
24 months and within 5 years	100	0	57	20.4
5 years and within 10 years	100	0	28	10.0
10 years and above	100	0	165	58.9

8 Total principal sums invested for periods longer than 364 days

This indicator is set in order to manage the risk inherent in investments longer than 364 days. For 2009/10 this limit was set at £30 million and at their peak, these investments totalled £12 million.

9 Adoption of the CIPFA Treasury Management Code

The Council confirms its adoption of the CIPFA Code of Practice for Treasury Management in Public Services.

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

NORTH WEST IMPROVEMENT AND EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP EFFICIENCY COMMISSION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends that Wirral Council become the accountable body for the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (NWIEP) Efficiency Commission programme.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In January 2008, the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) published the National Improvement and Efficiency Strategy. This stated that local authorities and their partners are responsible for driving improvements. The strategy placed Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnerships (RIEPs) at the heart of providing support to Councils and partnerships. It identified £380m, for England, over the three years 2008/09 to 2010/11 to back this.
- 2.2 The RIEP for the North West is the North West Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. Wigan Council is the accountable body for the NWIEP. Sub-regional improvement and efficiency partnerships have been established and the Merseyside Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (MIEP) is one of the five sub-regional partnerships in the North West region.
- 2.3 Cabinet agreed on 26 November 2009 that Wirral Council would act as the accountable body for the MIEP.
- 2.4 The NWIEP strategic plan contains a number of region wide programmes. For July 2010 to June 2011, the NWIEP has significantly increased available resources within the Efficiency Commission programme.

3. NWIEP EFFICIENCY COMMISSION ACTIVITY 2010/11

- 3.1 The NWIEP draft Efficiency Commission Programme Delivery Plan (Appendix 1) identifies a number of strategic areas including:
- Sharing best practice and benchmarking across the Northwest e.g. improving purchase power by collaboration
 - Improving delivery of services through reorganisation of service delivery and shared services and reducing buildings assets

- Improving efficiency by removing duplication and waste involving business improvement activities and shared services
- 3.2 A number of workstreams have been established within the Efficiency Commission programme. Workstreams will work collaboratively across the North West and their leads will be drawn from a range of authorities. The workstreams include:
- Shared Services and Collaboration
 - North West Construction Hub
 - North West Procurement Programme
 - Business Improvement Training
 - Extending Total Place approaches and investigating 'Big Society'
 - Asset Management
 - Adult Social Care
 - Foster Care Placements
 - Communications and Networking
- 3.3 The funding available to the NWIEP Efficiency Commission for July 2010 to June 2011 is £1.65m. Within this allocation, £1.48m is for revenue purposes and £176,500 is for capital purposes. The Efficiency Commission efficiency target across the whole North West region is £15.96m of cashable benefits and £2.75m non cashable during this period. A further £81.6m is anticipated from July 2011 to June 2015 in cashable savings and £33.85m in non cashable savings.
- 3.4 In terms of programme governance, it is proposed that the Efficiency Commission will be chaired by the Leader of Chorley Borough Council with Wirral Council providing the Chief Executive lead and support for the programme. Quarterly reports will be required from the component workstreams in line with current NWIEP procedures and will be subject to review at quarterly commission board meetings. Quarterly claims will be compiled by Wirral and submitted to NWIEP.
- 3.5 Funding of £60,000 has been allocated for programme management for July 2010 - June 2011. This will fund the costs of external programme management support currently being provided. Wirral will be able to recover costs incurred in supporting the Efficiency Commission.

4. CONDITIONS OF FUNDING

- 4.1 Funding will be approved on the basis that standard NWIEP terms and conditions will be met. The conditions will be contained within the NWIEP offer letter. This will be issued to Wirral once formal approval has been received from the NWIEP board (during June 2010) in respect of the Efficiency Commission delivery plan.
- 4.2 The standard terms and conditions will also apply to individual programmes of work in respect of those bids that have been approved.

4.3 The role of Wirral Council is:

- to ensure that individual workstreams submit quarterly monitoring and finance reports on time and that the reports are passed to NWIEP
- to reimburse expenditure to individual workstreams, on receipt of payment from Wigan Council
- to ensure that the overall performance and financial position is reported quarterly to NWIEP
- to ensure that there is reporting of the overall performance and financial position to NWIEP as and when required. This includes providing an account of progress to date for inclusion in the NWIEP Annual Report

4.4 The Wirral Council role is discharged through the NWIEP Member Steering Group and the Management Board. These bodies include Elected Members and Chief Executives from various local government, police and fire and rescue authorities in the North West.

5. RISKS TO WIRRAL COUNCIL

5.1 The Standard Terms issued by NWIEP states that Wigan Council, as accountable body for the NWIEP, may vary or withhold any or all of the amount that has been approved under a bid (the Investment Amount) and / or may require payments of any or all of the investment already paid to the extent that Wigan Council is required to repay or recover such funding in whole or in part to or by the Government.

5.2 Wirral Council does not manage any programme of work under the Efficiency Commission directly. There are potential risks to Wirral Council that:

- (a) money may be withheld;
- (b) there may be a requirement to repay funding for programmes over which the Council does not have direct control

5.3 These risks are reduced to the extent that:

- (a) Wirral Council only pays money to individual programmes of work after it has received funds for payment from Wigan Council;
- (b) It pays programmes only after it is satisfied that quarterly reporting requirements have been met and after it has reported in turn to NWIEP;

- (c) Programmes have been asked to sign the standard terms as a condition of their funding and are subject to scrutiny as described in the standard terms.

5.4 It is considered, therefore, that the likelihood of the above risks crystallising are remote.

5.5 There is potential benefit to Wirral Council from the work of the MIEP and the Efficiency Commission. It ultimately should benefit from the improvements and efficiencies that the work programmes identify. There are less tangible benefits that may accrue from the goodwill generated by the role that it plays in supporting the MIEP and Efficiency Commission.

5.6 It is recommended, therefore, that Cabinet supports and endorses the role that Wirral Council performs in respect of the regional wide Efficiency Commission and its status as accountable body.

6. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no direct financial or staffing implications arising out of this report.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

8. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

9. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 There are no particular implications for any Members or wards arising out of this report.

13. BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1. NWIEP Efficiency Commission Programme Delivery Plan.

14. RECOMMENDATION

- 14.1 That Cabinet endorses Wirral Council as accountable body for the NWIEP regional wide Efficiency Commission programme.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/93/10

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1. Commission Details

Regional Commission:	Efficiency Commission
Programme Manager:	<p>Programme Manager (part time): Neil Hind 07966 213575 neil.hind@hind.co.uk</p>
Accountable Body:	<p>Accountable Body: Wirral MBC Town Hall Brighton Street Wallasey Wirral Merseyside CH44 8ED</p> <p>General Queries: Neil Hind 07966 213575 neil.hind@hind.co.uk</p> <p>Finance Queries: Peter Norris - Senior Accountant Wirral Council - Finance Department (Accountancy) Tel: 0151 666 3586 email: peternorris@wirral.gov.uk</p>

2. Description/Overview & Strategic Focus

The Efficiency Commission was introduced by the NWIEP at the start of year 2 (09/10). Its aim is to help authorities deliver significant efficiencies through collaborative working to reduce costs, improve performance and share learning on relevant best practice. The commission plans to build on initial work to ensure that local authorities continue to deliver efficiency savings but increase the pace to which these are delivered ensuring that the CSR07 targets are achieved.

The commission is using the NI179 (Value for Money gains) to monitor progress with regard to efficiency savings generated. Analysing the year 2 forecasts the NW is currently the worst performing region and is behind the 6% saving expectation. At a sub-regional level all sub-regions are behind the 6% figure with an expected shortfall of £60m at the end of year 2. All councils are currently reporting increased pressures upon their budgets and that a step change is required to allow for the increased levels of savings to be delivered. The commission has a work plan to assist local authorities and their partners in their delivery.

Following regional input and review of national documentation a number of priority areas have been identified. The commission also noted the recent “Putting the Frontline First: Meeting the Local Government Challenge” task force paper and plans to focus on the following highlighted topics:

- Check performance against others and learn from who is doing it better
- Make services more efficient - cutting out waste and unnecessary duplication. (Especially in two tier areas)
- Buy goods and services in groups and use that buying power to create local benefits and involve the third sector
- Reduce the number of council buildings by locating more services together
- Streamline management. Consider splitting senior posts with other councils or PCTs

The commission will look to address strategic items as outlined below:

“Emphasise improvement, emphasise efficiency”: This will be the core objective of the commission to emphasise and delivery efficiencies via the various programmes. Specific activities will include:

- Make managers leaders of innovation to improve services via the use of regional benchmarking and sharing of good practice. The commission will provide regional benchmarking so authorities can compare with peers and examples of the most efficient service delivery can be identified. It will also further build on examples of innovation and “quick wins/no brainer” type ideas where simple ideas can be easily adopted by organisations. Buying goods and services in groups and use that buying power to create local benefits and involve the third

sector. The regional procurement and construction programmes will continue to encourage the take up and development of regional and sub-regional tendering and frameworks. The procurement standards group and regional portal have already successfully engaged with 3rd sector and SME supporting organisations and will continue with this work.

- Reduce the number of council buildings by locating more services together will be undertaken by the planned shared services work stream in conjunction with a programme of work around asset management. The shared service work will look at where service delivery, in both front and back office activities, can be combined to deliver efficiencies whilst maintaining service levels. The asset management work stream will provide guidance and advice as to how assets can be better managed and merged or removed where it makes sense to do so. Work will consider, not just across authority sharing of assets, but with other public sector partners.
- Make services more efficient - cutting out waste and unnecessary duplication (especially in two tier areas) will again be supported by the shared service programme in conjunction with business improvement activities. Work will ensure that business process improvements can be made with continued investment in skills and relevant resources.

“Think place-based, think sector-led”: The commission will support a Total Place or “Big Society” approach to frontline service delivery within its shared services work. It will also look to work with other partners with regards to asset management and procurement activities. Early discussions have already taken place with NHS NW as to where procurement activities can be shared. The specific work around total place will also ensure that lessons learnt from current initiatives are shared across the region.

“Learn to share, share to learn”: Increased effort is planned within the commission on communications to ensure that case studies and examples of good practice are shared. The specific areas of work will also look to address the below:

- Check performance against others and learn from who is doing it better will be addressed by the regional benchmarking activity. The work will allow authorities to compare the cost and outputs of service delivery against others.
- Streamline management. Consider splitting senior posts with other councils or PCTs will be evaluated under the shared services work. There are many examples of resource sharing within the region that will be evaluated with results disseminated.
- Share professional expertise and ensure council staff are able to be flexibly deployed can be addressed again by increased sharing of good practice and increased skills, especially around business process improvement. The planned training on BPI will ensure that staff have additional skills and expertise to look at numerous service areas for both personal and organisational continual development.

“Cultivate community accountability”: It is expected that the total place pilots will address this and be reported through the commission with added support.

“Give a little help to our friends”: The procurement programme has already addressed the issue of supporting local economies and 3rd sector organisations within the region. Work is planned with NWDA, GONW and other public sector organisations within the region to ensure increased supply opportunities are made available to such organisations. The total place experiences of all public sector organisations working in a locality will also assist with this agenda.

The commission also notes the areas “requiring further action” in the letter from the minister that has highlighted benchmarking, collaborative procurement and innovative procurement as priorities in the forthcoming year.

As such the commissions scope, in agreement with the NWIEP Management and Member forums, has increased to cover a wider range of work. To support this budget has increased from £600k to £1.7m. A number of workstreams have been identified as listed below following consultation and workshops with regional and sub-regional leads.

Shared Services & Collaboration: The shared service and collaboration agenda is seen by many local authorities as a route to further efficiency savings, especially with back office functions. However, substantial progress is also being made on joint services with PCTs and other public sector organisations such as fire and police. As such the commission feels this should be a priority area that could make a real difference to the region. The work would look at address cultural and political issues that often prevent progress. It would also look to build a register of where authorities are willing to lead on specific shared services and/or are willing to share with others with a suitable support network.

The work stream would also look to fund or part fund the feasibility and help identify the possibility of shared services within the region. Such funding would be dependant on a critical mass of interest and may also address the issues of staff redeployment. An invest to save policy maybe included to allow for projects to be funded ongoing. It is envisaged that sub-regions will focused on more “oven ready” shared service opportunities whilst the regional work will help address possible political, legal and procurement type issues.

North West Construction Hub: By the end of June 2010 the Construction Hub will have awarded two, High and Medium Value, of the three frameworks it had been mandated to deliver. The third, the Low Value Framework, tenders will be coming back for evaluation prior to interviews and contract award. Funding for the third year would include the completion of the Low Value Framework, contract award September/October 2010 with debriefing continuing to November.

After autumn 2010 the process of procurement drops off and the exercise of managing the frameworks created begins and a programme of engagement to embed the arrangements will increase. Framework management and the process of ‘bedding in’ the frameworks will begin in year two for the High and Medium Value and continue in year three. The exercise will involve the creation of framework management groups to support the arrangements and enable them to deliver the objectives that can be achieved through frameworks that are not obtainable through traditional procurement. There will also be training programme for users of the frameworks; partnership working through framework arrangements will be a new experience some users and a degree of guidance and support will be required to embrace a new culture of working.

North West Procurement Programme: The regional procurement programme will continue to promote efficiency and improvements within the regional procurement activities. However, it will consolidate a number of current initiatives into the work streams including: *Training*: This will

include leadership training as procurement becomes more prominent in local authorities. The work will also evaluate current procurement skills and identify any gaps. *Procurement Improvement Projects (PIPs)*: These will be task and finish items of work to incorporate regional requirements to improve regional procurement. The board will take project proposals from sub-regions and from previous work streams (standards, sustainable procurement and regional tendering portal). Each project will be led by hub lead or senior procurement manager who will report to project board with agreed deliverables. *Programme Co-ordination*: This work will lead on regional communications and ensure coordination of regional/sub-regional activities. It will also ensure reporting and promotion of good practice within the region.

The regional group will also continue to work at a national level with other procurement initiatives within other RIEPs and with the OGC, and at a regional level on the regional procurement strategy with 4NW, NWDA and GONW. It will also continue to part fund the national sustainable procurement work led by the North East.

Business Improvement Training: Over 450 people in the NW have now registered for the NWEgg managed Business Improvement Techniques NVQ with some organisations having trained over 50 people free of charge. This is translating to immediate cashable benefits – South Ribble alone is attributing over well over £1 million of cashable efficiency gains to this with Rochdale, Chorley, Fylde, Wirral and others similarly benefiting. NWEgg is aiming for another 300 people to go through the training in 2010-11 and generate a further £3-5 million plus of savings as a result. However, the government has confirmed that the funding for this will be withdrawn as of July 2010 for people other than those with very limited existing qualifications. The project will look to maintain the momentum and fund as the business case has been shown to be sound. An additional consideration is the longer term sustainability of the Business Improvement Training. The project could decide to train 20-30 individuals at a higher level (NVQ 3 or 4) as this would create a pool of individuals able to train others at NVQ2 level. This maybe considered if matched funding can be found for the level 2 training.

Extending Total Place approaches and investigating “Big Society”: Substantial work has already been carried out within Cumbria (Counting Cumbria) and AGMA (0-5 year olds) within the total place agenda. It is envisaged that this agenda will migrate into the new “big society” thinking. This work stream will identify areas and participants who will be willing and have the capacity to model and pilot some of the very practical issues that may arise from adopting a place based approach. It is envisaged that these may include performance management, governance, shared and collaborative services etc. The work will look to identify possible efficiencies from such an approach.

Asset Management: Asset management has, in the main, been a neglected area at a regional level but improvements in this area were highlighted by CLG as giving a possible 6% efficiency contribution from source budgets in CSR07. As such up to £15m per annum of efficiency savings maybe available from this area. This area would focus on improvements that can be made to existing assets and also investigate the sharing of assets to include not only buildings but facilities management, highways and IT infrastructure. It is expected that sub-regions would take an active lead on this work with the regional work providing guidance and support.

Adult Social Care: There is now a growing consensus and evidence base that investment in Reablement and Telecare will keep more people

at home, reduce the demand for service in the community and the cost of that which is provided. The impact of this project will be to improve the outcomes for people who receive services through enhanced independence and to deliver efficiency gains. It will be a significant reduction in projected additional costs for older people in the region which is £202 million in the next 5 years based on current spend pattern or £189.5 million based on projections for the over 65 population.

Foster Care Placements: There is currently a shortage of foster care placements within the region. This incurs additional costs for local authorities when externally provided care placements are used. This project plans, via an advertising campaign, to recruit an additional 150 foster care placement providers within the region. As such this will reduce costs within children's services departments and generate efficiencies.

Communications & Networking: A general theme from current regional and sub-regional work that more effort is required in sharing of good practice, lessons learnt and successes, not only from within the region but nationally. This work would look to produce real life examples and to offer support to implement such efficiency saving initiatives. A number of events would also be established on key topics to ensure that progress is made and obstacles identified and removed. A central repository would also be created to hold relevant information and guidance.

3. Description of Governance Arrangements

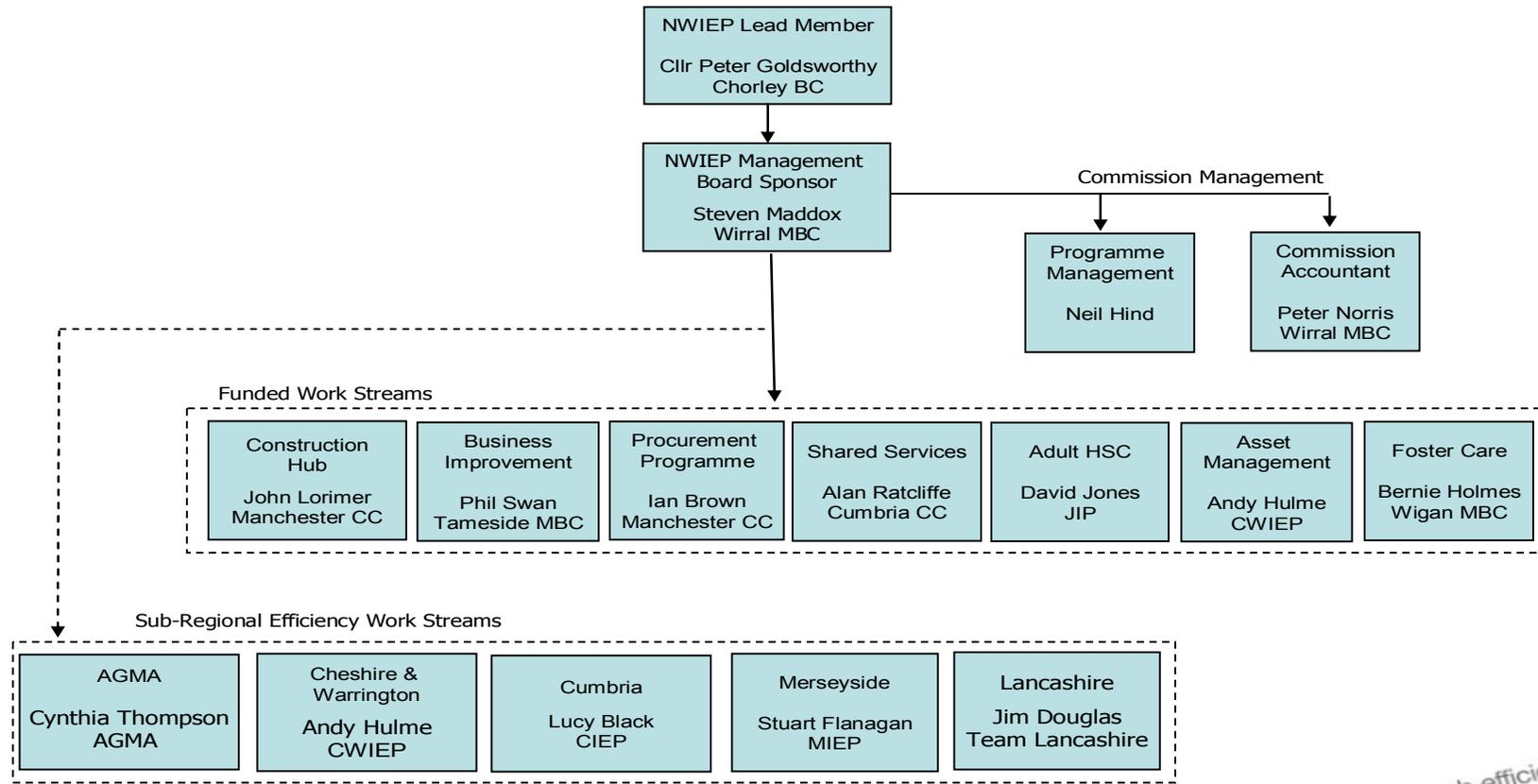
The Efficiency Commission is chaired by Cllr Peter Goldsworthy, Leader of Chorley Borough Council. The Efficiency Commission also has an appointed Chief Executive lead, Steve Maddox, Wirral MBC. Overall governance will be managed by Wirral MBC and the commissions management team.

The commission meets formally quarterly to review progress and address any performance issues. Each work stream is required to produce an update report quarterly inline with NWIEP reporting to ensure progress is being made. Such reports are reviewed at the quarterly commission board meetings.

The commission programme manager will also chair an operational group of work stream leads each quarter (6 weeks before/after the commission board meetings) to review interim progress and address any immediate performance issues. This will help ensure that progress is made between the formal board meetings.

Any areas of non-performance are reviewed and addressed with corrective actions being agreed. Each funded programme and sub-regional efficiency work report to the Efficiency Commission as shown below in the diagram below. Funded work stream will also have a nominated lead organisation with a nominated lead officer at Assistant Director level or above. Work streams will also be encouraged to have project boards where existing arrangements do not exist to manage day to day progress.

Efficiency Commission Structure



4. Communications Plan

Awaiting NWIEP Regional Comms Plan to update efficiency communications plan to prevent duplication and ensure joined up message.

Key Messages	Recipients of Message	Method of Communication	Frequency
What efficiency commission plans to achieve in 10/11.	Chief Executives and Leaders	Letter & Launch Event	One off
Update on key events and progress against delivery plan	Sub-regional IEP boards and other commission leads	Briefing note	Quarterly
Information around efficiency savings delivered or identified and good practice examples	All relevant stakeholders i.e. those with interest in efficiency	Email newsletter	Quarterly
Detailed examples of where efficiency savings maybe possible	Chief Executives, Leaders and specific impacted service leads	Case study type report	Ad-Hoc

5. Outcomes, Actions and Measures

A&B	C	D	E	F
<p style="text-align: center;">Project Titles & Outcomes</p> <p>Name the projects and describe the real, lasting, tangible benefits that will result from the project.</p> <p>You are required to identify an indicator in columns E and/or F to measure each outcome and a target value for that indicator. It is useful to have this in mind when framing the outcomes for the Delivery Plan.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Actions</p> <p>Describe, in summarised form, the actual actions/activities you intend to undertake that will produce the outcomes you want to deliver.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Outputs</p> <p>Describe the measures and milestones that will indicate that you are successfully carrying out the actions in column C.</p> <p>Date deadlines are required to track progress.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Lag indicators</p> <p>Describe the indicators you will use to measure the successful achievement of the outcomes set out in column A where it may take some years or they are only measured infrequently (e.g. annual count or three yearly survey). These measures are 'lag indicators'.</p> <p>Identify a few key indicators that are at the core of what the particular outcome is about. It is entirely appropriate to use National Indicators (NIs) or other existing indicators to measure the impact of your RIEP project. But be realistic about the degree small projects will change the NI.</p> <p>The targets set for the lag indicators should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely)</p> <p>For each measure the following is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'baseline' (current/as is) position • The date when this current position was measured • A target position to be achieved as a result of the project • The date when this target should be reached 	<p style="text-align: center;">Lead indicators</p> <p>Describe the indicators you will use to measure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The successful achievement of those outcomes set out in column A that can be delivered within one year, or • Progress on achieving longer term outcomes measured by the lag indicators in column E.. <p>These latter will allow you (and us) to know that your project is on track to produce the outcomes measured by the lag indicators.</p> <p>The targets set for the lead indicators should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely).</p> <p>For each measure the following is required:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A 'baseline' (current/as is) position • The date when this current position was measured • A target position to be achieved as a result of the project • The date when this target should be reached

Actions and Outputs			
A & B	C	D	
Project Titles & Outcomes	Actions	Outputs	
		Output	Quarter
1 Shared Services			
Outcome 1: Identification of potential efficiency savings from shared services and collaborations initiatives Outcome 2: Commitment from members and chief executives for implementation of identified initiatives	Survey and mapping exercise for NW authorities to identify what exists (with any end dates) and current plans.	Completed survey of current landscape including local authorities, PCTs, NWFRS and regional police forces.	Q1
		High level report of survey findings and opportunities. .	Q2
	Research and consolidation of information around previous guidance, business cases and implementations to include legal and personnel impacts.	Signposting of relevant support material	Q2
		Commissioning and delivery of any missing guidance to help support shared service agenda.	Q3
	Identification of up to 3 cross regional/agency with relevant supporting business case and plans.	3 business model with supporting financial case for possible (non sub-regional local authority) shared services.	Q4
Work with CEx and members to obtain commitment for identified projects and eliminate possible issues	Agreement from management and political levels as to scope and business case for identified projects	Q4	
2 NW Construction Hub			
Outcome 1: Improved community outcomes through an efficient and sustainable built estate Outcome 2: A quality and sustainable product, operating efficiently to a satisfied client	Complete procurement (ITT) and award LVFW contract	Completion of ITT evaluation and awarding of framework contract	Q1
		Effective sub regional arrangements to support delivery of projects up to £500k	Q2
	Production of Framework Management 'manual'	First issue of framework manual including templates to support project delivery	Q1

Outcome 3: Streamlined processes, easy to use, low cost and encourage the benefits achievable through partnership working	Creation and support of Framework Management Groups (FMG)	Effective FMGs for each Framework / Sub-regional lot.	Q2
		FMG Terms of reference	Q2
		Effective Governance model for NWCH and the frameworks	Q2
Outcome 4: Drive improvements to the design process through early contractor involvement, utilising knowledge of the supply chain	Capability development programme	Officers with the ability to use the frameworks to deliver effectively	Q4
Outcome 5: Delivery of efficiency saving from framework usage		Increased client confidence and workflow through the arrangements	Q4
3 Regional Procurement			
Outcome 1: Increased efficiency savings from collaborative procurement.	Creation of collaborative contracts for managed consultancy service, Special Educational Needs & High Cost Dependency Care.	Delivery of regional contract for supply of low value consultancy via vendor model.	Q4
		Delivery of regional framework for supply of special education needs.	Q4
		Delivery of regional framework for supply of high cost dependency care.	Q4
Outcome 2: Increased contracting opportunities for SMEs and 3 rd sector organisations.	Local authorities to advertise low level supply opportunities in SME and 3 rd sector friendly manner.	Increase in local authority usage of regional portal.	Q1 – Q4
		Increase in number of sub-OJEU opportunities being advertised.	Q1 – Q4
Outcome 3: Improved skills and resources within NW procurement community.	Delivery of regional training programme.	5 procurement training events covering at least 60 personnel	Q4
	Delivery of procurement transformation methodology.	Delivery of tool kit to assist authorities in transformation in procurement departments.	Q2

4 Business Improvement Techniques support and training			
Outcome 1: Delivery of £3m efficiency savings from service improvement activities	Co-ordinate training for 300 people to NVQ level 2 with 66% funded via Train to Gain and 34% funded via NW IEP.	More efficiency service delivery in areas expected to include: procure to pay, planning, building control, library services, complaints, complaints and street scene services.	Q1 – Q4
	Co-ordinate 45 people trained to NVQ level 3 Establish a network of NVQ3 practitioners established that can lead further training because 10-11. Manage ongoing training improvement and coordination with training providers and ensure results are communicated to all relevant stakeholders	Undertake communications activities to ensure take up and dissemination of outputs via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWEgg Newsletters (monthly) • PR materials on NW IEP website and in NW IEP newsletters. • Individual contacts and presentations at each organisation, LSP or group (average of 6 per month) • Update letters and emails to senior offices (Quarterly) • Regional celebration event similar to the successful event held in Chorley in Feb 2010. 	Q1 – Q4
		Quarterly BIT Improvement Group meetings with suppliers with actions between meetings.	Q1 – Q4
		Ah hoc support for organisations going through the training to resolve any issues with suppliers (ongoing).	Q1 – Q4
		Support for sub-regions in ensuring allocation of funding is fair and that payment to suppliers / colleges aligns with training delivered with quarterly claimed evidenced with invoices and financial tracking.	Q1 – Q4
5 Total Place			
Outcome 1: Completed pilots of total place/big society to indicate opportunities for efficiency savings (cashable and/or non cashable)	Identify groups to pilot agenda.	List of possible sub-regional or local groups with history of delivery of local improvement	Q1
	Scope and agree pilots	Scoping documents for at least 3 pilots.	Q2
	Deliver pilots and report on results	Report on (or expected) impact of localised working within local government and public sector agenda with focus on possible efficiencies.	Q4

6 Asset Management			
Outcome 1: Improved use of resource (KLOE3.1) scores within the region.	Survey of planned activities within authorities and sub-regions.	Completed survey of current landscape including local authorities, PCTs, NWFRS and regional police forces.	Q1
Outcome 2: Identification of asset management efficiency opportunities	Highlighting good initiatives and encourage wider take up.	Signposting of relevant support material	Q2
		Commissioning and delivery of any missing guidance to help asset management agenda.	Q3
	Lead on identified key initiatives	Support for identified cross sub-regional/agency initiatives	Q4
7 Adult Social Care Efficiencies			
Outcome 1: Increased number of people being supported within the community	Specialist input to facilitate the implementation of reablement and telecare services based on the work of the Care Services Efficiency Delivery programme which has been active across the country.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of authorities benefiting from 1-1 inputs • Support plans developed and signed off by senior management • Number and purpose of individual meetings identified for each authority • Findings from investigation and research reported to senior management of individual authorities and supporting organisations • Improvement recommendations made to Directors/SMTs • Local authority action plans developed for 2010/11 and beyond 	Q4
			Q1/Q3
Outcome 2: A reduction in the number of acute admissions to residential and nursing care / hospital	Staff development and support to enhance implementation capacity in-house and build skills transfer to enable sustainability after funding ceases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of authorities benefiting from 1-1 inputs • Development of common frameworks to support; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Cases • Project management • Workforce issues • Commissioning services • Performance management • Efficiency and cost benefit analysis 	Q1-Q4
			Q2-Q4
			Q2-Q4
			Q3-Q4

<p>Outcome 3: A lasting and positive impact on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life • Choice and control • Inclusion and contribution • Health and wellbeing • Dignity and safety <p>of citizens who have received the improved services</p>	<p>Support for a core and cluster network including a “buddying” approach that encourages sharing and learning in tackling operational and strategic issues at each layer of the regional network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of sub regional meetings undertaken • Attendance records at sub regional meetings • Number of authorities operating suggested “buddying” relationship • Operational and strategic issues resolved within agreed timescales • Regional events held 	<p>Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q1-Q4 Q2-Q4 Q3-Q4</p>
8 Foster Care Placements			
<p>Outcome 1: The generation of 150 additional foster care placements within the region.</p>	<p>Develop the regional brand Develop co-ordinated publicity campaign with local authorities</p>	<p>Media company appointed, brand developed and approved</p>	<p>Q2</p>
	<p>Commence production for TV campaign Launch a major television advertising campaign supported by local billboard poster, leaflet, newspaper advertising</p>	<p>23 Local authorities engaged and co-ordinated advertising campaign agreed</p>	<p>Q2</p>
	<p>Define different support “offer” required by local authorities and procure where appropriate Implement Call handling and information systems including web based information resource</p>	<p>Media company appointed, campaign theme agreed, production commenced Television advertising campaign commissioned supported by local advertising campaigns</p>	<p>Q2</p>
	<p>Implement assessment support to assist local authority carer approval processes</p>	<p>23 local authorities will have defined their support requirements. Procurement programmes in place where external assistance is required.</p>	<p>Q2 – Q4</p>
	<p>Implement assessment support to assist local authority carer approval processes</p>	<p>Call centre facilities in place supported by web site and follow up information resources</p>	<p>Q1</p>
		<p>Implementation support called of as applicant progress through the statutory approval process.</p>	<p>Q1 & Q2</p>
		<p>Q3 & Q4</p>	

Lag Indicators, Baselines & Targets Table

A & B	E				
Project Titles & Outcomes	Lag Indicators				
	Indicator	Baseline	Date	Target	Date
1 Shared Service					
Outcome 1: Identification of potential efficiency savings from shared services and collaborations initiatives	Increase in number of shared services within the region.	Survey to define baseline	June 2010	A further 3 cross sub-region/agency shared services	June 2012
Outcome 2: Commitment from members and chief executives for implementation of identified initiatives	Contribution to NI179 efficiency savings from additional shared services	£0	June 2010	£8 million	June 2015
2 NWCH					
Outcome 1: Improved community outcomes through an efficient and sustainable built estate	Percentage of construction and demolition waste diverted from landfill	NWCH regional frameworks are new arrangements so comparable baseline information does not exist. Indicators selected are common with OGC data to enable sharing	June 2010	More than 50% waste being diverted	June 2013
Outcome 2: A quality and sustainable product, operating efficiently to a satisfied client	Time Predictability (OGC KPI)		June 2010	90% projects delivered +/- 5% time	June 2013
Outcome 3: Streamlined processes, easy to use, low cost and encourage the benefits achievable through partnership workin	Cost Predictability (OGC KPI)		June 2010	90% projects delivered +/- 5% cost	June 2013
	Customer satisfaction (OGC KPI)		June 2010	75% of response large customer satisfaction	June 2013

Outcome 4: Drive improvements to the design process through early contractor involvement, utilising knowledge of the supply chain	Fair Payment (OGC KPI)	and future comparison and benchmarking of performance	June 2010	95% of payments in line with OGC FP Charter	June 2013
Outcome 5: Delivery of efficiency saving from framework usage	Savings on building costs benchmarked against industry standard using BCIS data		June 2010	4%	June 2013
3 Procurement					
Outcome 1: Increased efficiency savings from collaborative procurement.	Increase in NI179 efficiency figure from outlined collaborative procurement activities	£0 from current identified categories	June 2010	£15m	June 2013
4 Business Improvement Training					
Outcome 1: Delivery of £3m efficiency savings from service improvement activities	Efficiencies gained in specific service areas as a result of ongoing improvements using the same skilled individuals.	0	June 2010	£3m of savings generated from trained officers	March 2012

5 Total Place					
Outcome 1: Completed pilots of total place/big society thinking	None – research project to be completed within 12 months				
6 Asset Management					
Outcome 1: Improved use of resource (KLOE3.1) scores within the region.	Increase in number of asset management collaborative projects within the region.	Survey to define baseline	June 2010	A further 3 cross sub-region/agency projects	June 2012
Outcome 2: Increased understanding of asset management efficiency opportunities	Improvements in KLOE3.1 Use of Resources scores	22 at 2 15 at 3 2 at 4 2 at n/a	Dec 2009	18 at 2 19 at 3 4 at 4	June 2012
7 Adult HSC					
Outcome 1: Increased number of people being supported within the community	Number of people with no ongoing care package required	33%	June 2010	40%	April 2011
Outcome 2: A reduction in the number of acute admissions to residential and nursing care / hospital	Percentage of over 65 population undertaking a period of reablement within the region	1.7%	June 2010	2.1%	April 2011
Outcome 3: A lasting and positive impact on:	Customer Satisfaction of the provided care and reablement services	70%	June 2010	90%	April 2011
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life • Choice and control • Inclusion and contribution • Health and wellbeing 					

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dignity and safety <p>of citizens who have received the improved services</p>					
8 Foster Care Placements					
Outcome 1: The generation of 150 additional foster care placements within the region	Increase in number of foster care families	503 additional placements	June 2009	Increase of 150 annually	July 2012

Lead Indicators, Baselines & Targets Table					
A & B	F				
Project Titles & Outcomes	Lead Indicators				
	Indicator	Baseline	Date	Target	Quarter
1 Shared Service					
Outcome 1: Identification of potential efficiency savings from shared services and collaborations initiatives Outcome 2: Commitment from members and chief executives for implementation of identified initiatives	Availability of information to show current shared service landscape.	No landscape	June 2010	Landscape available	Q2
	Increase in NWIEP funded shared service projects with identified efficiency savings	0	June 2010	3 projects £8m savings	Q4
	Commitment secured to move forward into implementation	0	June 2010	2 projects with secured commitment	Q4
2 NWCH					
Outcome 1: Improved community outcomes through an efficient and sustainable built estate Outcome 2: A quality and sustainable product, operating efficiently to a satisfied client Outcome 3: Streamlined processes, easy to use, low cost and encourage the benefits achievable through partnership working	Work through NWCH Frameworks	NWCH regional frameworks are new arrangements so comparable baseline information does not exist. Indicators selected are common with OGC data to enable sharing	June 2010	£150m	Q4
	Cost Predictability (OGC KPI)		June 2010	90% projects delivered +/- 5% cost	Q4
	Time Predictability (OGC KPI)		June 2010	90% projects delivered +/- 5% time	Q4
	Fair Payment (OGC KPI)		June 2010	95% of payments in line with OGC FP Charter	Q4
	Savings on building costs benchmarked against industry standard using BCIS data		June 2010	4% savings	Q4

Outcome 4: Drive improvements to the design process through early contractor involvement, utilising knowledge of the supply chain		and future comparison and benchmarking of performance			
Outcome 5: Delivery of efficiency saving from framework usage					
3 Procurement					
Outcome 1: Increased efficiency savings from collaborative procurement.	OJEU compliant contract or framework available	No regional contracts in place.	June 2010	3 contracts in place.	Q4
Outcome 2: Increased contracting opportunities for SMEs and 3 rd sector organisations.	Number of authorities advertising Number of contracts/quotes advertised	22 local authorities currently advertising	June 2010	35 local authorities advertising	Q4
Outcome 3: Improved skills and resources within NW procurement community.	Number of training courses	No regional training planned	June 2010	5 course held	Q4
	Number of officers receiving training.			60 officers trained	Q4
4 Business Improvement Training					
Outcome 1: Delivery of £3m efficiency savings from service improvement activities	New people trained at NVQ level 2	0	June 2010	75 75 75 75	Q1 Q2 Q3 Q4
	Successfully completed cohorts with awards conferred and changes to ways of working delivered.	0	June 2010	Evidence of changed processes (8 per quarter)	Q1-4

	New people trained at NVQ level 3	0	June 2010	15 15 15	Q1 Q2 Q3
5 Total Place					
Outcome 1: Completed pilots of total place/big society thinking	Increase in NWIEP funded total place themed initiatives	0	June 2010	3	Q4
6 Asset Management					
Outcome 1: Improved use of resource (KLOE3.1) scores within the region. Outcome 2: Increased understanding of asset management efficiency opportunities	Availability of information to show current asset management landscape.	No landscape	June 2010	Landscape available	Q2
	Increase in NWIEP funded asset management projects with identified efficiency savings	0	June 2010	3 projects £4m savings identified	Q4
7 Adult HSC					
Outcome 1: Increased number of people being supported within the community Outcome 2: A reduction in the number of acute admissions to residential and nursing care / hospital Outcome 3: A lasting and positive impact on:	Percentage net reduction in support hours provided following reablement or telecare interventions	50%	June 2010	60%	Q4
	Average time taken from referral to commencement of support	5 days	June 2010	10 days	Q4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of life • Choice and control • Inclusion and contribution • Health and wellbeing • Dignity and safety <p>of citizens who have received the improved services</p>					
8 Foster Care Placements					
<p>Outcome 1: The generation of 150 additional foster care placements within the region by:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Create a regional brand and infrastructure to support future recruitment 2. Raise the profile of local authority fostering as a career 3. Recruitment of foster carers in the region. 	Regional brand adopted and incorporated into all local authority advertising	No regional brand	April 2010	All authorities incorporate brand	September 2010
	Raise the profile of fostering	Static or negative carer recruitment performance	April 2010	75% of local authorities report an increase in recruitment	April 2011
	Recruit additional 150 carers	No co-ordinated regional recruitment	April 2020	1500 responses to advertising campaign followed up	December 2010
		503 recruited	2009	150 additional carers approved	April 2011

6. Finance

The financial plan needs to convey how RIEP expenditure will be spent and defrayed on the project each quarter up to end of March 2011 (the end of NWIEP capital funding). It needs to distinguish between RIEP capital and RIEP revenue funding.

The financial information should be presented in tabular form as illustrated below.

Project Costs			Spend Profile			
			Q1: July-Sept 2010	Q2: Sept-Dec 2010	Q3: Jan-March 2011	Q4: April-June 2011
Shared Service	NWIEP Revenue	£225,000	£56,250	£56,250	£56,250	£56,250
	NWIEP Capital	£25,000	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250
	TOTAL	£250,000	£62,500	£62,500	£62,500	£62,500
NWCH	NWIEP Revenue	£189,000	£47,250	£47,250	£47,250	£47,250
	NWIEP Capital	£21,000	£5,250	£5,250	£5,250	£5,250
	TOTAL	£210,000	£52,500	£52,500	£52,500	£52,500
Procurement	NWIEP Revenue	£202,500	£50,625	£50,625	£50,625	£50,625
	NWIEP Capital	£22,500	£5,625	£5,625	£5,625	£5,625
	TOTAL	£225,000	£56,250	£56,250	£56,250	£56,250
BPI Training	NWIEP Revenue	£90,000	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500
	NWIEP Capital	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	TOTAL	£90,000	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500	£22,500
Total Place	NWIEP Revenue	£135,000	£33,750	£33,750	£33,750	£33,750
	NWIEP Capital	£15,000	£3,750	£3,750	£3,750	£3,750
	TOTAL	£150,000	£37,500	£37,500	£37,500	£37,500
Asset Management	NWIEP Revenue	£135,000	£33,750	£33,750	£33,750	£33,750
	NWIEP Capital	£15,000	£3,750	£3,750	£3,750	£3,750
	TOTAL	£150,000	£37,500	£37,500	£37,500	£37,500
	NWIEP Revenue	£180,000	£45,000	£45,000	£45,000	£45,000

Adult HSC	NWIEP Capital	£20,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
	TOTAL	£200,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000	£50,000
Foster Care Placements	NWIEP Revenue	£235,000	£0	£70,000	£85,000	£80,000
	NWIEP Capital	£58,000	£16,000	£42,000	£0	£0
	TOTAL	£293,000	£16,000	£112,000	£85,000	£80,000
Communications & Networking	NWIEP Revenue	£25,000	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250
	NWIEP Capital	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	TOTAL	£25,000	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250	£6,250
Programme Management	NWIEP Revenue	£60,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
	NWIEP Capital	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	TOTAL	£60,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000	£15,000
Programme Total	NWIEP Revenue	£1,476,500	£310,375	£380,375	£395,375	£390,375
	NWIEP Capital	£176,500	£45,625	£71,625	£29,625	£29,625
	TOTAL	£1,653,000	£356,000	£452,000	£425,000	£420,000

7. Efficiencies

These should be stated for each project in a table as set out below.

Cashable Savings – Detail specifically what ‘cashable’ savings will be derived (in simple terms – how much money will be released as a result of this project that can be spent on other priorities).

Non-cashable benefits – Detail specifically what non-cashable benefits will be derived (in simple terms what measurable improvements will there be in efficiency or effectiveness but which will not release money to be spent elsewhere e.g. doing more for same cost.)

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Project	Additional Funding		
	Additional Funding Source	Type of Additional Funding	Amount
BIT Training support	Skills Funding Agency	Revenue. Estimates: NVQ2: £1,800 for 200 people and £900 for 100 more = £450,000 NVQ3: £1,800 for 45 people = £81,000	£531,000
Foster Care Placements	Local Authority Children’s Services	Officer Time	£35,000
		Local advertising campaign activity	£40,000
Adult Health Social Care	North West JIP/CSED	Match funding to support agenda	£200,000

In-Year Project Efficiencies			Efficiencies Profile			
			Q1: July-Sept 2010	Q2: Sept-Dec 2010	Q3: Jan-March 2011	Q4: April-June 2011
Shared Services	Cashable Savings	£100,000	£0	£0	£50,000	£50,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£20,000	£0	£0	£10,000	£10,000
NWCH	Cashable Savings	£5,000,000	£500,000	£1,000,000	£1,750,000	£1,750,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£250,000	£62,500	£62,500	£62,500	£62,500
Procurement	Cashable Savings	£4,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£400,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
BPI Training	Cashable Savings	£1,500,000	£375,000	£375,000	£375,000	£375,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total Place	Cashable Savings	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Asset Management	Cashable Savings	£800,000	£0	£50,000	£250,000	£500,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£80,000	£0	£10,000	£20,000	£50,000
Adult HSC	Cashable Savings	£4,100,000	£600,000	£1,200,000	£1,300,000	£1,000,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£400,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Foster Care Placements	Cashable Savings	£462,500	£0	£0	£0	£462,500
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£1,600,000	£87,350	£611,600	£464,150	£436,900
Programme Total	Cashable Savings	£15,962,500	£2,475,000	£3,625,000	£4,725,000	£5,137,500
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£2,750,000	£349,850	£884,100	£756,650	£759,400

Forecast Project Efficiencies			Efficiencies Profile			
			Delivered by July 2012	Delivered by July 2013	Delivered by July 2014	Delivered by July 2015
Shared Services	Cashable Savings	£8,000,000	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	£2,000,000	£2,000,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£800,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000	£200,000
NWCH	Cashable Savings	£35,000,000	£10,000,000	£12,500,000	£12,500,000	£0
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£750,000	£250,000	£250,000	£250,000	£0
Procurement	Cashable Savings	£15,000,000	£5,000,000	£5,000,000	£5,000,000	£0
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£300,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£0
BPI Training	Cashable Savings	£1,500,000	£1,500,000	£0	£0	£0
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Total Place	Cashable Savings	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Asset Management	Cashable Savings	£4,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£400,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000	£100,000
Adult HSC	Cashable Savings	£4,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000	£1,000,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£1,600,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000	£400,000
Foster Care Placements	Cashable Savings	£14,100,000	£3,000,000	£3,700,000	£3,700,000	£3,700,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£0	£0	£0	£0	£0
Programme Total	Cashable Savings	£81,600,000	£23,500,000	£25,200,000	£25,200,000	£7,700,000
	Non-Cashable Benefits	£3,850,000	£1,050,000	£1,050,000	£1,050,000	£700,000

8. Risk Management

Potential Risk	Likelihood of Occurrence (Low, medium, high, very high)	Potential Impact on Project (Low, medium, high, very high)	Action being taken to avoid and/or manage risk	Responsibility for Managing the Risk
R1: Work stream / project leads fail to deliver planned outputs	Medium	Medium	Regular performance management meetings	Board
R2: Local authorities fail to engage with work streams and projects	Low	High	Ensure good communications so authorities understand benefits from commission work	Board Sub-regional Directors
R3: Work streams fail to generate efficiency opportunities as planned	Medium	Medium	Regular monitoring of projects progress and planned outputs	Project leads

9. Return on Investment

Where regional funding has been utilised projects recipients will be encouraged to return that investment in a number of ways as outlined below:

- Case studies: Each project at completion will be asked to produce a short case study on lessons learnt and efficiencies generated. If felt appropriate interim case studies at key stages may also be requested.
- Sharing sessions: The commission plans to hold a number of information sharing sessions. Officers from funded projects will be asked to attend at least 2 sessions and undertake a short presentation with question and answer session.
- Mentoring: Senior officers who have benefited from commission funding will be asked to make available time for mentoring within the region. It is envisaged this will be in the region of 1 hour per £10,000 invested. (200 hours for commission funding) The commission will also investigate the use of online forums and ask mentors to monitor and reply to relevant questions.
- Commission Communications: Each funded project will be asked to supply updates and information for any commission communication publications. These will normally be in the format of short written updates.

Requirements to produce case studies, present at sharing events and offer mentoring will be conditions of the funding.

Each work stream will also generate and monitor its own return on investment model. For example, the business improvement training is expecting a return on investment of 16:1 in the first year alone with a similar efficiency benefit expected as part of ongoing activities in 2011/2012.

For the shared services work stream funding to generate case studies will be issued on an “invest to save” model. On implementation of any shared service model the NWIEP investment will be repaid from estimated savings. It will then be reinvested in further shared service business cases. It is not envisaged that any other work stream will repay funding in cash.

10. Sustainability

A number of models will be investigated during the early stages of each work stream. These will include:

- Mainstreaming: Where a project has delivered substantial outcomes these should be mainstreamed within local authorities. As such, no additional funding should be required. Benchmarking maybe an example of such a mainstreamed activity.
- Decommissioning: Work streams may have reached their natural conclusion they should be de-commissioned with any remaining assets or outputs being adopted by one or more authorities. For example, it is envisaged that the regional procurement programme will be de-commissioned with any required work groups being led by an authority or sub-regional hub.
- Self funding: A levy or management fee could be added to generated products or outputs. It is envisaged that the construction hub will charge a small % for usage of frameworks. This will be re-invested into the management and renewal of the frameworks.
- Subscriptions: It maybe that authorities see enough worth in a product to support it ongoing via a subscription model. Options to combine products or merge with other subscription based organisations will be considered.

It expected that local authorities will be setting budget for 2011/12 around Autumn 2010 so any potential funding requirements should be established by that time.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET: 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

Fair Access to Care Services

Executive Summary

This report provides Members with background information on the national eligibility criteria for Adult Social Care, recent updates to guidance in February 2010 and makes recommendations to Cabinet for the future application of the FACS (Fair Access to Care Services) eligibility bands. This involves a key decision which was first identified in the Forward Plan dated June 2010.

1 Background

Fair Access to Care Services (FACS)

- 1.1 The FACS guidance issued in May 2002 (for implementation in 2003) provided a national framework for eligibility criteria for adult social care. The Department of Health had acknowledged that the use of different local criteria *“leads to considerable variation in access to adult social care, which in turn leads to unfairness”*. The guidance issued under section 7 (1) of the Local Authority Social Services Act 1970 was mandatory and designed to be consistent with the policy objectives of the 1990s to focus upon people with the greatest assessed needs.
- 1.2 The national framework sets out a system of four bands, critical, substantial, moderate and low, which describe the seriousness of the risk to independence or other consequences if needs are not met. The FACS framework was based on risks arising from needs associated with various forms of disability, impairment and difficulty in order to *“help councils to promote the independence of those seeking their help”*.

2 Wirral implementation of FACS

- 2.1 On 23 April and 14 May 2003. The Director of Social Services reported to Social Care and Health Services Select Committee and Cabinet respectively, outlining the national policy guidance (FACS), the department’s proposed eligibility threshold and other actions needed as a consequence. Cabinet resolved that *“individual social care services (be provided) for adults and older people whose assessed needs fall into the critical and substantial risk bands only, with all other people receiving an information, advice and a signposting service from the Central Advice and Duty Team. The critical and substantial bands describing the seriousness of the risk to independence or other consequences if needs are not addressed are as follows:*

2.2 **Critical** – when

- life is, or will be, threatened; and/or
- significant health problems have developed or will develop; and/or
- there is, or will be, little or no choice and control over vital aspects of the immediate environment; and/or
- serious abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur; and/or
- there is, or will be, an inability to carry out vital personal care or domestic routines; and/or
- vital involvement in work, education or learning cannot or will not be sustained; and/or
- vital social support systems and relationships cannot or will not be sustained; and/or
- vital family and other social roles and responsibilities cannot or will not be undertaken.

2.3 **Substantial** - when

- there is, or will be, only partial choice and control over the immediate environment; and/or
- abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur; and/or
- there is, or will be, an inability to carry out the majority of personal care or domestic routines; and/or
- involvement in many aspects of work, education or learning cannot or will not be sustained; and/or
- the majority of social support systems and relationships cannot or will not be sustained; and/or
- the majority of family and other social roles and responsibilities cannot or will not be undertaken

2.4 The original decision as to where to place Wirral's eligibility threshold was based on an assessment as to the level at which current budgets would enable services to be provided. It was estimated that in 2003/04 Wirral Social Services could provide individualised services to adults whose assessed needs fell into the critical and substantial bands.

2.5 In December 2003, as agreed by Cabinet in May 2003, the Social Services Department formally implemented its Policy on Fair Access to Care Services (national eligibility criteria for adult social care; Wirral's risk threshold for services). Implementation has subsequently been supported by briefings to Elected Members, further reports to Social Care and Health Select Committee and a rolling programme of FACS training to relevant managers and staff in the Department of Adult Social Services, to ensure that eligibility for services is properly determined and that service provision complies with FACS eligibility criteria.

2.6 There is a requirement that Members receive periodic reports on the threshold for Fair Access to Care Services to confirm the existing application of the criteria or make recommendations for a change in FACS banding.

- 2.7 On 19 March 2009, the Director of Social Services submitted a further report which recommended that the threshold should remain at critical and substantial. Members agreed to this recommendation.
- 2.8 As of March 2010, 5157 people who are receiving services were assessed as having substantial needs and 151 people receiving services were assessed as having critical needs.

3 Commission for Social Care Inspection Review - “Cutting the Cake Fairly”

3.1 In October 2008, the Commission for Social Care Inspection produced a government sponsored review of the national FACS criteria following concerns about the quality of life of many people and deemed ineligible for publicly funded social care and inconsistent application of the FACS criteria across Councils. The findings of the review highlighted the following issues:

- Lack of clarity and confidence in understanding of the framework by professionals and people who use services
- Lack of fairness due to variations in professional judgements, a service led as opposed to a needs led approach, over-standardisation of groups of people and a lack of consideration of other important areas such as health
- Not connected to prevention and inclusion agendas and inadequate signposting on first contact
- Emergent tension between FACS standardisation and Personalisation principles based on self-assessment, individual choice in control.

Recommendations from the report covered the following: offering better arrangements for universal support; improving the quality of response at peoples' first contact with the Council; a new system for allocating public funds based on immediate, early and longer-term intervention; a national resource allocation formula; improvements in the quality of decision making.

As part of the Transformation Agenda for the Department of Adult Social Services, some of the key recommendations and priorities set out in the report have been incorporated into the Department of Adult Social Services change programme.

4 “Putting People First – A Whole System Approach to Eligibility for Social Care”

- 4.1 In February 2010 the Department of Health introduced further guidance with the aim of ensuring that the continued application of FACS criteria took place within the context of personalisation and “putting people first”- the Government’s radical reform of public services through personalisation. The guidance emphasised the role of adult social services departments and Councils in providing universal services supporting early intervention and prevention, creating conditions where people were given choice and control about how much they spend on their care and support and promoting social capital through work with communities. The guidance emphasised the importance of service such as reablement which can support people through a period of recovery and defer the need for FACS eligible services. Assistive Technology is another area where providing services to people with low and moderate needs can support health and wellbeing and extend periods of independence. The key message from this policy is that Council’s have a dual responsibility for applying FACS criteria, while also having broader responsibilities for the wider community. The Department’s development of early intervention and, preventative services reflects the requirements set out in this policy guidance.

5 Personalisation and Future Consultation

- 5.1 The DASS transformation has provided a focus for the revision of a different set of more personalised processes with an emphasis on self-directed assessment and support planning as part of the statutory assessment process. However, these new arrangements do not negate the need to apply a test of eligibility and for that reason, the new self-directed assessment process includes information which will establish a person’s level of need and the Council’s banding for FACS.
- 5.2 In the light of the transformation agenda and more recent policy guidance, it would be expedient and beneficial to undertake a wider consultation exercise on the application of FACS in Wirral to gain a more comprehensive understanding from people who use services and community groups about its application. Any recommendations arising from this consultation would form part of the future reports to Elected Members on determining the future FACS banding.

6 Financial Implications

The Budget 2010-11 was set on the basis of the existing FACS criteria of “substantial and critical”. Raising the threshold to “critical” only would mean many people having services removed which would reduce spending in the short term. However, people with “substantial” need would quickly deteriorate into crisis without support and lead to higher costs in the long term.

Conversely, many Councils have lowered their threshold to include “moderate” needs as part of the early intervention and prevention agenda.

Budget stability in 2010-11 is best achieved by maintaining the criteria at “critical and substantial”. Future reports to Cabinet will explore the potential of preventative services below this threshold on the medium term financial scenario.

7 Staffing Implications

Changing the FACS criteria will have significant staffing implications for people employed in the care sector, if those services are removed.

8 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

As part of the review and consultation, a full Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken.

9 Community Safety Implications

None.

10 Local Agenda 21 Implications

None.

11 Planning Implications

None.

12 Anti Poverty Implications

None.

13 Social Inclusion Implications

None.

14 Local Member Support Implications

None.

15 Background Papers

Department of Health: Prioritising need in the context of putting people first: A Whole System Approach to Eligibility for Social Care.

16 Recommendations

That:

- (1) Members endorse the decision to continue to provide social care services to individuals in Wirral who have critical and substantial needs.
- (2) Members note the revised guidance on FACS and the need for Council's to support universal services which promote reablement and prevention.
- (3) Members endorse the decision to undertake a wider consultation on the Council's FACS criteria to enable Council to determine FACS levels for 2011/12.

JOHN WEBB
Director of Adult Social Services

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE/DIRECTOR OF
CORPORATE SERVICES

INTEGRATED REGENERATION STUDY FOR BIRKENHEAD AND WIRRAL WATERS

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the findings of the Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters (IRS) produced on behalf of the Council by GVA Grimley.
- 1.2 The report sets out the background to the study, the preparation process, including stakeholder engagement and the key findings and recommendations.
- 1.3 The report also explains how the IRS is an important element of the evidence base for Wirral's Core Strategy Development Plan Document and outlines how the key findings of the study will inform a series of guiding principles for Wirral Waters which in turn will shape the consideration of Peel's proposals for Wirral Waters.
- 1.4 The report recommends that the IRS be adopted by the Council as a material consideration; that the findings of the IRS be used to inform the content of the emerging Core Strategy Development Plan Document; that the thematic relationships table linking the IRS and the East Float component of Wirral Waters (appended to this report) be used to inform the consideration of the current planning application by Peel holdings; that the thematic relationships table is taken forward alongside the Core Strategy; and that a further report be brought back to Cabinet on delivery options in due course.

2. Background and Context

- 2.1 The Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters (IRS) was commissioned by the Council (Cabinet 5th February 2009, Minute 352 refers). GVA Grimley were appointed in September 2009, following a tender process (reported to Economy and Regeneration Overview and Scrutiny Committee 15th September 2009, minute 16 refers).
- 2.2 The timing of the Study is particularly important as the Council is also considering the major economic opportunity for regenerating Wirral at Wirral Waters. Wirral Waters is approaching a key milestone in the determination of the planning application for East Float (W/OUT/2009/06509). Although Wirral Waters is very important to the regeneration of the Borough, it must be integrated with the surrounding

areas, specifically including the HMRI area and Birkenhead Town Centre, which are both critical to the Council and to the wider interests of the Liverpool City Region in terms of the transformation of the sub regional economy. The IRS offers the opportunity to consider the spatial integration of these initiatives and the integration of economic programmes through the Investment Strategy themes of People, Places and Business.

- 2.3 Beyond the Council, there is a need to influence the investment programmes of the Council's partners (including Merseytravel, Registered Social Landlords and NHS Wirral) to ensure that all their programmes benefit the regeneration of the study area. Although the future of several external agencies is currently being reviewed by Government the North West Development Agency (NWDA) and the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA, through the so-called 'Single Conversation') have both requested a comprehensive regeneration study for the study area to provide a framework for their future financial investment decisions.
- 2.4 Whilst the future of agencies such as NWDA and HCA is subject to the new Government's strategy, any resources available for regeneration will need to be focused and prioritised. New funding mechanisms will need to be identified and explored as part of the delivery plan. The Government has announced in its manifesto that it will maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020 and that it will provide incentives for local authorities to deliver sustainable development, including for new homes and businesses. The IRS study area contains some of the highest levels of child poverty in the country and also presents the opportunities to deliver sustainable development through Wirral Waters, the HMRI and surrounding areas.
- 2.5 The IRS aims are as follows:
- To provide a sound basis for spatial planning across the study area
 - To provide a framework for the integration of the Wirral Waters proposals with the surrounding residential neighbourhoods and Birkenhead Town Centre
 - To guide the investment of external financial resources with the aim of regenerating the study area and reviving failing housing markets
 - To inform the development of the Local Development Framework and guide future planning decisions in the study area
 - To provide a single integrated vision for the regeneration of the study area
- 2.6 The IRS has been through a series of stages (outlined to Cabinet on 14 January 2010). The finalised IRS produced by the consultants is appended to this report.

3. Stakeholder Consultation

- 3.1 Whilst the Study has not been subject to full public consultation (which will be carried out in the context of the Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy), it has been subject to a series of stakeholder consultations, Steering and Project Group meetings and workshops (listed in the GVA Grimley document appended to this report). The results of this stakeholder consultation, alongside an evidence base which has been used to develop the key findings and options, have been subject to a Sustainability Appraisal consistent with the Council's own Sustainability Appraisal Framework.

4. Key Features and Conclusions

- 4.1 Key components of the IRS, which are outlined in more detail below, include:

- A Vision and Objectives for Birkenhead,
- A Spatial Framework, which is a central element of the IRS
- A delivery and next steps section

Vision and Objectives for Birkenhead (Chapter 3)

- 4.2 The Vision for Birkenhead has been informed by stakeholder engagement and baseline analysis and is set out on pages 21-23 of the IRS. The vision is underpinned by a number of guiding principles and foundations for change: these in turn have informed the development of the Spatial Framework discussed below.

Spatial Framework (Chapters 3 & 4)

- 4.3 The Spatial Framework aims to provide a single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead to demonstrate how physical change and development could potentially help address key economic, social and environmental issues in the area. The Spatial Framework is based upon a series of eight thematic principles, set out in Chapter 3, which are each supported by a set of objectives to guide future development, regeneration and investment in Birkenhead. The eight thematic principles are:

1. Achieving Economic Prosperity
2. Town Centre Restructuring
3. Take Advantage of the Waterfront
4. Enhanced Education and Learning Offer
5. Health and Well Being
6. A Sustainable Residential Offer
7. Places, Spaces and Connections
8. Sustainable Future

- 4.4 The Spatial Framework itself forms the whole of Chapter 4 of the IRS and sets out ideas and proposals for change that include a 'bottom up' as well as a 'top down' approach, based both on wider concepts that react to large scale, strategic issues and opportunities and on more localised, site specific issues and opportunities.
- 4.5 A detailed baseline analysis of local issues and opportunities has informed the preparation of an Opportunities Area Plan, which provides the foundation to the Spatial Framework, by identifying locations where physical change has the greatest potential.
- 4.6 In spatial terms, the 'big picture' concepts - the overall approach to change - are defined by three central ideas that look to enhance and re-establish key components of Birkenhead:
1. Improving the attractiveness and legibility of key routes and enhancing the overall sense of connectivity through Birkenhead;
 2. Improving the quality of key areas of public realm, and the connectivity between important public open spaces; and
 3. Developing a land use structure that can guide development decision in a way that helps to improve the 'intactness' and coherence of Birkenhead's urban structure
- 4.7 The Spatial Framework includes proposals informed by these three central ideas, represented by Framework Plans for Movement, Public Realm and Land Use, each supported by written strategies.
- 4.8 The Spatial Framework contains 13 Focus Areas defined by similarities in spatial characteristics and common objectives and themes for development and change. Proposed regeneration objectives have been developed for each Focus Area to provide a structure for regeneration activity and a guide for coordinating multi-service delivery and investment moving forward. The Framework includes a synopsis of potential for individual 'Neighbourhood Focus Areas', which can form the starting point for developing detailed planning policy for the Birkenhead area within the emerging Local Development Framework.

A Delivery and Next Steps (Chapter 5)

- 4.9 The delivery and next steps section emphasises the challenges involved in delivering the IRS and identifies that it will require a multi-agency approach using a wide range of skills. It identifies a number of actions to run in parallel with and be co-ordinated alongside the delivery of Wirral Waters by Peel. These actions are to:
- Accelerate the implementation of the HMRI programme in the Birkenhead Priority Neighbourhood

- Advance the concept of an education cluster/campus centred around a possible university precinct campus and re-located Wirral Metropolitan College
 - Prepare an integrated masterplan for Birkenhead Town Centre
 - Put in place an integrated strategy to tackle the underlying socio-economic problems of the study area
 - Develop the East Wirral Traffic Model and Transport Strategy for the Town Centre
- 4.10 In terms of policy development and engagement, the ongoing preparation of the Core Strategy is seen as key. There is also some examination of potential delivery vehicles. It is noted however that there is declining support nationally for traditional regeneration delivery models such as Urban Development or Regeneration Companies (such as Liverpool Vision) and consequently a new approach to bring together public and private sectors is needed. Noting the development of the Jessica Merseyside Urban Development Fund, GVA recommend consideration be given to setting up a delivery vehicle in the mould of an Urban Regeneration Company which is Council led but slightly removed (arms length) with private investment and a small core team to take work forward. Chester Renaissance is highlighted as a useful comparison. GVA recognise that further work is needed to explore this.
- 4.11 Finally, in relation to next steps, GVA identify several key actions:
- Feeding the findings into the LDF process (this is discussed further below)
 - Update and carry forward the HMRI programme
 - Undertake a feasibility study into potential delivery vehicle options
 - Prepare a masterplan for Birkenhead Town Centre

5. Planning Policy Implications

- 5.1 The GVA Grimley report refers to the Strategic Context in which the Study has been prepared. The North West of England Plan - Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021 (RSS) was approved in September 2008 and currently forms part of the development plan, alongside the Unitary Development Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework.
- 5.2 However, the new Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP) has announced that Regional Strategies will be abolished by the Government. Until the abolition is confirmed through statute, the Secretary of State wishes his statement to be a material planning consideration. The exact implications of this change have yet to be clarified, although the Government remains

committed to the principle of local councils' decision making through local planning, without the framework of regional numbers and plans.

- 5.3 It was always intended that the IRS should inform both the Council's determination of Wirral Waters' planning applications and the emerging Local Development Framework Core Strategy. GVA Grimley note that, with the uncertain future for Regional Strategies, a specific study for a key area of the Borough, such as the IRS area would become more valuable. This point has been echoed by Government Office North West in their response on the Council's Core Strategy Spatial Options (to be reported to Cabinet with the Core Strategy Preferred Options in due course):

'it is important that the Council sets out its own vision for the Birkenhead Dock estate as the document (ie Core Strategy) develops, as well as setting out what has happened/been proposed so far. For example, links to the surrounding HMRI area/populace could be stressed. PPS4 considerations will be key, as will the work you are currently undertaking on Birkenhead and Wirral Waters Integrated Regeneration Study. In this respect, it is important the implications of the work (ie IRS) are fed into the document (ie Core Strategy) at an early stage and should not be left too late.'

- 5.4 It is therefore timely for Members to consider carefully the issues raised by the IRS, before they consider the final content of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy at Cabinet and Planning Committee determines the Wirral Waters East Float planning application. Appended to this report is a table which shows the relationship between the themes developed in the IRS, a proposed vision for Wirral Waters and proposed objectives to ensure the delivery of benefits from Wirral Waters. These relationships provide a response to Government Office's advice and a starting point for the consideration of this area in the Local Development Framework and in the determination of the Wirral Waters East Float planning application.
- 5.5 If Members are minded to approve this report and the IRS, this will provide support to the objectives for Wirral Waters and the wider area. In statutory terms, the area of the IRS remains a high priority within RSS, although with its uncertain status, the weight to be applied to this approach may now diminish. What can be taken forward is continuing priority to regeneration within the emerging Core Strategy.
- 5.6 Whilst the Government is likely to review the wide range of Planning Policy Statements produced in the past, they currently carry considerable weight and still focus on sustainable development, following a sequential approach, both spatially (within particularly deprived urban areas) and in terms of the use of brownfield land before greenfield land. The Government, in its Programme for Government 'Freedom Fairness Responsibility' is committed to maintaining Green

Belt, further protecting green areas and giving local councils new powers to stop 'garden grabbing'.

- 5.7 Therefore, whilst RSS will be abolished, it is likely that Wirral Council will be able to develop a planning strategy, informed by the IRS, which could focus regeneration in an area of the Borough, long-recognised as a regeneration priority. The IRS provides an important independent verification of the continuing need for such priority, noting that economic and social circumstances in the IRS area are continuing to decline. Wirral Waters can help to uplift this area but a planning response must be integrated across the wider hinterland.
- 5.8 The conclusions of the IRS will be assimilated into the Core Strategy Preferred Options document currently in preparation in line with Government Office advice and the study itself will form part of the supporting evidence base. As with the other background studies completed to date, the IRS will be available for scrutiny and comment alongside the Preferred Options Report during a six week public consultation process, which is anticipated to take place over the summer.

6. Wirral Waters Alignment

- 6.1 As Members are aware, Peel Holdings' planning application for a major mixed use development at East Float, which comprises the largest part of their Wirral Waters proposals, is to be determined by Planning Committee in the near future. The IRS provides a framework, which sets the Wirral Waters proposals in a wider context and develops linkages with HMRI and Birkenhead Town Centre.
- 6.2 The table appended to this report shows the relationship between the thematic headings and themes developed in the IRS and the Council's proposed vision and objectives for Wirral Waters. This provides a structure and framework for the Wirral Waters development to ensure the benefits from the development are fully realised and integrated in future phases. This provides a response to Government Office North West and ATLAS (the Government funded Advisory Team for Large Applications Service) advice that the IRS can provide a context for determining Wirral Waters planning applications. The vision and objectives can also be carried forward into the Local Development Framework.
- 6.3 Approval of the table appended to this report provides a clear view of the Council's support to the vision and objectives set out. Whilst the IRS cannot have the status of the development plan, it is a material consideration, being a statement of the Council's intent.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 Cabinet 5th February 2009 (Minute 352) agreed a budget of £120,000 for the Study, to be funded 50:50 by the Housing Market Renewal Initiative and Growth Fund.

8. Staffing implications

- 8.1 The study has been managed by existing staff in the Corporate Services Department.

9. Equal Opportunities/Equality Impact Assessment

- 9.1 The Study has been subject to consultation with key stakeholders and will assist in developing solutions to meeting the housing needs of vulnerable people

10. Community Safety implications

- 10.1 HMRI and the New Growth Point programmes aim to create safer neighbourhoods through creating safer living environments.

11. Local Agenda 21 implications

- 11.1 The level of new development proposed in Birkenhead will see the construction of homes and buildings which are highly energy efficient and more environmentally sustainable than the buildings that they will replace.

12. Planning implications

- 12.1 The purpose of the Study is to provide a co-ordinated update of existing strategies and emerging strategies for Wirral Waters, the Growth Point and Housing Market Renewal Initiatives. Co-ordination of development in this area is central to the achievement of the Council's Investment Strategy objectives. The Study will feed into the Council's Local Development Framework and provide a spatial focus for the areas around the Wirral Waters project, for which Peel Holdings are preparing a Strategy Regeneration Framework, spatial masterplans and have submitted a major planning application (W/OUT/2009/06509), which will be determined by the Council's Planning Committee in due course.
- 12.2 Later phases of this Study will provide for the integration of the Birkenhead spatial masterplans into the Local Development Framework, potentially through the preparation of a series of Area Action Plans.
- 12.3 Regeneration of Birkenhead and south Seacombe is consistent with the existing Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (although the Government's manifesto and a recent Ministerial Statement referred to elsewhere in this report sets out the Government's intention to abolish

RSS). Regeneration in this area is nevertheless a long-held priority of the Council.

13. Anti-poverty implications

- 13.1 The potential regeneration programmes which this area will benefit from will tackle fuel poverty through energy efficiency and will promote income and wealth via employment creation.

14. Human Rights implications

- 14.1 There are no implications arising directly from this report.

15. Social Inclusion implications

- 15.1 Regeneration in Birkenhead and in Wirral in general, aims to promote greater inclusion of residents, improve socio-economic outcomes for residents and improve neighbourhood sustainability.

16. Local Member Support implications

- 16.1 The wards affected directly by this report are Bidston and St James, Birkenhead and Tranmere and Seacombe.

17. Background Papers

- 17.1 Previous reports on this subject can be found as follows:

Cabinet Report 5th February 2009 seeking approval to commission the study

[http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/Published/C00000121/M00000355/AI00003378/\\$CABreq090205rep3.docA.ps.pdf](http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/Published/C00000121/M00000355/AI00003378/$CABreq090205rep3.docA.ps.pdf) Cabinet report, 14 January 2010

Progress report to Cabinet - 14th January 2010-06-10

[http://wir06metrognome.admin.ad.wirral.gov.uk/Published/C00000121/M00000734/\\$\\$ADocPackPublic.pdf](http://wir06metrognome.admin.ad.wirral.gov.uk/Published/C00000121/M00000734/$$ADocPackPublic.pdf)

18. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 18.1 That the Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters be adopted by the Council as a material planning consideration in relation to development proposals in the vicinity of the study area;
- 18.2 That the findings of the Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters be used to inform the content of the emerging Core Strategy Development Plan Document;
- 18.3 That the thematic relationships table linking the Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters and the East Float component of Wirral Waters (appended to this report) be used to

inform the consideration of the current planning application by Peel holdings and be taken forward alongside the Core Strategy; and

- 18.4 That a further report be brought back to Cabinet on delivery options In due course.

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Integrated Regeneration Study for

Birkenhead and Wirral Waters

STRATEGY REPORT JUNE 2010

Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study (Birkenhead IRS)

Wirral Council

Final Report for Approval

June 2010

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2009 GVA Grimley Ltd was commissioned by Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council to prepare an Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters.
- 1.2 The IRS represents the “single, integrated comprehensive spatial regeneration plan for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters”. As such, it is accountable to a number of audiences and will help establish the policy context in support of a wide platform of investment activity going forward. It will inform the statutory Local Development Framework process and has taken account of work completed to date as part of this process.
- 1.3 The extent of the study area is highlighted in figure 1.1, and was agreed through discussion with Wirral Council to include the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (HMRI) neighbourhoods adjacent to the Birkenhead dock system to fit with locally recognised boundaries of the township of Birkenhead.

Strategic Context – “A Single Vision, Story and Programme”

- 1.4 The Brief notes the past recent history of planning, economic development and regeneration activity in the Birkenhead locality, which includes the area immediately to the north of the dock system, south of the Mersey Kingsway Tunnel. Quite rightly, the Brief also concludes that much of the previous analysis is becoming out-dated, having been prepared in a very different economic climate and within a different public policy context. Previous spatial masterplans for the area have, in general, proved difficult for the public sector and the market to deliver (being the case with the Birkenhead Town Centre or the previous Woodside Masterplan) or proved to be too ambitious in the face of available resources and commitments from stakeholders.
- 1.5 Since this time, the higher order strategic context has emerged. This relates to both the *regional* level of strategic planning (Regional Spatial Strategy now adopted) and the level of the *city-region* (Liverpool City Region Growth Strategy and City-Region Housing Strategy) and sets a very different strategic context to the way in which we can plan for the future of Birkenhead. The

new Housing Growth Point programme represents a further important iteration of the higher order strategic context.

- 1.6 Going forward, the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (2008) is in the early stages of being replaced by a new Regional Strategy, an over-arching policy document that draws together the regional, spatial, economic, social and environmental strategies to build a long term vision for the region to 2030. The draft Part 1, a high level strategic framework, was issued for consultation in January 2010 with the draft Part 2, which will contain more detailed policies, due to be issued in the summer. Final publication of the overall Strategy was anticipated by the end of 2011 following an Examination in Public into the comments made during the consultation stages.. However, recent announcements by Central Government cast doubt on the continuation of the regional planning tier, including abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy. This will place greater emphasis on the Local Development Framework and reinforces the importance of this document in helping to position the Birkenhead Study Area within the Liverpool City Region.
- 1.7 The research that underpins many of the previous regeneration strategies represents a valuable time-trend resource in which it is possible to track changing conditions in Birkenhead. The

greatest value to be gleaned from previous regeneration proposals has been the depth and breadth of evidence used to support proposals at that particular time.

- 1.8 There is no greater illustration of this than when considering the detailed analysis that was undertaken as part of the Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework (the “Wirral Investment Strategy”). The conclusions drawn at this time (2005/6) underlined a number of key important factors that prevented the borough from competing with the likes of Liverpool, Chester and North East Wales. In particular, was the borough’s movement towards its subservient role in relation to these locations in terms of employment and retail opportunities as the area continues to slip towards an increasingly dormitory role within this part of the Northwest region; a wholly unsustainable position.
- 1.9 In the appraisal of the evidence base for the purposes of the IRS, it is clear that three years on, many of the conclusions drawn as part of the Investment Strategy remain extremely relevant. Wirral Council and partners are therefore looking for a new future that will reverse this trend and establish a role for Birkenhead and Wirral that will complement higher order centres and make an active contribution to the economic performance of the City Region.

1.10 The emerging proposals for Wirral Waters present an exciting opportunity for Wirral, which could act as a major driver in attracting inward investment into Birkenhead, thereby potentially helping to accelerate the wider regeneration of the urban areas that compose Inner Wirral, if an appropriate policy and strategic context can be put in place.

Purpose of this Report

1.11 This report presents an Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) for Birkenhead and proposes a coordinated approach to regeneration in light of the proposals of Wirral Waters and other key projects. The recommendations draw upon the core issues identified in the baseline report, provided in Appendix 1, and through discussion with key council officers and stakeholders.

1.12 The purpose of this study as defined in the initial Brief is to:

- Produce a “single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead
- Provide a “clear vision for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters, which supports the core aims of strategic economic regeneration within both the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Local Development Framework.

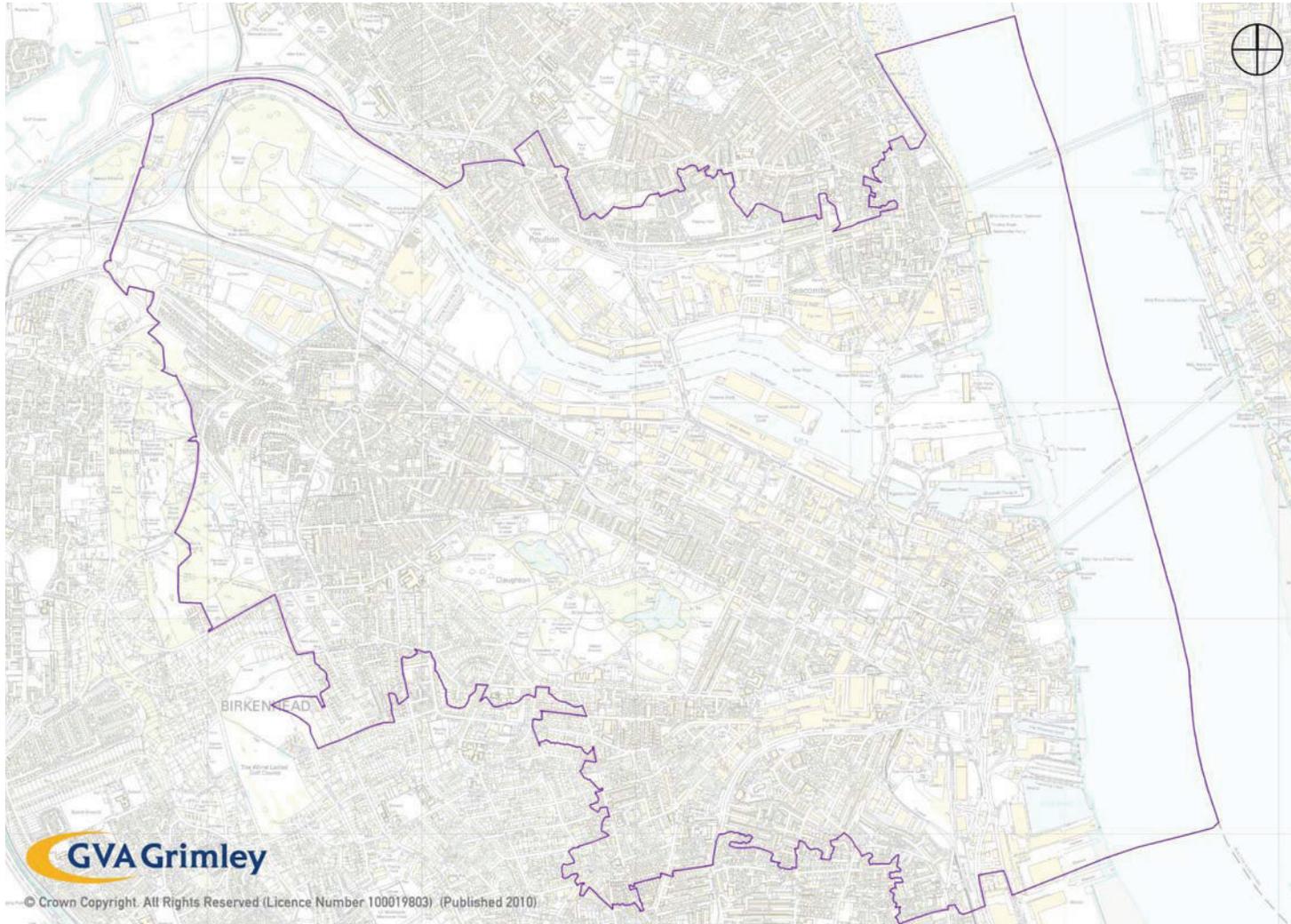
1.13 This report presents a summary of the core findings from the evidence base and discusses stakeholder aspirations and concerns, before presenting a strategic framework and series of area-based principles for regeneration.

1.14 Finally, it considers various mechanisms for delivery, including alternative approaches to management, project coordination and raising finance.

1.15 This report is structured as followed:

- **Chapter 2 – Issues and Opportunities**
- **Chapter 3 – Vision and Objectives**
- **Chapter 4 – Strategic Framework**
- **Chapter 5 – Delivery and Next Steps**

Figure 1.1: Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study Area



2. Issues and Opportunities

- 2.1 This report is supported by a thorough and robust analysis of the IRS study area, providing a baseline profile against which to set future proposals. The baseline forms an appendix to this document (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 This section draws together the conclusions reached from the baseline analysis and offers an interpretation of the key issues and 'drivers' that need to be addressed by a strategy for Birkenhead. Combined, understanding these drivers and addressing the identified issues will be critical to enabling the delivery of sustainable regeneration and growth across Birkenhead in years to come.
- 2.3 Whilst the Birkenhead study area exhibits certain opportunities there are a significant number of constraints that need to be addressed in order to transform the area physically, economically and socially, thereby enabling it to make a much more positive contribution to the sub-regional economy.
- 2.4 The baseline analysis in particular highlights a series of challenges presented by the borough's economic structure and

ability to support long term growth. All other issues relating to local skills and employment, housing, retail, and the built environment are all related to this central issue. Maximising both the physical and socio-economic potential of the area and the potential to attract inward investment and stimulate economic development through key projects including *inter alia* Wirral Waters, revitalising the town centre, continued HMRI activity and the redevelopment of Woodside, will therefore be critical to its future regeneration. However, this requires a co-ordinated strategy to address a series of core challenges, which are summarised below.

Structural weaknesses in the economy

- 2.5 The restructuring of the traditional industrial base of the economy has had a major impact on the both the physical and social fabric of the whole area. The once thriving riverside is now characterised by lower value employment activity alongside large areas of semi-redundant and underutilised land. These structural changes have in turn resulted in high levels of unemployment, which is mirrored by comparatively low productivity in the

economy with GVA per head lagging significantly behind the national average, with the gap widening¹.

2.6 Whilst the future sustainable economic growth of the area will largely be dependent on wider macro-economic forces, the analysis presented through the baseline has highlighted a number of obstacles and challenges to growth going forward. They include:

- **An inadequate business base** - Issues regarding the quality of the employment offer are underpinning the problems in this economy with the more 'mobile' residents travelling to work outside Birkenhead or actually leaving the peninsula altogether. This is also highlighted by low productivity levels, lower wages and low value volume production. Whilst the business set-up level across Wirral is creditable (one of just three local authorities in the North West to meet targets), this is not converting on the ground into sustained job creation and economic value creation. This raises questions in terms of the quality of businesses setting up in the area and is synonymous with a weakening capital base in the broadest sense.

- **Limited education and skills levels** – Although within the Wirral context skills levels are generally good, the education and skills deprivation in the Birkenhead study area is particularly acute (42% of residents have no recognised qualifications²), acting as a barrier to people's participation in the local labour market. However it can be argued that skill shortages are also a consequence of a more worrying deficiency in the business base highlighted above.
- **Lack of quality sites and premises** – The study area, as a result of its industrial legacy, has a large number of sites of different sizes and ownerships, with varying site conditions, which make the availability of quality sites a significant challenge for economic development. In addition, whilst there has been the provision of some modern units in various parts of the study area, the majority of the premises are dated and not fit for modern business uses due to their large size, inflexibility in terms of adaptation and sub-division and surrounding environments. These circumstances cannot therefore attract higher value businesses to the study area and a re-structure of the business environment is needed to realise the economic potential of the area.

¹ GVA Performance: Past GVA Trends 1998-2008; Future GVA Trends 2008-2026; Forecast Productivity Growth (Source Experian) Baseline Report – Chapter 4.

² Qualification Levels (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

- 2.7 The economic assessment portrays a challenging context for the borough-wide economy but in many respects, an even greater challenge for the Birkenhead economy, which raises the importance of the IRS for Birkenhead and the potential opportunity created by Wirral Waters within this context. Those economic sectors expected to post growth going forward to 2026 make up a 41% share of total employment in Wirral but only 30% in the study area³. The disaggregated sectoral analysis highlights that the only real 'growth' sector across the borough will be public health, a sector significantly under-represented in the Birkenhead area. Consequently, the study area has a higher share of employment in those sectors expected to contract.
- 2.8 Whilst this baseline has considered future economic trends and projections these can be no certain guide to what the future may hold. Ultimately there is a need for local partners to continue to take a long term view, whatever the economic conditions at the current time. The current economic climate therefore presents an opportunity to refocus key sectors to provide the context for growth in the future. This study provides a spatial and thematic structure from which to guide inward investment and streamline service delivery, both necessary to attract emerging sectors.
- 2.9 Looking beyond the current market opinion, a key challenge will be diversifying the economic specialisms for which Birkenhead can become known⁴. Critical to this will involve enhancing the competitiveness of indigenous sectors, whilst diversifying the local business base and capitalising on growth sectors. A lack of employment in the public health and social work sector within this specific area would appear to provide an opportunity to nurture investment linked to the strength of the sector elsewhere in Wirral and indeed in Liverpool (e.g. the Bio-medical cluster). At the same time the concentration of public administration suggests that this is an area which lends itself well to Government de-centralising opportunities. Wirral has previously benefited from the relocation of the Land Registry and Wirral Council are currently progressing discussions with various Government departments concerning new opportunities.
- 2.10 Creating development of a high quality, both in which to work and live, will be critical in realising economic potential.

³ Employment Base and Forecast (Source: ONS 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 4.

⁴ Refer to Wirral Economic Development and Investment Framework (2006) GVA Grimley/KPMG, and Birkenhead Integrated Regeneration Study (IRS) Baseline Report - Appendix 2 Employment Sub-Sector Forecasts (2010) GVA Grimley.

Socio-economic underachievement

- 2.11 In stark contrast to the recent economic performance of the wider sub-region, and barring the present recession, the economy of Birkenhead is suffering from long-term stagnation and structural weakness, with unemployment and benefit claiming levels substantially above the Wirral average⁵.
- 2.12 Given the continuation, and in some cases concentration, of socio-economic disparities and inequalities across Birkenhead, measures aimed at addressing these structural weaknesses have become increasingly important when the present recessionary climate is considered.
- 2.13 It is evident that major barriers (identified below) still exist which are disconnecting the labour force within the study area from the opportunities of the wider City and Regional economy which are both tangible and intangible. Accessibility to employment in one sense is arguably a major barrier due to the limited employment opportunities within the area. Poor health is another barrier, with a high proportion of the resident population of the study area

having a long-term limiting illness, which prevents them from working⁶.

- 2.14 However, in addition to these barriers there is also evidence of wider aspirational issues associated with people not wanting to engage in employment⁷, or lacking the confidence to do so. This is a major problem when considered alongside deficiencies in the skills and qualifications required to access higher value employment. Furthermore, those residents that are in employment are consequently predominantly restricted to lower value sectors and elementary occupation roles⁸. These issues have been recognised by Wirral Council and are being targeted through the Reach Out Initiative, which aims to engage with hard to reach groups and encourage people back into employment.
- 2.15 The issue of acute multiple deprivation remains across large parts of the study area, though there are concentrations in specific neighbourhoods, particularly within North Birkenhead. An assessment of the 2004 and 2007 IMD suggests that this deprivation is deeply entrenched with a vast proportion of the

⁵ Various (Source: DWP 2009; ONS 2001; IMD 2007) Baseline Report Chapter 3 and 4.

⁶ Proportion of Population with a limiting long term illness (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

⁷ Economic Inactivity – Propensity to work in Wirral 06-08 (Source ONS). Baseline Report Chapter 4.

⁸ Occupation Classification of the workforce (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 4.

area continuing to be classed within the worst 10% nationally. Particularly alarming is that in certain areas this entrenched deprivation has intensified between 2004 and 2007.

2.16 Deprivation is most severe in the belt of neighbourhoods running to the north and south of the docks and to the east of Birkenhead Park. Here pockets of deprivation within the worst 1% nationally persist. Particular hotspots include:

- the western estates towards Bidston. This includes the areas surrounding the Bidston Rise Estate, Hoylake Road, Ilchester Road, Laird Street and Townsend Street.
- the neighbourhoods to the east of Birkenhead Park, stretching from Paterson Street towards the town centre between South Claughton Road and Conway Street.
- the neighbourhoods between East Float and Beckwith Street, including parts of Price Street, Corporation Road, Vittoria Street; and Duke Street;
- the neighbourhoods to the east and west of Birkenhead Road and Demesne Street to the north of the docks in Seacombe; and
- the areas to the north of Hamilton Square towards Morpeth and Egerton Docks.

2.17 These neighbourhoods, some of which were identified for intervention as part of the HMRI programme in 2005, remain some of the most deprived areas of Merseyside and indeed the North West.

2.18 Another important consequence of socio-economic underachievement is low income. This is manifest in the high proportion of low-income households within the area⁹ and in particular the over-representation of single-parent households and households with dependent children and no source of employment. This situation is being driven in part by housing needs and a lack of financial capacity, both of which have served to direct those households with low incomes, and in a vulnerable position, into the Birkenhead study area where there is a substantial proportion of social and private rented accommodation. This is also a symptom of several other component factors mentioned above including; limited educational attainment, low skills and capacity building, physical barriers to accessing employment and low aspirations reinforced over several generations, which are evident across Inner Wirral and in particular within the Birkenhead study area.

⁹ Average Weekly Earnings (Source: ASHE 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 3.

2.19 Household income has important knock-on effects for the wider economy and quality of place within the Birkenhead study area. Moreover, the wider quality of place associated with many of the neighbourhoods within the area has clearly been highlighted as a major issue in market perception and attractiveness. This impacts on the ability of the area to attract new families and households with higher aspirations. Indeed often households that do achieve higher incomes often leave Birkenhead to live elsewhere, a factor which further compounds the concentration of deprivation within the area.

Poor quality housing offer

2.20 The Birkenhead study area has a high social-rented bias to its housing tenure profile¹⁰ (38.5% compared to Wirral 16.6%), with a relatively low proportion of private market (owner-occupied 44.8% compared to Wirral 72.9%) and intermediate affordable housing stock, including a high proportion of private rental (16.7% compared to Wirral 10.5%). The prominence of the social rented sector not only creates significant concentrations of certain types of properties, but also limits the opportunity and choice for existing and new residents to obtain equity in their property and to move tenure.

2.21 In contrast to the rest of Wirral, the area is characterised by a high proportion of single person households¹¹ and, in particular, above average levels of lone parent households who are unable to buy and/or rent in the market. Given this context, and the relative affordability of property in Birkenhead, it is likely to remain an attractive option for lower income households who are more reliant on affordable housing to meet their needs.

2.22 However, an analysis of affordable housing provision¹² highlights clearly that the supply of new affordable housing has failed to keep pace with demand. This demand is driven by the low income of residents in the study area which restricts their ability to afford even the low cost accommodation available in the area. This situation clearly justifies the case for the focus of the HMRI and other economic initiatives to tackle worklessness and create employment in the area. What is more the financial capacity of many households continues to be eroded due to the tightening of lending criteria and rising unemployment. This places additional pressure on the need to provide a broader spectrum of housing to meet the varying needs of new and existing residents.

¹⁰ Housing Tenure (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 7.

¹¹ Housing Composition (Source: ONS 2001) Baseline Report Chapter 2.

¹² Affordable Housing Provision (Source: Wirral MBC 2009) Baseline Report Chapter 7 – See wider assessment detailed – various data sources.

- 2.23 These issues, coupled with a lack of planned new-build schemes coming to the market, is likely to result in heightened levels of demand and further unmet housing need across Birkenhead. Whilst some unmet need is being met through the private rented sector, further new development is clearly needed to improve the quality and choice of affordable housing and address the current shortfall.
- 2.24 Given this context, there is a strong rationale for tenure diversification and a re-focus on stock types suitable to modern aspirations and living standards. This will not only provide greater housing choice for both new and existing residents, but will also help to break down perceptual barriers which continue to constrain market demand.
- 2.25 Given the fragility of the housing market a strategy that seeks to provide largely for the social rented sector is likely to exacerbate, and indeed reinforce, the deep-rooted and long-term socio-economic problems that have become entrenched within Birkenhead. Furthermore, additional social-rented housing will continue to skew the tenure imbalance and further increase the proportion of vulnerable households residing within Birkenhead. Redressing the tenure balance and improving housing choices is

the focus of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative for Inner Wirral.

- 2.26 The development of high quality affordable housing across a range of sizes and a range of tenures would be an appropriate measure to provide affordable housing choices in the current market and encourage an increasingly stable and sustainable community across Birkenhead. Continued HMRI investment in restructuring Birkenhead's housing market is also vital to stimulating the wider and longer term regeneration of the area, which will include concerted action to reduce the number of pre1919 housing stock in private rental activity,

Fragmented urban form and function

- 2.27 Despite a history of development that was based upon the 'Laird grid', developed in the 19th century and which created strong, distinctive patterns of urban form, the urban structure of the study area has been eroded over time with a large part of the central area characterised by irregular forms (large footprint industrial and retail/service buildings), which are fragmented by extensive areas of vacant, underused land.

- 2.28 The gradual erosion of the urban form and changes to movement around the grid pattern has resulted in a loss of coherency. This has affected the relationship between key locations such as the town centre, the dock system and Birkenhead Park. The poor quality of the townscape makes the public realm in these areas feel hostile, exacerbating the sense of separation and lack of cohesiveness.
- 2.29 The analysis has also revealed how physical fragmentation affects the *function* of the place, as much as it does its *form*.
- 2.30 The study area reveals in overall terms a rigid land use structure, which is a legacy of its historic development patterns and especially dock activity. It is possible to identify a number of 'hubs' - or key nodes – within the study area that are characterised by clusters of activity. These hubs are an important part of the structure and the 'mental map' of the place. However, rather than feeling like component parts of an overall whole, there is a sense that these are detached. Adding to this effect is the dominance of the employment corridor extending through the Birkenhead dock system and along the Mersey edge. The poor pedestrian environment in these areas results in an isolated and unpleasant atmosphere. Furthermore it severely affects the sense of north-south connectivity.

Opportunity Areas

- 2.31 There is a clear opportunity for Birkenhead's ongoing regeneration to include interventions that will help to connect key hubs, create a less divisive pattern of land use and enhance the public realm experience. These should come together as part of an integrated approach to creating a better connected and united place: a better sense of a coherent whole.
- 2.32 An early step in taking this approach is to identify 'opportunity areas'. These include areas where evident weaknesses in form and function are presenting opportunities for change and improvement: In particular, these include redevelopment/refurbishment of land and property, and enhancement of key public realm/movement corridors. Aiding this process is information held by Wirral Council on development opportunities, including through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), and housing quality.
- 2.33 Opportunity areas are defined on the plan overleaf, which highlights a series of opportunities particularly throughout the Birkenhead dock system, extending through to Woodside and the

residential corridor that bounds Conway Street and Cleveland Street.

- 2.34 It is this combination of opportunities that lays the foundation to recreating a formed, connected series of neighbourhoods that can enhance the quality of place.

3. Vision and Objectives

- 3.1 To inform the visioning process and the development of regeneration objectives for Birkenhead, a comprehensive series of meetings with individual stakeholders and discussion groups were held during the study process. This was complemented by a series of Steering Group meetings which guided the vision and content of the IRS.
- 3.2 A list of those consulted during this process is included in the baseline study.
- 3.3 The following section presents a summary of the key messages emerging through these discussions, before presenting the proposed vision and the integrated regeneration themes and objectives.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.4 The messages which emerged through discussion with Stakeholders about the future of Birkenhead have informed the development of a vision. These are presented here in summary form and in some cases include direct quotes, where these

explain an aspiration. These perspectives have been collectively discussed in the Steering Group meetings, enabling refinement and consensus and allowing us to utilise them in arriving on an agreed Vision.

Sub Regional Perspectives

- Birkenhead has “dropped in the void” between Liverpool and Wirral/North Cheshire/North East Wales
- Wirral, and by implication, Birkenhead needs to find its own solution to **stimulating local wealth generation**
- Birkenhead needs to find a “new reason to exist”
- Birkenhead should actively be the “other side” of a **‘Regional Central Business District’**
- Birkenhead needs a “big vision” and needs to become an “I’d like to go there” **destination**.

Birkenhead Town Centre

- Birkenhead town centre is in significant decline and needs to find a **new purpose** and direction
- The configuration of the retail centre does not meet the accommodation requirements of present day high street multiples.
- The town centre needs a more **sustainable mix** of uses to attract and retain users
- The owners of the Shopping Centre are unable/unwilling to invest in the current market and in the meantime occupiers are leaving as demand drops
- The centre lacks a **quality hotel** or leisure-based offer to attract and retain overnight visitors
- The town centre should become more multi-functional for example a focal place for **business and multi-service delivery, which could** act as a catalyst for investment, helping to create confidence in the private sector to invest.
- Birkenhead Market is poorly configured and has lost its once strong **focus** on fresh produce. It is an important feature of the town centre and needs to be a priority for revitalisation.

- There is a need to improve the physical relationship with Conway Park station
- Need to establish **better connections** between the central town centre area and Woodside.

Wirral Waters

- Birkenhead needs a strong and **ambitious Vision** that provides a context for Wirral Waters
- Wirral Waters and the rest of Birkenhead need to **complement** each other, rather than compete.
- Delivery of Wirral Waters over 30-40 years has the potential to become part of the “**community’s** ”life-work” – something to be proud of and in so doing, **raise aspiration** and **confidence**
- Wirral Waters would deliver 18,000 **new residents** to the population, therefore requiring **supporting infrastructure** (i.e. schools, green space, transport etc)
- Need to ensure that Wirral Waters is **socially integrated** – build on initiatives such as the ‘Construction Employment Integrator’.

- Wirral Waters offers the opportunity to make more efficient use of the dock land with increased public accessibility to the waters edge.

Economic Development

- Building up the **local economy** from within is essential – make people ready for work and encourage local entrepreneurships.
- Ensuring local employment opportunities **address Wirral's long term worklessness**.
- Ensure full advantage is taken of national and local **public sector occupation** requirements
- Birkenhead's industrial past provides a positive (as well as negative) legacy and should not be ignored. Need to build upon the **potential for investment in key sectors** – maritime, food, environmental, digital, health and pharmaceuticals
- A distinction needs to be made between Bromborough (industrial-led) and Birkenhead (**office-led**) to ensure complementary activity.

- Small, **start-ups/incubators** are in relatively high demand in Birkenhead ('Micro-Business Accelerator') - 3,000 sqft and should be nurtured and accommodated.
- Investigate the potential to create a zone of **enterprise** within Birkenhead, with appropriate fiscal incentives.
- Promote the Birkenhead study area for significant inward investment.
- A focus on **renewable technologies** and eco-buildings should be actively pursued as an opportunity.

Residential

- Introducing new **higher density town-living** into the wider town centre area and expand mixed-use approach around **Hamilton Square**
- Introduce high quality, **mixed tenure residential** development which is socially sustainable - It is necessary to increase the level of owner occupation in the area to increase the population level and subsequently support local and economic infrastructure.

- Ensure access to a range of **community services** including health and education for existing and potential neighbourhoods.
- The recent **HMRI investment** in existing housing stock has led to resurgence in interest in the housing in some areas. Opportunity for further investment of this nature into residential areas
- Important to **invest into the existing stock**, in addition to redeveloping certain **areas for new housing**
- The quality of the **historic stock** is high in certain places and despite a lack of recent investment could become popular again in the future if the Wirral Waters scheme goes ahead – however there is a need to consider the future of poorer quality older stock in low demand in certain locations and reconfigure land uses to assemble sites for new housing.
- Need for **neighbourhood management** approach to be continued in HMRI neighbourhoods and expanded across the study area as appropriate.

Education and skills

- **Improvement in educational attainment** outcomes and raise skills levels should be given the highest priority.
- Educational “drive” to reinstate “the value of education” locally from early-learners to adults; reinforcing the contribution of education to family life and **economic well-being**
- Encourage the **retention of Higher Education (HE)/Further Education (FE) students** in Birkenhead from study through to employment
- Explore opportunities for public sector multi-agency approach to provide and boost **local apprenticeships, training and employment**
- Use policy as a lever to formally **tie local education, apprenticeship, up-skilling and employment opportunities to new development** through Development Agreements
- Introduce a marketing strategy to encourage local engagement with education, employment and skills services and events

Health and Well Being

- A focus is required to improve physical health outcomes and mental **well-being**
- Raise the quality of, and accessibility to, **public recreational** facilities
- Encourage **healthy lifestyles** and raise local and regional awareness of green assets
- Develop a **multi-agency approach** to improving health outcomes linked to improving economic activity, skills, attainment and community support
- Improve mental well-being to raise confidence and aspirations, foster personal development and encourage a **sense of pride** in the community

Places, Spaces and Connections

- Reinststate a **legible and coherent** city structure, including a network of safe and accessible neighbourhood streets
- A **pedestrian focused** public realm connecting key locations

- A more integrated and connected **sustainable public transport system**
- Utilise existing investment programmes, including HMRI, to transform the place and feel of Birkenhead with the local authority taking a lead role.

3.5 Drawing upon these key messages and the baseline analysis the vision for the Birkenhead (IRS) study area is proposed:

Proposed Vision for Birkenhead

By 2030, Birkenhead will be a lively and popular place, which attracts a wide variety of visitors, residents and investors, who are attracted by the exciting urban waterside environment and popular residential neighbourhoods with excellent links to a bustling town centre, world famous green spaces and Liverpool City Centre.

Firmly established on the tourist trail, visitors will be attracted by a diverse range of cultural and heritage assets, which included the world's first public park, Hamilton Square and the best views of the Liverpool World Heritage Site waterfront and skyline.

The daily bustle of Birkenhead town centre and waterfront as a modern shopping, business and service destination offering a

sustainable mix of uses, will extend into the evening and visitors and residents will enjoy a range of quality hotel accommodation and a diverse evening economy, including gourmet restaurants and lively waterfront cafes and bars in Woodside. The town centre will offer a variety of new and refurbished residential and business accommodation, including the introduction of new uses in to Hamilton Square, with safe and attractive connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods. The transport infrastructure will support the priorities for Birkenhead and the surrounding area, providing effective access to services and opportunities, helping to reduce carbon emissions and contributing towards a healthier community.

East Float will complement the regeneration of the town centre and will raise aspirations and confidence in the future ambition of Birkenhead, providing a sustainable mix of exciting new residential, office and ancillary retail, leisure and commercial uses. The vibrant East Float will be physically and socially integrated with surrounding neighbourhoods providing new opportunities for the local community and attracting new residents to the Birkenhead study area.

The Birkenhead study area will offer a strong economic platform, which responds to emerging key sectors and will complement

and draw upon its links with Liverpool City Centre, actively contributing towards the strength of the City Region. Businesses will be attracted by a variety of high quality accommodation incorporating sustainable technologies, which will include new waterfront floorplates catering for national private and public office-led sectors and smaller start-up and incubation spaces to support indigenous enterprise. Local businesses will have established links with adjacent education and training amenities.

The variety and quality of housing choices in Birkenhead will attract new residents into the area, who are drawn by attractive, modern new build and high quality historic properties adjacent to Hamilton Square and Birkenhead Park. The HMRI programme will deliver new and improved properties throughout the wider study area, which will include investment into sustainable stock and the redevelopment of less popular housing types. New higher density development in the town centre and within East Float will diversify the housing choices further, to ensure that the full range of housing choices are offered across Birkenhead, for sale and rent.

Birkenhead will be a successful place to live – where residents are happy, healthy and have access to the amenities and services they need. Birkenhead will offer a high quality of life,

which combines the facilities of a town centre at the heart of the Liverpool City Region, the green spaces and quality waterfront of a top destination, with a choice of unique, popular and liveable urban neighbourhoods.

- 3.6 The next section sets out the key elements of the approach and guiding principles that will be necessary to achieve such an ambitious vision.

Guiding Principles

Bold, but practical

- 3.7 Key to developing the Strategic Framework is an approach that aims to be bold, but practical, exploiting with the economic potential of Birkenhead, the wider Borough and the City Region. The framework seeks to set out a new future for Birkenhead and its role within the City Region, raise aspirations, tap into emerging economic prospects and to attract inward investment thereby changing the economic profile of the Borough.

Emphasises Delivery

- 3.8 An emphasis needs to be placed upon delivery at all stages, setting out how change can be delivered, who should manage

the process and where funding opportunities may lie in the short and long term. Wirral Waters brings with it an unprecedented level of investment over the long term. The key to success is to capture the benefits of that investment for the areas beyond the site boundaries. A 'planning gain' approach alone will not achieve this, but a comprehensive approach that delivers integrated development and economic growth across the wider area is required.

Exploit the Assets

- 3.9 The aspiration is to capture and deliver the potential of the local assets in Birkenhead and the wider Inner Wirral area. The waterfront offers tremendous potential for the long-term regeneration of Birkenhead, and provides a starting point for capturing value. However, other key green, cultural and heritage assets in the wider area include *inter alia* Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Bidston Hill, Bidston Moss, Birkenhead Priory and the sustainable neighbourhoods that surround the inner core. Improving the connections between these assets, creating areas of opportunity and facilitating integration between neighbourhoods forms the basis of an agreed regeneration strategy that draws upon the strengths of the local area.

Local Benefit

- 3.10 The strategy seeks to direct investment to the benefit of the local community thereby improving prosperity and quality of life. The challenge is to position Birkenhead economically within the city region and wider North West region in order to drive growth and renewal and deliver a step change in social mobility for the people that reside there.

Commitment

- 3.11 The framework has sought to achieve the required focus and agreement of the Stakeholders and core service providers who will be tasked with making things happen and delivering change. This has sought to include the commitment of parties beyond the Council, including all service providers. The next step will be to ensure it is embraced by leading businesses and land owners in Birkenhead and the wider Inner Wirral area.

Defining roles and relationships

- 3.12 The future role of Birkenhead and its regeneration strategy must be defined by its relationship with the wider Wirral Peninsula and the Liverpool City Region. The consequence of these

relationships defines the potential of this place, and shapes the ongoing development and change.

1. *The Wirral Peninsula*

Development and change in the Birkenhead study area should be driven by its role as “Inner Wirral”; an energetic urban centre with a quality retail and leisure offer. A vibrant, mixed-use, multi-functional location which integrates a unique residential offer within the peninsula: an urban, compact housing environment with convenient access to quality walking, cycling and public transport links and offering a high degree of liveability built around strong quality of life factors – especially open space and leisure (both local and peninsula-wide) and access to a strong educational offer.



2. *Liverpool City region*

Central Birkenhead should be distinct but complementary to Liverpool city centre - a historic, liveable, intimate, human scale and tranquil location which is different to and balanced against Liverpool’s clear role as economic driver. This is not to say that Birkenhead cannot and should not offer a diverse and varied

range of uses, services and facilities that supports a strong local economy in its own right, and accommodates industry, business, education and training.



3. A unique and self sustaining “city quarter”

Bringing these two concepts together, we can see central Birkenhead as an individual quarter of the wider Liverpool City Region. Central Birkenhead has all the essential ingredients of a liveable neighbourhood but with a walkable scale and a density and intensity that gives it life and animation – potentially very good services, facilities, shops and restaurants, superb links to Liverpool city centre, quality open space assets and waterfront access. The following diagrams illustrate this concept.

Figure 3.1 A Complementary Role for Birkenhead

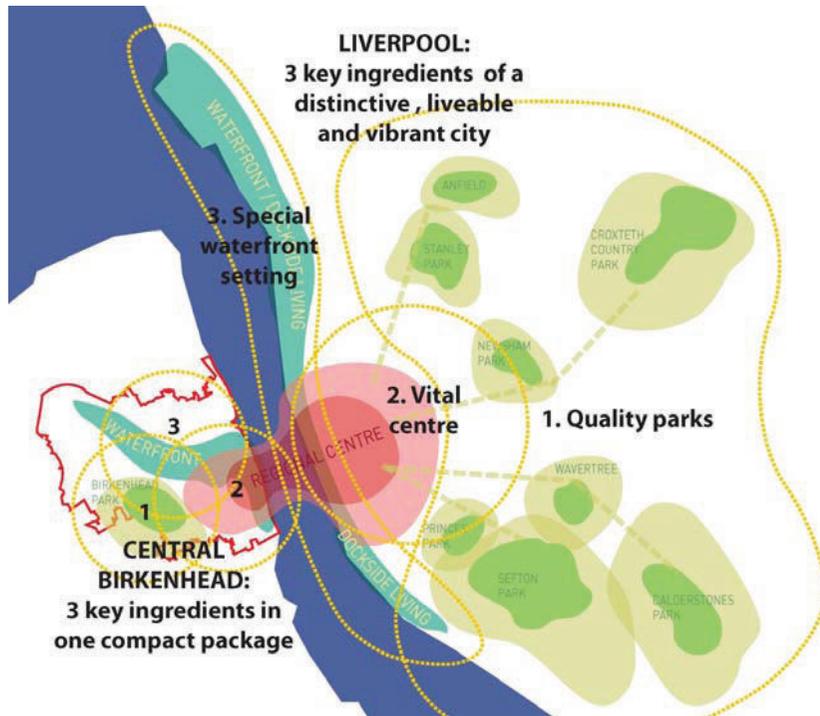
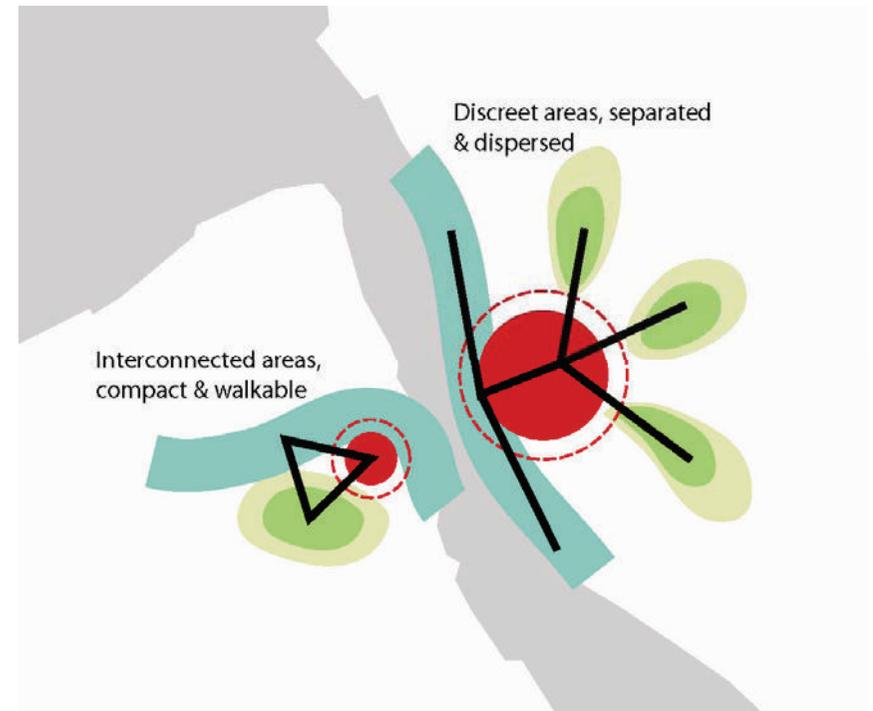


Figure 3.2A Compact and Walkable Neighbourhood



Enhancing and re-establishing the key components of Birkenhead

Foundations for change

3.13 Our approach to shaping the future of Birkenhead focuses on rediscovering what made it vibrant and vital in the past. Key objectives embedded within an integrated regeneration study for Birkenhead are:

- Rediscovering people-friendly routes into and out of the central core and waterfront
- Rediscovering human scale, welcoming streets and spaces
- Rethinking the Birkenhead dock system– from isolated former dock system (and barrier) in to an attractive waterside hub – vibrant, active and integrated.
- Rediscovering a logical, responsive scale of built form scale, enhancing the role and structure of the place by building up density in the central area.
- Rediscovering the ‘Laird grid’, and maximising this as a highly distinctive asset and foundation for a clear and legible urban structure.

- Rediscovering natural landscape features and the ‘man made’ open space network

3.14 To deliver these objectives the spatial strategy should be founded upon improving;

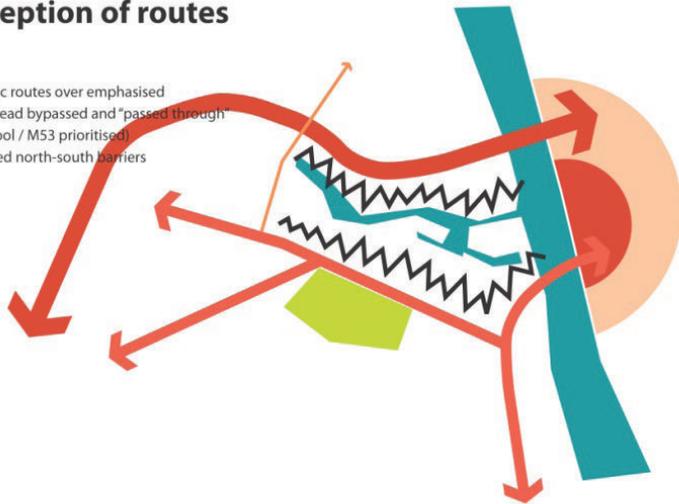
a) Perceptions of routes and connectivity

From...

Figure 3.3 Perception of routes: Now

Perception of routes

- Strategic routes over emphasised
- Birkenhead bypassed and "passed through" (Liverpool / M53 prioritised)
- Ingrained north-south barriers

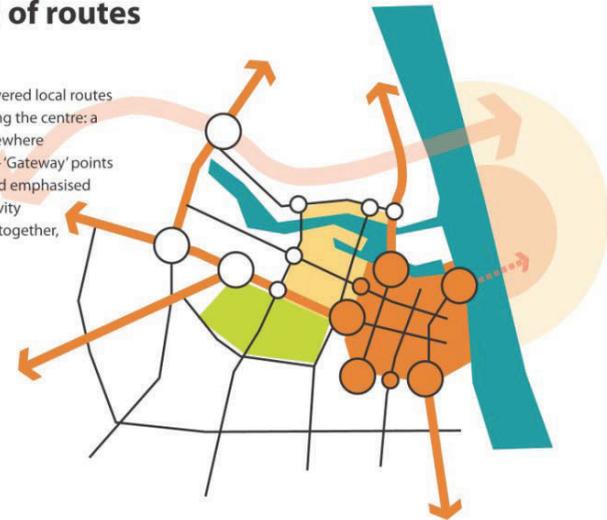


To...

Figure 3.4 Perception of routes: Improved

Perception of routes

- A better balance of layered local routes
- Strategic routes feeding the centre: a sense of arriving somewhere
- Easy to find your way - 'Gateway' points and nodes defined and emphasised
- North-south connectivity
- Routes 'bind' the area together, not divide it



b) Perceptions of public realm assets and open spaces

From...

Figure 3.5 Perception of public realm assets: Now

Perception of public realm assets

- 'Stranded islands' of green space
- Birkenhead Park has limited placemaking value - a wasted asset
- A privatised, inaccessible and/or very low quality waterfront
- High quality assets are 'outside' not 'inside' Birkenhead
- An intense, unrelieved town centre environment

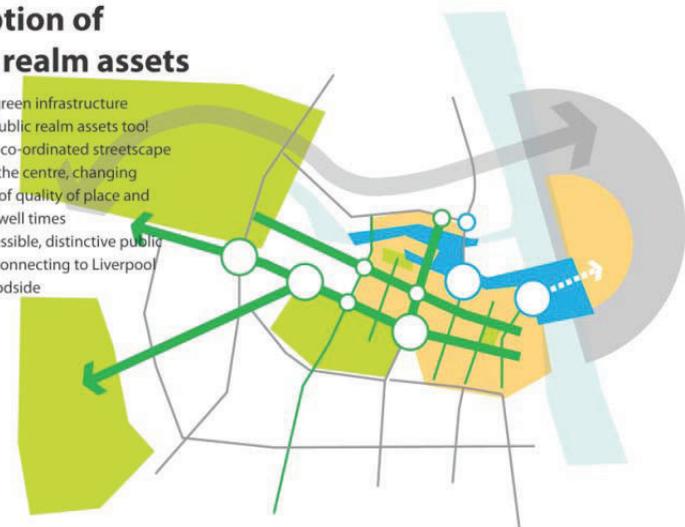
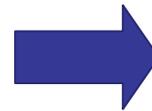


To...

Figure 3.6 Perception of public realm assets: Improved

Perception of public realm assets

- Connected green infrastructure
- Streets are public realm assets too!
- High quality co-ordinated streetscape throughout the centre, changing perceptions of quality of place and improving dwell times
- Vibrant, accessible, distinctive public waterfront, connecting to Liverpool through Woodside



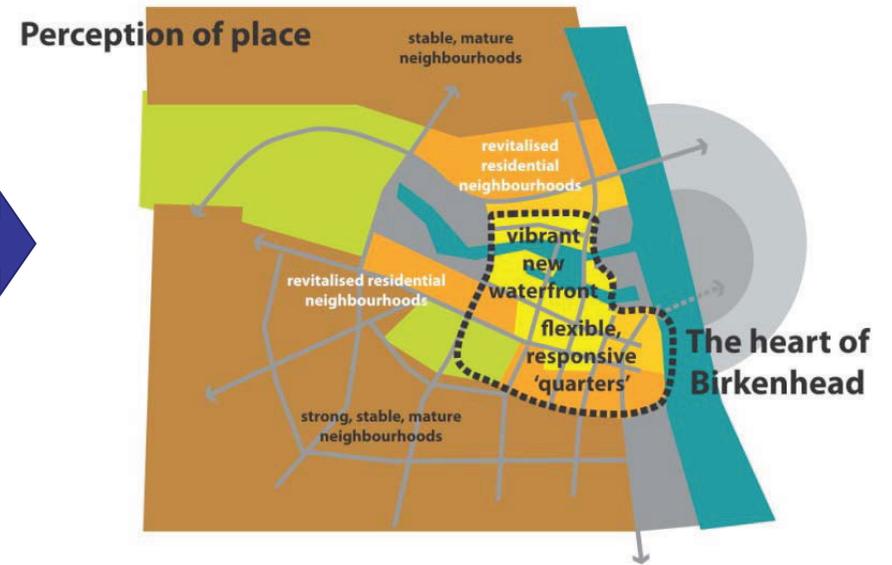
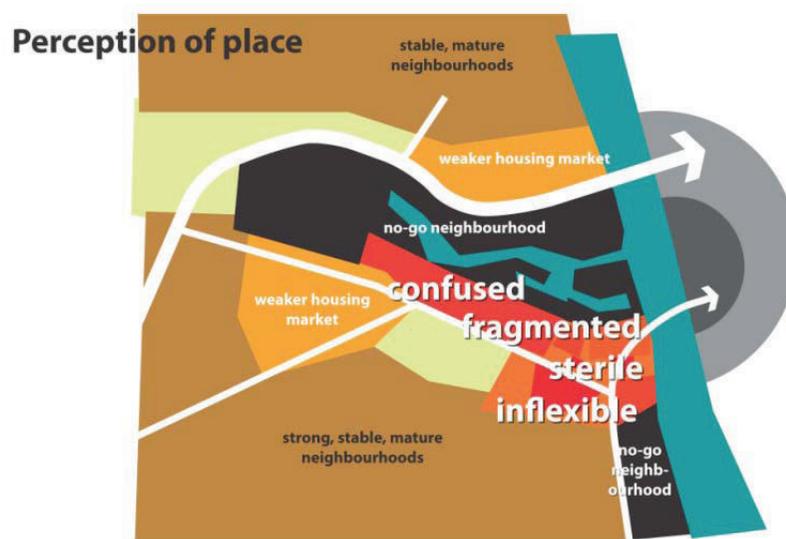
c) Perceptions of intactness and integrity

From...

To...

Figure 3.7 Perception of place: Now

Figure 3.8 Perception of place: Improved



Reasserting the town centre as the nucleus

3.15 The town centre is key to realising the potential to create a self-sustaining “city quarter”. Without a strong, vibrant centre activity will continue to leak out and there will be no ‘life and intensity’ to balance the more serene open space and passive leisure assets. A strong town centre is also key to unlocking the potential of the waterfront, both in terms of the River Mersey and the dock system.

3.16 The objective should be to rediscover the original “central hub” of the borough – the heart of inner Wirral and a key to historic partnerships with Liverpool.

3.17 By taking this ‘start with the heart’ approach the central core of Birkenhead can become the focus of and driver for change, based on strengthening key attributes to;

- build on the existing sense that this is somewhere distinct – a clear sense of place;
- build on the significant heritage assets;
- build on the foundations of an organic, logical and legible movement network;

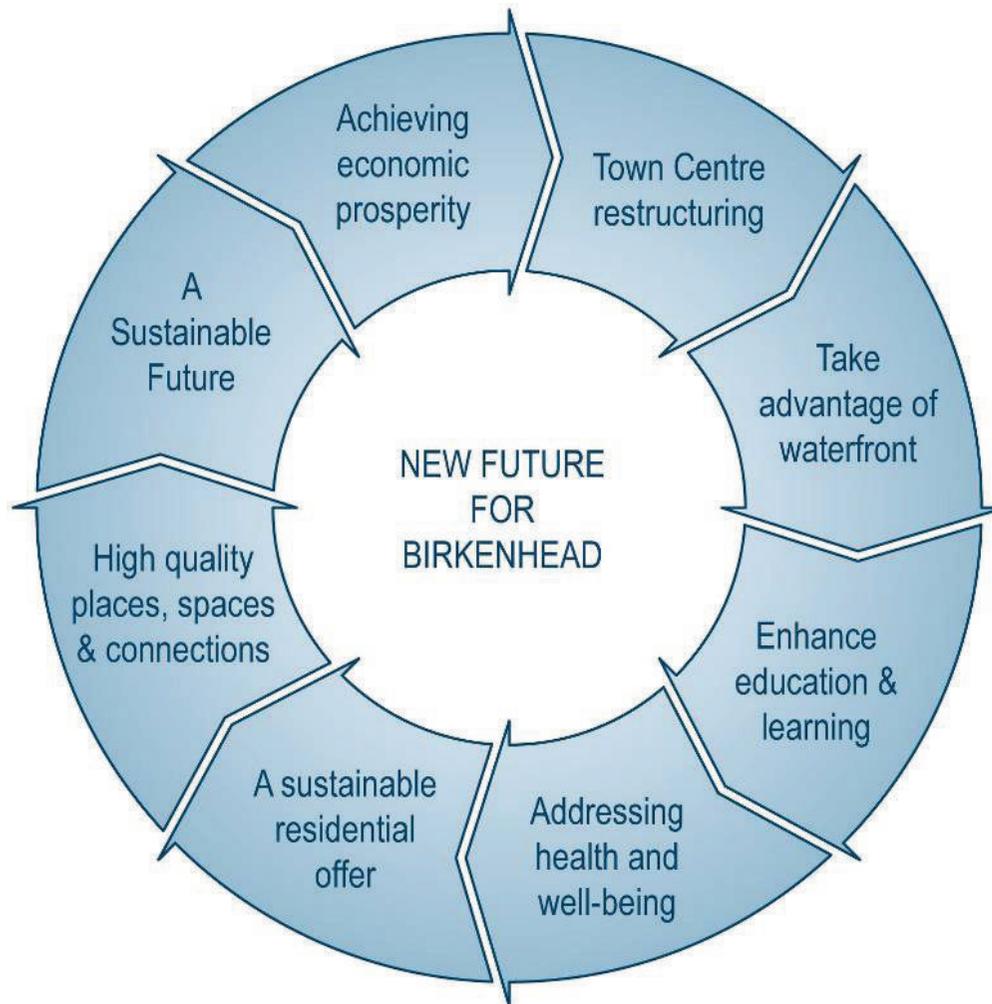
- build on the unique juxtaposition between planned/formal (Laird grid, Hamilton Square) and organic/informal (Bridge Street, Grange Road) built form origins;
- build on the key views and a perceived connectivity to Liverpool (River Mersey and the Birkenhead dock system);
- build on the great public transport assets, especially Merseyrail; and
- build on the walkable scale and intimate street spaces.

Spatial Framework

Thematic Principles

- 3.18 These elements have been incorporated into the spatial framework for the regeneration of Birkenhead, which is based upon a series of thematic principles to guide future development and investment in Birkenhead.
- 3.19 The thematic principles have evolved through discussion with Stakeholders and Council officers in a series of discussions and are represented and discussed overleaf.

Figure 3.9: Thematic Principles



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Theme 1 – Achieving Economic Prosperity

- 3.20 The baseline analysis outlines the structural weaknesses of the economy and the socio-economic factors that in particular are holding back economic growth. Much work has been done in the past to put in place an integrated economic strategy for Wirral¹³ and efforts continue with the recent Investment Strategy.
- 3.21 Within the context of existing and ongoing work, this study aims to provide a focus for Birkenhead in the light of the Wirral Waters proposals and the wider City Region economic strategy. The key is to establish a role and function for the Birkenhead study area and to nurture businesses in target economic sectors, matched with up-skilling and enhanced educational attainment. Economic prosperity goes hand in hand with a successful town centre, exploiting the full potential of the waterfront and, a sustainable housing offer and improved educational attainment.

¹³ Wirral Economic Regeneration Strategy 2001 – 2010, and the Economic Regeneration and Investment Framework 2005.

Proposed Objectives

- Wirral will play an increasingly **active role in the City Region**, with the wider Birkenhead study area increasingly seen as the western edge of Liverpool city centre.
 - Optimise the full potential of the waterfront for economic activity – the Wirral Waters proposals in particular have the potential to deliver a transformational level of new accommodation.
 - Nurture investment in identified economic sectors, including public health and social work, including spin-off activity from bio–medical clusters in Liverpool; Communications, retail and hotels and catering, etc.
 - Address supply side issues by providing accommodation to meet business needs, including quality large-footplate office space, and smaller accommodation to support and foster start-up and enterprise activity.
 - Seek to attract additional relocations as a consequence of Government relocations through preparation and presentation of a credible offer.
- Birkenhead Town Centre will become a **key ‘centre’ for Wirral** – a primary service centre to serve the borough catchment, **offering a variety of uses**:
 - a. Reinvigorated retail environment
 - b. Cultural/leisure amenities
 - c. Higher quality office space
 - d. Quality business accommodation and the potential for multi-agency service delivery
 - e. Educational linkages
 - f. Quality civic environment
 - g. Pedestrian and cycle friendly public realm
 - h. Improved connections to the waterfront and neighbourhoods
 - Birkenhead will become a **destination** for cultural, leisure, economic and residential opportunities.

Theme 2 – Town Centre Restructuring

- 3.22 The central area of Birkenhead is composed of a number of distinct zones, including *inter alia* Hamilton Square, Woodside, Europa Boulevard and the core retail area among others, which together create the wider town centre environment.
- 3.23 The revitalisation of this wider central area is an essential component in the regeneration of Birkenhead and the Inner Wirral catchment. Once the driving force behind the borough's development, Birkenhead has declined in recent years, which is reflected in the lower status of the town centre shopping precinct in the retail hierarchy. However, due to its proximity to Liverpool City Centre, Birkenhead retains the opportunity to once again become a central service centre for the borough, with the potential to establish a quality mixed-use complementary offer that contributes to the extended city centre region.
- 3.24 The latent potential that exists within Birkenhead and the wider study area due to its connectivity to Liverpool; the size of its urban catchment; the extent of under-utilised dockland; and recent developer ambition, which is best illustrated through the ambitious plans of Wirral Water, places Birkenhead in an

opportune position that distinguishes it from other town centres in the borough.

- 3.25 It is therefore within this context that the future of Birkenhead town centre becomes a key priority, not just for the immediate Birkenhead area, but also for the Borough as a whole. This is considered in the recent [Wirral] Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure report¹⁴, which considers the future viability of the town centre.
- 3.26 The essence of the IRS approach is it to take a fresh look at the potential of the wider town centre to grow and develop in line with emerging markets. In order to do this, the town centre needs to offer the appropriate quality of floor space, activity and service support required to retain and attract new businesses. The Focus Area Objectives (Appendix 2) discuss the potential of the wider town centre in more detail and also draw upon best practice, considering the essential ingredients required to support a successful town centre.
- 3.27 Retailing is increasingly recognised as being only one component of a successful town centre: leisure, residential,

¹⁴ Wirral Council Strategy for Town Centres, Retail and Commercial Leisure – Volume 1: Main Report (Dec 2009) Roger Tym and Partners

office/service and a diverse evening economy all have a role in contributing to future vitality and viability.

3.28 The wider town centre needs to be reconsidered as an appropriate location for key services that could otherwise be brought forward elsewhere in Birkenhead (and the borough). A commitment is needed to ensure that the town centre remains as the primary service centre in Inner Wirral and that service providers, where appropriate, are setting an example to the wider business market that central Birkenhead is a viable business location.

3.29 As such, the role and function of the wider town centre and how this is considered in policy terms needs to change from one primarily focused on the retail precinct, to a wider central urban area that offers a range of high quality uses including *inter alia* retail, business, cultural, transport, service, recreation and residential. The latter of which would play an important role in ensuring that the town centre is lively and active throughout the day and has the critical mass of activity in the evening to create a safe, interesting and diverse night-time economy to attract new users back into the centre for leisure and recreational purposes.

3.30 As discussed previously, the central area is made up of a number of distinct zones, which need better definition and

connection. In addition, the redundant rail line runs through the centre of this area and acts as a physical scar and barrier to efficient movement and integration. Each of these areas has its own (existing and potential) character and should be knitted together, to create a mixed-use town centre which has a variety of high quality character zones.

3.31 The use and function of the wider Birkenhead (IRS) area needs to support and complement the role of the town centre as the primary service centre and ensure that new development does not undermine this role, but contributes towards a more sustainable Birkenhead.

3.32 The ability to deliver positive change in the town centre is constrained by the lack of available sites within or close to the retail/transport core, with those that do exist, fragmented. Utilising existing vacant land and surface car parking is a start to creating new opportunities, subject to development of a Parking Strategy for the town centre. However, in the longer term a more intensive approach will be needed to enable development to come forward. This will include taking a long term view on the mix of occupiers in the town centre and identifying areas of overprovision of retail and other floorspace, with the overall aim of raising the quality of use and appearance of the town centre.

In light of this, a level of commitment to the IRS is needed that goes beyond the public sector and service providers and includes key business stakeholders, which recognises that change is needed in the wider town centre area if it is to become a viable and competitive business location that plays a recognisable role in the City Region context.

Proposed Objectives – for the wider town centre area

1. To **revitalise and diversify the retail provision** through the provision of modern retail floor plates and enhance connections towards the waterfront.
2. To **improve pedestrian and cycle connections** to surrounding neighbourhoods and create a quality environment that is attractive and vibrant.
3. For **Europa Boulevard** to become the primary street for new and improved leisure and business activity and to consider the potential to extend to the north, to link to East Float.
4. To create a high quality **public realm** along Europa Boulevard, which connects to key destinations e.g. Hamilton Square; Woodside; the retail precinct; Docks and Waterfront; residential communities.
5. To attract new leisure and business activity along Europa Boulevard, including active uses at ground floor, to strengthen activity between the waterfront and the retail centre.
6. To introduce **new residential development** into the wider town centre area to stimulate activity and create a vibrant urban environment.
7. To increase the **scale and mass of development** within the town centre to clearly define the 'central zone' and stimulate greater activity.
8. To maximise the potential of the town centre and the study area as a focus for multi-agency service delivery.
9. To **reduce the impact of highways** infrastructure on pedestrian and cycle movement within and around the town centre – review the priority of through traffic and consider how the tunnel toll plaza area might be more effectively utilised.
10. To create a more **user-friendly street hierarchy** that sensitively guides through traffic around the town centre, using better signage and legible public realm, whilst enables convenient access for town centre users.

11. To **re-establish routes** and connections across the town centre and 'knit' together different parts of the town centre, including sites segregated by the redundant rail line.
12. To bring forward **higher-value development on vacant and under-utilised sites** and relocate industrial activity to more appropriate locations.
13. To introduce **new educational, business and enterprise activity**, to integrate with established and emerging uses on the docks and along Canning Street and Cleveland Street.
14. To open up **connections to the Merseyrail stations and bus facilities** and cluster activity around these locations.
15. To provide a **new hotel and leisure offer** that capitalises on the historic and cultural assets of the town centre, including Hamilton Square and the waterfront.

Theme 3 – Take Advantage of the Waterfront

- 3.33 The waterfront is one of Birkenhead's untapped 'Unique Selling Points'. It offers the potential for a step change in perception. The proposal by Peel for Wirral Waters captures that potential and presents a new long term aspiration for Birkenhead. There

is no doubt though that the proposals seek to fully exploit that potential. A long term perspective may mean that recent investments, for example at 12 Quays are revisited, particularly if investment at the East Float is successful.

Proposed Objectives

1. To introduce appropriate **higher value development** on the waterfront to capitalise on setting and outlook.
2. To draw upon **Northern European exemplars** of best practice to guide development activity – Malmö, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Hamburg
3. To open-up **pedestrian and cycle access along the waterfront** and encourage public access in new dock front developments including the creation of new linkages and connections.
4. To create **new physical and visual connections** from the town centre to the waterfront through an integrated urban design.
5. To secure **design principles** for the waterfront which will ensure the quality and future maintenance of the new development and public realm in waterfront locations.

6. To ensure all new **developments are founded on masterplanning principles**, which consider scale and massing, and ensures that new developments are integrated with the town centre, minimise overshadowing and respond appropriately to the open waterfront location.
7. To create opportunities for **ground floor activities** in key locations to stimulate footfall and animate public routes – to avoid blank frontage at ground floor.
8. To ensure that new development is physically and visually integrated into the surrounding context and that pedestrian and cycle **connectivity and movement is maximised** within a defined route network.
9. To **consolidate industrial activity** into appropriate locations, which are accessible to the motorway network and limit impact on residential neighbourhoods.
10. To ensure that development activity is set within a wider masterplan that establishes a framework for places, spaces and connections.
11. To ensure that the integration of **new uses complements the role and function of the town centre**.

12. To ensure that the masterplan for the waterfront is deliverable and provides a **viable framework for regeneration activity**.

Theme 4 – Enhanced Education and Learning Offer

- 3.34 Linked to economic development a core element of creating a sustainable recovery is addressing educational attainment and skill levels across the community. This requires a joined up approach and concentrated effort by all public sector institutions to tackle worklessness and low esteem within the community. This is a long, slow and intensive process.

Proposed Objectives

1. Improve educational attainment outcomes and raise skills levels
2. Educational ‘drive’ to reinstate “the value of education” locally from early-learners to adults; reinforcing the contribution of education to family life and economic well-being
3. Encourage retention of HE/FE students in Birkenhead from study through to employment

4. Explore opportunities for public sector multi-agency approach to provide and boost local apprenticeships, training and employment
5. Use policy as a lever to formally tie local education, apprenticeship, upskilling and employment opportunities to new development through Development Agreements and S106
6. Introduce a marketing strategy to encourage local engagement with education, employment and skills services and events

Theme 5 – Health and Well Being

- 3.35 A similar approach is required in relation to addressing healthcare inequalities in Birkenhead – a multi-agency collaborative approach that learns from best practice.

Proposed Objectives

1. Improve physical health outcomes and mental well-being
2. Raise the quality of, and accessibility to, public recreational facilities

3. Encourage healthy lifestyles and raise local and regional awareness of green assets
4. Develop a multi-agency approach to improving health outcomes linked to improving economic activity, skills, attainment and community support
5. Improve mental well-being to raise confidence and aspirations, foster personal development and encourage a sense of pride in the community

Theme 6 – A Sustainable Residential Offer

- 3.36 Birkenhead has an imbalanced housing offer, which no longer provides the quality, choice and range of property types and values to create a sustainable housing market. Successful regeneration will require the provision of a full range of housing opportunities offering choice for local residents and in-migrants alike. The HMRI and Wirral Waters programmes offer an opportunity to restructure Birkenhead's housing market which can be phased to create incremental change.

Proposed Objectives

1. To create choice and diversity in the Birkenhead housing offer – providing new, high quality housing products that offer aspirational choices for rent and for sale.
2. To offer a balanced housing market that provides a full range of products and a sustainable mix in type and tenure, and to raise the owner occupation rates closer to the borough average.
3. To introduce good quality higher density residential uses into the town centre and surrounding area to stimulate activity and vibrancy.
4. To identify declining stock of architectural and historic value for targeted improvement activity, including stock within or adjacent to conservation areas – Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Clifton Park.
5. To continue to remove poor quality, low demand and obsolete housing supply and consider derelict and industrial land for housing, where it can create a new residential market.

6. To provide higher quality housing for rent, shared ownership and affordable sale including specialist housing for elderly residents, families and single persons.
7. To introduce high quality residential development in waterfront locations, which capitalise on the views and create a new housing offer in Birkenhead.
8. To extend the HMRI stock improvement activity, including face-lifting and refurbishment, to bring declining stock back into viable and popular uses.
9. To continue neighbourhood management approach in HMRI neighbourhoods (Seacombe, Birkenhead, Bidston)

Theme 7 – Places, Spaces and Connections

- 3.37 Quality of Place is a key determinant of economic investment and success. As has been identified Birkenhead has a series of fundamental weaknesses. This means not only creating high quality, attractive and safe neighbourhoods, but a town centre that is attractive to users. It also means making it easy for people to move through the area, accessing services, the town centre, the parks, waterfront etc.

Proposed Objectives

1. To re-empower the pedestrian in Birkenhead creating safe and attractive connections, downgrading the emphasis on through traffic and re-establishing use and activity along key routes to improve natural surveillance and animation.
2. To refine the use and activity of places and spaces by introducing ground floor activity in key locations, encouraging an appropriate scale and mass of development in the town centre, and integrating a mixed-use approach to promote day time and evening activity.
3. To connect key assets with opportunity areas by creating new green linkages and pedestrian/cycle links; emphasising north-south connections and improving access to public transport.
4. To establish connections between the town centre, existing and potential key locations through an integrated public realm strategy.
5. To create connected communities, which are safe, well designed and usable to all.

6. To build upon the Live Wirral branding and communication projects as a successful method to promoting HMRI in Wirral.

Theme 8 – Sustainable Future

- 3.38 New investment in Birkenhead should push the boundaries of sustainable development. It should be ‘future-proof’. We should seek to make Birkenhead and its renaissance an exemplar in sustainable development

Proposed Objectives

1. To encourage the use of Modern Methods of Construction and sustainable technologies in design, development and use.
2. To minimise waste creation during construction and promote recycling and sustainable lifestyles.
3. To adopt sustainable approaches to power generation and distribution in large redevelopment schemes.
4. To promote healthy lifestyles and encourage greater pedestrian, cycle and public transport use.

5. To support exemplar schemes for sustainable design and development to promote sustainable lifestyles and housing choices.
6. To incorporate sustainable technologies into the refurbishment and improvement of popular historic stock in sustainable locations.

4. Spatial Framework

4.1 The proposed spatial framework is a central element of the Birkenhead IRS and is intended to be developed further to inform the LDF process. It demonstrates how physical change and development could potentially help to address key issues and opportunities – not just from an environmental perspective (i.e. addressing weaknesses in urban form) but also encompassing social and economic dimensions to. For example;

- Helping to address **structural weaknesses in the economy** by identifying opportunities for complementary employment and education development, and enhancing the attractiveness of Birkenhead as a place to invest.
- Helping to address **socio-economic inequality and instability** by easing tangible barriers – e.g. opening up access to and connections between places of work and education, enhancing the quality and legibility of the environment (to appeal to and inspire people), promoting walking, cycling and public transport as genuine alternatives as modes of travel to work (and, in the case of walking and cycling, as appealing leisure pursuits).

- Helping to address the **quality of the housing offer** by promoting key residential development and redevelopment opportunities and using urban design principles to establish the foundation for more appealing living environments that feel welcoming and safe.

4.2 In creating a spatial framework the consultant team has integrated a number of influences including careful analysis of stakeholder viewpoints and information. The aim has been to generate a framework that assimilates a wide range of factors in a way that presents a **single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead**. This comprehensive plan;

1. *Is founded on a defined context and understanding of place assets.* This has been achieved through comprehensive baseline analysis and stakeholder consultation.
2. *Defines a clear vision and overall concept for change.* This has been driven by a need to both (a) *complement* and reinforce existing assets and (b) coordinate and prioritise responses to weaknesses and features which currently 'divide' the place (be this a physical or a socio-economic divide).
3. *Can be used as a foundation for co-ordinated delivery.* This has been achieved by thinking about how opportunities for

change can both (a) maximise and synchronise existing strategies / development proposals, and (b) stimulate new partnerships and complementary approaches to development.

Approach

- 4.3 The spatial framework sets out ideas and proposals for change that have a 'bottom up' as much as a 'top down' approach. This means that the framework is based both on wider concepts that react to large scale, strategic issues and opportunities, and also on localised, site specific issues and opportunities ('getting under the skin' of Birkenhead to reveal the detail of the challenge - the potential to implement change - at the local level).

Bigger Picture Concepts

- 4.4 The vision and objectives for the IRS define the overall approach to change across Birkenhead, not only driven by need but also by opportunity. This has in turn defined the thrust and content of the physical framework.
- 4.5 In spatial terms, the big picture concepts - the overall approach to change - are defined by three central ideas that look to enhance and re-establish key components of Birkenhead (as

described at Section 3.0 Vision and Objectives). These form the foundation to the three plans (presented later) which together form the physical framework.

- i. Improving the attractiveness and legibility of key routes and enhancing the overall sense of connectivity through Birkenhead
- ii. Improving the quality of key areas of public realm, and the connectivity between important public open spaces
- iii. Developing a land use structure that can guide development decision in a way that helps to improve the 'intactness' and coherence of Birkenhead's urban structure

Locally Relevant and Manageable

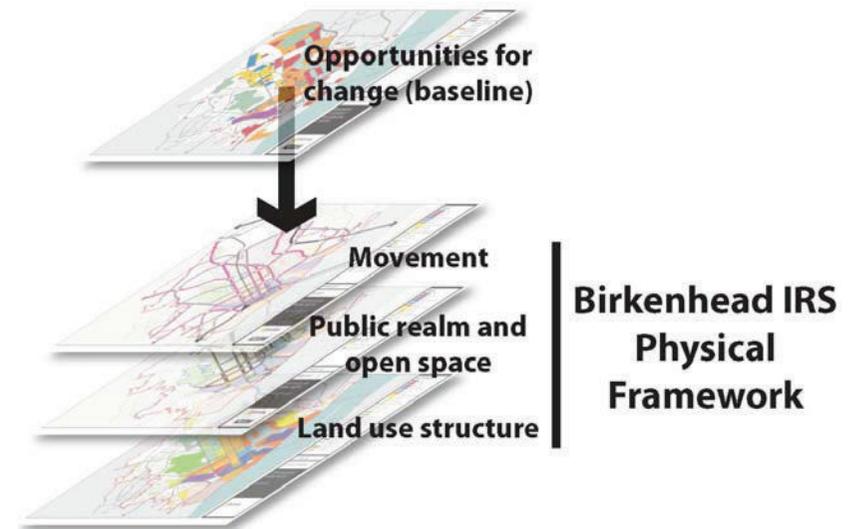
- 4.6 The study area for the IRS is of a significant scale, and the physical framework covers an extensive spatial area. In creating the plan it is has been advantageous to break the wider down into a number of smaller elements, to help make it more manageable to assemble. The physical framework is based on a number of constituent Focus Areas which have been defined by (a) similarities in spatial characteristics (i.e. the Character Areas identified in the baseline study) and (b) common objectives and themes for development and change.

- 4.7 Putting together proposals for individual Focus Areas has allowed the capacity for change to be understood and calculated at site specific level. This ensures that the overall framework is based on a firm understanding of more localised issues and opportunities. It also makes the framework easier to interpret (and more useful) at a local level as much as an overall, wider concept. Hence it becomes a 'composite' framework – a big picture shaped by local opportunities and strategies.

Layering the Plan

- 4.8 In order to manage the myriad issues and objectives underpinning the IRS, the physical framework has been generated as a layered spatial plan. This has involved generating proposals under the three key themes set out above in a way that comes together to create a combined physical framework strategy – in effect creating three plans in one. Layering the plan in line with these themes allows the spatial strategy to be understood as an overall plan for change, whilst also allowing an appreciation of component strategies, tailored to specific objectives.

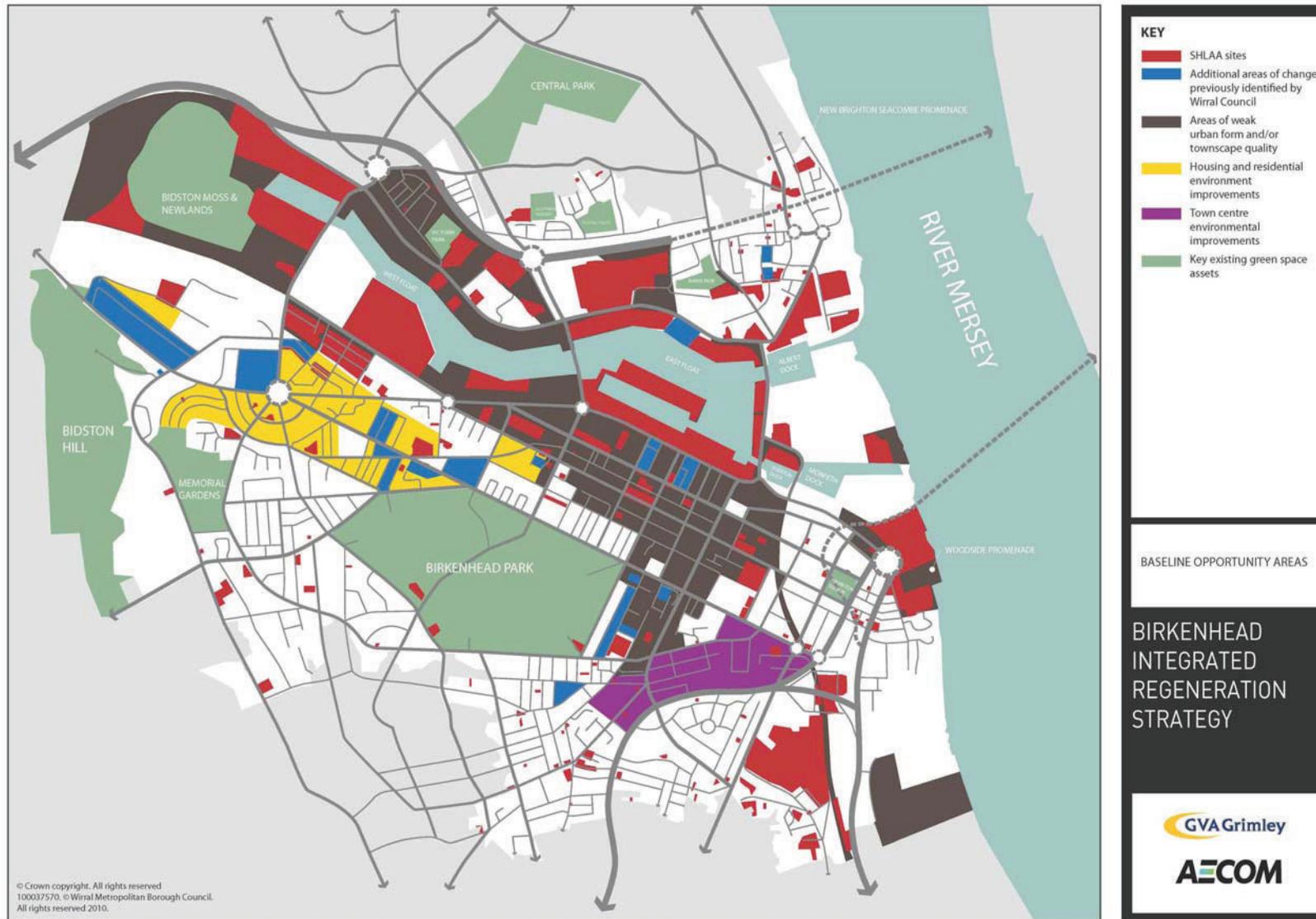
Figure 4.1: Approach to creating a Physical Framework



The Physical Framework Strategy

- 4.9 By addressing both the bigger picture concepts and understanding localised challenges and capacity, the physical framework represents a single, integrated comprehensive spatial plan for Birkenhead. The 'opportunities for change' plan generated through baseline analysis provides the foundation to the strategy – revealing locations where physical change has the greatest potential.

Figure 4.2 Opportunity Areas Plan



1. Improving the attractiveness and legibility of key routes and enhancing the overall sense of connectivity through Birkenhead

- 4.10 Birkenhead has become a place where highways infrastructure dominates its environment. Highways infrastructure has evolved in a way that has impacted negatively on quality of place, as the focus and nature of movement has shifted fundamentally: Original, 'organic' pathways to the town centre and waterfront have been engulfed by strategic highways that prioritise fast, efficient vehicular links to/from the M53, the Mersey tunnels and Twelve Quays ferry terminal.
- 4.11 This engineering-led approach has given rise to strategic highways that dominate the environment, cutting through the urban fabric, often severing areas from one another and creating environments that are often very hostile to pedestrians and cyclists. This effect is felt most in and around the town centre, where the strategic highways both "drive through" and "pass around" what should be a key focal point for the community.
- 4.12 The strategy expressed by the spatial framework aims to rebalance the movement network in a way that helps to ensure

that the character of key routes is more responsive to their context (e.g. heavily engineered, fast moving traffic routes should not be appropriate within the town centre) and play a greater role in providing attractive, welcoming public realm that should be attractive and welcoming for all. There are some particular street environments highlighted in the framework that need to be improved to enhance the experience of being in and moving through Birkenhead, helping to reinstate a network of streets and spaces that make it easier for people, and in particular pedestrians and cyclists, to find their way around the town (logical and clear) and that integrate areas across the Birkenhead study area and beyond rather than divide them (well connected and permeable).

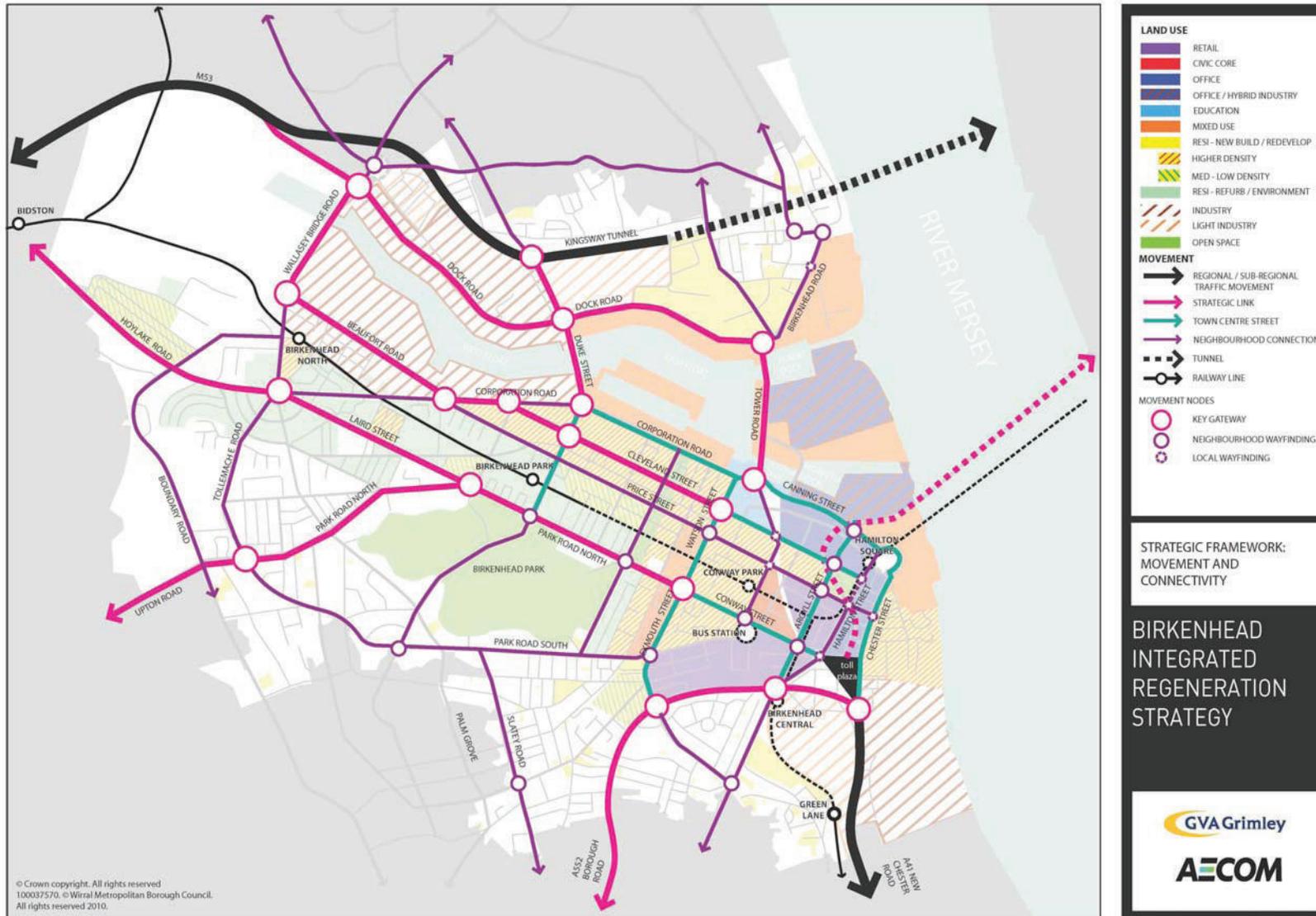
- 4.13 Some key ideas promoted within the strategy are to;
- a) Acknowledge that Birkenhead town centre is somewhere that should be "arrived at and enjoyed" rather than "passed through and ignored", and make sure that the design of roads and the character of street spaces change in proximity to the centre, favouring a more pedestrian friendly environment.
 - b) Create attractive, pedestrian and cycle friendly spaces along key radial routes. Higher volume, higher capacity roads

such as the A553 (Conway Street / Park Road North / Laird Street) should not allow vehicles to dominate the pedestrian and cyclist experience, and in fact they should be attractive, multi-functional 'corridors' that provide a welcoming experience for those travelling into and out of the centre.

- c) Where appropriate, physically downgrade certain highways – for example changing from dual carriageways and/or urban motorways to standard carriageways with integrated footpaths and cycle paths.
- d) Improve perceptions of north-south connectivity across the Birkenhead dock system, rebalancing the dominant east-west flow of routes through the Laird grid. There are particular opportunities to improve the sense of connectivity through the A554 Tower Road corridor, extending through Kelvin Road / Wheatland Lane (B5144).
- e) Improve the quality of the environment / pedestrian experience around the tunnel toll plazas and their approaches. This is particularly important at the Queensway Tunnel plaza which is currently surrounded by an extensive zone of land that is very hostile to pedestrians and has limited development value - it needs to provide a much more positive front door to the town centre for arrivals from the

south. Kingsway Tunnel, being in a cutting, is less of a priority in this regard.

Figure 4.3: Movement Framework Plan



4.14 The movement framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below.

a) Regional / Sub-Regional Movement

4.15 Although there is a desire to emphasise Birkenhead as an attractor in its own right - an 'arrival' point - the framework also recognises the strategically important function of the M53, A5139 in the regional and sub-regional road network. Its location in a cutting and its strategic importance limits the opportunity for significant environmental enhancements. None the less measures which will lessen this severance effect without reducing the strategic importance of the route should be promoted.

b) Strategic Links

4.16 The physical framework looks to promote a more logical and better balanced arrangement of strategic links in a way which (a) promotes a sense of "arrival" at the town centre, and (b) ensures that north-south connections, across the dock system, are an integral part of the movement network.

4.17 The changes promoted here are not dramatically different to the existing "A" road structure. The framework does not necessarily recommend the downgrading of existing "A" roads in terms of highway / traffic function, but promotes a step change in the environmental quality and character of the routes. The framework advocates that strategic links should not be designed purely to maximise the flow of vehicular traffic, but should be key links which can accommodate both vehicular and non-vehicular traffic, and which have an attractive and welcoming character.

4.18 This is something that can be achieved in particular at Queensway tunnel plaza and the A41 / A5227 junction, which has the potential to perform a role as a key entry point into Birkenhead town centre, rather than just a means of getting to Liverpool. Highway remodelling schemes in this location that seek to improve the directness of connections with the town and rationalise highways infrastructure should be promoted. In this way the Queensway tunnel takes on less of a regional / sub regional movement corridor but becomes more of a strategic link between the Liverpool City Region and Birkenhead. The need to accommodate pedestrian and cycle movements as well as vehicles should be considered on key north – south routes such as A5027 and A554.

c) Town Centre Links

- 4.19 A key weakness of the current movement network is the sense that vehicle-dominated main routes pass through rather than arrive at the Town Centre. As part of a more coherent and logical route hierarchy, a key move should be to identify certain routes into, through and around the town centre which should be targeted for environmental and public realm improvements that highlight their significance as town centre environments, yet maintain their role as movers of significant volumes of vehicular traffic.
- 4.20 The A41 New Chester Road (around and to the north of Toll Plaza), eastern Corporation Road, A554 Canning Street, A5029 Watson Street and A553 Conway Street are key links on which such improvements should be considered.
- 4.21 The idea would be not to restrict their strategic purpose, but to find a better balance in the way highway space is designed, to promote a sense of being more friendly to pedestrian and cyclist use.
- 4.22 This approach would see these routes become a 'hybrid' between the Strategic Links and Neighbourhood Connections (see below).
- 4.23 Every effort should be made through development decisions to promote building forms that provide maximum active frontage along these routes and a high quality public realm / landscape finish involving generous footways, street planting and excellent lighting that forms part of a coordinated scheme across the centre. There is particular potential to implement a complementary approach to public realm design along these routes and certain 'key gateways' (see Movement Nodes below) which mark threshold locations into the core of the town centre. These relationships are illustrated on the strategy plan.
- 4.24 The emphasis on establishing 'Town Centre Streets' is about delivering vibrant and active street spaces which help to unify areas. As such Corporation Road has been identified as a route which should take on the above characteristics, with the aim of ensuring that future development at East Float is integrated as much as possible with neighbourhoods immediately to the south.

d) Neighbourhood Connections

4.25 Development and investment in public realm along these routes will see a greater focus / emphasis on the pedestrian and cyclist experience – with an improved balance in design approach between pedestrians and cars (i.e. moving cars must not be allowed to dominate these environments). This should not only involve intelligent and sensitive design of highway space itself (where there is opportunity to invest in and redesign existing routes) but thinking carefully about how adjacent built form affects the character and feel of that highway space, for example;

- wherever possible highway space along these routes should be defined as a 2-sided street (consistent building frontage on both sides of the street)
- reducing the set back of buildings from the street so that buildings align or come close to back-of-pavement, encouraging a more interactive and intimate relationship between buildings and space
- ensuring that new buildings alongside these routes are of a height that creates a well proportioned street section – reducing this down to around 1:2.5 or less can be a very

effective way of creating human scale space which feels welcoming and comfortable

Movement Nodes

4.26 To help create a movement network that is easier to navigate and that invites a sense of progression towards the centre, it is important to identify junctions that can play a role as nodal points - distinctive and notable landmarks in the network. These can be marked by specialised design features, in terms of public realm and landscape and also the quality and scale of buildings that front onto them. The approach should be consistent and complementary along routes to promote the navigational qualities.

4.27 These nodal points should be evident at three scales;

- **Key gateways** - These are junction points that are designed to signal a sense of arrival at somewhere important – essentially effective at two levels; (a) marking 'arrival' into the centre of Birkenhead itself (e.g. markers along Laird Street and Dock Road) and (b) arrival into the 'core' of the town – marking the threshold into a pedestrian friendly town centre environment (e.g. the Conway Street / Exmouth Street junction). These key gateways should be marked by

clear and consistent signage, attractive public realm / landscape, key landmark buildings and an urban form that creates a distinct urban character.

- **Neighbourhood wayfinding** - These are nodal points which acknowledge the point at which key routes cross and there is a choice to divert to significant neighbourhoods and key locations within Birkenhead. For example marking the point at which key routes divert off Park Road North down to the West Float (these will be highly significant junction points as the Wirral Waters development concept is realised). There is good opportunity to create an urban form at these locations which 'clusters' around nodal points, creating an enclosed urban character.
- **Local wayfinding** - The intent here is to promote some smaller scale / pedestrian scale junction points which could enhance the experience of being in and moving around a particular locality. This is particularly important with the town centre, where currently 'separated' areas could feel more coherent and joined up if the junction points between them benefited from investment into consistent public realm and landscape treatments (e.g. the junction points between the Hamilton Square area and the Laird Grid).

2. Improving the quality of key areas of public realm and the connectivity between important public open spaces

- 4.28 The public realm experience in Birkenhead is on the one hand marked by a number of highly distinctive elements – key set piece open spaces such as Hamilton Square - but on the other characterised by low quality, poorly maintained streets and spaces. The latter is generally exacerbated by a tendency for the main strategic / radial routes to and from the town centre to be dominated by vehicular traffic. It is evident that Birkenhead has seen physical change and interventions that generally focus on making traffic movements more efficient (e.g. widening carriageways, creating 'heavily engineered' junctions) at the expense of comfortable pedestrian and cyclist environments.
- 4.29 The approach to addressing these issues is built on two foundations; (a) to uplift the quality of public realm, in terms of the pedestrian experience, along key movement corridors, and (b) to improve the sense that key public open spaces form part of a connected and coherent network. This is about making Birkenhead feel a more integrated place – an environment which is less fragmented, that helps to bind the town and its

communities, and that creates a satisfying series of quality spaces that enhance quality of life and sense of place.

4.30 Some key ideas promoted within the strategy are;

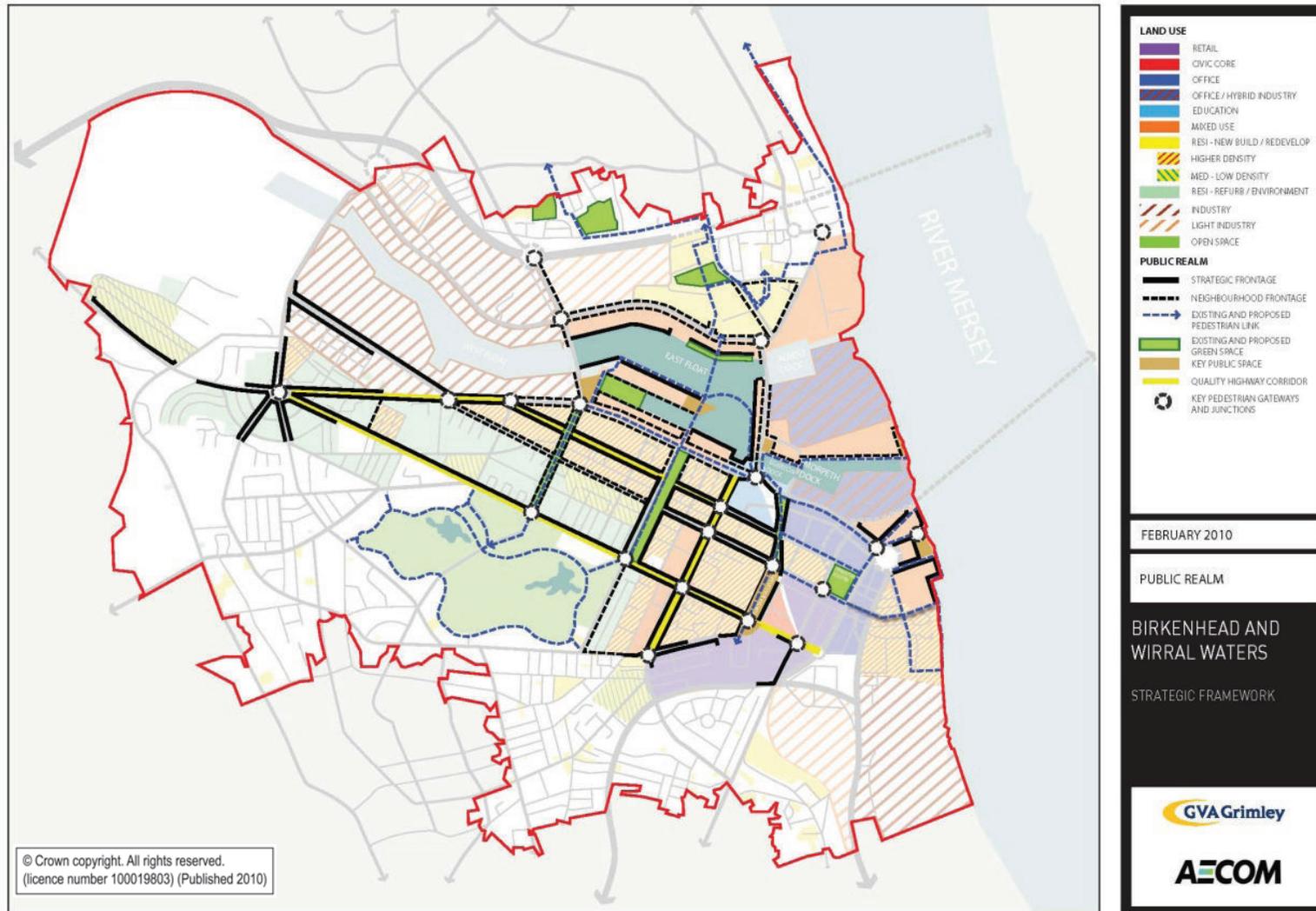
- Realising the potential for the Birkenhead dock system to incorporate attractive and highly distinctive open space assets offering informal/passive and formal/active leisure as part of redevelopment of East Float. This is key to helping address its current barrier effect and providing an open space resource that connects Birkenhead and Wallasey.
- To 'rediscover' and reemphasise the qualities of the Laird town plan, by strengthening the quality of key routes, particularly those that will promote a sense of connection between Hamilton Square, Birkenhead Park and the dock system.
- Strengthening the role of the town centre as a key hub at the centre of an open space network, especially by strengthening links between it and the River Mersey (especially Woodside) and the dock system.
- Generally promoting links to and the quality of the environment around the River Mersey. This will target both

opportunities for high quality, highly distinctive passive leisure (taking advantage of the remarkable views and opportunities for river side walks) and enhancing its social and economic role (improving the prominence and quality of the ferry services being a key priority).

- Promote the diversity of the natural environment, habitats and ecology as a key feature of Birkenhead, particularly by opening up access to the River Mersey and also to Bidston Moss. These are both potentially high value environments that are currently being compromised by poor accessibility.

Figure 4.4: Public Realm Framework Plan

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- 4.31 The framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below.

Existing and Proposed Green Space

- 4.32 The framework identifies where there is opportunity to enhance existing and create new green spaces – public spaces that incorporate soft landscape features. The key aspects of this are;
- i. To recognise the importance of Birkenhead Park as a feature which drives change in the surrounding urban structure. The framework plan promotes the creation of a new linear green space aligned along Vittoria Street that makes a literal, highly distinctive north-south connection between Birkenhead Park and the dock system.
 - ii. To create a quality destination green space at the East Float– adopting the proposal set out within the Wirral Waters scheme to partly fill Vittoria Dock and create a new focal space. Linkages to/from this space need to be enhanced by proposals to create new bridging points across water bodies at East Float, aligned with Vittoria Street.
 - iii. To define a new link extending north from Europa Boulevard to Tower Road and the south eastern edge of the East Float.

This could be a quality green space incorporating the disused rail link in this location.

Other Key Public Space

- 4.33 In addition to enhancing and creating green space, the framework identifies the opportunity for additional key public spaces that might not necessary have a soft landscape character, but that need to be invested in and promoted as quality public space assets. There are particular opportunities at;
- i. Woodside – creating a waterfront square in tandem with new development and a revitalised ferry terminal
 - ii. Europa Boulevard – continuing to invest in creating and maintaining high quality public realm, in order to strengthen the proposed north south link between East Float and the town centre retail core (this potentially including revitalised Market Place / Market Hall to create a southern ‘anchor point’ for the link)
 - iii. East Float – Wirral Waters scheme envisages a number of key public spaces, including at the eastern tip of Vittoria Wharf (the Point), potentially in tandem with a new iconic building. Again this aligns and complements with proposals to create new

linear green space along Vittoria Street. There is also additional opportunity to create good quality public space at Egerton Dock to complement proposed development here, allied with the proposed Europa Boulevard link.

Quality Highway Corridors

- 4.34 The intent is to identify particular opportunities to create high quality public space within key highway corridors in a way that aligns with the movement network proposals. The framework identifies the A553 Conway Street / Park Road North / Laird Street and the A5053 Cleveland Street as being key opportunities, especially as a means through which to redefine and strengthen the environmental quality of the Laird grid. The framework also identifies the A5029 Watson Street / Rendell Street as a potential quality corridor – this route providing a key north-south connection and also marking the threshold point into the core of central Birkenhead.

Frontage

- 4.35 It is essential that proposals to create quality public spaces, highways corridors and an interweaving pedestrian movement network (see framework diagram) is complemented by consistent, quality building frontages. The framework identifies

locations where as development and investment opportunities arise, there is a need to strengthen existing building frontages. This operates at two levels;

- i. Strategic frontages are those where a higher volume of traffic movements imply a need to present a consistent visual experience which promotes Birkenhead as a quality environment. Building frontages should be as uninterrupted as possible, distinctive and harmonious, helping to build a common sense of place throughout Birkenhead.
- ii. Neighbourhood frontages are those where links pass through areas where there is opportunity to create a more individual character for individual neighbourhoods, albeit in a complementary way in terms of built form scale and massing. These frontages could be looser and a little more eccentric than the strategic frontage elements, with more interruptions and therefore greater permeability and through-movement.

3. Developing a land use structure that can guide development in a way that helps improve the ‘intactness’ and coherence of Birkenhead’s urban structure

- 4.36 Birkenhead has emerged from ordered and logical development origins, but has developed to become somewhere that feels divided, with a sense of a place in decline. Whilst urban form characteristics closely follow historic growth patterns, these have been eroded over time and there are locations where this characterises the central part of Birkenhead as a fading, disintegrating environment.
- 4.37 Furthermore, baseline analysis has shown that, by identifying a series of Character Areas, we reveal on the one hand that there is a varied built environment, but on the other this is often composed of weak urban form and accommodates patterns of land use that give rise to rigid zones, with boundaries that are rigid and exacerbate the sense of segregation and division.
- 4.38 Future development and investment needs to help break down these perceived barriers and generate a more integrated place with a physical environment and land use structure that has a

more seamless ‘flow’. A key early step in this approach has been the identification of opportunity areas (see 4.17), which reveal locations where the opportunities for change – improvement, refurbishment and development - are most evident.

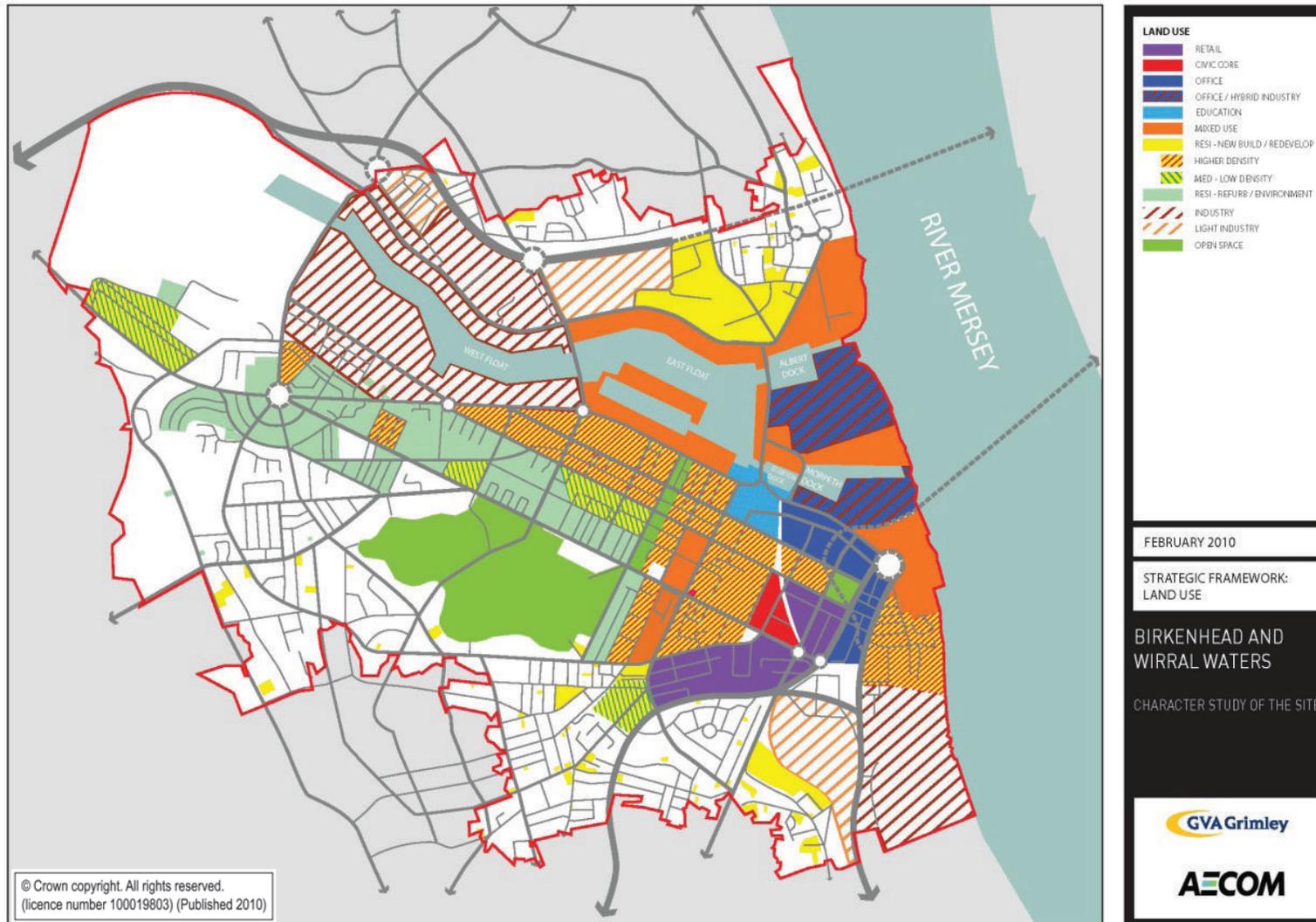
Opportunities need to be taken here to improve the intactness and integrity of the built form and land use structure.

Fragmentation affects the *function* of Birkenhead as much as it does its *form* and this relationship is interlinked; weaknesses in one will detrimentally impact the other.

- 4.39 The preceding framework diagrams – movement and public realm – implicitly identify priority locations for development and change, including the need for better quality, more continuous built form. To complement this there needs to be a wider concept of development form and function – thinking in particular about wider patterns of land use and how a looser, more informal land use arrangement can help Birkenhead become a more integrated place.
- 4.40 Some key ideas promoted as part of this strategy are;
- a. **Maximise locations identified within the opportunity areas plan to redevelop, refurbish and generally improve the quality of the built environment and land use structure.**

-
- b. Look to strengthen key clusters and hubs in land use terms, with particular opportunities for employment and education clusters, and shopping and leisure clusters in and around the town centre.
 - c. Look to strengthen heritage assets that can become the focal points for specialised and highly distinctive land use clusters, especially Hamilton Square and Woodside, with their inherently strong public transport connections
 - d. Similarly look to maximise the mutually beneficial value of key open space / public realm assets and development opportunity. This is particularly important around East Float, Egerton Dock and Europa Boulevard for example.
 - e. Encourage town centre diversification and integration.

Figure 4.6: Strategic Framework: Land Use



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- 4.41 The framework plan above demonstrates potential to implement these strategic objectives. Some key aspects of the framework plan are discussed below:

Mixed Use Waterfront

- 4.42 There are specific and substantial opportunities for change throughout the Birkenhead dock system that need to be maximised. The legacy of historic development patterns dominated by privatised dock activity has sterilised and isolated land and created a considerable physical and psychological divide between Birkenhead and Wallasey. It is clear that, through concepts advanced through Wirral Waters, there is considerable potential to overcome these issues.
- 4.43 The scale of the opportunity here lends itself to a truly mixed use neighbourhood (or neighbourhoods) where new homes, a range of employment, education, leisure, community and cultural uses can enliven the public realm and create a defined series of links, movement corridors and quality spaces. This will be crucial to improving connectivity and cohesion between Birkenhead and Wallasey.
- 4.44 There is particular opportunity to strengthen this by extending the mixed use redevelopment concept north through to the

Birkenhead Road area (A554) and the Alfred Pier Head. Over time this could release considerable value by opening up access to the banks of the Mersey and Alfred Dock. Similarly, to the south, the area around Woodside should be seen as part of this mixed use waterfront opportunity.

- 4.45 Woodside is a key development location in any event – where there is a clear need to rediscover connections between Birkenhead town centre and the River Mersey, and, of course, promote ferry links with Liverpool.
- 4.46 Over time the waterfront mixed use concept could be extended to include Morpeth Dock, although it is acknowledged that existing uses and property here (Twelve Quays business units and – more significantly – the Water Treatment works operated by United Utilities) are likely to limit potential in the short – medium term.

A Stronger Residential Offer

- 4.47 Housing is currently a feature of the central areas of Birkenhead, which is key to maintaining a vibrant and vital local economy and injecting life into streets and spaces. However, the area of housing to the north of Birkenhead Park – lying between the town centre / Conway Street and the East Float currently suffers

socio-economic deprivation, a weak housing market and - in physical terms - a confused and unsettling built form (which gradually deteriorates travelling north, towards the edge of the dock system).

4.48 The framework, builds upon the HMRI strategy and updates this in response to the Wirral Waters proposal, and envisages two approaches to improvement and development to strengthen the housing offer at this particular location;

- i. In the areas around Birkenhead Park (where the stock is the most robust but where environmental quality could be improved): refurbishment of building exterior and street spaces.
- ii. In the areas further north, adjacent to East Float: New build development, and redevelopment, to provide mostly higher density family housing areas (circa 50 dwellings per hectare or above), feeding from and linking to the opportunities arising through East Float/Wirral Waters. There is significant opportunity as part of this concept to rationalise land use here – gradually relocating existing heavy industrial premises to more appropriate locations to create a more comfortable and attractive residential, mixed-use environment.

4.49 By rationalising the land use structure in this location it will be possible to realise a more stable and appealing housing offer, with a complementary opportunity to revitalise built form quality and in particular redefine the Laird grid (and reduce the severance effect of roads such as Price Street and Cleveland Street). The Laird grid can become a quality, highly liveable location.

4.50 Flexibility is needed across the wider area in the use of HMR funds to ensure investment is directed towards the neighbourhoods where it will have the greatest impact. This is especially important against a backdrop of limited public finance for housing investment. For instance, areas around Oxton Road and Balls Road are currently showing some of the worst housing market decline in Birkenhead, but fall just outside the HMR area set in 2003 on previous ward boundaries.

4.51 The HMR programme has had a demonstrable impact in Birkenhead through the removal of over 400 properties since 2003, but there is still unfinished business in respect of the obvious need for further clearance and the emergence of a large scale new build programme, led by the Council, Keepmoat Homes and local RSL's, which aims to provide upwards of 500 new homes in the next ten years.

4.52 The land use structure in the primary residential areas of Birkenhead needs simplifying to create a scale of development opportunity to attract a new housing market. The location of existing lower value commercial and industrial uses should be reconsidered in light of the need to create suitable locations for housing development to optimise the impact of existing HMR clearance schemes.

Town Centre: 'Flexible Quarters'

4.53 The area around the town centre has become disjointed as a result of contraction in population and activity. From its origins as a bustling – and substantially sized – centre extending from Exmouth Street to Woodside, activity has tightened around three key areas: (i) the main shopping area defined by Grange Road, St Werburgh's Square and the Pyramids, (ii) a cluster of business and tourism activity around Hamilton Square, and (iii) secondary shopping areas on Market Street and Grange Road West/Oxton Road. Areas in between these locations have a peripheral feel, with a lack of a defined character, role or function.

4.54 The approach advocated through the framework is to support the development of a series of quarters across the town centre,

where mutually supportive clusters of activity can begin to take root and 'fill out' the currently underutilised and underperforming parts of the central area. Particular elements that could form part of this include;

Diversification of Town Centre Uses

4.55 References have already been made to the fact that retailing is increasingly recognised as being only one component of a successful town centre: leisure, residential, office/service and a diverse evening economy all have a role in contributing to future vitality and viability. Particular emphasis should be placed on activities which inject significant levels of activity throughout the centre, supporting local business and in particular shops and services.

4.56 Europa Boulevard/Conway Park rail station area, potentially extending through to Argyle Street, is a key location for new development and investment to enable town centre diversification. This area benefits from its location close to key public transport nodes and proximity to the existing retail core.

4.57 Bringing forward development along Europa Boulevard could also potentially stimulate greater ground floor activity and animation, which would help to strengthen the role and function

of the retail precinct. This should be influenced in a way that extends out along Argyle Street, to meet Hamilton Square (with the objective of enhancing connections between Hamilton Square and the current retail hub).

Commercial office

- 4.58 There is no doubt that Birkenhead's public transport connections are not currently being maximised, and there is considerable potential on the back of this to promote the town centre as a great business location. This location is not only highly accessible by public transport (with particularly strong and rapid connections into Liverpool city centre) but, by promoting the area around Hamilton Square as the main 'office quarter', can clearly become very attractive and distinctive environment - offering occupiers the opportunity to become part of a unique, exceptional place. Hamilton Square also offers attractive glimpsed views out across the Mersey, and of course ready access to Woodside which in its redeveloped state could provide a very appealing complementary business and leisure location in an exceptional setting.

Town Centre Residential

- 4.59 Housing should continue to form part of a vibrant, mixed use centre and the framework advocates intensification of the current offer, but with an improved form and quality. This should include maximising development and redevelopment opportunities to provide higher density urban living options, with particular opportunities within the areas to the west of Europa Boulevard and extending through to Hamilton Square. Additionally, the area to the east of Church Street, on the banks of the River Mersey has housing potential, strengthening existing housing in this location as a complementary element of the Woodside development concept.

Education Hub

- 4.60 With the potential to rationalise existing and attractive additional higher and further education establishments in Birkenhead, there could be significant benefits in promoting this as a function of the town centre, and in particular clustering new and improved accommodation. The framework proposes that the area around Egerton Dock/Tower Road/Canning Street could be promoted as a location suitable for such a cluster, stimulated by the recent 12 Quay Campus development for Wirral Metropolitan College and providing a vibrant anchor at the northern end of the proposed

extension of Europa Boulevard. These proposals could also complement the promotion of town centre residential, with student housing potentially providing a significant economic boost to the town centre.

Focus Areas

- 4.61 Appendix 2 provides a synopsis of potential for individual 'neighbourhood focus areas' across the Birkenhead area. It builds upon the principles set out in this section. It is, however important to remember that the proposals for these areas need considerable new detailed assessment and consultation. The proposals have been formulated at this stage for the purposes of conducting a high level environmental assessment and will need further development in line with the LDF process.

5. Delivery and Next Steps

5.1 This Integrated Regeneration Study for Birkenhead does not constitute a Masterplan or Blueprint dictating the way forward. Rather it points the direction of travel to address the major physical and socio-economic issues faced in Birkenhead and detailed in the Baseline report. It also recognises fully the potential afforded by Wirral Waters and points to how wider benefit from this investment can, and should be captured to help deliver regeneration across Birkenhead.

5.2 What is clear from this work is the sheer scale of the challenge posed across Birkenhead. The reversal of the decline that has befallen the community will take at least a generation of effort. There are no quick fixes and leadership is required from the Council and partners if success is to be achieved.

5.3 Wirral faces a challenging agenda and the IRS and Wirral Waters proposals will demand additional skill and capacity to deliver. In particular, delivery will need to involve people and agencies with:

- Clear vision and leadership skills;
- Commercial and urban regeneration skills in developing a robust new framework;
- Commercial skills in dealing with private sector partners and entering into complex negotiations;
- The ability to establish and broker new partnerships with multi-sectoral leadership and representation;
- Project and Programme management skills – including the ability to co-ordinate area-based multi-agency teams dealing with physical and people based actions in an integrated way;
- Effective marketing and promotional skill, including the ability to draw upon the private sector expertise.

5.4 A key attribute of delivery arrangements where regeneration has been achieved is a clear and pragmatic demarcation of delivery responsibilities based on agencies and the individuals that possess the right skills and experience to deliver effectively.

5.5 Wirral Waters in isolation will not address these wider problems. Rather it creates a window of opportunity that needs to be grasped by the public sector. An integrated approach is called for and a set of priorities needs to be established to commence,

and give momentum to the regeneration process – beyond the delivery of Wirral Waters.

- 5.6 This report does not comment specifically on the delivery of the Wirral Waters scheme – that is in the hands of Peel. However, it focuses on parallel action in a co-ordinated and focused manner to ensure that wider benefits accrue.

Delivery Considerations

- 5.7 The IRS sets a long-term vision for change and agreement needs to be reached on what the priorities should be. We consider that the following should be a focus for activity at the next stage:

- **Housing Market Renewal.** As outlined in the baseline and in the ‘Focus Area’ assessments there is potential to build upon the success of the HMR programme elsewhere in Wirral and bring a focus to those areas of Birkenhead showing ‘Housing Market Stress’. The Wirral HMR programme has now made an important transition into Birkenhead as its priority neighbourhood. This can allow an acceleration of momentum building on the investment made in Birkenhead since 2003. To achieve value for money for

the investment to date, the area requires continued attention to complete a programme which has made inroads but is some way from completion. An integrated approach is required that identifies bespoke solutions in particular neighbourhoods addressing local problems, but also expanding housing choice for existing and new residents.

- Advance the concept of an ‘education cluster/campus’ around a new University precinct and relocated Further Education College. This can be a key linkage (functionally and physical) between Wirral Waters and the Town Centre.
- Prepare an integrated masterplan for the whole town centre along the lines set out in this report. This must not just focus on the shopping aspects but address all aspects of a centre that truly functions as the ‘heart’ of the wider community. The ‘direction of travel’ for this masterplan has been set out in this report.
- Put in place an integrated strategy to tackle the endemic socio-economic condition – low education attainment, poor health, worklessness and high unemployment. Again this report points the way and there are lessons to be learned from local initiatives, but equally an alignment of approach is required to ensure comprehensive and joined-up action.

- Develop the East Wirral Traffic Model and Transport Strategy for the Town Centre. The model will provide a valuable tool to help determine the cumulative traffic impacts of the proposed and any future developments in and around the Town Centre, and help inform decisions in regards to changes to the existing highway infrastructure, including re-prioritisation of the various road-users. The model will be essential to inform the development of a transport strategy for the town centre, which should be an integral part of the overall masterplan for Birkenhead. The East Wirral Traffic Model will also be invaluable in assisting future development Transport Assessments.

Policy and Engagement

- 5.8 Work is advancing on the LDF for Wirral and the content of this document, and in particular the baseline study will be invaluable in helping formulate the component parts of the LDF. An outline Strategic Environmental Assessment has been completed and is provided separately. This can be refined and updated as more information becomes available as the elements referred to are advanced. Moreover detailed community engagement will be required as part of the LDF process.

Delivery Vehicle/Process

- 5.9 During the course of the study there has been considerable discussion around how change in Birkenhead can be delivered and a series of options have been debated with the Steering Group. These are outlined below with a synopsis of issues arising:

- **“Routine” local authority** – This would represent a huge challenge for the Council, especially in the face of public sector spending cuts. Although there are clearly delivery skills within the Council – most notably in the HMRI team, does the level of resource and expertise exist to deliver a programme of this scale?
- **Special ‘Executive’ Arms Length Public Agency (e.g. New Town Development Corporation, UDC)** - an Urban Development Corporation has specific powers and a dedicated resource. This was a concept that was well known in the 1980/90s, and indeed had a short revival more recently. However, it is not a favoured delivery model in the current political and funding climate.
- **Special ‘Facilitating’ Arms Length Public Agency (e.g. URC, CDC)** – This is a more recent delivery model, which is

more of a public partnership approach than a UDC – e.g. Liverpool Vision, directing established funding streams. However, this is not favoured approach in the current political and funding climate.

- **Managing Development Agent** - This would involve the involvement of a third party, probably a private organisation, to manage the delivery process. Again, this is unlikely to be a favoured model in the current funding and policy climate and would also be difficult to ensure longstanding public support.
- **Single Private Developer (i.e. empowerment of a single developer through transfer of consolidated land)** - In our view, this places too much power with one private organisation and there is no evidence of this approach being successful elsewhere. This approach is also not likely to be acceptable in the current policy and financial climate.
- **Enlightened “Private Developer(s)/Town Founder(s)”** – This approach raises issues similar to those discussed above and would not be a favoured approach in the current political and funding climate.
- **Joint Private-Public (e.g. Local Asset Backed Vehicle; pooling of assets)** - This is the current forward model being

adopted elsewhere – note the Croyden example, etc. It appeals in the current restricted public spending environment and seeks to fully utilise existing public sector assets. It will require the identification of assets and matching these with private investment in a special purpose delivery vehicle.

- 5.10 Current arrangements have not been successful in reversing decline. A new way is required. However with declining political and fiscal support for traditional regeneration delivery models – Urban Development Companies (UDCs), Urban Regeneration Companies (URCs), Economic Development Companies (EDCs) etc then we need to become more creative.
- 5.11 A joined up and focussed public sector is essential. Whatever form this takes it needs to be supported by the private sector if it is to be successful.

We advocate an ‘Asset Based Approach’

- 5.12 We see scope to utilise land, and other assets controlled by the public sector to entice private investment. This points to a ‘new wave’ Asset Backed Vehicle (ABV), utilising land and other income generating assets, complemented by any public funding

that can be attracted to entice matching private investment to deliver change.

- 5.13 A further dimension is provided by the Jessica programme. A Merseyside Urban Development Fund (UDF) has been identified with an initial fund size of £60m, for which private sector interest has been sought. Aside from identifying projects in Birkenhead that could possibly benefit from this fund, thought should be given to a parallel 'Place Fund' for Birkenhead with a core portfolio of projects and initiatives. This is new ground, but the ingredients in Birkenhead are potentially enticing given the low values currently and the potential emanating from a major investment by Peel at Wirral Waters, plus the new Education Campus Concept.
- 5.14 This initial concept idea should be the subject of much greater testing, and to an extent the experience of the Jessica UDF will assist with this, by illustrating the private sector appetite for such a Fund and also the issues that would be faced in formulating such a fund.
- 5.15 Regardless we would suggest that an initial step would be to set up a vehicle in the mould of a URC – Liverpool Vision, Creative Sheffield – but not a URC. Chester Renaissance would be a useful comparison. This should be Council led, but slightly

removed, with private involvement and a small core team to stand to move matters forward in a co-ordinated manner.

- 5.16 The aim here is to draw upon established delivery expertise, existing public funding streams and the start of a process of 'joining up' different programmes. It also brings a clear focus, and intent to the programme. There may be a requirement for a number of Special Purpose Vehicles/ Asset Backed Vehicles dependent upon the specific nature of land ownerships and desired objectives. Further work will be required on the detail of the implementation stage of the project.

Next Steps

- 5.17 There are a number of key steps to moving the Birkenhead Regeneration Study forward. This is to enable progress to be made as rapidly as possible once the study's findings have been ratified. A number of these steps have been articulated in outline at the steering and member groups. These steps are not necessarily sequential and indeed in certain instances should be implemented in parallel.
- 5.18 The findings of the study need to be fed into the LDF process in a manner to be determined by the Local Planning Authority. We

have completed a high level Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposal to facilitate this process. A key component of the next stage will be to engage with the wider community in a manner that satisfies the requirements of the LDF process.

5.19 The HMRI programme needs to be updated and carried forward as an essential tool to improve the existing housing market in the urban areas that compose Inner Wirral. The plan provides a framework for that, but there is a need to establish the detail of the appropriate interventions in each neighbourhood. A key starting point will be engagement with the community using the plan as the vehicle to initiate that process. This will utilise effectively update the HMRI area development frameworks in reference to the emerging Wirral Waters proposals and the wider regeneration context provided in this study.

5.20 We include initial thoughts on the format of a delivery vehicle to take the initiative forward. There is a considerable amount of work involved in formulating and agreeing the detail of this vehicle. An initial step is to hold discussions with NWDA on the subject. A detailed feasibility study is required to advance thinking, which needs to fully consider the assets and income streams that could provide a basis for a vehicle and the market

appetite for the fund. Legal advice will be required as part of this exercise.

5.21 The study advances radical thinking around the regeneration of the Town Centre. The key next steps will be the completion of a masterplan for the centre as defined to clearly define a strategy for the centre as outlined in this report instruction, and the appropriate means of delivery in the context of the wider strategy.

Appendices

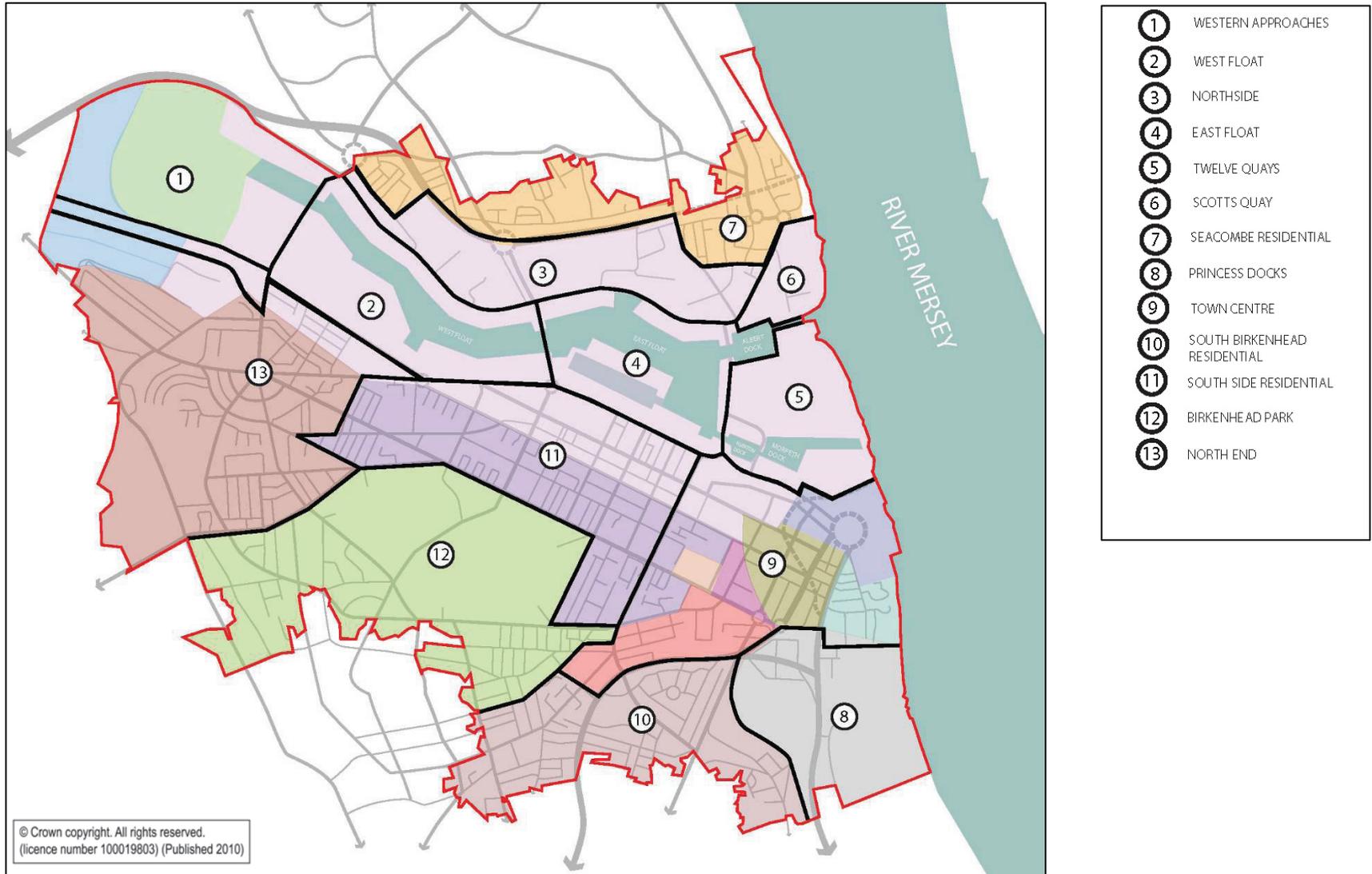
Appendix 1: Baseline Report – (provided separately)

Appendix 2: Focus Area Profiles

Focus Area Profiles and Objectives

1. To disseminate the strategic framework at a local level, a series of focus areas have been defined within Birkenhead, identifying neighbourhood character areas with a similar role and function. Proposed regeneration objectives have been proposed for each area to provide a structure for regeneration activity and a guide for coordinating multi-service delivery and investment moving forward.
2. This chapter therefore presents each focus area and discusses the approach to regeneration envisaged, together with a series of proposed regeneration objectives.

Figure A: Focus Area Plan



Focus Area: Western Approaches/Bidston Moss

3. The prime asset of this area is the Bidston Moss Open Space and Nature Reserve, established on the site of a former municipal waste landfill. However, this facility is largely obscured from view in all directions, by a variety of commercial and retail uses and heavy road infrastructure, which sever visual and physical linkages from the surrounding area. The regeneration of this focus area should therefore aim to open-up and exploit this resource as a key green space in the heart of Birkenhead. This will involve improvements into the provision, condition and signage of pedestrian and cycle linkages, in addition to expanding the range of facilities that this area offers, including parking, visitor information centre and complementary leisure and recreational activities.
4. The open space and nature reserve is surrounded by a variety of commercial activity, of which a proportion is underutilised or poorly designed. Therefore, regeneration activity should aim to consolidate active uses and develop under-used sites to attract new commercial and leisure opportunities. A careful balance is required in design and planning to respond to the unique setting and fully exploit the visual and physical connectivity to the open

space and nature reserve, whilst enabling development to come forward in a sustainable manner.

5. It is essential that new uses introduced as part of this activity complement the role and function of the town centre as the primary service centre within Inner Wirral. The introduction of new and expanded uses in this location will benefit from access to the wider Wirral and Liverpool catchment, through the M53/Wallsey Tunnel connection and access to the rail network at Birkenhead North station, but need also to be considered in light of the local context and impact.

Regeneration Objectives

- Consolidate retail and commercial activity and introduce new commercial and leisure uses
- Ensure that uses complement the town centre.
- Improve pedestrian and cycle linkages to Bidston Moss from surrounding locations
- Upgrade the appearance of the streetscape along Wallasey Bridge Road and Poulton Bridge Road

Focus Area: Northside



6. Regeneration activity in the Northside provides an opportunity to consolidate commercial and industrial activity and intensify use through the development of under-utilised and semi-vacant sites. Developing a more focused and supported business environment here will create greater employment opportunities and support the redevelopment of the wider dock area. The Northside has the potential to capture displaced business and commercial activity from the wider area, including elsewhere on the dock estate.
7. The tunnel approach cutting forms a physical barrier to the residential area to the North (Seacombe Residential) and

therefore, this should be used as a positive barrier to separate conflicting uses. Under-utilised sites within this area can accommodate commercial and industrial activity including B1, B2 and B8 and other complementary uses, in a sensitive manner. The point at which the tunnel approach descends, marks the point at which uses should become more conducive to integration with the adjacent residential neighbourhoods. With this in mind, higher value mixed-use would be appropriate on the eastern fringe of this area, which would complement the regeneration of Scott's Quay.

8. To support this role and function the Northside requires improvement to the wider environmental and streetscape appearance, including investment into Dock Road, to improve signage, access and create a safer pedestrian environment. The Northside needs to become a more attractive business location with the necessary characteristics and services to support sustainable business activity.

Regeneration Objectives

- Focus industrial use on the south side of the Tunnel approach, to facilitate relocation from elsewhere on the docks

- Utilise the Tunnel Approach as a positive barrier between residential and industrial/commercial activity
- Encourage higher-value business uses along Dock Road, with B1 offices to front and servicing/industry to the rear
- Create an attractive business environmental along Dock Road, including environmental and streetscape improvements

Focus Area: West Float

9. The West Float includes a number of active industrial and port-based operations and therefore the regeneration of this area should support these businesses. However, despite existing employment-related uses there are a number of large under-utilised and vacant sites, where development activity should be focused to intensify the use of this area. Regeneration activity should aim to consolidate port-related activity and make better use of the land that exists in this location, creating the opportunity to attract new commercial and high-tech industries on available sites, which do not hinder the operation of the port.
10. To support the role and function of the West Float investment is required to improve the overall quality of the wider environment and public realm, including investment into Beaufort Road and Wallasey Bridge Road, to improve signage, access and create a

safer pedestrian environment. Establishing better pedestrian linkages to the stations, which will improve the safety and convenience for potential employees, is an important aspect in raising the profile of this location for employment purposes. The West Float needs to become a more attractive business location with the necessary characteristics and services to support sustainable business activity. However, a sensitive approach is needed in urban planning and design to integrate these uses with the adjacent residential communities.

11. An emphasis should be placed on locating higher value business operations along Beaufort Road, including ancillary office buildings, to create an active frontage and improved natural surveillance along its length.

Regeneration Objectives

- Consolidate existing port uses within West Float to maintain viability of port operations
- Introduce new high-tech industrial opportunities beyond those areas required for port operations
- Create safe and accessible pedestrian and cycle linkages to adjacent rail stations and the proposed park and ride facilities

- Locate higher value/quality business use (providing frontage) to Beaufort Road

Focus Area: East Float



- The regeneration of East Float offers a tremendous opportunity to stimulate investment in the wider Birkenhead area and change the role and perception of the Wirral dockland environment. Emerging proposals for the site envisage the creation of a new waterside community, which will involve a mixed-use development, with significant amounts of residential development, office employment and complementary commercial and ground floor retail activity in key locations.
- Through the relocation of existing industrial and port-related activity from this area to the West Float, there exists an opportunity to introduce new uses onto the dock and transform the area from a previous industrial location, to a publicly accessible new waterfront neighbourhood.
- In light of this, it is important that development here is set within an agreed masterplan framework, which establishes how the development will be integrated with the wider area and, in particular, the town centre and adjacent residential communities to the south.
- Given the strategic location of the site and the significant waterfront opportunity, it is essential that high quality design and materials are used to raise the profile of the area and create a precedent for new development elsewhere on the docks. The design and form of development should draw upon exemplar projects from across Northern Europe and ensure that public and private environments are designed and delivered to the highest possible standard. This is particularly important in considering public accessibility, pedestrian and cyclist activity and animation and activity in core locations. As such the new environment needs to create a safe and attractive waterfront amenity, which has a direct benefit to those living in the wider Inner Wirral area.
- Whilst the emerging development is likely to contain a mix of residential, office and commercial uses, the proximity of this site to the town centre means that all new uses in this location should be complementary to the role and function of the town centre as the main service centre in Inner Wirral. The development should draw upon the services provided in the town centre, rather than becoming self-sufficient, to help stimulate the use of town centre

(including the wider Conway/Europa Boulevard and Hamilton Square central area) and encourage integration with adjacent neighbourhoods.

17. The regeneration of the East Float will create an opportunity to open-up access to the dock front to the public for the first time and create a new and extended public realm with impressive views across the dock.
18. The physical integration of the East Float with the wider area is important, particularly the visual and physical connections to the town centre and adjacent residential communities and therefore must be set within a wider public realm framework. As a new 'public' realm connectivity with existing and proposed green and open spaces across Birkenhead should also be considered with the aim of establishing green connections to *inter alia* Birkenhead Park, Hamilton Square, Central Park Liscard, Bidston Hill and Bidston Moss.
19. The regeneration of East Float should act as a catalyst for wider investment, which should put in place the basic urban and public realm infrastructure in the wider central Birkenhead area to attract additional inward investment.

Regeneration Objectives

- New waterside community – mixed-use development – residential and offices, with ground floor activity in key locations
- Development to be founded on masterplanning principles
- High quality design and materials to raise the profile of the area and create a precedent for new development
- Introduce new pedestrian and cycle linkages and permeability between the waterfront, town centre and surrounding neighbourhoods

Focus Area: Twelve Quays



20. Twelve Quays currently provides an interesting mix of employment uses, which include the Twelve Quays ferry and freight terminals, and therefore plays an important role in the local economy of Birkenhead and Wirral as a borough. However, this site sits directly opposite central Liverpool and is arguably Wirral's 'prime regeneration' site, offering the greatest views across the River Mersey to the Liverpool World Heritage Site. However, the current uses are likely to remain in *situ* for the foreseeable future and therefore this area will continue to have a predominantly employment-related function.

21. On the western fringe, the Twelve Quays area borders the East Float and with significant activity envisaged across the road, plans are also emerging for the Tower Wharf/Egerton Dock with aspirations for a new educational campus that brings together Higher Education and Further Education amenities.



22. Physical and visual connectivity with the town centre and East Float will be vital in creating a wider redevelopment that hangs together as a complete place. Within this, public realm connections and pedestrian safety will play a pivotal role in establishing linkages to public transport connections and supporting uses in the town centre.
23. In the longer term, the future for Twelve Quays should consider the introduction of higher value uses onto this 'prime' site, to fully capitalise on its river front location, drawing upon exemplars from waterfront regeneration in Northern Europe.

Regeneration Objectives

- Create a new educational cluster, with linkages to the town centre and the revitalised East Float

- Pedestrian and cycle movement framework to connect key waterfront sites – Woodside, East Float, Scott’s Quay
- Consider the long-term potential of introducing higher value uses along Mersey waterfront, through the relocation of industrial activity
- Monitor air quality issues and mitigate if necessary

Focus Area: Scott’s Quay

24. The regeneration of Scott’s Quay provides a fantastic opportunity to take advantage of the river front location, with views across the River Mersey to Liverpool World Heritage Site, and the connectivity to the City Centre by the Seacombe Ferry Terminal.
25. Intervention here should involve the relocation of industrial and commercial activity to more appropriate locations and the redevelopment of under-utilised sites to create a higher value mixed-use neighbourhood. This would include the introduction of residential, leisure, cultural and business opportunities, with greater physical connections created to the ferry terminal and adjacent communities in Seacombe.
26. Development in this location should adopt excellence in design and materials and should draw upon exemplars from Northern European waterfront development. Creating an attractive and

visually interesting skyline - this will be highly visible from Liverpool City Centre. The corner site, along Kings Wharf, offers the potential for an ‘iconic’ building, through international architectural competition, which will contribute to the visual interest of the River Mersey frontage and will create a destination to draw people along the new stretch of promenade - attracting visitors from Liverpool, via the Seacombe Ferry connection.

27. Creating new public realm linkages by extending the promenade through to Alfred Dock, will also help to establish greater connections with the emerging developments on the East Float and Twelve Quays, and will forge greater integration across the dock estate.
28. Scott’s Quay is almost a forgotten corner of the dock estate and has the potential to become a destination in its own right, with panoramic views of the Liverpool World Heritage site.

Regeneration Objectives

- Introduce mixed-use development on the waterfront, which includes residential, leisure and business opportunities and opens up access to the waterfront for the general public
- Promote high quality design and materials as an exemplar waterfront scheme

- Improve pedestrian and cycle linkages with the Seacombe Ferry Terminal
- Monitor air quality issues and mitigate if necessary

Focus Area: Seacombe Residential



29. South Seacombe is a largely sustainable neighbourhood, which has pockets of low demand and areas which are blighted by their adjacency to lower value uses, included industrial activity, both within the community and on adjacent dockland sites.
30. Regeneration activity will build upon the HMRI with the aim of creating a more balanced and sustainable housing market. Intervention will involve small-scale housing infill, development and refurbishment activity. This will be focused initially on

SHLAA sites identified on Gorsey Lane (Neighbourhood Resource Centre site); various sites along Brighton Street/Borough Road; and key waterfront sites. Environmental and public realm investment is also needed to raise the overall quality of the urban area in key locations.

31. An emphasis should be placed upon relocating industrial activity away from residential neighbourhoods and improving the choice and quality of local services. Renewed interest in the area following potential activity in Scott's Quay will also help to support local businesses along the A554 and A551.
32. South Seacombe will benefit from the more intensive redevelopment activity in Scott's Quay and public realm investment in both areas should improve linkages between the adjacent neighbourhoods. Key to this will be consideration of the A554 and the potential realignment of Birkenhead Road to create a more amenable pedestrian and cycle environment and higher value frontages.

Regeneration Objectives

- Continued delivery of planned HMRI-led housing intervention, including small-scale residential-led infill, development and refurbishment activity

- Targeted environmental and public improvements along the A554 to improve north/south linkages, with the possible realignment of Birkenhead Road

Focus Area: Princess Dock



33. Princess Dock, including the site of the former Cammell Laird ship yard, which has an important role within the history of Birkenhead and in the hearts of local residents. However, in response to the rise and fall of ship building activity in the area, the Princess Dock focus area has become a fragmented area of industrial mixed-use, which is cut off from the town centre by heavy road infrastructure.

34. Whilst the ship building works remains active (January 2010 announcement that the works received an order for the flight decks of the Royal Navy's new aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth), decline is evident in some of the ancillary industries in the surrounding area and therefore regeneration activity should seek to consolidate business activity to reflect emerging markets and enable Wirral to remain at the forefront of shipbuilding activity.
35. Intervention here is therefore more related to movement, access and infrastructure, than significant land use changes, with the aim of creating a mixed-use area which is more conducive to attracting inward investment. Improving the physical appearance, structure and connectivity of this area will play an important role in attracting new business investment and visitor interest, and therefore intervention should focus on improving physical and visual connections with the town centre and adjacent neighbourhoods, together with appropriate signage and branding.
36. The area also includes the Hind Street Regeneration Area, which offers potential to improve links with the town centre, as part of a wider mixed-use proposal (this has outline planning permission), which would connect the Rock retail park and the roundabout by Birkenhead Central Station.

37. On the softer side, greater connectivity is required to improve linkages to Birkenhead Priory as a visitor destination. This local attraction is currently hidden amongst commercial and industrial activity and needs to become a more accessible location, including the potential to open up access to the waterside where feasible.

Birkenhead Priory



Regeneration Objectives

- Improve physical and visual connections with the town centre
- Consolidate business activity to reflect emerging markets

- Improve signage and access to Birkenhead Priority as a key visitor destination
- Establish pedestrian and cycle linkages with the Woodside Masterplan area, including access to the waterfront where possible

Focus Area: Town Centre

Town Centre – Retail Precinct



38. The IRS considers the town centre ‘hub’ to be a much wider area than the retail precinct alone. Instead the IRS draws a new boundary for the wider urban town centre area, which also includes Europa Boulevard and Conway Park, Hamilton Square and the civic uses located on Hamilton Street, and the Woodside

masterplan area. Thus including all of the uses that are generally associated with a town centre, beyond the primary retail function. Grange Road West/Oxton Road would fall outside of this area as a secondary retail location.

Town Centre – Hamilton Square and Europa Blvd



39. This is broadly defined as the central area bounded by Canning Street; Exmouth/Watson Street; Chester Street and Borough Road.

Town centre 'hub'

40. The creation of a vibrant central hub in Birkenhead will be a key element in unlocking the regeneration of the surrounding area and therefore ensuring that the town centre retains core activities which sit alongside and complement the proposals for Liverpool City Centre in particular Wirral Waters, and will ensure the

successful regeneration of the town centre and therefore the wider Birkenhead area.

41. The retail centre in Birkenhead will always be influenced by the proximity of Liverpool One scheme, but it could viably offer a more localised and unique offer, which if planned in an appropriate manner and linked to complementary activity in the wider central 'hub' could help sustain its future use.
42. The retail offer of Birkenhead town centre needs to be strengthened to provide a sustainable blend of multipliers and independent retailing, including an improved market and retail anchor, either through improving the existing floorspace or through redevelopment activity. The Strategy for Town Centres. Retail and Commercial Leisure in Wirral (2009 Roger Tym and Partners), which identifies the difficulties of redevelopment within the town centre, outlines some of the key elements needed to stimulate activity in the core area:
- *Attract a greater diversity of retailers*
 - *Physical upgrading and maintenance of the public realm/streetscape*
 - *Address vacancy, particularly at the Grange Centre*
 - *Enhanced service sector and night time economy*

43. The approach to the regeneration of the town centre is therefore based on the strengthening of a number of core elements, which are widely recognised in best practice as key ingredients in a successful town centre:

What makes a successful town centre?

A vibrant mix of uses

- Complementary activity and overlapping retail, business, cultural, leisure, recreation and residential
- Active Streets – ground floor activity, vertical mixes
- Themed clusters and character areas/quarters

A safe and attractive environment

- Heritage – focus on assets
- Pedestrian and cycle friendly, accessible and legible environment
- Human scale, welcoming and comfortable spaces
- Well maintained, quality materials

A day time/night time economy

- Quality evening economy
- Residential life
- ‘open’ and visible street spaces, open to vehicles and pedestrians

A competitive business environment

- Modern floor space, which responds to market standards
- If heritage – high quality and well maintained units, cluster of activity
- Access to key public transport nodes, communications and Liverpool City Centre

A place that is easy to navigate and understand

- A legible and secure pattern of “arrival” circulation and “departure” (e.g. defined threshold points/gateways)
- Public Transport
- Parking
- Signage

An appropriate scale and mass

- Cluster of activity to create higher density development
- Clear and obvious gateways to mark central area
- Maximising densities and build form scale at key nodal points: both in practical terms e.g. public transport nodes, and in 'psychological' terms to mark important areas and encourage high numbers of people on the street.

A place that is connected to its hinterland

- A town centre should be easy to find – an obvious destination
- Well connected to surrounding neighbourhoods by pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists

44. With these overall aims in mind, the IRS proposes the following approach for the regeneration of the town centre hub.

Regeneration Objectives

- Establish a new north-south boulevard, linking to the docks, by utilising the redundant rail line
- Maximising the use of under-utilised sites adjacent to Conway Park train station and along Europa Boulevard as a focus for town centre diversification.

- Bring forward the regeneration of the Woodside masterplanning area – through the creation of a mixed-use leisure quarter linking the waterfront to Hamilton Square and East Float.
- Support the retail function of the town centre by creating new modern floor plates in a central position.
- Introduce modern residential choices into the town centre to stimulate activity
- Support the creation of an education cluster at Egerton Dock, including the potential to introduce new education, enterprise and supporting uses into the town centre
- Establish clear gateways to define the wider town centre environment, introducing higher density development in to core locations
- Maximise the potential of Hamilton Square to become a destination of residential, business, cultural and visitor activity
- Create a pedestrian and cycle friendly town centre environment, with clear signage, appropriate traffic calming, quality public realm and clear movement structure

45. The number of existing vacant and under-utilised sites in the town centre is limited and therefore the ability to bring forward

positive change in the town centre will involve a need for site assembly and taking a long term view on the mix of occupiers in the town centre.

Focus Area: South Birkenhead Residential



46. South Birkenhead is a largely sustainable neighbourhood, which borders the popular Birkenhead Park area in the west and the Tranmere area to the south/east.

47. Regeneration activity will build upon the HMRI with the aim of creating a more balanced and sustainable housing market. Intervention will involve small-scale housing infill, development and refurbishment activity. This will be focused around a number of SHLAA sites, including those located at the Balls Road

East/Borough Road junction. This site offers the potential for a new mixed-use development, creating new frontage onto Borough Road and Ball's Road at a key junction within the neighbourhood.

48. The continued approach to environmental and neighbourhood management will also ensure that services are coordinated in an appropriate manner.

Regeneration Objectives

- Deliver HMRI housing intervention to improve housing choices, including small-scale residential-led infill, refurbishment and improvement activity
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

Focus Area: Southside Residential (Birkenhead Central)

Livingstone Street



49. The approach to regeneration in Southside is likely to involve significant intervention in the longer-term, which will see a step change in the quality and type of land use, particularly to the north of Price Street. Whilst the wider area will remain as a predominantly residential area, the lower value mixed-use neighbourhood to the north of Price Street will require a more intensive approach to create a higher-value mixed use neighbourhood that will complement the regeneration activity of the East Float. New higher density family and professional housing and apartments will be delivered along-side new start-up business space and sustainable B1 businesses, localised retail and supporting services.

50. In order for this to be realised a relocation strategy will be required to move the heavier industrial and commercial activity to appropriate locations, supporting and retaining business operations that are more conducive to a higher-quality mixed-use neighbourhood. This will need to be prepared following a more detailed analysis of occupier requirements and demand and consultation with key businesses. However, the improvement of the Northside focus area to create a more attractive commercial business environment could offer some opportunity for relocation.
51. Intervention to the south of Price Street will work with the existing stock, including a number of substantial period terraced streets, and will involve HMRI investment activity to improve housing stock through refurbishment and create some targeted development opportunities for new build. This approach will also require partnership working with social housing providers to upgrade or replace less popular stock.
52. The regeneration of this area will play a critical role in integrating the neighbouring communities, with key north-south routes (Duke Street, Vittoria Street, Cavendish Street, Livingstone Street and Watson Street) providing attractive connections between Birkenhead Park and the East Float.

53. A neighbourhood management initiative is also required to support the physical intervention envisaged in this area.

54. Given the extent of physical change envisaged in this area, it is recommended that a neighbourhood masterplan is prepared to guide development activity.

Regeneration Objectives

- Targeted mixed-use redevelopment north of Price Street, including residential (medium density)
- Residential improvement and targeted redevelopment south of Price Street
- Improved pedestrian and green linkages linking Birkenhead park to the docks
- New frontage development and improvement along key north-south routes
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

Focus Area: Birkenhead Park



55. Birkenhead Park is a largely sustainable residential area, which includes a wide range of housing choices and popular places to live. Regeneration activity in this area would therefore focus on small-scale residential-led infill developments on vacant and under-utilised sites as and when they become available.

56. This area continues to offer aspirational housing products and the provision of affordable family and LCHO products should be delivered as part of a sustainable mix of new housing products.

Regeneration Objectives

- Small-scale residential-led infill on vacant/underutilised sites.
- Encourage the development of aspirational, family housing products, including affordable and LCHO.

Focus Areas: North End



57. The Bidston/North End remains at the forefront of regeneration need within Birkenhead and continues to suffer from issues of deprivation, low demand and decline. Recent investment activity into local services and NRA activity is starting to create opportunities for housing-led development, and refurbishment

and improvement works undertaken through the HMRI have also been largely successful and welcomed by the local community.

58. Despite this ongoing investment, the area continues to need targeted investment into the physical and social infrastructure to combat the growing polarisation evident within the community.
59. Regeneration activity will bring forward HMRI/NRA investment into existing stock and deliver improvement in housing choice and new development will be delivered in the Milner Street area, creating new frontage along Laird Street, and on cleared sites in the vicinity of Ilchester Road. However, HMRI-led intervention in this area is at risk of being constrained by non-residential land uses along the Laird Street corridor where unless certain commercial interests are relocated, the integration of new housing with existing buildings and functions will be difficult. Further a field, it will be important to take a longer term view on the future of the large social housing estates in the areas where decline is evident despite some previous intervention.
60. To support intervention into the physical stock, a more extensive approach to environmental and neighbourhood management will be required, together with the coordinated delivery of services to ensure that the local community has access to emerging opportunities and support services.

61. A key aim of the regeneration of this area will be to forge greater integration with more sustainable neighbourhoods to the south and planned new development activity in Central Birkenhead and East Float. With this in mind, upgrading the quality of the public realm along key routes will be important in creating safe and accessible linkages for pedestrians and cyclists to key destinations, including Bidston Moss, East Float, Birkenhead Park and Bidston Hill together with the employment opportunities in the East and West Float and in the town centre.

62. The proposed Park and Ride schemes at Bidston and Birkenhead North Stations bring a meaningful land use to long standing vacant land and can be developed as part of an integrated approach to housing and transport provision, which will have the added value of creating an improved physical environment. The delivery of Park and Ride facilities will bring more people into the neighbourhood from further a field and it will be important to reduce the impact of additional traffic on existing residential areas and create better quality stations for all users.

- Create new residential frontage along Laird Street
- Consolidate the local centre to create a smaller, but more active service provision
- Improve accessibility to local stations including the creation of park and ride facilities at Birkenhead North Station and Bidston station
- Environmental/neighbourhood management approach

Regeneration Objectives

- Deliver HMRI housing intervention to improve housing choices, including targeted improvement/refurbishment and redevelopment activity

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APPENDIX – Thematic Relationships between the Integrated Regeneration Strategy and Wirral Waters East Float Proposals

<p>Integrated Regeneration Study For Birkenhead and Wirral Waters themes</p> <p><i>'A clear vision for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters'</i></p>	<p>East Float vision</p> <p><i>'To create a truly mixed use waterside neighbourhood where new homes, a range of employment, education, leisure, community and cultural uses enliven the docks to create an attractive and exciting mixed use development that is physically and visually integrated with surrounding neighbourhoods, provides new opportunities for the community and complements the regeneration of the town centre'.</i></p>	
<p>IRS Thematic Headings</p>	<p>'Vision'</p>	<p>Objectives</p>
<p>Theme 1- Achieving Economic Prosperity</p>	<p>Economy</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wirral to play an increasingly active role in the City Region, with the wider Birkenhead study area increasingly seen as the western edge of Liverpool city centre. • Optimise the full potential of the waterfront for economic activity- the Wirral Waters proposals in particular have the potential to deliver a transformational level of new accommodation. • Nurture investment in identified economic sectors • Address business supply issues by providing accommodation to meet business needs, including quality large- footplate office space, and smaller accommodation to support and foster start up and enterprise activity. • Seek to attract additional relocations as a consequence of Government relocations through preparation and presentation of a credible offer. 	<p>To significantly contribute to the strengthening and diversification of the economy by establishing a new transformational business location at East Float that provides a range of employment opportunities and business requirements, attracts inward investment and accelerates business growth in the local economy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide local employment opportunities, tackle Wirral's long term worklessness issues and engage in the Council's employment initiatives • To create new strategic high quality sustainable employment sites at East Float to support economic change and prosperity, utilising the place-making opportunities with exemplary physical infrastructure and environments to attract inward investment • To address supply issues by providing high quality commercial accommodation with large floorplate office space to provide for high value businesses and smaller flexible business accommodation to support the establishment and growth of SME's, and local enterprise. • To ensure local residents can access new employment opportunities by developing a skilled local workforce and stakeholder working with education and training providers. • To ensure employment opportunities are linked to the education facilities potentially provided within the East Float site and beyond to improve skills and learning through job creation and career development. • To maintain the operational viability of the Birkenhead Dock system, with no net loss of port-related employment.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birkenhead town centre will become a key 'centre' for Wirral a primary service centre to serve the borough. • Birkenhead will become a destination for cultural, leisure, economic and residential opportunities 		
<p>Theme 2- Town Centre Restructuring</p>	<p>Retail/commercial</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To revitalise and diversify the retail provision through the provision of modern retail floor plates and enhance connections towards the waterfront. • Improve pedestrian and cycle connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and create a quality environment that is attractive and vibrant. • For Europa boulevard to become the primary street for new and improved leisure and business activity and to consider the potential to extend to the north, to link to the East Float. • To create a high quality public realm along Europa Boulevard and connecting key destinations including Hamilton Square, Woodside, the retail precinct, Docks and Waterfront; residential communities. • To attract new leisure and business activity along Europa Boulevard, including active uses at ground floor to strengthen activity between the waterfront and the retail centre. • To introduce new residential development into the wider town centre to stimulate activity and create a vibrant urban environment. • To increase the scale and mass of development 	<p>To support the high quality living and working environment at East Float by providing complementary retail, food/drink and leisure uses which provide for the every day needs of the new residential and office communities and contribute to the vibrancy and vitality of the development through a mix of uses, particularly at ground floor level in key locations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To secure through the East Float proposal a mix of retail, food/drink and commercial leisure uses which delivers the vision, is consistent with National and local policy objectives and complements and supports the role of Birkenhead, Liscard and other surrounding town centres • The development at East Float will provide the right balance of land uses to support activity, animation along the waterfront and vibrancy and vitality to key routes through the site and key areas of public realm. • The development at East Float will sit alongside and support Birkenhead and other surrounding town and local centres through expenditure capacity generated by the new residential and working population and by a form of development which will support and strengthen links to the existing centres and encourage linked trips. • To ensure the amount and mix of retail and leisure floorspace is distributed across the East Float scheme in a way which reflects the role and character of each quarter and is of a level which remains secondary to the residential and office uses brought forward • To ensure that the split between convenience and comparison retail facilities ensures a balanced approach to the provision of retail across the East Float development with leisure and food and drink uses meet the needs of the living and working populations and the evening economy, while safeguarding the amenity of the resident population • To ensure that provision is phased to reflect and respond to development of the residential and office components of Wirral Waters and is of a scale which serves the needs of the new residential and working population.

<p>within the town centre to clearly define the 'central zone' and stimulate greater activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To maximise the potential of the town centre and the study area as a focus for multi agency service delivery. • To reduce the impact of highways infrastructure on pedestrian and cycle movement within and around the town centre. • User friendly street hierarchy that sensitively guides traffic around the town centre, using better signage and legible public realm, whilst enabling convenient access for town centre users. • To re-establish routes and connections across the town centre and knit together different parts of the town, including sites segregated by the redundant railway line. • To bring forward higher value development on vacant and under utilised sites and relocate industrial activities to more appropriate locations. • To introduce new educational, business and enterprise activity , to integrate established and emerging uses on the docks and along Canning Street and Cleveland Street. • To open up connections to Merseyrail stations and bus facilities and cluster activity around these locations. 			
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Theme 3- Take Advantage of the Waterfront	Water spaces	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce appropriate higher value development on the waterfront to capitalise on setting and outlook • Draw on northern European examples of best practice • Open up pedestrian and cycle access along the waterfront and encourage public access in new dock front developments • To create new physical and visual connections from the town centre to the waterfront through an integrated urban design. • To secure design principles for the waterfront which will ensure the quality and future maintenance of the new development and public realm in waterfront locations. • To ensure all new developments are founded on masterplanning principles, which consider scale and massing and ensures that new development is integrated with the town centre, minimise over shadowing and respond appropriately to the open waterfront location. • To create ground floor activities in key locations to stimulate footfall and animate public routes • To ensure new development is physically and visually integrated into surrounding context and that pedestrian connectivity and movement is maximised within a defined network • To consolidate industrial activity into appropriate 	<p>A high quality mixed use development that exploits the full potential of the waterfront and transforms the east float docklands to create an attractive and exciting publicly accessible waterfront neighbourhood that is physically and visually integrated with its surroundings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the concentration and distribution of uses across the site makes best use of the water frontage and immediate waterside environment and maximises place making opportunities by promoting a mix of vibrant ground floor uses in key waterside locations. • To create a series of animated squares, terraces and boardwalks that promote increased public access to the waterfront within the site and form an integral component of the overall movement strategy by visually and physically integrating the development within the surrounding area and key locations beyond the site boundary. • To ensure a sequence of high quality water spaces that are a focus for cultural and social activities, respond to the varying environmental conditions across the site and reinforce a strong sense of place by allowing the historic and cultural fabric to shape the character, function and form of the waterside environment. • To encourage active use of the water itself for a variety of leisure, recreational and amenity purposes. • To enhance connectivity and the pedestrian experience moving through the site by using crossings and bridges as a dramatic focal point and a practical means of crossing water.

<p>locations, which are accessible to the motorway and limit impact on residential neighbourhoods.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of new uses that compliments the role and function of the centre. • To ensure that the masterplan for the waterfront is deliverable and provides a viable framework for regeneration activity. 		
<p>Theme 4- Enhanced Education and Learning Offer</p>	<p>Education</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve educational attainment outcomes and skills levels • Reinstate the value of education, reinforcing the contribution of education to family life and economic well being • To encourage retention of HE/FE students • Explore opportunities for public sector multi agency approach to provide and boost local apprenticeships, training and employment • Use policy as a lever to tie local education, skilling and employment opportunities to new development through developer agreements and S106 • Introduce a marketing strategy to encourage local engagement with education, employment and skills services and events. 	<p>To improve the education opportunities to local people, whilst working with further and higher education establishments to link skills, education and job creation throughout the development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Float will link employment and skills through job creation and career development working with local higher education facilities and actively encouraging local community engagement • To promote the delivery of a new educational facility on the site to support the mix of uses envisaged, a strong community use and a focus for the existing and new population to support an integrated community.

Theme 5- Health and Well Being	Services	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve physical health outcomes and mental well being • Raise the quality of and accessibility to recreational facilities • Encourage healthy lifestyles and raise local and regional awareness of green assets • Develop a multi agency approach to improving health outcomes linking to improving economic activity, skills, attainment and community support • Improve mental well being to raise confidence and aspirations, foster personal development and encourage a sense of pride in the community 	<p>East Float will be well served by public, private, community and voluntary services that are appropriate to the needs of the new neighbourhoods and accessible to all. To improve physical health and mental well being by supporting existing and creating new communities, linking economic activity, skills attainment and community support, raising quality and access to recreational facilities, encouraging healthy lifestyles and a sense of pride in community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide and ensure access to well-performing local schools, further education and training facilities. • To ensure services and facilities are located within accessible locations, are well integrated into the development maximizing place making opportunities and ensuring active and vibrant key routes through the site and key areas of public realm. • To ensure high quality, local health care and social services that socially and physically integrated within the development and the surrounding areas including green assets. • To secure a range of accessible, affordable public, community, voluntary and private services for businesses and residents, including Health, education and leisure facilities, phased as appropriate to the level of development and complementary to provision elsewhere in Inner Wirral, including Birkenhead Town Centre • To ensure delivery of the commitment to recreational facilities and community services as an early phase of the development.
	Governance	
	<p>The East Float development will be 'well run', with integrated management strategies that can engage and inspire local communities, and stakeholders in delivering and sustaining a well balanced sustainable community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The future maintenance and management of East Float will be supported by effective and inclusive participation, representation and leadership to create and sustain a well balanced community. • To engage with local communities, schools, amenity groups and key stakeholders to create and sustain a well balanced community. • Continued and meaningful engagement with steering groups and management bodies to guide future development • Engagement with the Hamilton Sq business steering group to ensure regenerative benefits for the Square and established connectivity.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formation of a design review panel to ensure accordance with vision framework and design quality for development
Theme 6- Sustainable Residential Offer	Equity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To create choice and diversity in Birkenhead's housing offer- providing new high quality housing products that offer aspirational choices for rent and sale. • To offer a balanced housing market that provides a full range of products and a sustainable mix in type 	<p>Create a development that is welcoming, easy to use and, accessible for all</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To enhance the mental and physical health and well-being of those living, working and visiting the East Float site as well as surrounding neighbourhoods • To reflect the diversity of today's society while building on the history of local areas and encouraging mutual and harmonious relations between social groups and ensuring that economic resources are evenly and fairly shared. • Provision of a range of jobs • To integrate development at Wirral Waters with the adjoining community within the Housing Market Renewal Area • To ensure a range of housing opportunities, offering innovative housing choices to existing and new residents • Integration of new development with the adjoining infrastructure, including greening corridors and improving walking and cycling routes to Birkenhead Town Centre, Hamilton Square, the waterfront and key green infrastructure such as Birkenhead Park, Central Park Liscard, Bidston Hill and Bidston Moss.
	Housing	
	<p>To create a high quality, high density living environment that makes best use of its waterside setting, the historical and cultural assets within and beyond the site and promotes innovative design to promote a new housing offer capable of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To secure the delivery of a high quality, high density waterside residential development that expands the housing offer, encourages positive interaction and diversity, improves the viability of and access to community services and will provide a sound base for better integrated social housing. • To create a community that is socially sustainable with a sense of place and distinct character that takes advantage of its dockside setting and cultural and historic assets. • To improve the housing offer by providing a variety of housing mix, size and tenure to

<p>and tenure, raise owner occupation rates closer to the borough average</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce good quality higher density residential uses into the town centre to stimulate activity and vibrancy • To identify declining stock for targeted improvement • To continue to remove poor quality, low demand and obsolete housing supply and consider derelict and industrial land for housing, where it can create a new residential market • To provide higher quality housing for rent, shared ownership and affordable sale including specialist housing for elderly residents, families and single persons. • To introduce high quality residential development in waterfront locations, which capitalise on views and create a new housing offer in Birkenhead • To extend the HMRI stock improvement activity, including face lifting and refurbishing to bring declining stock back into viable popular purposes • To continue neighbourhood management approach in HMRI neighbourhoods 	<p>attracting and sustaining a new residential community that establishes clear relationships with existing communities.</p>	<p>ensure a vibrant community that is inclusive and adaptable to changing needs and lifestyles.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure a mix of uses and users, that compliment and serve the residential accommodation with community facilities to support the future residents and ensure a sustainable form of development. • To create a legible built form with well-designed and safe public spaces that are accessible, inclusive and contribute to the creation of an attractive residential environment.
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Theme 7- Places, Spaces and Connections	Built environment/ Urban Form	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To re-empower the pedestrian in Birkenhead creating safe and attractive connections, down grading the emphasis on through traffic and re-establishing use and activity along key routes • To refine the use and activity of places and spaces by introducing ground floor activity in key locations, encouraging an appropriate scale and mass of development in the town centre, and integrating a mixed use approach to promote day time and evening activity • To connect key assets with opportunity areas by creating new green linkages and pedestrian cycle links • To establish connections between the town centre, existing and potential key locations through an integrated public realm strategy • To create connected communities, which are safe well designed and useable to all. • To build upon the Live Wirral branding and communication projects as a successful method of promoting HMRI in Wirral. 	<p>A high quality waterside development that reinstates legibility and coherence to the urban structure, improves connectivity between key locations and creates a dynamic cityscape and an urban form that takes full advantage of historic and cultural assets to create a new visual identity for Wirral.</p>	<p>Cityscape</p> <p>To create a distinctive skyline that creates an internationally recognizable waterfront and a new visual identity for Wirral, establishes a clear visual relationship with the river Mersey, Liverpool city waterfront and increases Wirral's visual prominence as a destination within the regional park.</p> <p>To secure a high standard of design for all development, that is responsive to environmental, historic and cultural influences within and beyond the site</p> <p>Public Realm</p> <p>To ensure a legible permeable city structure that promotes a secure, inclusive and attractive public realm and establishes a clear movement strategy for the site and beyond</p> <p>To create clear, safe, animated streets, squares, and waterside walkways that focus active uses and pedestrian movement at key destinations and along key connections to create a coherent and legible framework linking East Float with the wider neighbourhoods</p> <p>Historic Assets</p> <p>New development will preserve and enhance existing maritime assets (docks, grain warehouses and tower), celebrating the past and inspiring the future by shaping the form, function, design and character of the contrasting areas across the site.</p> <p>Mixed Use and Diversity In Quarters</p> <p>To create a mixed use development with innovative and distinctive waterside quarters, each promoting a distinctive character and identity derived from differences in form, function, scale, massing, materiality and proximity to different neighbourhoods.</p>

	Transport	
	<p>To create an inclusive and accessible low carbon transport system which has a safe, well maintained and efficient integrated network that meets wider community needs, and facilitates a sustainable mobility culture which promotes social cohesion and positively contributes to a high quality of life, a thriving economy and pleasant environment through the provision of opportunity, choice and the minimisation of unnecessary travel.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation of a sustainable transport network that promotes the use of public transport, walking, cycling and car share as alternatives to single occupancy private car use • Effective interchange between transport modes, particularly at public transport hubs including Seacombe & Woodside Ferry Terminals, Birkenhead Bus Station and Merseyrail Stations. • Ensure good access to public transport systems through the provision of safe, high quality routes for pedestrians and cyclists. • Sustainable travel information, awareness and education to encourage people to change their travel behaviour and have more healthy, active lifestyles • Provision of good quality transport, pedestrian and cycleway connectivity within the development site and to Birkenhead Town Centre and other key destinations, including public transport hubs at Seacombe & Woodside Ferry Terminals, Birkenhead Bus Station and Merseyrail Stations • Provision of Intelligent Telematics Systems to provide transport information and manage traffic movements • Effective connectivity for freight and servicing vehicles to the designated Merseyside Freight Network. • Improvements to the existing highway and bridge infrastructure to ensure the efficient management of traffic, aid pedestrian and cyclist journeys, and facilitate bus movements. • Implementation of a movement hierarchy that delivers permeability according to the needs of different types of road user and of neighbourhoods. • Ensure that parking provision supports the creation of, and encourages the use of, a network of sustainable transport provision

Theme 8- Sustainable Future	Environment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To encourage the use of modern methods of construction and sustainable technologies in design, development and use. • To minimise water creation during construction and promote recycling and sustainable lifestyles • To adopt sustainable approaches to power generation and distribution in large redevelopment schemes • To promote healthy lifestyles and encourage greater pedestrian, cycle and public transport use • To support exemplar schemes for sustainable design and development to promote sustainable lifestyles and housing choices. • To incorporate sustainable technologies into the refurbishment and improvement of popular historic stock in sustainable locations. 	<p>To promote a sustainable and 'future proof' development, encouraging modern and innovative sustainable design and the promotion of sustainable lifestyles, enhancing the quality and legibility of the environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide increased energy efficiency, cleaner air, better flood protection, sustainable management, renewable energy creating a high quality living/working environment. • To maximise the contribution of natural resources, - sun rainwater, ground water and wind and minimise environmental demands and ensure the efficient conversion or disposal of waste. • To create an innovative and inspiring landscaping and public realm and blue and green infrastructure that delivers an attractive residential environment • To create a range of complementary contrasting spaces to add to the range of experiences and use the parks and squares to help connect access into the wider urban area. • The courtyard typology is to contribute to the distinct identity and attractive environment within the development with special bio topography and range of plants. • The development will accord with sustainable design principles, promoting sustainable means of transport, integrating suds and taking account of the current standards for renewable energy to create a sustainable community.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24th JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ENERGY EFFICIENCY FUND

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 To seek approval to the proposed mechanism and qualification criteria for the setting up and administering of a Community Energy Efficiency Fund for the allocation of energy efficiency grants to community groups.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 One of the Council's strategic objectives for 2008-11 is "to create a clean, pleasant, safe and sustainable environment" and one of the key 2010/11 priorities below this objective is "to reduce Wirral's Carbon Footprint". The Council's 2006 Climate Change Strategy vision statement underpins and supports this priority and the overall strategic objective, it states:

"Working with residents, communities and local businesses to tackle Climate Change by reducing Wirral's carbon emissions, thereby helping to meet our present needs in a sustainable manner without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

- 2.2 The Council realised, at an early stage, that tackling the effects of climate change and reducing Wirral's carbon footprint are challenges that the Council cannot tackle alone. It requires the support and involvement of local partners, communities and businesses.
- 2.3 Cabinet, on 22nd February 2010, approved the 2010/11 Council Budget, which included a number of initiatives to 'Improve the Environment, Energy Efficiency and Carbon Reduction'. One of these initiatives was an allocation of £66,000 for 2010/2011 to set up Energy Efficiency Grants for Community Groups. This important project will enable the Council to support the long term sustainability of community groups running community buildings, giving these groups access to appropriate energy efficiency technologies to help them reduce their energy bills and carbon emissions. This project will therefore help community groups to tackle and reduce Wirral's carbon footprint.
- 2.4 This report proposes a mechanism and qualifying criteria for a Community Energy Efficiency Fund to allocate energy efficiency grants to community groups.

3.0 Proposed Community Energy Efficiency Fund (CEEF)

3.1 Purpose

To support the long term sustainability of community groups running community buildings by investing in energy-efficient technologies to reduce energy costs, climate change levy payments and the impact of climate change. Grants will be available for a number of different energy efficiency technologies, including building insulation, heating and lighting upgrades and IT energy efficiency improvements.

3.2 **Grants**

There will be two levels of grant available depending on the commitment of individual organisations. Grants of up to £2,000 will be available to organisations meeting the criteria for the scheme. For organisations willing to provide matched funding, a grant of up to £4,000 would be available. Grants would be allocated on an individual technology basis i.e. more than one grant could be requested by an organisation, say for (1) Boiler replacement and (2) Insulation. Grants will only be payable on completion of a project and will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

3.3 **Criteria**

Projects must deliver energy efficiency benefits and comply with the following criteria:

- Maximum 5 year payback period.
- Payback of projects implemented must be shorter than the expected life of the building or the technology must be transferable.
- If the expected lifetime of the building or lease is shorter than the expected lifetime of the technology, then the compliancy calculation will be based on the shorter of the two.
- Projects must be seen as being additional and not mandatory.

3.4 The scheme will be promoted through Area Fora, the Council's website and through Wirral's third sector community networks. Simple application forms will be available for download from the website or upon request.

4. **Financial implications**

4.1 Cabinet at its meeting of 22nd February 2010 allocated £66,000 from the budget for the energy efficiency fund for communities.

4.2 The Council's Sustainability Unit will undertake technical evaluations of any proposed scheme which is the subject of a grant application and submitted under the qualifying criteria outlined at section 3.3 above. The nominal cost of these evaluations will be funded from existing budgets.

5. **Staffing implications**

5.1 The fund will be administered within existing staffing resources.

6. **Equal Opportunities implications/Equality Impact Implications**

6.1 The fund will be available to all community groups running community buildings.

7. **Community Safety implications**

7.1 None arising directly from this report.

8. Environmental Sustainability Implications

8.1 The fund will enable community organisations to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions, thereby helping community groups to tackle and reduce Wirral's carbon footprint, as measured by NI 186.

9. Planning implications

9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Anti-poverty implications

10.1 None arising directly from this report

11. Human Rights implications

11.1 None arising directly from this report

12. Social Inclusion implications

12.1 None arising directly from this report

13. Local Member Support implications

13.1 The fund will be available borough wide and will be of interest to all members.

14. Background Papers

14.1 Cabinet 22nd February 2010 minute 332.

15. RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That Members approve the mechanism and qualification criteria detailed in this report for the setting up and administering of the Community Energy Efficiency Fund.

Bill Norman

Director of Law HR & Asset Management

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

OFFICE ACCOMMODATION

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report presents the business case produced by EC Harris for the rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation. It identifies related issues that require further consideration and seeks guidance from members on the preferred way forward.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 On 9 July 2008 Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive setting out an approach to a strategic review of the Council's assets. Administrative accommodation was to be included within that review. The Council's current Asset Management Plan aims to reduce its ownership and occupation of office and administrative accommodation, but the report recognised that further progress needs to be made. At that date the report identified 42 administrative buildings across the Borough.

2.2 Cabinet agreed the proposed approach and required that the review of administrative buildings begin immediately. As part of the agreed approach there was to be an exploration of how the introduction of agile working could help reduce the total amount of space required in administrative buildings. Consideration was also to be given to whether a business case exists to replace existing office accommodation with a new purpose built facility.

2.3 An update on the Strategic Asset Review (SAR) was given to Cabinet on 16 October 2008, when it was noted that the future options for the Council's administrative accommodation would have the potential for synergy with existing or proposed larger regeneration schemes in the Borough.

2.4 On 27 November 2008 Cabinet considered a report of the Chief Executive entitled Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review. The report proposed that the Council could – subject to certain conditions being satisfied - achieve at least a 20 per cent reduction in its own accommodation costs by 2011. It made clear that this would mean fewer office buildings which would be achieved through greater use of open plan accommodation; a reduced average floor space per employee; increased desk sharing; and more flexible working (which is also likely to reduce absence levels and thereby further improve efficiency and value for money). The intention was through these measures to save over £1 million a year by the 2011/12 budget.

- 2.5 A process of public consultation and Council scrutiny of the SAR proposals followed. Cabinet at its meeting on 15 January 2009 then resolved that the office accommodation aspects of the Strategic Asset Review be implemented and officers be asked to accelerate the process of making savings from the rationalisation of the Council's office accommodation.
- 2.6 Subsequent reports to Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee have provided an update on progress and on 17 March 2010 the committee resolved that the Strategic Asset Review - Office Rationalisation Project form part of the Committee's work programme for 2010/2011.

3.0 APPROACH TAKEN TO RATIONALISATION

- 3.1 Following the final decisions on the SAR, a co-ordinated approach to office rationalisation was implemented in line with corporate project management principles. The office rationalisation project was integrated into the Council's Strategic Change Programme and is monitored by the Strategic Change Programme Board.
- 3.2 EC Harris were appointed by competitive tender as external specialists to support the office rationalisation project. One of their key roles (referred to in paragraph 4.1 below) was option appraisal and the delivery of a business case for future office need, with a recommended way forward. Work undertaken within the project using baseline data showed that some buildings would be more straightforward to vacate and demolish than others, thus realising quicker savings. However, in the event of a business case for a multi-site approach to meet future need, those same buildings may offer greater flexibility in use than others. Agreement of a business case for the Council's future office need will clarify which existing buildings are to be emptied and sold and over what timescale.
- 3.3 Whilst the business case has been in development, work has continued on the review, vacation and disposal of a range of buildings identified in the original list of 42 administrative assets but which have been agreed to be outside the scope of the business case.
- 3.4 The business case is now presented for members' consideration, and is attached to this report.

4.0 REPORT AND BUSINESS CASE

- 4.1 EC Harris were engaged to support the office rationalisation programme by providing strategic advice. They were required to:
- Identify and examine options for future office provision
 - Identify and examine delivery options
 - Deliver a business case to meet the Council's future office needs and, in particular, answer the question as to whether a business case exists to replace existing offices with a new purpose built facility.
 - Recommend a way forward

- 4.2 There is a wide range of potential options, but six options are considered in detail, covering a range of possible solutions. At one extreme a 'do minimum' option would see the retention of all existing stock. At the other extreme would be the vacation of all existing facilities and their replacement with a complete new build. Between these extremes the four remaining options all retain some existing buildings.
- 4.3 The report reaches the following conclusions
- Any of the 5 options beyond 'do minimum' will deliver savings and operational efficiencies.
 - Continuing as we currently operate ('do minimum') is not recommended
 - The savings achievable are based on stated assumptions within the report and will vary as inputs and assumptions are varied. The timing of savings also varies depending on the option chosen.
 - The recommended option (Option 3) produces discounted annual revenue savings to the Council in excess of £800,000 p.a. over the model period of 25 years. It should be noted that EC Harris have adopted a modelling assumption of a 10% reduction in staff numbers over the 25 year period under consideration. Additional but at this stage unquantified savings are also identified. Figure 6.2 within the report illustrates the timing of savings over the modelling period.
- 4.4 The report considers the configuration of future office provision rather than the location (i.e. the quantity and form of future provision, not where new provision will be built).
- 4.5 It should be noted that the report is relatively 'high level'. It is intended that the detail will be developed as the project moves forward through a gateway review process and into delivery.
- 4.6 All options were appraised from the twin perspectives of the cost savings and qualitative benefits they would deliver to arrive at the most economically advantageous solution. The qualitative benefits are those which have been judged to best achieve corporate and organisational priorities. Option 6 (total new build) shows the lowest cost but for reasons set out in the report it is judged to present higher risks and be less acceptable than solutions mixing new build and refurbishment of core retained assets. It may potentially be less flexible and less responsive to future needs than a mixed solution. When its qualitative score is added to the financial score it ranks fourth of the six options.
- 4.7 A limited group of people has been involved in the qualitative scoring, and EC Harris's view is that the choice between options 3, 4 and 5 is finely balanced. Whilst Option 3 is the favoured option they believe that further work is required to consider all the information in order to arrive at the correct decision as between options 3, 4 and 5. If further work is not done their view is that the Council would be undertaking a very important decision on the basis of a fine margin.

5.0 ISSUES RAISED AND FURTHER COMMENTS

- 5.1 Office rationalisation is not undertaken in isolation but sits within the broader corporate Change Programme. It is interlinked with other strands and to radically reduce buildings stock we need to change ways of working. The range of options between the two extremes allows for flexibility in future as the Council and its requirements for accommodation change. On this basis – and subject to being satisfied with the business case – the Council can move forward whilst uncertainties remain.
- 5.2 EC Harris approached all LSP partners as part of their study but no major shared accommodation opportunities were identified at this stage. However locality based working is developing strongly across the borough, and the potential impact of this on a central requirement will be taken into account as a preferred option is developed.
- 5.3 A principal driver in developing the business case has been on delivering minimum savings of £1m per annum. This will only happen with the modernisation of the working environment and working practices. Re-design and investment in the workplace will be required to deliver the key metrics around space use. Within the wider rationalisation project the Council's policy framework to support agile working has been reviewed. Revised policies have been shared with Trades Unions and will be the subject of further discussion with them.
- 5.4 Whilst the business case focuses on back office functions some one stop shops are in buildings affected by the options. Change at these points links to the Customer Contact Strategy in the Change Programme. There may be opportunities here to review existing asset provision with a neighbourhood focus in line with a 'Total Place' approach.
- 5.5 The report identifies the potential for savings in facilities management (FM) costs. As part of the overall office rationalisation project work is under way to define the potential scope of this. FM for offices forms part of a wider FM service across the Council, and the greatest opportunity for savings will come from reviewing services across the authority. This has begun and will be the subject of a further report. There may also be opportunities to develop a shared services approach with partners, and these will be explored.
- 5.6 Cabinet received a report on 18 March 2010 from the Director of Finance on future arrangements for the Council's data centres. It resolved that a further report be presented to Cabinet following the outcome of the current review of office accommodation. The Council's two existing data centres need upgrading or replacement. Both are in buildings that are identified for vacation in all the options presented by EC Harris except for "Do minimum". Re-provision of accommodation (but not for hardware, software and data migration) has been included in the financial model for the main data centre. A review of the consultant's recommendations for future data centre provision will be required in the light of the chosen option for future administrative accommodation.

- 5.7 The “Do minimum” option gives a baseline against which the benefits of the other options can be compared, and assumes continued occupation of the existing buildings in the current manner. A variety of further options could be modelled which, without a new build element, would intensify the use of the most flexible of the current buildings and seek to free up space in others. Possible options on this basis are not recommended by EC Harris and have not been appraised, as they are considered to be less supportive of transformation and organisational improvement. Such options would continue the existing incremental approach to rationalisation.
- 5.8 Where accommodation is vacated in options 2 to 6 it is assumed that the Council will dispose of it, and no assumptions are made as to alternative uses. It should be noted that Birkenhead Town Hall, Wallasey Town Hall and the Conway Centre are listed buildings.
- 5.9 EC Harris identify the opportunity for the Council to use a requirement for a new office development to ‘kick-start’ a wider regeneration scheme within the Borough. Depending upon its location it could also support the regeneration of the wider Birkenhead Town Centre. If the preferred option includes a new-build element then the location and delivery mechanism for this will be the subject of further more detailed evaluation. Negative impacts from withdrawal from existing buildings are considered to be low, but no formal evaluation of these has been undertaken
- 5.10 Upgraded ICT provision will be essential to support new ways of working. Cabinet has separately considered and approved reports that are preparing for necessary changes. In addition to the future of the Council’s data centres, to which reference is made above, Cabinet on 14 January 2010 approved actions to revise the approach to infrastructure and desktop equipment provision. In addition, Cabinet on 27 May 2010 agreed to enter into a new contract for the provision of a replacement telecommunications network. Arrangements have therefore been put in place to move forward with appropriate IT to support rationalisation.
- 5.11 There are some building specific issues which need to be addressed whichever option is chosen for future office provision. These are summarised below:
- 5.12 Cheshire Lines – There is vacant accommodation next to the Council’s existing offices which may be suitable for expansion. It is recommended that discussions be held with the Council’s landlord to explore opportunities this may offer in the context of a future strategy.
- 5.13 Acre Lane – The report identifies the need for a separate review of this facility. It is recommended that this be undertaken and that options for future provision should include consideration of potential links to partners’ proposals and other opportunities for further and higher education provision in the Borough.
- 5.14 Birkenhead Town Hall – Option 4 allows for the re-use of the former town hall. Cabinet approval has previously been given to support the Hamilton Partnership in the development of their proposals for transfer of the building. Discussions have been taking place with the Partnership and it is intended to report back to Cabinet

in July on the outcome of their work. A revised proposal was received from the Partnership on 15 June 2010 and is now being considered.

5.15 Westminster House – options 1 to 5 in the business case propose the continued occupation of this building. If retention of Westminster House is agreed a scheme and estimate report will be brought to a future Cabinet meeting seeking approval of proposals to refurbish the building and modernise the internal environment to allow for intensification of its use.

6.0 RISKS

6.1 The rationalisation of the Council’s offices will form a major programme linked to other aspects of the corporate change programme. A comprehensive approach to risk management will be developed within the delivery programme. The EC Harris report includes an initial ‘High Level’ identification of risks and is reproduced below:

Risk	Description
Project not progressed for internal reasons	Persist with do minimum option incurring steep maintenance costs with no benefits
Organisational design not developed to support the preferred asset configuration	New asset and refurbished accommodation not used to the optimum to provide minimum amount of space
7:10 workspace to staff ratio not achieved	Inability to use the space efficiently
Suitable site not identified	Need to reconfigure the preferred solution or incur additional cost in site acquisition
Preferred option becomes unaffordable	2011 settlement makes the capital investment a higher risk
Flexible working methodology not agreed	Outputs from Work stream 3 not adopted
IT support to agile working not adopted across the portfolio	Lack of efficiency across the service functions and unable to derive full benefit from the building; improvised use of space
Headcount does not reduce by 10%	Additional costs incurred as identified in the sensitivity model
Planning permission not obtained for the preferred site	Alternative site options to be considered or delay to address planning conditions
Business continuity risks emerge during the transitional period	Risks particularly apparent during the transfer and decanting period
Strategy delayed because of individual service issues	It is important to look at the whole picture rather than risk allowing individual components to determine the strategy.

7.0 CONCLUSIONS

7.1 The business case now received advises that the provision of the Council’s administrative accommodation in the present estate with the current level of expenditure is unsustainable. It recommends that the Council should pursue Option 3 for future provision which would retain a small number of core assets and provide the balance of accommodation in a new development the location of which has yet to be determined. Option 3 is recommended as being the most economically advantageous solution.

7.2 This option would deliver discounted average revenue savings to the Council (compared with ‘do minimum’) in excess of £800,000 per annum over the model period of 25 years, plus further as yet unquantified savings. These savings are

dependent upon stated assumptions in the report, including a 10% reduction in staff numbers.

- 7.3 EC Harris recommend that, because three of the modelled options are so closely ranked, further work should be done to confirm Option 3 as the agreed way forward, and this recommendation is endorsed.
- 7.4 Once a preferred option is confirmed further detailed work would be undertaken to develop a final business case as the project moves forward. Separate detailed work is also required to address the related and building-specific issues outlined above so that the maximum advantage is taken of opportunities arising from the rationalisation project.
- 7.5 Following confirmation of the preferred option the existing project structure and project management arrangements will be revised to ensure that the agreed rationalisation programme is delivered.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The business case has used current revenue expenditure budgets on the buildings in-scope together with the Council’s own property condition data to model the various options.
- 8.2 The buildings that have been reviewed have an identified maintenance backlog of £8.9m, plus a further identified life cycle maintenance requirement of £8.3m.
- 8.3 Potential savings from 6 options are modelled. The business case shows an average saving for the preferred Option 3 of in excess of £800,000 per annum over the model period of 25 years, plus further as yet unquantified savings. These savings are dependent upon stated assumptions in the report. The business case includes sensitivity analysis across all the modelled options and identifies consequent variations in the estimated savings.
- 8.4 The business case also identifies additional but currently unquantified savings that the project can realise (for example savings on mileage costs). Significant non-financial benefits are also important drivers of the business case, for example organisational efficiencies through co-locating directorates and reducing the current dispersed operating model; reduced staff turnover and absenteeism; improved services to customers; reduced carbon emissions.
- 8.5 A summary of items included and excluded from the financial model is given in the table at figure 6.5 within the business case. This is reproduced below.

Included	Excluded
Capital cost of new build (incorporating construction, fees and contingencies with allowance for BREEAM excellent)	Any demolition of surplus buildings
Refurbishment of retained accommodation	VAT (assumed recoverable)
All maintenance costs for retained buildings (including backlog)	Information Technology (“IT”) (budgeted separately)

Included	Excluded
Facilities Management ("FM")	Dispersal costs (ie staff allowances for change of location) (assumed neutral)
Utilities	HR savings
Business Rates	FM efficiency savings
Income currently generated by the existing building portfolio	Car Park income
Ongoing life costs of new building	Re-provision of One Stop Shops additionally to the replacement of the OSS at Conway Centre
Building Insurance	Property sales and other capital receipts
Car parking allowance for new build	Acre Lane modifications
Replacement of OSS at Conway Centre	Removals
Data centre (in separate location)	Decanting costs
Service Charges	Mileage savings (fuel and time)
Security costs for empty Town Halls	Storage
	Site acquisition costs

8.6 Other key assumptions used for financial modelling are as follows:

- A 2 year construction period has been modelled for the new build element in options 2-5 and a 3 year construction period for the substantially larger option 6.
- All new build construction costs have been prudentially borrowed, with a payback period of 10 years from the 1st year of construction.
- Inflation for construction costs has been projected to the 2nd year of construction.
- New build areas have been worked out on the area required to accommodate staff that haven't been housed in the retained/refurbished buildings. 6.5 m2 has been allocated to each desk and a ratio of 10 people to 7 desks has been used on average.
- Refurbishment of Westminster House has been taken to be funded by Wirral BC and is not prudentially borrowed.
- All refurbishment (inc Westminster House and refurbishment involved in options 2 & 4) have been split over a 2 year period.
- Backlog maintenance and ongoing repairs for both existing estate and new build, have been prudentially borrowed with a 10 year payback.
- All costs are assumed to increase in line with inflation at 2.5%
- Cheshire Lines has been assumed to be occupied and continued to rent over the 25 year period for options 1-5. Option 6 continues to rent until the end of the lease but is not occupied.
- Rate of increase in rent has been taken to be in line with inflation.
- Existing buildings have been modelled to keep their existing car parking with zero cost.
- Car parking costs have been split over a 2 year construction period and have been assumed to be financed by Wirral BC.
- All new builds are to receive new furniture.
- Where existing buildings are reconfigured, they have received new furniture.
- For energy consumption an increase of 7% has been made to the capital cost to cover the cost of building in sustainability.
- This is modelled to produce savings of 30% compared to current costs.

- 8.7 Investment in IT and telephony has not been costed into the option appraisal on the basis that the Council has identified separate funding for this. IT will be a substantial cost in reconfiguring administrative accommodation and will need to be modelled in detail.
- 8.8 As noted above the SAR sought to achieve a revenue saving of over £1m per annum from administrative accommodation by 2011. Whilst indications from the business case are that overall savings on this scale are achievable it is clear that they will not be realised by that date. Once a preferred option for future accommodation is agreed a revised analysis of achievable savings will be reported to Cabinet.

9.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 All administrative staff will potentially be affected by the rationalisation of the Council's administrative estate and the implementation of new ways of working.
- 9.2 The design of new and refurbished offices together with new working arrangements will improve the quality of the workplace for staff.
- 9.3 Effective communication and staff engagement are key to successful large scale workplace change, and a comprehensive communication strategy will be developed for the project. Communication about the overall office rationalisation project will be dealt with in the wider context of the Change Programme through the Strategic Change Programme Board. For team and service office redesigns and relocations, a more detailed communications plan is being developed.
- 9.4 Full engagement will take place with trades unions, and discussions have already begun on revised policies to support agile working.

10.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 An equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the overall rationalisation project, and a copy is attached to this report. More detailed assessments will be undertaken as workplace changes are implemented.
- 10.2 Refurbishment of existing accommodation and new build will allow the development of more accessible environments than exist in current accommodation.

11.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None arising directly from this report.

12.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Refurbishment of existing accommodation and new build will allow the creation of a more sustainable administrative estate with lower environmental impact. Other benefits will be realised through new working arrangements, for example a

reduction in business mileage and CO2 emissions due to the consolidation of offices and an increase in agile working.

13.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None arising directly from this report, although it should be noted that within the business case options Birkenhead Town Hall, Wallasey Town Hall and the Conway Centre are listed buildings.

14.0 ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 None arising directly from this report.

15.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

15.1 None arising directly from this report.

16.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

16.1 None arising directly from this report.

17.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

17.1 This report will be of interest to all members.

18.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet 9 July 2008	Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 16 October 2008	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 27 November 2008	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 15 January 2009	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee 17 March 2010 – Office Rationalisation Project Update	

19.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

19.1 The report be noted.

19.2 Cabinet identifies its preferred approach to the provision of the Council's administrative accommodation in the future, having regard to the business case prepared by EC Harris.

19.3 The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management be instructed to carry out further work on the related and building specific issues identified in the report and to report further on these to Cabinet as appropriate.

19.4 The Director of Law, HR & Asset Management reports to a future meeting of Cabinet on the revised project structure required to deliver the preferred solution

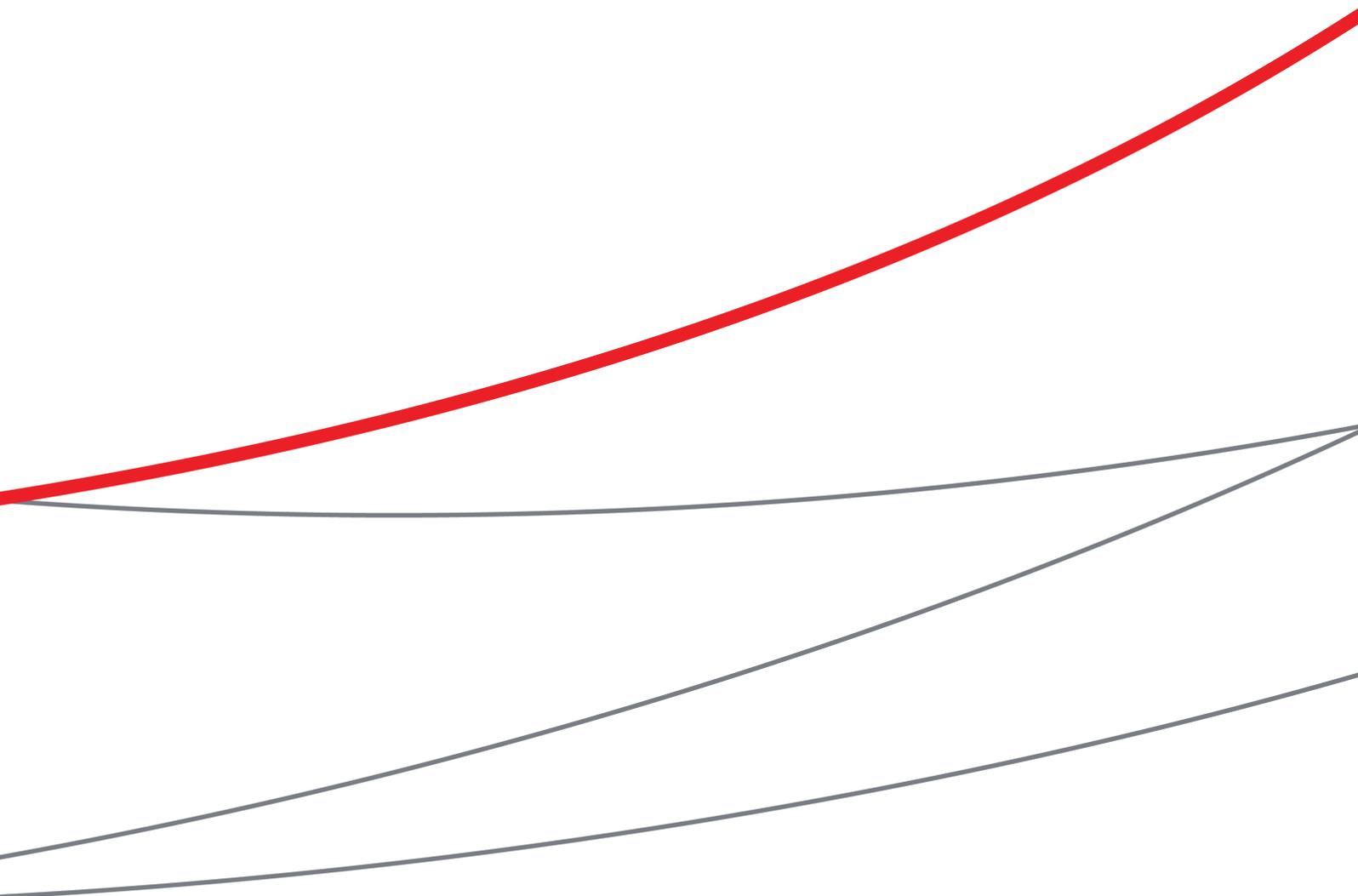
for future accommodation and the revised amounts and timing of savings that it will produce.

Bill Norman
Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

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Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

March 2010



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Appendix

Appendix A Glossary of Terms

Appendix B Financial Model (included as a separate cd)

Appendix C Offices Location Map

Appendix D Indicative Project Timetable for Delivery

Appendix E Cheshire Lines (commercial in confidence – not included)

Version Control

Version and date	Author(s)	Reviewed (4 eyes)
Draft 0.3 12.03.10	David Revell, Catherine Harvatt	Peter Hogg
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Final draft (12a) for WBC Head of Asset Management	David Revell, Catherine Harvatt	Dan Gregory

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

1. Executive Summary

Wirral Borough Council has recognised a ‘once in a generation’ opportunity to use its office accommodation and a 21st Century working environment within it, as a catalyst for long – term cost efficiency and delivery of services to citizens. To maximise this opportunity, the Council has commissioned EC Harris to undertake a structured 16 week review to explore the opportunity and to define the best possible outcome. The exercise has brought together the Council’s existing change activity, its front line service departments and the back office functions of Finance, Human Resources (“HR”), Information Technology (“IT”) and Asset Management to produce a consolidated view on the accommodation model that will best support Wirral’s vision and strategy in the short, medium and long term. The exercise has defined and examined the Council’s office accommodation options, analysing their relative merits, savings and investment required. This Business Case sets out the options, including analysis of the financial aspects of each and the benefits arising from them.

The exercise has been conducted on the Council’s behalf by International Built Asset Consultancy, EC Harris. The exercise involved wide and thorough engagement with Officers throughout the Council, meetings with lead Members of each of the three political groups represented on the Council and engagement with other third parties with a potential stakeholder interest in this project. EC Harris has enjoyed excellent co-operation and assistance from everyone in the Council with whom it has come into contact and, in particular, Ian Brand, Phil Ashley and the staff of the Asset Management Division. The exercise established:

- An understanding of how the Council is organised, how it wishes to utilise its space and the steps it is taking to deliver its vision and strategy.
- How much physical space this may demand, based on experience of best practice, and what direct accommodation cost savings can be made.
- How the space can most effectively be delivered to create an efficient working environment.
- What opportunities for broader cost saving and service delivery improvement accommodation can enable and what the financial value of this will be.
- What specific options exist for Wirral implementing the model and how these support the Council’s regeneration agenda.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Wirral Borough Council has embarked on a Strategic Asset Review which includes all the built assets of the Council. The project to deliver strategic recommendations for the future of the office accommodation sits within the Strategic Asset Review.

The current configuration of the Council's office portfolio has evolved over time and no longer offers an efficient money saving solution to their current needs and ambition to create an excellent Authority. The Council has identified a total of 42 buildings which house some form of back office function. Of these, 22 have significant numbers of staff with the remainder catering for the needs of small numbers of staff and a variety of other agencies and functions. It was agreed that this study should focus on the portfolio of 22 with significant occupation and potential to deliver savings.

Functions are widely dispersed across this portfolio and although much of the corporate estate is described as being in satisfactory condition, substantial sums of money would be required to be spent to deal with the maintenance backlog and planned maintenance thereafter to ensure the estate is fit for purpose for the next 25 years. No benefits from improving the utilisation of space would result from this approach and the opportunity for creating efficiency savings from the estate would be very limited. The number of office buildings and the dispersal of staff in itself suggest a more concentrated model could deliver greater operational efficiency. Current spending on the office portfolio has been historically low, but sufficient to ensure the buildings continue to function adequately. This position, however, cannot be sustained into the future.

A range of options have been investigated to provide a long term solution. The options present a variety of configurations with differing new build area requirements attached to them. The Option which delivers the best combination of benefits and cost and is therefore the most economically advantageous solution is described in this Business Case as Option 3, although other options appear almost as good. In the light of this outcome, it is recommended that Wirral Borough Council undertakes a further piece of detailed analysis to affirm the benefits of Option 3 compared with other closely ranked Options. Option 3 retains Wallasey Town Hall, but disposes of the North and South Annexes to the Town Hall. This Option also retains Solar Campus (which it is proposed is more intensively used), Cheshire Lines (which currently has 14 years of lease remaining), Acre Lane and a refurbished Westminster House. The remainder of the accommodation is provided in a new build. Option 3 delivers discounted average revenue savings to the Council (compared with do minimum) in excess of £800,000 per annum over the model period of 25 years. A central assumption of an overall reduction in staff of 10% has been modelled from the outset.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

The new build will deliver significant economies in operating costs, much better use of space as a result of intelligent and efficient design, the Council's emerging agile working policies and greater efficiency around energy use. Facilities Management services costs are also reduced as a result of working from a smaller overall amount of space. The efficient working methods will be enabled by a significant investment in IT which is managed as a separate work programme within the overall transformation agenda.

In arriving at these savings, for reasons of reasonable caution, a number of potential areas of saving have been excluded from the model. These are:

- FM efficiency savings (as opposed to savings arising from a smaller area);
- HR savings from lower absence and less recruitment costs;
- Savings in business rates from demolition of surplus areas at Acre Lane;
- Reduced staff travel and expenses arising from fewer inter building journeys
- Car park income
- Potential property sale receipts (eg North and South Annexes of Wallasey Town Hall)

Acre Lane is retained under each Option, but the long term future of the building is uneconomic. Re-provision of the asset should be examined by way of a separate option appraisal, possibly as a second phase development following delivery of the reconfigured office accommodation.

Wirral Borough Council is progressing rent review discussions with the landlords of the Cheshire Lines building. There may be an opportunity to extend the Council's interest at this location.

This Business Case is not intended to settle the debate about where any potential new building might be located. However, the advantages and disadvantages of a range of options are examined. There is a clear opportunity in this debate to connect the office accommodation project with the Council's regeneration aspirations for the area.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

2. Introduction

2.1 Purpose of the Document

The purpose of this Business Case is to analyse the options available to Wirral Borough Council (“WBC”) to rationalise and modernise its use of administrative accommodation and to make recommendations on the configuration (but not the location) of that accommodation based on that analysis. Possible locations are identified separately in Chapter 7 with some advantages and disadvantages of each to begin to inform a structured debate.

The rationalisation and modernisation of administrative accommodation is set in the context of a wider Strategic Asset Review (“SAR”) that the Council is undertaking which in turn is designed to make a major impact on the Council’s Corporate Objective 5; ‘To Create an Excellent Authority.’ The SAR will contribute to Corporate Objective 5 by improving the Council’s use of land and assets. The modernisation and rationalisation of the administrative estate can make a significant impact on bringing this improvement about. This Business Case demonstrates how this can be achieved. This Business Case focuses on the back office functions, but there are linkages to front of house services which are frequently delivered from buildings or locations which also deliver back office functions: these include One Stop Shops. Re-provision of One Stop Shop accommodation is incorporated into the recommendations for overall re-provision where appropriate. The Business Case also includes proposals in respect of Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre and Solar Campus, which deliver training and educational services as well as some back office functions.

The Business Case provides a robust audit trail for future investment decisions that the Council will make to achieve its overall goals. In order to do this, the Business Case is compliant with the approach of the Treasury Green Book and follows the process identified as best practice by the Office of Government Commerce (“OGC”). Accordingly, the Business Case follows the 5 case model. Much of the analysis and the conclusions in this Business Case have been prepared and agreed through contact and interface with Council Officers. It’s purpose is to contain no surprises and offer an affordable and deliverable solution that all those who own and are affected by the preferred solution can sign up to and identify with. The five case model is:

1. Strategic Case
2. Economic Case
3. Financial Case
4. Commercial Case

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

5. Management Case

Strategic Case

The strategic case establishes what is driving the proposal, why there is a need for change and why the current operating model is in need of review and change. A key focus is the needs of WBC and the consequent benefits that are deliverable to its citizens. It also takes account of WBC priorities for regeneration and considers the possible regeneration benefits that could be secured by the development of a new administrative office strategy. The output from the strategic case will be a set of SMART (specific, measurable, achievable and agreed, realistic and timetabled) objectives that define the project. This will capture the drivers for the strategy and the impact of the change

Economic case

The economic case explores the different options for meeting the project objectives, including the do minimum option and also investigates a list of options for change and how value for money can be achieved. In summary the purpose of the economic case is to:

- Define the objectives to be met and benefits being sought;
- Generate the options for meeting those objectives;
- Measure the benefits of each option;
- Determine the costs of each option;
- Assess the key project risks.

By bringing together the information in these steps, it is possible to determine which option best balances cost and benefits based on the information to hand.

Financial case

The financial case illustrates the revenue savings achieved by each option.

Commercial Case

The commercial case details the various delivery options for the project and recommends a route to establishing the preferred approach. All options are considered together with their advantages and disadvantages. The benefits of the recommended delivery solution should be viewed in the light of the local economy, the risk profile of the preferred option, the relationship of capital investment and revenue saving and the perceived timescales.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

The following commercial options are considered:

- Internally generated cash flows supported by Prudential Borrowing as required;
- Strategic Partnering and the Integrator Solution; (this is totally distinct from the Construction Employment Integrator which is a WBC initiative);
- Solution which introduces Council assets into a delivery vehicle;
- Private Finance or form of Public Private Partnership;
- Developer led opportunity

The Business Case model is constructed on the assumption of a Prudential Borrowing (“PB”) route. Other potential delivery routes require some other form of public/private partnership arrangement and it is recommended that they are assessed against the benchmark of PB and only employed if better value for money and regeneration benefits can be clearly demonstrated.

Management Case

The management case seeks to determine how the project will be managed and who will be involved with this. Those involved will include both those in and outside WBC, including employees, and other stakeholders.

A successfully well managed project requires the following inputs in accordance with the principles of PRINCE2 (“Projects in Controlled Environments Version 2”):

- A clear project structure that includes wide-ranging and appropriate council and cross-organisational input;
- Identification and provision of the resources necessary to support the project;
- A benefits plan;
- A plan for post project evaluation, to determine that the required benefits have been achieved;
- A timetable for the whole project, up to and including post project evaluation.

A number of these areas are ably supported through parallel work streams within the overall SAR and a willingness of the Council to ensure best practice is followed, for example by enquiring into the benefits obtained through the Office of Government Commerce (“OGC”) Gateway Review Process.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

2.2 Methodology

The methodology employed for the study was in three stages over 16 weeks. The first stage involved a intensive period of fact finding and data gathering, including a series of focus interviews with, political leaders, the Chief Executive, Deputy Chief Executive, Executive Directors and key Heads of Service. These interviews were complemented by a data gathering exercise on the existing buildings, their use and functions. This stage culminated in a stakeholder workshop held on 5 February. The details of this workshop are provided at Chapter 4. The Members and Officers met in focus interviews were as follows:

Fig 2.1 Focus Interviews

Interviewee	Role
Cllr S Foulkes	Leader of the Council and the Labour Group
Cllr S Holbrook	Deputy Leader of the Council, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group and Portfolio Holder for Corporate Resources
Cllr J Green	Leader of the Conservative Group
Steve Maddox	Chief Executive
Jim Wilkie and Corporate Services Management Team	Head of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive
Ian Coleman with Tom Sault	Director of Finance with Head of Service for Accounting and Research
Howard Cooper with David Armstrong	Director Children's and Young Peoples Directorate with Head of Branch
David Green and Management Team	Director Technical Services
Bill Norman with Ian Brand	Director Law, HR and Asset Management with Head of Asset Management
Alan Stennard and Management Team	Director Regeneration
John Webb with Mike Fowler	Director Adult Social Services Directorate with Head of Branch – Finance and Performance
David Ball	Head of Housing and Regeneration
Chris Hyams	Head of Human Resources
Jacqui Roberts	Head of Transformational Change
John Carruthers with IT Management Team	Assistant Director Finance Directorate

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Stage 2 of the process concentrated on developing a set of options that would deliver the project objectives that emerged at the focus interviews and were ranked and weighted by the 5 February workshop. These options are identified at Section 4.4.

The final stage in the process is the delivery of this Business Case.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

3. Strategic Business Case for Change

3.1 Economic and Financial Context

The overall economic context in which this business is presented significantly reinforces the case for an improved and more efficient configuration of corporate office accommodation in Wirral. The government targets for efficiency savings across the public sector as a whole have been most recently articulated in the Comprehensive Spending Review (“CSR”) of 2007 and HM Treasury’s Operational Efficiency Programme (“OEP”) which identified a further £14.8bn of public sector savings by 2011. The drive towards greater operational efficiency is given greater urgency as a consequence of the rapid increase in public sector borrowing (estimated to rise to £180bn) to mitigate the worst effect of the recent recession. Most analysts accept that repayment of this debt will begin to have a marked impact on Council budgets from 2011. This, therefore, is an excellent time for Wirral to create operational efficiencies through better use of its corporate estate in order to protect and enhance front line services. The overall economic context also introduces an urgency and necessity to address the issue of the corporate estate. It is therefore important that the momentum of the project is maintained following the delivery of this Business Case.

3.2 Wirral Borough Council

The Wirral peninsular covers 60.35 sq miles between the estuaries of the Mersey and the Dee. The area is one of contrasts. The industrial and business centre is concentrated in the eastern part of the borough facing the Mersey and Liverpool and the more residential rural aspects are found to the west of the M53. The accessibility of Liverpool with shopping and leisure attractions has resulted in a progressive decline of Birkenhead as a main retail and leisure attraction. This is now being addressed vigorously by a regeneration outline study for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters.

Wirral is home to 312,293 people recorded in the 2001 census with a total electorate of 248,043. 30.4 percent of Wirral’s population is under the age of 25 and 18 percent is over 65.

Wirral Borough Council was created in the 1974 local government reorganisation when it became part of Merseyside. The 1974 reorganisation merged 5 former District Councils into a single Council. WBC is the third largest metropolitan authority in the North West of England. The Council employs approximately 12,500 staff including teachers and is the largest single employer in the area. The Council has

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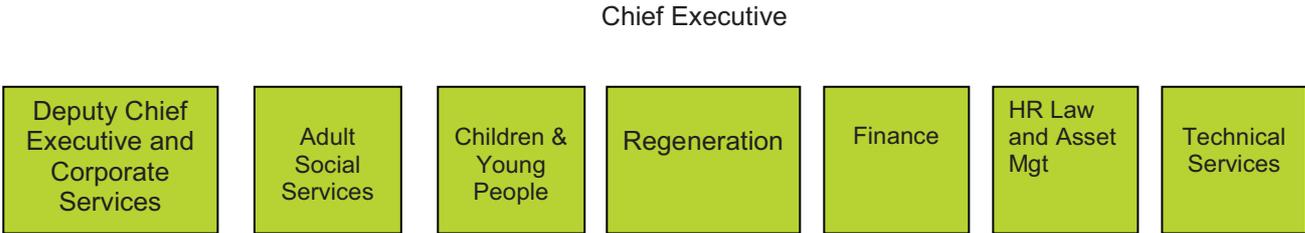
an annual budget of circa £336m and administers the Pension Fund for the Mersey Authorities with a value of £3bn.

The Corporate Plan for 2008-2011 identifies an efficiency investment budget to generate savings and continue to provide services that represent value for money to Council Tax payers.

The 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment (“CAA”) for WBC produced an overall score of 2 out of 4 (performing adequately) for Managing Performance and Use of Resources. In relation to WBC Objective 5 (To Create an Excellent Council) the Audit Commission noted: “The Council has made reasonable progress to strengthen its capacity to improve services....The Council has reasonable financial capacity and has achieved savings of £37m in the past three years. It is running several large projects which aim to improve efficiency and make extra savings. The Council also places greater emphasis on value for money from its services, and aims to better understand how much its services cost compared to (sic) others so it can take action where its costs are higher.”

The Council is organised currently into the following directorates, each headed by a Chief Officer. It is noted that the Director of Regeneration retires on 31 March 2010 and it is not intended to replace him. Interim arrangements will be put in place for the management of that Department’s services pending a review of the organisational structure.

Fig 3.1: Departmental Organisation



3.3 Strategic Asset Review

The Council has recently undertaken a Strategic Asset Review (“SAR”). Decisions on the way forward with various types of assets were reported to Cabinet on 15 January 2008. That meeting resolved that the office accommodation aspects of the SAR should move forward to implementation and that the process of making savings from the rationalisation of the Council’s office accommodation should be progressed. The overall SAR has resulted in a substantial change programme with a

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

number of interrelated projects. The Office Rationalisation Programme is one of these and is itself divided into the following work streams:

Work Stream 1

Work Stream 1 has determined the costs, income and usage of the existing accommodation to inform the current operating model and provide information for the analysis in this Business Case.

Work Stream 2

The terms of reference of this Work Stream are to:

- Develop a plan for future building use, focussing on physical requirements, and providing for the maximum use and efficiency of retained buildings and confirm the demolition and disposal programme;
- Engage with partners to explore opportunities for co-location and rationalisation;
- Establish an appropriate framework for managing the performance of the administrative estate

The original project for the review of office accommodation within the SAR contained two key elements. As a basis for future actions, a long term strategy for the future of the corporate office estate is required, and this Business Case addresses that. Secondly, a project was being developed for the refurbishment of Westminster House to support building rationalisation and agile working. Plans were previously drawn up as part of the overall EC Harris exercise to demonstrate that 500 staff could be accommodated in the refurbished space. The SAR Project Board meeting on 14 January 2010 decided that the Westminster House refurbishment element of the project would be put on hold pending recommendations on the strategic direction.

This Business Case operates within the remit of Work Stream 2.

Work Stream 3

This Work Stream is developing WBC's approach to agile working and is providing a framework for implementation of the working practices consistent with a modern working environment. The Work Stream is identifying, in collaboration with Human Resources ("HR") and Information Technology ("IT") colleagues how and where agile working will be used. This Work Stream is tasked with leading and facilitating workplace change and developing and managing a communications plan for the whole project.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Work Stream 4

This Work Stream is examining the Facilities Management (“FM”) arrangements; identifying options for delivering savings and recommending a way forward.

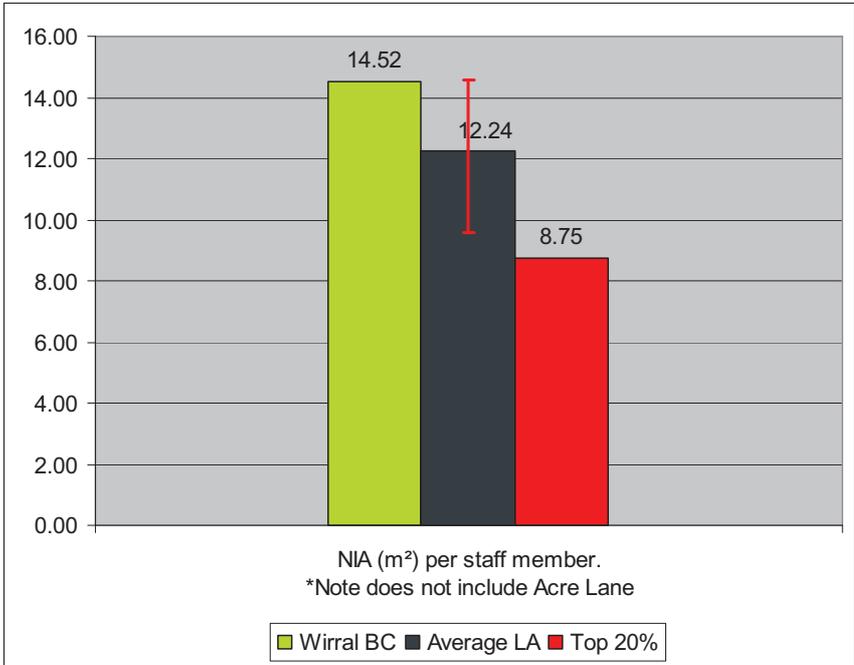
Work Stream 5

This Work Stream is responsible for managing the implementation of the agreed rationalisation. It will deal with the re-location of staff and all that is entailed from the project schedule of building closures, disposals and demolitions.

3.4 The Current Office Accommodation Operating Model

The chart below shows the Net Internal Area (“NIA”) per staff member in administrative functions for WBC compared with a sample of representative Councils drawn from across England. This exhibit also shows the performance of the top 20% of those Councils. The bar shows the range of the upper and lower quartiles from which the average is obtained. Wirral BC performance is almost in the lowest quartile when set against these benchmarks.

Fig 3.2: NIA per Staff Member

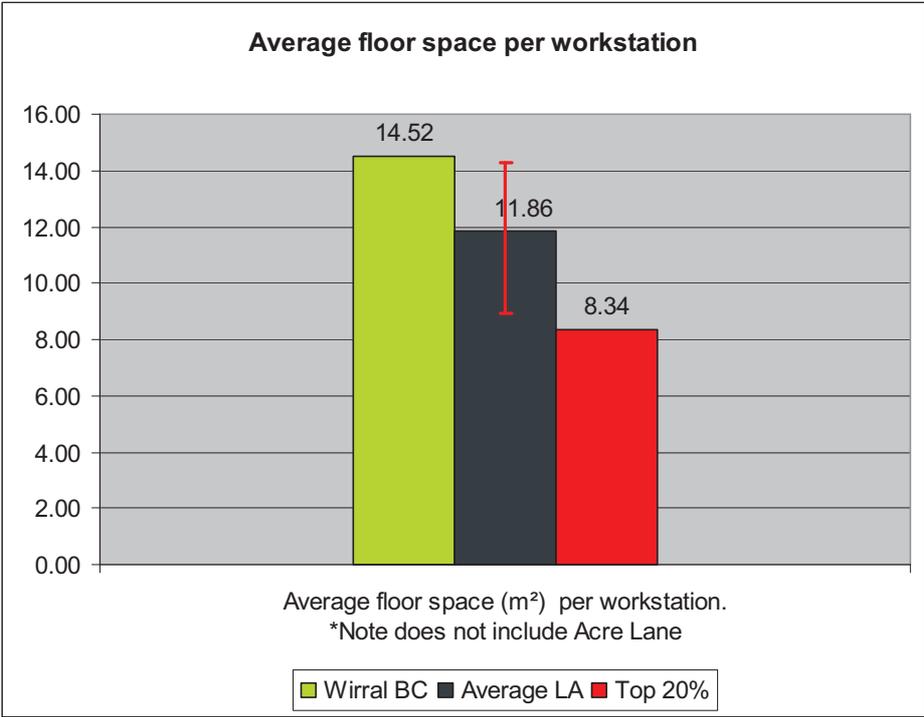


The current model works broadly on the basis of one desk per employee which means that the average floor space per workstation is the same as that for each

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

employee in the administrative estate. The allocation of individual offices in Wirral has developed as a result of the constraints of individual buildings and through custom and practice. The chart below shows the position of WBC compared with the same group of Councils some of which operate on a more efficient desk to staff ratio.

Fig 3.3: Average floor space per workstation



The following table shows the performance of individual buildings and includes building locations to additionally illustrate the dispersal of the current operational administrative portfolio. The dispersal is also illustrated in a map format at Appendix D.

Fig. 3.4 Building Location and Occupancy

Building	Location	Staff numbers	GIA(Note1)	NIA(Note2)	NIA m2 per staff member
Bebington Town Hall	Bebington	112	1542	1213	10.83
Bebington Town Hall Annexe	Bebington	63	836	707	11.22
Birkenhead Town	Hamilton Square,	19	4979	2385(est)	125.53

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Building	Location	Staff numbers	GIA(Note1)	NIA(Note2)	NIA m2 per staff member
Hall	Birkenhead				(Note 3)
Bedford Road	Rock Ferry	18	175	140	7.78
Cheshire Lines	Birkenhead	447	6894	3367	7.53
Conway Centre	Birkenhead	171	4037	2952	17.26
Devon Gardens	Rock Ferry	4	279	223	55.75
Finance Municipal Building	Birkenhead	292	3838	2645	9.06
Hamilton Building	Birkenhead	227	3775	2881	12.69
Liscard Municipal Building	Wallasey	73	2106	1516	20.77
Moreton Municipal Building	Moreton	60	977	791	13.18
Pennant House	Bebington	11	636	431	39.18
Professional Excellence Centre, Acre Lane	Bromborough	158	8083	6010	38.03 (Note 4)
Rock Ferry Centre	Rock Ferry	56	1936	1549	27.66
Solar Campus	Wallasey	115	5598	4199	36.51 (Note 4)
The Old Courthouse	Wallasey	54	1800	1191	22.06
Treasury Building	Birkenhead	185	4586	2709	14.64
Wallasey Town Hall	Wallasey	190	7809	3741	19.69
Wallasey Town Hall North Annex	Wallasey	143	2061	1445	10.10
Wallasey Town Hall South Annex	Wallasey	138	2211	1493	10.82
Westminster House	Birkenhead	347	4733	3600	10.37
Willowtree	Moreton	56	1494	1195	21.34
Total		2939	70385	46383	15.78

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Building	Location	Staff numbers	GIA(Note1)	NIA(Note2)	NIA m2 per staff member
Total (excluding Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre)		2781	62302	40373	14.52

Notes:

- (1) Gross internal area of the buildings
- (2) Net internal area of the buildings
- (3) Birkenhead Town Hall was previously vacated in preparation for disposal. The Registrars remain as the sole occupants.
- (4) Includes educational or training facilities.
- (5) Accommodation occupied by the Merseyside Pension Fund is excluded

Fig 3.5: Building Functions

Building	Directorate	Wirral BC Function	Other Occupiers
Bebington Town Hall	CYPD HR, Law and Asset Management	Various Educational Support Services Buildings Supervisor	
Bebington Town Hall Annexe	CYPD DASS UNISON	Social Care Locality Teams Union office	Co-located with NHS Teams
Birkenhead Town Hall	Law, HR and Asset Management	Registrars	
Bedford Road	CYPD	Lifelong Learning Service	
Cheshire Lines	Technical Services HR, Law and Asset Management Finance DASS CYPD	Headquarters Asset Management (planned move on 1/7/2010) Wirral Archive Call Centre Call Centre Community Patrol HQ	(24 hour operation)
Conway Centre	CYPD DASS	Social Workers Welfare Benefits Homeless and Housing Options Team	Connexions

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Building	Directorate	Wirral BC Function	Other Occupiers
	Regeneration & Finance	One Stop Shop	
Devon Gardens	CYPD	Social Care	
Finance Municipal Building	Finance	Benefits, Revenue, Misc Income, administration, information management,	
Hamilton Building	CYPD Finance	Headquarters Data Centre	
Liscard Municipal Building	CYPD DASS	Social Care Care Management	Connexions
Moreton Municipal	CYPD Finance	Social Care One Stop Shop	
Pennant House	Finance	One Stop Shop	
Professional Excellence Centre, Acre Lane	CYPD	Professional Training Specialist Education Support	Also used by Edge Hill University, PCT and other bodies.
Rock Ferry Centre (257 Old Chester Road)	CYPD Finance	Social Care One Stop Shop (Also houses public library. Note 1.)	Wirral Partnership Homes
Solar Campus	CYPD	Youth Services (Exclusions, Youth Offending,) Anti Social Behaviour	
The Old Courthouse	Regeneration	Community Safety	Police
Treasury Building	Finance	IT, Financial Services, Internal Audit, Print Unit, Change Team, Main Data Centre	Occupational Health Service
Wallasey Town Hall	Chief Executive Corporate Services	Policy Members and Democratic Services Council Chamber Committee Rooms Civic Hall and Ceremonial	

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Building	Directorate	Wirral BC Function	Other Occupiers
	HR, Law and Asset Management Finance Regeneration	Space Support Services Law Team One Stop Shop Trading Standards Environmental Health Licensing	
Wallasey Town Hall North Annex	Corporate Services Regeneration	Communications, Tourism and Marketing Teams and Strategic Development Storage Housing and Regeneration	
Wallasey Town Hall South Annex	HR, Law and Asset Management Regeneration	Conveyancing HR Training facility Asset Management Team (planned move to Cheshire Lines on 1/7/2010) Strategy and Implementation	
Westminster House	DASS Regeneration	Headquarters Social Care Cultural Services	NHS Wirral
Willowtree	CYPD	Social Care Resource Centre	

Note 1. The purpose of this Business Case is to make recommendations in respect of office accommodation. It is assumed that the Rock Ferry Centre public library is unaffected by any proposal.

The Council currently has some form of presence in 42 buildings from which administrative, technical or back office functions are undertaken. A number of these buildings also have public facing services or One Stop Shops and are part of Wirral's initiative to continue to develop efficient and accessible services to its citizens. Of the 42 buildings, EC Harris was asked to focus attention on 22 buildings identified in Fig 3.4 where there is significant Council occupancy. The remaining 20 buildings are recorded as accommodating just 47 office staff and a variety of other occupants. Under the current model, every Directorate, with the exception of Technical Services, has a core administrative function spread across at least 2 of

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

the 22 buildings in the study. Our study did not look at the organisational detail, but compared with other Councils, services seem unduly dispersed. This will have a bearing on travel costs, efficient working and communications.

A capital budget of £1.5m per annum over 4 years has been identified to upgrade the Council's IT systems to provide a key enabler for agile working and support a modern working environment in a reduced office portfolio. There is also a separate revenue budget of £750,000 per annum for desk top equipment.

3.5 Project Objectives, Assumptions and Constraints

The SAR report to Cabinet in January 2009 which gave approval for the office accommodation project to proceed identified the need to make recurrent savings of £1m from the future level of recurrent operating costs of the existing portfolio. The aim is now to treat this as a minimum figure. This objective, therefore, was established as a principal driver for the project from the outset, and the options which have been generated as a result of this exercise are designed to show how this could be achieved with a combination of modelled and potential additional savings.

Crucially, the change programme, of which the SAR is a component, has not yet determined the future staff numbers or the organisation of functions within a rationalised portfolio. It is considered very important that the organisational drivers and the future operating model for the Council are clarified. These are an integral part of the physical accommodation aspects, as they will impact not only on the consideration of the merits of the options but the real benefits that will be delivered from occupation.

In order to legislate at a very general level for the overall size of the organisation going forward the core assumption of an overall reduction of 10% in staff to be accommodated has been made. This has regard to the current economic climate and potential expenditure constraints in future years. The sensitivity analysis in Section 5.6 shows the financial impact on the options of re-providing office accommodation for existing staff numbers and a 20% reduction. These are illustrations only and are not intended to be prescient in terms of any way in which the Council may organise its resources in the future.

As explained in Section 3.4 (The Current Office Accommodation Operating Model) the present general arrangement (with a few isolated exceptions) is for each person to have a desk, irrespective of whether the working pattern of the individual is desk or client or site based. The focus interviews and the stakeholder workshop of 5

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February 2010 achieved a consensus that the Council should be considerably more ambitious than that and, accordingly, an average provision of 7 desks for every 10 employees has been targeted in this exercise. This is fully comparable with other councils that have adopted similar office accommodation strategies.

Similarly, the SAR report to Cabinet identified a future requirement of 10sqm per workspace. Initial work for the Westminster House project and experience of EC Harris working with other councils has demonstrated the feasibility of creating excellent working environments comprising an average of 6.5sqm for each workspace (including local, but not general circulation space.) This average takes into account, for example, the needs of mobile staff who need touch down space and technical staff who may have specialist requirements. Accordingly, these metrics determined the requirements of the project brief.

A number of the focus interviews discussed the advantages and disadvantages of leased as opposed to owned property for the services currently delivered from the portfolio. The broad consensus was that the Council would be prepared to own or lease any new accommodation, or acquire accommodation as part of a developer agreement. The key requirement was stated to be a compelling business case that clearly showed the financial advantage of the recommended approach.

In particular, a business case which advocated new build would need to demonstrate clearly the merits of the proposed solution that could be explained through an effective communications strategy, not least to the wider public, that clearly articulated the value for money and other benefits to local people.

As part of this exercise, contact was made with each of the partners in the Strategic Assembly Partnership to ascertain any views on the office accommodation project. A summary of the responses is provided at Chapter 4 of this Business Case. There is a high level of enthusiasm within the Council to take advantage of any opportunities there might be to link with other local providers to deliver more joined up services and greater efficiency. This is happening on the ground. For example, both CYPD and DASS employ joint working through shared accommodation. Therefore, any business solution to the office project should fulfil the needs of WBC, ensure that proper provision is made for the existing joint working and seek to extend Total Place type initiatives wherever there is common ground and a mutual willingness to do so.

3.6 Project Scope

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The scope of this Business Case includes accommodation where front office and back office functions exist side by side for operational and efficiency reasons. The approach to these elements in this Business Case is as follows:

One Stop Shops

The in scope buildings that currently incorporate WBC led one stop shops are:

- Conway Centre;
- Moreton Municipal Building;
- Pennant House;
- Rock Ferry Centre;
- Wallasey Town Hall.

This Business Case makes no specific recommendations with respect to the location of One Stop Shops, although re-provision of a One Stop Shop is included in the financial model. However, in the event of a disposal programme which includes any of the buildings currently housing the One Stop Shops a fuller analysis will be needed. This analysis should include:

- Footfall in current locations;
- Most appropriate future location for services taking the asset vacating programme into account;
- The opportunities for joint agency working
- Alternative, better ways, of the public accessing Council services, for example, using IT connections

This exercise has the potential to deliver further savings opportunities.

Offices used by administrative personnel and mobile employees

An over-arching position has been reached in consultation with Directors in the focus meetings and ratified by the stakeholder workshop that an overall average space allocation of 6.5 sq metres per workstation and an average ratio of 7 workstations per 10 employees would be applied to any potential new build. It is anticipated that existing refurbished accommodation may not achieve this level of efficiency. However, overall it will accommodate the needs of services which consist of desk based and mobile workers. Our overall approach is based on the experience of a number of other councils and the metrics that we have used assume that Wirral can replicate the best of class. A targeted desk utilisation study would help to inform that these assumptions are robust.

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Buildings with specialist services and have public access.

This arrangement applies particularly to the Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre and the Solar Campus. It is proposed to exclude the Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre from any potential new build solution. Proposals on a longer term way forward for Acre Lane as part of the SAR are at Section 4.4.

Solar Campus fulfils two distinct needs of an education and training centre for vulnerable young people and a focal point for CYPD Youth Services. This Business Case does not attempt to provide any recommendations in respect of the School on the Campus, but it is proposed that improved use could be made of the space in the St Marys building. This is described more fully in Chapter 4.

Outsourcing

The brief for the Business Case did not include any assumptions on variations which incorporated outsourcing of support or Facilities Management ("FM") services, although WBC is prepared to consider leasing options on future office accommodation.

3.7 Interfaces

Data Centre Upgrade

WBC has commissioned a study, which has reported, into the risks present with the existing data centres located in Treasury Building and in the Hamilton Building. Decisions on any recommendations which involve significant outlay to address lower grade risks are pending decisions on recommendations in this Business Case. Under the options for change identified in this Business Case, both current data centres will require re-locating. The cost of re-providing the buildings to house these is incorporated in the modelling.

Wirral Archive

The Wirral Archive has been situated in the Cheshire Lines Building since 2008. It provides the archive for the Council and also public records. There is also a public on line research facility. Planning for the future capacity of the Archive in line with forecast demand pressures is underway. It is noted that the current internal usage of the Archive varies significantly between Directorates (both in terms of items lodged and volume of churn of documents.) It is possible that a consistently applied policy on document storage would deliver a different conclusion about the capacity of the Archive. Also, the option of outsourcing the storage of older retained items may relieve capacity issues in the short to medium term.

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4. Option Appraisal

4.1 Benefits Ranked and Weighted

The key objectives for the office accommodation project set out at the beginning of the exercise were to establish a Business Case to:

- Optimise value for money and efficiency in the use of administrative accommodation;
- Realise savings of at least £1m from the revenue budget from 31 March 2011;
- Modernise working environments that deliver better efficiency and a greater degree of agile working.

During the focus interviews with Directors and Heads of Service these objectives were discussed and a more detailed list of project objectives analysed. A stakeholder group was then formed which took part in a workshop held on 5 February 2010. The workshop was tasked with deciding the ranking and weighting of the project objectives to determine which benefits were most important when choosing a final solution. The starting point for this analysis was the individual assessments of project objectives provided by leading Members, Executive Directors and Heads of Service at the Focus Interviews held during January. The workshop attendees were as follows:

Fig: 4.1 Workshop Members

Name	Position	Voting
Kevin Adderley	Head of Strategic Development	Yes
David Armstrong	Head of Branch, CYPDD	Yes
Phil Ashley	Asset & Support Services Manager	Yes
David Ball	Head of Housing & Regeneration	Yes
Ian Brand	Head of Asset Management	Yes
Gill Foden	Organisational Development Manager	Yes
Jayne Marshall	Principal Manager, DASS	Yes
Jacqui Roberts	Head of Corporate Change	Yes
David Taylor-Smith	Deputy Director of Finance	Yes
Jack Holroyd	EC Harris	No
David Revell	EC Harris	No

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Below are the outcomes from the workshop:

Fig. 4.2 Ranked and Weighted Benefits

Objectives	Rankings	Weighting*
Employ the minimal use of space, save money and deliver greater efficiency in fit for purpose working environments	1	29
Bring about improved services to customers and value for money to Council Tax payers	2	27
Achieve a recurrent saving of at least £1m in office accommodation property operating costs	3=	14
Act as a catalyst for regeneration activity in Wirral (support the regeneration agenda)	3=	14
Promote shared services within Wirral BC and with other local service providers	5	8
Co-locating Directorates to achieve efficiencies	6	5
Reduce the Council's carbon footprint	7	3
		100

The detailed requirements of the above benefits are as follows:

Employ the minimal use of space, save money and deliver greater efficiency in fit for purpose working environments

This objective reflects that this project is not just about the building, but, more importantly, about achieving better economy, efficiency and productivity through working environments. It also sits at the core of the way in which the Council wishes to deliver its services in the future, using built assets as an enabler rather than a constraint to flexible working and better value.

Bring about improved services to customers and value for money for Council Tax payers

Improved customer service is recognised as being at the heart of the service transformation. This is created by reducing overheads, better co-operative working within the council and the IT which enables the mobile working, providing quicker more efficient responses to customer needs.

This was seen as important for the following reasons:

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- Demonstrating good value for Council Tax payers;
- Showing a clear intention to engage in an open and visible process for key decisions that effect public services;
- A willingness to learn lessons from previous projects and other Councils that have undertaken similar exercises.

Achieve a recurrent saving of at least £1m in office accommodation property operating costs

The total expenditure on the existing corporate office portfolio within scope in 2008/09 was £4.091m. This figure excludes £8.9m accumulated backlog maintenance and an additional £8.25m identified as a maintenance requirement over the next 10 years. The approval of the SAR by Cabinet in January 2009 set out a savings target of £1million of property operating costs by 31 March 2011. This minimum target is incorporated into the overall savings programme within the Council's Change Programme and is thus an important feature of the office accommodation strategy.

Act as a catalyst for regeneration activity in Wirral (support the regeneration agenda)

The SAR is concurrent with a number of specific regeneration projects. There is therefore an excellent opportunity to re-provide civic accommodation which will act as a catalyst for area regeneration. The covenant of WBC in the overall investment strategy is capable of attracting complementary investment and leveraging funding into the office accommodation project itself, depending on the preferred funding route for any potential new development. Savings obtained through the accommodation project also potentially could be used to support regeneration.

Current major regeneration projects in varying stages of planning or physical development are:

- Wirral Waters;
- Birkenhead town centre;
- Woodside;
- New Brighton.

The regeneration planning of Wirral Waters and Birkenhead town centre creates a wide range of investment opportunities within which a civic campus could integrate.

Promote shared services within Wirral BC and with other local service providers

There was a high level of consensus from focus interviews and the workshop event that in undertaking this review, the Council should present every opportunity to other

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local providers to co-locate services or share facilities. Initial contact was made with all Strategic Assembly Partners and no immediate opportunities were identified. However, it is important that the ongoing debate facilitates continuing dialogue with all potential partners to develop continued efficiencies and in support of the Total Place initiative.

This was seen as important for the following reasons:

- Demonstrating good value for Council Tax payers;
- Showing a clear intention to engage in an open and visible process for key decisions that effect public services;
- A willingness to learn lessons from previous projects and other Councils that have undertaken similar exercises.

Co-locating Directorates to achieve efficiencies

The current operating model disperses the core back office functions of the Directorates as follows:

Fig 4.3: Dispersed Current Model

Directorate	In Scope Buildings occupied
Adult Social Services (DASS) 3 buildings	Bebington Town Hall Conway Centre Westminster House
Children and Young People (CYPD) 10 buildings	Acre Lane Bedford House Conway Centre Devon Gardens Hamilton Building Liscard Municipal Building Moreton Municipal Building Rock Ferry Centre Solar Campus Willowtree
Corporate Services 2 buildings	Wallasey Town Hall Wallasey Town Hall North Annex
Finance 9 buildings (including One Stop Shops)	Cheshire Lines Conway Centre (One Stop Shop) Finance Municipal Building Hamilton Building Moreton Municipal Building (One Stop Shop)

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Directorate	In Scope Buildings occupied
	Pennant House (One Stop Shop) Rock Ferry Centre (One Stop Shop) Treasury Building Wallasey Town Hall (One Stop Shop)
Law, HR and Asset Management 4 buildings	Cheshire Lines (planned move in July 2010) Wallasey Town Hall Wallasey Town Hall South Annex Birkenhead Town Hall (Registrars)
Regeneration 6 buildings	Conway Centre The Old Courthouse Wallasey Town Hall Wallasey Town Hall North Annex Wallasey Town Hall South Annex Westminster House
Technical Services 1 building	Cheshire Lines

Reducing the number of buildings to co-locate Directorates was seen as delivering the following efficiencies:

- Saving on corporate overheads;
- Better communication on cross Directorate issues;
- Improved access to corporate and common support functions; and,
- More effective collaborative working

Reduce the carbon footprint for the Council

In anticipation of future standards for public buildings, any new building which may be occupied as a consequence of this business case should have a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent' and good practice would determine that it should also meet Sustainable Operations of the Government Estate ("SOGE") targets. As a result of the government's targets to reduce carbon emissions by 12.5% by 2010 and 30% by 2020, any move to a different building (either new or refurbished) also reinforces the need to anticipate the future requirement of a BREEAM rating of 'Excellent'. Achieving a BREEAM Excellent standard will require an approximate 7% increase in capital cost of the build compared to BREEAM very good standard. However, this can deliver up to 30% in energy efficiency savings over the life of the building. These factors are assumed in our modelling.

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Reducing the amount of travelling between buildings will be achieved as a consequence of operating from fewer assets. This will not only save time and expense, but also reduce the overall carbon footprint for the Council.

Other Benefits

Directors additionally wished to take the following benefits into account:

- Improvement in HR costs, including reduced recruitment costs and lower staff absences which have been demonstrated to be delivered as a result of improved and modern working environments;
- A solution which minimised business disruption during the transitional period, which indicates that double decanting should be avoided wherever possible.

4.2 Approach to the Options Study

The options and their qualitative and financial evaluation which follow are designed to address two fundamental issues. First, it assesses the comparative advantage of taking steps to rationalise the portfolio as opposed to continuing to manage in the existing environment or undergoing piecemeal change. Second, the options offer varying degrees of new build as a practical and cost effective solution to the office accommodation strategy. The process does not attempt to define the location of any new or revised accommodation solution. Chapter 7 examines currently known sites and addresses the pros and cons of each in order to inform the subsequent debate on location.

This Business Case does not propose alternative uses for any of the buildings within its scope which may become surplus to requirements. It is assumed, however, that all such unused buildings will be disposed of and proposals for any potential disposals will be brought forward at the appropriate time

4.3 Cheshire Lines

Currently WBC leases 3367 sq m (NIA) of accommodation in the Cheshire Lines Building. The building accommodates the Technical Services Directorate headquarters, Call Centres, the Wirral Archive and (from 1 July 2010) the Asset Management Team. WBC leases this accommodation for £410,000 per annum (currently under review.) There is a further 14 years remaining on the lease which will expire in 2024. The accommodation in Cheshire Lines is recently refurbished and achieves an economy of 7.75 sq m per workstation. The working environment is of generally fair to good standard, although lacking in natural light. There may be the opportunity for the Council to extend its interest at this location.

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Each of the following options includes the retention of Cheshire Lines under the current lease agreement, as the outcome of the review is not currently known.

Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre

The Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre managed by CYPD is generally recognised as providing a stimulating learning environment bringing clear benefits and involving a number of agencies working alongside WBC. The facility itself, however, is not economical to run. It has an annual energy cost of £97,578 (rated as F); the total outstanding maintenance requirement (current and planned) amounts to £2,488,000 and the carbon emissions from a large and rambling building are 617 tonnes per year. Further, the building itself is located remotely from the rest of the corporate office estate and accessibility is not ideal for the functions of the Centre.

Each of the options in the following Section 4.4 (excluding Option 6 – the complete new build option) include the retention of the existing Acre Lane facility. However, in anticipation of delivering further economies from integrated working, the site options also identify the sites that would possibly accommodate a new Centre as part of a second phase development. In this event, it is recommended that all of the agencies that currently use the Centre are involved in the consultation and invited to contribute to the capital cost of the development. Any proposal to re-provide the Centre should also be based on a separate business case to determine its long term business objectives and revenue targets.

In the interim, it is recommended that the gymnasium, hall and associated accommodation amounting to 850sq m (which are empty and in need of repair) are demolished. This will achieve an immediate estimated annual saving of £6,435 on the uniform business rate. Furthermore, any internal works that are intended to generate additional capacity are similarly subject to a business case appraisal to demonstrate that they will deliver genuine value for money.

4.4 The Options

The following configuration options were arrived at as a result of the process of

- An initial viewing of the current in scope buildings;
- The underlying geographical distribution of the buildings;
- The need to offer the opportunity to make continued use of either Wallasey or Birkenhead Town Halls, assuming that the latter is not sold as part of the current marketing initiative, (Options 5 and 6 demonstrate the cost of utilising neither);

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- The metrics of 6.5 sq m per workstation (average) and an overall staff to desk ratio of 7:10 for the new build;
- The views expressed at the Focus Interviews, the 5 February 2010 Stakeholder Workshop and discussions with the Head of Asset Management.

The future numbers of staff and the organisation of services in respect of these options are not yet decided. The national spending cuts anticipated to affect local government from 2011 are expected to generate the need for efficiencies in back office functions. Accordingly, the central assumption of a 10% across the board staffing reduction has been made and informs the staff numbers in the following options. The impact of retaining staffing levels and a reduction of 20% are included as sensitivities at Section 5.6.

Option 1: Do minimum option, including addressing backlog maintenance within the next 5 years

The immediate backlog maintenance on the existing office portfolio for the 22 in scope buildings is £8.9m or £128 per sq m compared with the existing expenditure of £12 per sq m. A further £8.25m has been identified as being required to prevent further degeneration of the assets and to secure their future over the next 25 years. The net present value of Prudential Borrowing over 10 years to maintain the existing estate is £39,899,281 with no benefits arising from this investment. The impact of delay in addressing this backlog in maintenance expenditure would be to increase the liability in real terms in future years. This would be due to deterioration in the building fabric, further deterioration in the energy efficiency rating across the estate and rapidly deteriorating conditions for staff. Health and Safety issues could also be expected to arise.

Option 2: Retain Wallasey Town Hall, Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, retain the North and South Annexes with refurbishment, improved utilisation of Solar Campus and refurbishment of Westminster House. Provide the balance of the required accommodation in new build

This option retains Wallasey Town Hall with existing levels of occupancy. It therefore incurs the current maintenance expenditure and backlog maintenance associated with this building. The existing Council Chambers and Members' offices would also continue to be used under this option. This option also assumes that the existing lease on the Cheshire Lines Building will run its natural course and WBC will continue to pay rental under the current agreement. Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre is retained in its existing location, but it is proposed that possible synergies and economies of scale that will result from a second phase development on the new build site are fully investigated.

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Both North and South Annexes of Wallasey Town Hall are refurbished under this Option. Together the Annexes are modelled to be capable of accommodating 458 staff in their refurbished state (compared with their current loading of 281.) This option effectively retains the Wallasey Campus centred on the Town Hall.

Solar Campus currently provides important services for young people, but, in relation to the remainder of the corporate estate, is considerably under-utilised. Without a structure plan to build a functional utilisation model it is difficult to anticipate what a future optimum usage might be. However, a staffing complement of 200 is envisaged as necessary to justify the retention of the building in terms of its efficiency for office accommodation purposes, in support of its primary function to provide special educational and training support for young people. (This equates to an average of 9.56 sq m per workstation. It is believed that this level of economy should be possible with only minor modifications to the St Mary's building.)

The Westminster House refurbishment project, as it was originally conceived as part of the overall strategy, is included in this option. It will deliver a good quality economical environment for DASS and other Departments to engage in modern working practices.

The total number of staff remaining to be accommodated in new build under this option is 692.

Option 3: Retain Wallasey Town Hall, Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, better use of Solar Campus, refurbish Westminster House. Provide the balance of the required accommodation in new build.

This option repeats the main features of Option 2, but envisages the disposal of the North and South Annexes to Wallasey Town Hall. These annexes are not within the existing areas of housing restraint and any future potential housing development would be able to make use of the waterfront location and be designed around the feature of the Town Hall as a focal point.

This option will require 1150 staff to be accommodated in the new build.

Option 4: Retain Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, make better use of Solar Campus and refurbish Westminster House. Re-provide democratic and corporate functions currently in Wallasey Town Hall in Birkenhead Town Hall. Provide the balance of the accommodation in new build.

The legacy buildings of the former District Councils include two former Town Halls at Birkenhead and Wallasey. The options for alternative use of these buildings are extremely limited, particularly in the current economic climate. In the event that Birkenhead Town Hall is not disposed of, this option provides for its re-use as an

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alternative to Wallasey. It is possible that some future use could be devised for Wallasey Town Hall in the event that the North and South Annexes are disposed of.

This option therefore configures services identically to Option 3, but moves the democratic heart of the Council from Wallasey to Birkenhead. This would provide a better civic campus feel to Birkenhead in the event that the new build was sited in the Wirral Waters or Birkenhead Town Centre regeneration study areas.

This option requires a new build capable of accommodating 1223 staff using the same metrics as before.

Option 5: As option 4 but assumes that Birkenhead Town Hall is disposed of and its staff are housed in a new build. This option would therefore involve re-providing the Council Chamber, civic space and Member accommodation in the new build.

This option would create a more efficient new building, but would be more capital intensive and probably challenging in terms of public acceptability. The abandonment of both Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls in favour of a larger new build would be difficult from a presentational point of view. The perceptible improvement in public services in return for the investment may be similarly hard to justify.

The total number of staff to be accommodated in a new build under this option is 1540, together with additional accommodation modelled at 500sqm for new Council chamber and Member accommodation.

Option 6: complete new build solution

This option models the effect of a total new build solution for all the buildings in scope.

- This option would commit the Council to a substantial capital development. A single large building would not provide the flexibility to respond to funding cuts or future ways of working that may require a greater degree of flexible or home working;
- The solution would require a new building of 20,650 sq m which would not provide the most economically advantageous solution;
- A full new build would mean abandoning both Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls, but WBC would retain a contingent liability for each;
- It would mean providing a new Council Chamber and Member offices or devising some other arrangement for Council meetings;
- The Council would retain liability for the lease on Cheshire Lines;

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- Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre and Solar Campus would be replaced contributing to a very large and high risk project;
- It is unlikely, in view of the above, to be capable of attracting support from the Council, stakeholders or the wider public.

4.5 Assessment of the Options against the Qualitative Benefits

The above accommodation options have been scored against the objectives in terms of how well they meet them by giving them a qualitative score. This score has then been multiplied by the agreed weighting. The results are shown as follows:

Fig 4.4: Assessment of Benefits of Each Option

Project Objectives	Options					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Score from 1-10 weighted to reflect relative importance of the objective (see Fig: 4.2)					
Employ the minimal use of space, save money and deliver greater efficiency in fit for purpose working environments	28	145	185	185	228	181
Bring about improved services to customers and value for money to Council Tax payers	0	169	176	172	166	192
Achieve a saving of at least £1m in office accommodation property operating costs	0	126	126	112	84	26
Catalyse regeneration activity in Wirral (support the regeneration agenda)	0	58	84	96	98	107
Promote shared services within Wirral BC and with other local service providers	14	41	56	56	55	50
Co-locating Directorates to achieve efficiencies	16	24	33	35	35	44
Reduce the carbon footprint	0	17	21	21	24	21

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for the Council						
Total weighted score for each option	58	580	681	677	690	621

4.6 Rationale

The weighted benefit scores awarded to each option determine the extent to which that option meets the project criteria agreed by Directors in focus interviews and ratified by the Workshop of 5 February 2010.

The Do Minimum Option

The do minimum option scores poorly against every benefit criterion. It scores some points in respect of the working environment in recognition of the fact that the IT investment to provide the technical backbone for agile working is budgeted for separately and will deliver the ability for people to work in a more agile manner, to a degree, irrespective of the buildings. Some co-location will be possible under the central assumption of a 10% reduction in staff numbers. There is no opportunity to catalyse regeneration activity and no identified opportunity to generate revenue savings.

The above paragraph describes one approach to a do minimum option. It is possible to develop other variants on this theme which would progressively economise on space over time. This could be described as a Do Minimum Plus approach. However, irrespective of the way in which a do minimum option is configured, this type of intervention will tend to be characterised by an opportunistic and unplanned approach where asset use will be driven by circumstances rather than the key objective of creating planned sustainable savings from asset use.

Minimise the use of space and save money

In respect of the options proposing an element of new build, the greater amount of new build produces a higher score for securing a modern fit for purpose working environment. It is assumed that retained buildings even if refurbished will not provide the same degree of flexibility of use of space due to the constraints of the existing buildings. It is estimated that the North and South Annexes can be refurbished to provide an average of 7 sq m per workspace. A complete new build solution would achieve good space efficiency but the extent of the new build would limit flexibility.

Improved Services to Customers and Value for Money to Council Tax payers

Improved customer services are achieved broadly across all remaining options. The transfer of the Registrars in Options 4 and 5 reduces the scores slightly for these options. The full new build solution provides little or no flexibility to respond to future

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customer needs and the additional cost will detract from the ability to channel funds into improving customer services.

Achieve Annualised Savings of at least £1m

The extent and the timing of savings differ for each of the Options. The additional savings opportunities (identified at Section 6.2) are excluded from this part of the analysis. The variation in the scores reflects the timing of the savings and the degree of risk inherent in delivering the savings under each option.

Catalyse Regeneration

The ability to use the covenant and the physical presence of the Council to support the areas of regeneration study vary as a function of the extent of the new build and its location. The option to retain Birkenhead Town Hall (in preference to Wallasey) is viewed as slightly better in this particular respect and abandoning both Birkenhead and Wallasey Town Halls as in Options 5 and 6 could have a negative impact.

Shared Services

The ability to attract services shared across other service providers is not considered to be directly related to a particular building configuration, but a civic campus in the Birkenhead area (possibly, but not necessarily, centred on the Town Hall) may create a better strategic relationship with the accommodation needs of potential partners.

Co-locating Directorates

The larger single building will provide better opportunities for collaborative working in the Council and create efficiencies of common and support functions.

Carbon Footprint

The carbon footprint is derived from the burning of fossil fuels (coal, petroleum products and natural gas) in proportion to their carbon content. Replacing the least energy efficient assets and constructing to BREEAM excellent standards will produce the greatest relative savings in operating costs. The clustering of back office buildings will reduce travel between premises and consequently carbon emissions generated by car travel.

4.7 The New Build Model

A model to assemble the new build has been made in order to develop the costs of the new build in the financial model in the following Chapter: The new build model incorporates the following features:

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Fig 4.5: Building Model Characteristics

Model feature	Characteristic
The numbers of staff to be accommodated in new build	Determined on the basis of a central assumption of 10% fewer staff by the time the new build is operational. Sensitivities in Section 5.6 identify the impact of steady state staffing and a 20% reduction
Allocation per workspace	6.5sq m average, taking into account smart design for mobile workers and a limited capacity for cellular offices
Workspace to staff ratio	7 workspaces for 10 staff as an average
Area breakdown	The design model allocates space on the following metrics of the NIA: workstations 62%, meeting rooms / reception 12%, staff facilities 5%, data centre, communications hubs and facilities management (“FM”) space 3%. This is considered sufficient to accommodate the data centre in the new build (for example, 3 communications hubs plus one data centre of approximately 100 sq m)
Grossing up factor	The model produces a grossing up factor of 18% to arrive at the GIA.
Car parking	One car park space for 40 sq m is allowed for
One Stop Shop	No allowance made for a number of One Stop Shops that might need to be re-provided greater than 1, pending detailed service delivery solution and agreed location for the build. Construction cost of a One Stop Shop designed and constructed similarly to the existing Conway Centre facility would require approximately £937,125 capital and this requirement is incorporated into the financial model.
Energy efficiency	A 7% increase in capital is modelled to achieve BREEAM excellent and 30% revenue savings on energy for each new build option compared to the buildings it replaces.

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5. Economic and Financial Case

5.1 Introduction

This Chapter of the Business Case provides the net present values (“NPV”) of each option, against a range of modelled assumptions for each option. The NPV enables a judgment to be made on the value of the benefit at any given time – the time value of the money which is then aggregated over the evaluation period to provide the relative benefits of each of the Options considered. The Chapter then relates the net present values of these options to their benefit score in the previous Chapter to arrive at the most economically advantageous option. Full discounted cash flows that apply to each option and further detail on the modelling assumptions are included at Appendix B. All the input data (other than general benchmarking data) in this Business Case was supplied by WBC and this information and the figures provided are relied upon to form the basis of the financial model.

Each option is modelled over a 25 year period, which takes into account the scale of the investment and savings to be generated, and, excludes all VAT. The repayment period for Prudential Borrowing has been agreed with the Finance Directorate of WBC and is modelled over 10 years.

It is prudent to illustrate the effect of any allowance for optimism bias which may enter into the model. This reflects the human characteristic of under-estimating costs at the planning stage. Accordingly, the impact of a 10% upward movement in construction prices is analysed at Section 5.5. The sensitivity of steady state staffing and a 20% staffing reduction is included at Section 5.6.

The financial model is constructed prudently to identify the capital outlay of the options and the savings arising from vacating the relevant buildings under each option. Chapter 6 additionally identifies a series of additional savings opportunities which will arise over and above the modelled savings, but are either not customarily captured within the model savings analysis or the input data is estimated from benchmarks rather than Wirral specific information. Therefore these savings are **not included in the financial model**. It is recommended that these benefits are noted here as potentially deliverable and assessed more closely going forward. They are:

- The estimated FM efficiency savings;
- The potential value obtained from property receipts
- HR administration savings arising from lower sickness absence and reduced turnover proven to result from improved working environments;

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- Savings arising from demolition of Acre Lane surplus accommodation
- Savings in staff travel, expenses and time resulting from reduced inter site travel
- Car park income resulting from any possible future arrangement to introduce a car parking charging regime for staff as part of the strategy

Section 5.7 examines the key variant of the cost benefit of the Westminster House refurbishment project;

Section 5.8 examines risk.

5.2 Do minimum Option

The do minimum option is included as a benchmark against which all other options are assessed. This option assumes that the existing portfolio of 22 in scope administrative buildings is retained without refurbishment and with no change to the current density of use. All backlog and outstanding maintenance is tackled over the next 5 years under this option and funded through Prudential Borrowing at Public Works Loan Board (“PWL B”) rates over 10 years. This option does not confer any quality benefits whatsoever and the maintenance liability of the existing portfolio would inevitably increase over time.

The impact of not planning for this hike in maintenance costs now would be to increase the liability in real terms in future years. This would be due to deterioration in the building fabric, further deterioration in the energy efficiency rating across the estate and rapidly deteriorating conditions for staff. The costs associated with this option must recognise, as they do, the consequences of retaining these buildings for a further 25 years.

The immediate accumulated backlog maintenance on the existing office portfolio for the 22 in scope buildings is £8.9m or £128 per sq m compared with the existing expenditure of £12 per sq m. A further £8.3m has been identified plus on going planned maintenance as being required to prevent further degeneration of the assets and to secure their future over the next 25 years with no benefits arising from this investment. On the assumption that these costs relate to labour and materials costs only, they would be need to be enhanced by the cost of professional fees. For the purposes of this Business Case we have used the figures on maintenance costs provided by WBC.

The impact of the maintenance spend of the combined £8.9m and £8.3m for the do minimum option is shown in the graph below:

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Fig 5.1: Maintenance Spend – Do Minimum

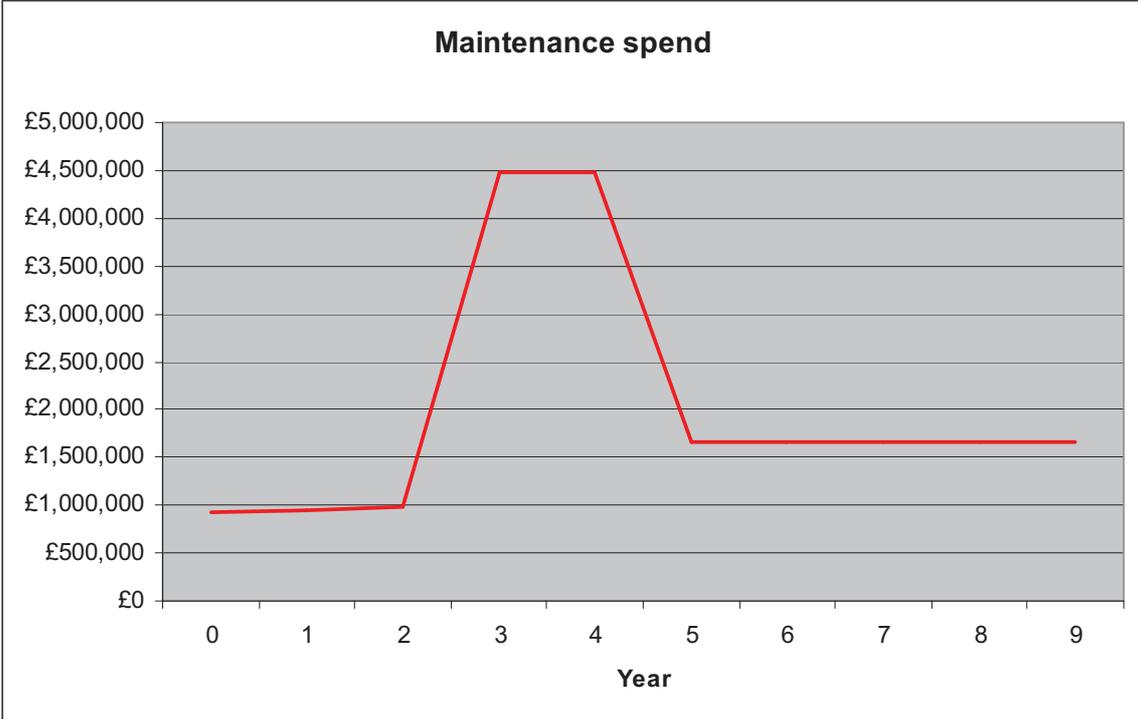


Fig 5.2: Do minimum NPV

Option	Net Present Value (£)
1. Do minimum	106,277,212

The do minimum option presents the highest NPV of all of the options. It would therefore not be advantageous to progress this route as it the most costly and would receive no other benefits.

5.3 Quantitative Evaluation of the Remaining Options

Option 2: Retain Wallasey Town Hall, Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, retain the North and South Annexes with some refurbishment, improved utilisation of Solar Campus and refurbishment of Westminster House. Provide the balance of the required accommodation in new build

This option requires a new build area of 5,819 sq m and refurbishment of 4,272 sq m in addition to some betterment of Solar Campus. The Prudential Borrowing to carry out these works is assumed to be repaid over 10 years. The refurbishment of

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Westminster House is modelled by means of capital allocation and consequently does not attract interest. Backlog maintenance and planned programmed maintenance (Prudentially Borrowed) is modelled to be carried out over the next 5 years. Surface level car parking for the new build is calculated at 1 space per 40 sq m. This would provide an average of 1 space per 5.4 staff.

Retained accommodation attracts maintenance costs as in the do-minimum option. This is replaced with refurbishment costs and an appropriate level of on-going life cycle cost for the refurbished buildings.

Fig 5.3: Option 2 NPV

Option 2	Net Present Value (£)
Wallasey TH, N&S Annexes (refurbishment,) CL (existing lease), AL, SC, WH (refurbishment) plus new build	84,366,929

Option 3: Retain Wallasey Town Hall, Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, improved utilisation of Solar Campus, refurbish Westminster House. Provide the balance of the required accommodation in new build.

This option increases the new build element as a replacement for Wallasey Town Hall North and South Annexes. The new build element therefore increases to 9,178 sq m and the impact of swapping new build for refurbishment increases the NPV of the PB over a 10 year repayment profile. Modelling for Westminster House and car parking provision at the new build is as option 2.

Fig 5.4: NPV Option 3

Option 3	Net Present Value (£)
Wallasey TH, CL (existing lease), AL, SC, WH (refurbishment) plus new build	85,177,197

Option 4: Retain Cheshire Lines, Acre Lane, improved utilisation of Solar Campus and refurbish Westminster House. Re-provide democratic and corporate functions currently in Wallasey Town Hall in Birkenhead Town Hall. Provide the balance of the accommodation in new build.

This option reflects the lower amount of usable space in Birkenhead Town Hall as opposed to Wallasey. The new build requirement is therefore increased to 9,716 sq m. All other modelled assumptions are as for previous options. This Option incurs the cost of re-providing existing functions in Wallasey Town Hall to Birkenhead.

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Fig 5.5: NPV Option 4

Option 4	Net Present Value (£)
Birkenhead TH, CL (existing lease), AL, SC, WH (refurbishment) plus new build	87,678,151

Option 5: As option 4 but this option assumes the successful disposal of Birkenhead Town Hall. This option would therefore involve re-providing a more space efficient Council Chamber and Member accommodation in the new build.

This option assumes that neither Birkenhead nor Wallasey Town Halls are re-used. The staff who would occupy Birkenhead Town Hall under Option 4 are accommodated in new build. New, smaller and fit for purpose Member accommodation and Council Chamber is also incorporated in the new build solution under this Option. This therefore requires new build of 12,540 sq m. Other modelled assumptions are as for other options.

Fig 5.6: NPV Option 5

Option 5	Net Present Value (£)
CL (existing lease), AL, SC, WH (refurbishment) plus new build	87,332,775

Option 6: This option is included to show the cost of a total new build solution.

The new build replaces everything included in the 22 in scope buildings, including Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre and Solar Campus. The entire new build, which is assumed to incorporate the new build efficiencies across the board, requires 20,650 sq m of office space including new Member accommodation and Council Chamber.

Fig 5.7: NPV Option 6

Option 6	Net Present Value (£)
Total new build solution	83,814,426

5.4 Benefits and Quantitative Summary

In order to understand the relationship between the financial analysis and the benefits delivered by each of the options a value point score has been calculated for each option. This methodology, which is widely used in this type of analysis is derived by dividing the benefit score by the NPV of each option. This produces the following result.

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Fig 5.7: Value Point Analysis

Option	Do minimum 1.	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5	Option 6
Benefit Score	58	580	681	677	690	621
Cost in NPV terms (£m)	106.3	84.4	85.2	87.7	87.3	83.8
Value points	0.55	6.87	7.99	7.72	7.90	7.41
Value ranking	6	5	1	3	2	4

Fig 5.8: Option Ranking

Option	Value points	Ranking
3	7.99	1
5	7.90	2
4	7.72	3
6	7.41	4
2	6.87	5
1	0.55	6

The value points per option (particularly for Options 3 and 5) are closely grouped, with Options 3, 5, 4 and 6 ranging from 7.99 to 7.41. In considering which Option to carry forwards, the sensitivities, variants and savings are important considerations. It is also very important to note the additional capital cost associated with Option 4 which involves vacating Wallasey Town Hall, and Option 5 which involves vacating both Wallasey and Birkenhead Town Halls.

5.5 Optimism bias

Construction costs

It reflects best practice to allow for an element of optimism bias in the calculations at an early stage of the project. We believe that all our assumptions in this Business

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case are reasonable and prudent; the costs reflect a basket of indices over the projected construction period and only savings which can be fully modelled are included in the analysis. However, to follow the best practice requirement the table below shows the impact of a 10% increase in construction costs.

Fig: 5.9: Impact of 10% increase in construction costs

Option	NPV (£)
1	106,277,212
2	85,561,890
3	86,541,804
4	89,507,141
5	89,197,279
6	86,824,567

5.6 Sensitivity Analysis

Change in staffing levels

Staffing sensitivities impact on the NPV of the options as follows:

Fig 5.10: Staffing Change Impact

Option	NPV (£) -20%	NPV (£) Steady State
1	106,277,212	106,277,212
2	80,063,550	88,670,307
3	80,873,819	89,480,576
4	83,375,184	91,981,530
5	83,031,345	91,636,153
6	79,573,975	88,052,957

5.7 Variants

Westminster House

The refurbishment of Westminster House was included as a discrete project in the overall office accommodation strategy. The NPV of the cost of this project compared with a 'no refurbishment' option is shown below. This cost comparison does not take account of the savings and efficiencies generated by this development which are rolled into the overall savings for each of the options; for example the ability to

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empty the South Annex as a result of the Westminster House refurbishment saving all utility and FM costs associated with that building.

Fig 5.11: Westminster House Refurbishment

	NPV Cost over 25 years
Refurbishment of Westminster House	10,194,684
No Refurbishment	8,220,848

One Stop Shop (“OSS”)

The effect of replacing the Conway Centre One Stop Shop is included in the financial model. Based on the areas of the existing One Stop Shops, if it is necessary to replace an OSS facility (additionally to Conway Centre) an area of 638 sq m is estimated to be required per facility producing an additional build cost (including externals, fees and an allowance for contingencies) of £937,125.

5.8 Risk

Risk will develop organically with the project. The risk matrix below identifies a series of strategic risks appropriate to this stage of the project. It is envisaged that the strategic risks identified below will be developed in terms of their impact and likelihood by the stakeholder workshop as part of the wider dissemination of the conclusions and recommendations in this Business Case. At the delivery stage of the project, the risks can be sub-divided into internal organisational risks around approvals and governance, design development risks, procurement risks and operational risks. At that stage it will be possible to cost the risks into the analysis using this Business Case model and the cost of sensitivities and optimism bias as a barometer for absorbing the cost of risk into the project.

Fig 5.12 Risk

Risk	Description
Project not progressed for internal reasons	Persist with do minimum option incurring steep maintenance costs with no benefits
Organisational design not developed to support the preferred asset configuration	New asset and refurbished accommodation not used to the optimum to provide minimum amount of space

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7:10 workspace to staff ratio not achieved	Inability to use the space efficiently
Suitable site not identified	Need to reconfigure the preferred solution or incur additional cost in site acquisition
Preferred option becomes unaffordable	2011 settlement makes the capital investment a higher risk
Flexible working methodology not agreed	Outputs from Work stream 3 not adopted
IT support to agile working not adopted across the portfolio	Lack of efficiency across the service functions and unable to derive full benefit from the building; improvised use of space
Headcount does not reduce by 10%	Additional costs incurred as identified in the sensitivity model
Planning permission not obtained for the preferred site	Alternative site options to be considered or delay to address planning conditions
Business continuity risks emerge during the transitional period	Risks particularly apparent during the transfer and decanting period
Strategy delayed because of individual service issues	It is important to look at the whole picture rather than risk allowing individual components to determine the strategy.

5.9 Conclusion

The cost benefit analysis identifies Option 3 as the most economically advantageous offer, providing the best combination of costs and benefits, but the advantage is not great compared with Options 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 6, Affordability and Savings, examines the savings attributable to each of the Options.

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6. Affordability and Savings

6.1 Affordability of the Preferred Solution

The overall financial position of WBC is reported as sustainable, notwithstanding any further financial pressures that will emerge in government decisions on allocations to Local Authorities over the coming period. The Audit Commission has complimented the Council in its 2009 Comprehensive Area Assessment on the savings that it has accumulated over recent years. The office accommodation project and other projects within the overall change programme (for example the IT initiatives) have demonstrated a willingness to engage in invest to save approaches in support of delivering business objectives.

The annual recurrent savings target for the office accommodation project was set at a minimum level of £1m. The table following identifies the average modelled savings for each Option.

Fig 6.1: Average Savings

Option	Average Saving per Year (£) (Note 1)
1	n/a
2	876,411
3	844,001
4	743,962
5	757,778
6	898,511

Note 1: NPV of savings averaged over 25 years

On the face of the analysis Option 6 delivers the highest level of savings overall. However, the reasons why we believe this project to carry unacceptably high delivery risks are given in previous Chapters. The savings would also take longer to materialise. Option 2 similarly, does not, on the current analysis, deliver the same extent of project benefits sought in the SAR strategy compared with Option 3. The savings derived from Option 3 relative to the do minimum Option 1 are illustrated in the graph below.

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Fig 6.2: Option 3 Yearly Savings relative to Option 1



Fig 6.3: Option 3 Costs Compared with Option 1



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If a 20% staff reduction were to take place then the following average savings could be achieved. This shows average savings in excess of £1m delivered under Options 2, 3 and 6.

Fig 6.4: Average Savings (20% staff reduction)

Option	Average Saving per Year (£) (Note 1)
1	n/a
2	1,048,546
3	1,016,136
4	916,081
5	929,835
6	1,068,130

The following table identifies the included and excluded items in the above analysis.

Fig 6.5: Model Inclusions and Exclusions

Included	Excluded
Capital cost of new build (incorporating construction, fees and contingencies with allowance for BREEAM excellent)	Any demolition of surplus buildings
Refurbishment of retained accommodation	VAT (assumed recoverable)
All maintenance costs for retained buildings (including backlog)	Information Technology ("IT") (budgeted separately)
Facilities Management ("FM")	Dispersal costs (ie staff allowances for change of location) (assumed neutral)
Utilities	HR savings
Business Rates	FM efficiency savings
Income currently generated by the existing building portfolio	Car Park income
Ongoing life costs of new building	Re-provision of One Stop Shops additionally to the replacement of the OSS at Conway Centre
Building Insurance	Property sales and other capital receipts
Car parking allowance for new build	Acre Lane modifications
Replacement of OSS at Conway Centre	Removals
Data centre (in separate location)	Decanting costs
Service Charges	Mileage savings (fuel and time)
Security costs for empty Town Halls	Storage

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Included	Excluded
	Site acquisition costs

6.2 Additional Savings Opportunities

Facilities Management

Identified annual FM spend on the existing office accommodation portfolio is £536,300 or £8.19 per sq m. The financial model makes appropriate allowances for providing FM services over a smaller space, but does not currently assume any FM efficiencies arising from new building design or redesigned refurbished space. The Asset Management Division is due to receive greater responsibility for FM across buildings previously managed by principal occupiers. The Division will take the opportunity to identify any savings which may be presented by this rationalisation.

Property Sale Receipts

The sale of the North and South Annexes to Wallasey Town Hall under options 3, 4, 5 and 6 may attract a substantial capital receipt in due course. This receipt could be further enhanced by planning permission for housing in support of the wider regeneration objectives. Clearly, market expectations have changed in the 5 years since the most recent valuation and the market currently may not be receptive to the offer. This may change in future. Furthermore, the release of these properties to the market as part of the office accommodation re-provision programme also offers the prospect of a developer partner agreement which may offer better value overall.

The sale of the North and South Annexes is identified as an additional (ie not modelled) receipt because it is a differentiator between option 2 and all other options (apart from do minimum.) No other capital receipts are referenced, although clearly, there is an opportunity to dispose of these assets when the market is suitable for realising appropriate value.

HR

The Audit Commission Comprehensive Area Assessment (“CAA”) for Wirral for 2009 commented that attendance levels needed to be improved and staff sickness was high. The detail of these costs in WBC has not been provided as part of this Business Case, but benchmarked savings from other Councils and comparable organisations shows a saving of up to 39% is achieved in sickness absence and related HR costs as a consequence of moving to new, fit for purpose accommodation within an environment supported by IT enabled agile working. It is recommended that current costs are established and a savings target identified for the new facility.

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Acre Lane Surplus Accommodation

Demolition of the gym and sports hall and associated accommodation at Acre Lane will produce an immediate business rate saving of approximately £6,435 or £219,788 over the 25 year period. There will be 'one off' cost of demolition circa £70,000. Demolition costs can vary considerably however and it would be advisable to obtain specific quotations to verify this estimate.

Car Park Income

No allowance has been made for income from car park charges. Experience elsewhere shows that charges for use of car parks adjacent to offices are deliverable as an additional income stream. Other public bodies that have introduced car parking charges that we have sampled (including Councils) set charges ranging from £2 to £9.77 per week and budget for an income stream of between £45,000 and £100,000 per annum.

6.3 Conclusion

The NPV of the average savings of Option 3 is £844,001. This base line saving could be expected to be improved upon by delivering the additional savings identified above and/or by achieving an overall staffing reduction greater than the 10% in the central assumption.

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7. Site Options

7.1 Identification of Site Options

It is not the purpose of this Business Case to make firm recommendations on the location of any solution which may involve a move to a new site. However, part of the study involved an examination of possible sites and this Chapter reports on these with the advantages and disadvantages identified in terms of their suitability and performance against the benefits criteria identified in Chapter 4 in order to inform a structured debate to aid a final solution.

7.2 Evaluation of Site Options against Project Objectives

In evaluating the various potential sites for their suitability, it is recommended that, as a minimum, the following search criteria are applied:

- The amount of land available; (the present building metrics for option 3 indicate a minimum of 3 acres.) A further 3 acres for a possible second phase Acre Lane project which may or may not sit alongside the new office building. These measures are to be confirmed going forward with the design brief and detailed site characteristics etc;
- Good accessibility by public transport and sustainable transport links. This approach has been endorsed by Mersey Travel;
- Within the footprint of the regeneration study area;
- An assessment of ease of obtaining planning permission in relation to the Local Development Framework (“LDF”)

The site options identified as part of this study are set out in the following table.

Fig 7.1: Site Evaluation

Ref No	Site	Comments
1	Wirral Waters	The regeneration of Wirral Waters is a strategic priority for the Council. The study area covers a wide area which may contain a number of opportunities for locating a potential new build. The further work which may be undertaken to create specific preferences for new build should include an examination of the detailed opportunities in the Wirral Waters regeneration study area. (Please also see ref no. 4 below.)

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Ref No	Site	Comments
2	Birkenhead, Beaufort Road	The total site occupies approximately 5.9 acres. There is one owner occupier remaining on what is otherwise a clean site. Merseyside Police Authority is purchasing the adjacent site to create a new Police HQ. Merseyside Police Authority has also expressed an interest in acquiring approximately 5 acres of the site for a co-located Area Command Centre. In the event that this application succeeds, the remaining space would be insufficient for a new building under any of the Options. There remains the possibility of locating a second data centre as a stand alone facility adjacent or linked to the Police Communications Centre for circa £147,000 build cost, based on an area of circa 100 sq m and a rate of £1,470/sq m.
3	Birkenhead, Europa Boulevard	The site currently in WBC ownership is subject to a development agreement with Europa Plaza Developments for a hotel and conference centre. The development agreement runs until 2014. The location is good for Birkenhead transport links and amenities. The site is approximately 3 acres which would be sufficient for the new building, but options 5 and 6 may result in constrained car parking availability and non-achievement of 1 space per 40sq metres used in the modelling tool. It would also provide insufficient capacity if a decision was made to incorporate the existing Acre Lane facility as a second phase. This second phase development if progressed would require an additional approximately 3 acres plus a car parking allocation.
4	Sites to be identified on regeneration study area in council ownership	GVA Grimley is commissioned by WBC to undertake an integrated regeneration study for Wirral Waters and Birkenhead Town Centre. It is recommended that all Council owned land in the study area is reviewed for suitability against the search criteria.
5	Cheshire Lines	There may be an opportunity for the Council to extend its interest at this location.
6	Birkenhead, Woodside	The Woodside Development Area may offer specific opportunities to introduce Council office accommodation to act as a catalyst for the progress of the Master Plan for Birkenhead Woodside. A Master Plan was produced in 2005 by the Building Design Partnership ("BDP") and Keppie Massie which is currently being refreshed. The Master Plan identifies various sites as having suitable potential for office development. The sites are in a variety of ownerships; for example, Secretary of State, Wichford (Birkenhead) and

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Ref No	Site	Comments
		private ownership (immediately adjacent to the development area.) The Plan for Woodside Business Park to the north of the study area in the ownership of Peel Holdings plc could also be considered. The area is adjacent to the existing listed Birkenhead Town Hall and therefore would create a campus configuration around democratic and civic functions at the town hall under option 4 which proposes the retention and re-use of Birkenhead Town Hall.
7	Birkenhead, Queensgate	The new development is not in Council ownership. Managing agents (Knight Frank) advise that this property is currently under offer. One of the offers is reported as enabling re-letting. The terms of this are unclear at present. The property may make suitable accommodation in the event that a temporary decant is required.
8	Bromborough, vacant sites on Wirral International Business Park	Vacant sites are available of up to 15.62 acres which would accommodate any option. The most land hungry options 5 and 6 can be expected to use in excess of 3 acres including 1 car park space for every 40 sq metres when the building is stacked over 5 floors. Public transport links are not as strong in the Bromborough area; dispersal costs could be expected to arise and additional car parking may need to be identified for the site.
9	Wallasey, Dock Road Depot, Dock Road	Leased by WBC to WPH and Colas who are vacating the site. The site is approximately 4.1 acres. This area is considered suitable for any new build option assuming a floor plate of between 1,500 sq m and 2,080 sq m and 1 car park space per 40 sq m. Access by public transport is limited at present, particularly by rail. However, road access is generally good.

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8. Commercial Case

8.1 Delivery Options Introduction

This Business Case assumes that the capital costs of the project will be funded entirely from Prudential Borrowing (“PB”) with the cost of the loan amortised over 10 years. However, the preferred procurement route for delivering the office accommodation strategy in its entirety will depend ultimately on a variety of factors. For example, the risk adjusted value of the portfolio, the opportunity for planning gain, the cash flow required by the project and the Council’s appetite for risk and approach to the risk management process. The experience of WBC in managing various forms of contractual relationship is also a consideration. In short, there is not a one size fits all type solution. The most successful councils arrive at a procurement choice through careful analysis of project requirements. Doing otherwise can be costly and counter-productive. Bearing in mind the character of the local property market as we understand it and the prevailing economic climate, the Prudential Borrowing route appears to offer the best prospects of delivery of the new office accommodation. But, WBC may wish to consider the feasibility of introducing opportunities presented by the wider regeneration plans

Separate legal and financial advice is also recommended in the case of implementation of any of the other structures described, to ensure that the Council is at all times acting within its legal powers. Members should also be aware of any potential conflicts of interest arising from membership of specially formed companies or Joint Ventures (JVs.)

This section of the report identifies the procurement and financing options generally and considers the pros and cons of each. This is intended to assist WBC in coming to a view. The following routes are considered:

Prudential Borrowing

Strategic Partnering Agreement

Integrator Model (which is not the same as the Construction Integrator operated by WBC)

Local Asset Backed Vehicle (“LABV”)

Private Finance Initiative (“PFI”)

While generally historically better value for money can be obtained from putting a number of properties into a single vehicle, the procurement options are not totally mutually exclusive and some combination of the above may suit the needs of this

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particular programme. For example, a discrete spend to save scheme may repay interest on Prudentially Borrowed capital on an element of the strategy with a guaranteed income stream (eg car parking) leaving projects with a different risk profile to a solution incorporating an element of private finance.

The information in this section also assumes that WBC wishes to act as a single entity. Any of the options described can be applied to an arrangement whereby services are shared or jointly delivered with another public service, but the public sector risk profile may differ for individual public sector entities in these scenarios. For example, a shared service centre delivered in conjunction with NHS Wirral might be delivered by a Local Investment Finance Trust (“LIFT”) Co which may lever in additional public funding. Each of the following options will require some form of competitive process to identify the strategic partner or contractor that the Council identifies as providing the most economically advantageous proposition.

8.2 Prudential Borrowing

Capital investment decisions funded through PB should take full account of affordability, value for money, the implications of external borrowing and all relevant strategic planning objectives including the SAR. All these features should be taken into account when setting the prudential indicators.

The system operates under the following key principles:

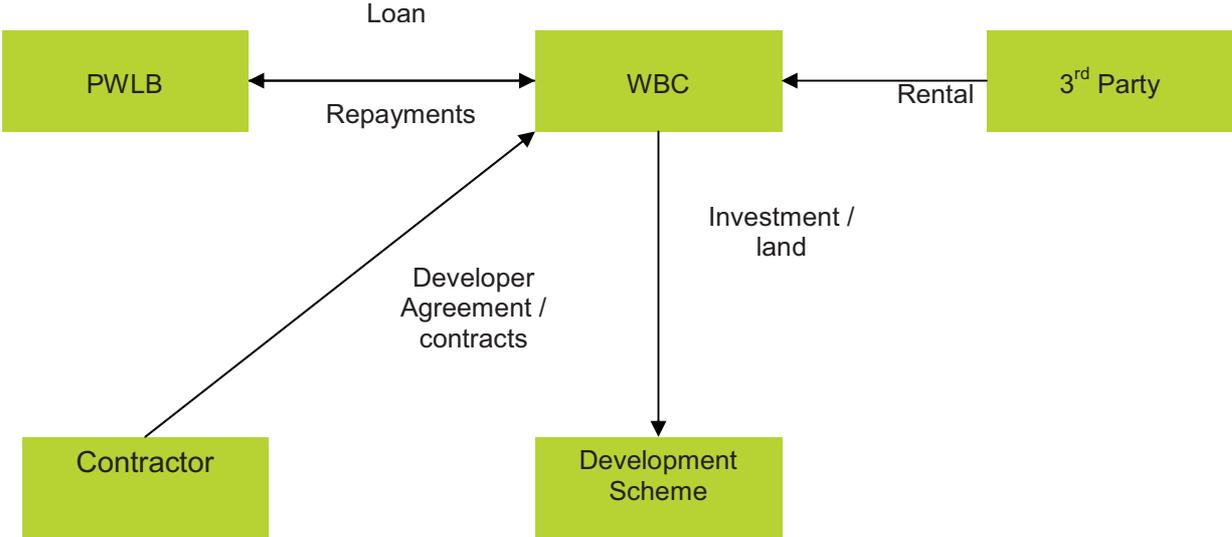
- The impact of the borrowing must be reflected in revenue budgets over the repayment period. This is a particularly relevant condition since risk is not transferred to a private sector partner under this option over and above that which is secured in a building contract. WBC must therefore ensure the sustainability of revenue to meet risk adjusted costs arising from construction, ownership and asset maintenance;
- The council must maintain a balanced budget;
- A set of Prudential Indicators are used to provide performance measurement in managing and controlling the impact of the investment decision.

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Fig 8.1: Prudential Borrowing

Strengths	Weaknesses
Prima facie economical funding method Council retains control May be combined with a framework agreement for project delivery, thus avoiding a separate competitive dialogue process May be combined with other funding options within the portfolio solution	Council retains project risks and benefits realisation risk stays with the council Prudential indicators may rule it out as an option The council should retain provision in its budget to meet contingencies throughout the asset life cycle.

Fig 8.2: Prudential Borrowing Model



8.3 Strategic Partnering Agreement

This form of agreement could range from a consultancy based service to an agreement to outsource various functions (either core or non core) and support services. The extent of the strategic partnering is dependent, among other things, on the scope of the project, the policy of WBC to outsourcing and the level of resources and skills in house to manage the consequences of the programme. These agreements are, however, typically characterised by not transferring delivery risk to the private sector partner, although payment can be linked to success or benefits realisation via a previously agreed mechanism. The above does not describe a full solution and neither would this option, on its own, have the capacity to raise project finance. A strategic partnering arrangement could, however, have the potential to

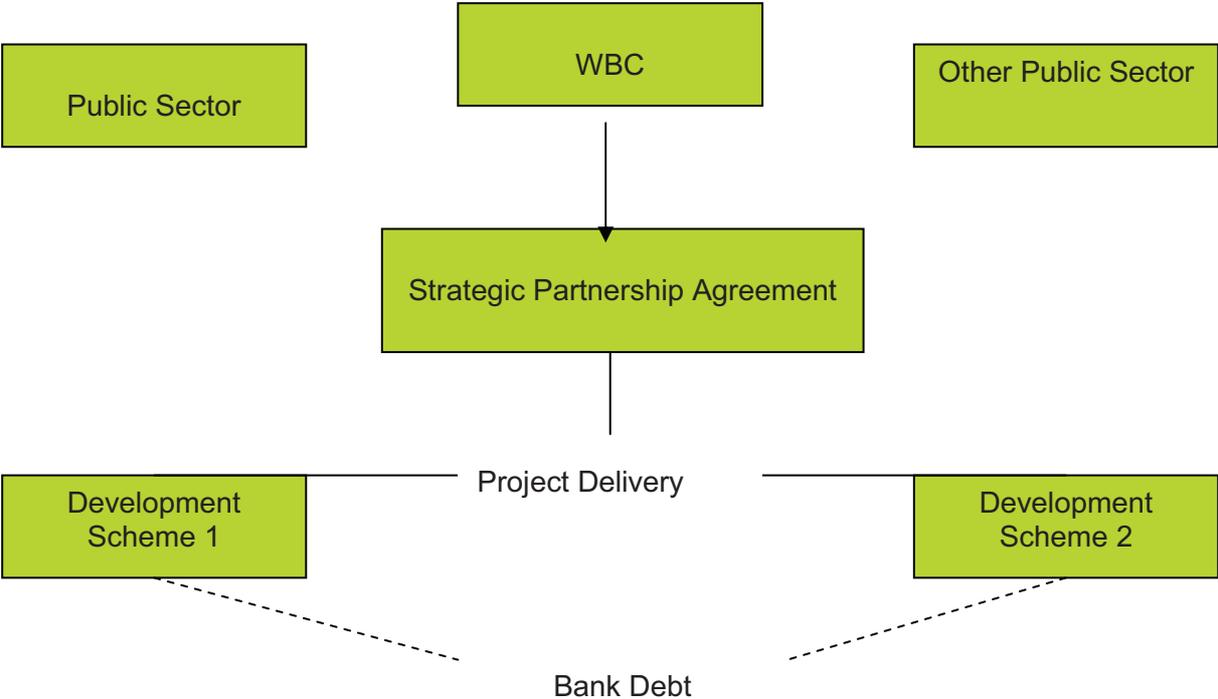
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crystallise into a Joint Venture (“JV”) type arrangement by mutual consent of the parties to the agreement.

Fig 8.3: Strategic Partnering

Strengths	Weaknesses
Creates flexibility Enables partnering without a formal JV structure Can be applied to a property portfolio with some flexibility within each discrete scheme Encourages participation from property consultancies and management companies, giving access to relevant expertise Council does not feel dominated by a separate legal entity	May attract a variety of partners offering a different combination of skills and motivations Council will need to define its requirements carefully to ensure that the partner is relevant and suitable in the medium to long term May not offer a complete solution to the council’s needs

Fig 8.4: Strategic Partnering Model



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8.4 Integrator Model

This model is a development on from the strategic partner model, and is particularly applicable where the programme can be cascaded into current and future phases; for example, any option which re-provided Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre as a second phase. The contractor takes construction risk and property risk on the initial phase, using the interest in sites known to become surplus to lever in capital for the initial phase of works. The value of the surplus sites is underwritten. The Council is protected from downside risk on property values and surpluses generated are shared between the client and the contractor. Under this model, the contractor would carry out a competitive tender for any subsequent phases, thus ensuring that the Council can continue to demonstrate best value on each individual transaction.

This model would be challenging to implement in the current economic climate where property values are likely to be depressed.

Fig 8.3: The Integrator Model

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>It is not necessary for the Council to undertake a procurement exercise for each individual scheme</p> <p>The ability to lever in capital for the initial development is underwritten by the contractor, thus avoiding cash flow problems associated with the initial tranche of office decant and relocation</p> <p>Gain share and risk share between partners</p>	<p>Site value may only be optimised by planning consent which could be difficult or costly to obtain</p> <p>Council locked into a medium or long term commercial agreement</p>

8.5 Local Asset Backed Vehicle (“LABV”)

LABV describes the arrangement whereby property assets are transferred to a newly created structure in return for a receipt paid to WBC which can be used to fund capital expenditure or reduce underlying borrowings. The covenant of the Council may be used to source cheap debt to fund the new build or refurbishment works. The newly created structure manages or disposes of properties as required by the strategy and can create a separate entity for each category.

There are a range of structural options available to deliver a LABV, including the use of Limited Liability Partnerships (“LLP”) which protect the council from unlimited

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liability. The relative tax efficiency of the structure will also be an important factor in determining the optimum structure for the delivery vehicle. If WBC was considering this route, separate tax advice would be required at the appropriate time.

Similarly to the integrator model, this model would be challenging to implement in the current economic climate where property values are likely to be depressed.

Fig 8.4: LABV

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Funding institutions may be involved at an early stage, adding additional confidence in the deal through financial due diligence</p> <p>Project remains firmly focussed because of profitability objectives</p> <p>Council will receive up front cash advance on the covenant of its property to fund the transformation programme</p>	<p>Structures to deliver can be complex and lead to delay in start up</p> <p>Only works effectively for portfolio transactions with a critical mass of land and property</p> <p>Current uncertainty in elements of the property market may add further delay and possibly dilute the deal for the council</p> <p>Profit maximisation may subsume the softer project objectives, such as optimised services, staff satisfaction or an ideal service configuration</p>

8.6 Private Finance Initiative (“PFI”)

PFI projects transfer construction and various degrees of operational risk to the private sector which the public sector pays for through a revenue charge for the life of the contract. The commercial terms of PFI are well understood in the market place. However, PFI requires a high degree of co-ordination and certainty of scope, particularly where multiple site projects are concerned. A PFI contract will need to be sustained for a period of 25 to 30 years and variations after the initial construction period may not be justifiable on value for money grounds alone. PFI contracts typically include outsourcing of support services (particularly those related to asset maintenance) and this may not fit with WBC’s strategic plans.

PFI agreements in the local government sector have traditionally relied on PFI credits to offset interest payments and financing charges. PFI credits are not currently available for property based projects; the government view being that these projects should be self financing and not require PFI credit support. The complexity and financing of PFI makes it generally unsuitable for projects of less than £50m capital cost.

Other forms of Public Private Partnership (PPP) which do not involve external finance from the banks or bond markets, but which nevertheless capture some

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

essential PFI contract principles (for example, payment related to performance) may be an acceptable alternative to conventional PFI.

Fig 8.5: PFI

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Standardised approach well understood in the market place</p> <p>Designed to create strong long term partnerships</p> <p>Private sector will accept construction risk and varying degrees of operational risk in return for revenue payment linked to performance</p>	<p>Risks involved in refurbishment projects generally too costly for the public sector</p> <p>Unsuitable for smaller scale projects because of the financing costs and complex contract structures</p> <p>Council must provide certainty of scope and affordability to engage potential partners</p>

8.7 Conclusion

The developing accommodation strategy should identify, via a risk analysis and financial model, the most appropriate route for implementation from those outlined in this Chapter. It is very important to make the right decision. It is recommended that any alternative delivery models are matched against the Prudential Borrowing model set out in this Business Case and any alternative only pursued if it demonstrates better value or can be packaged into a regeneration delivery vehicle and delivered to the agreed timescale. This is considered important, bearing in mind the sharp increase in maintenance costs in the immediate future consequent on proceeding with the existing portfolio. A process of soft market testing will identify the market appetite for partnership working to deliver the facility. Any prospective approaches can be benchmarked against the PB route at the appropriate time.

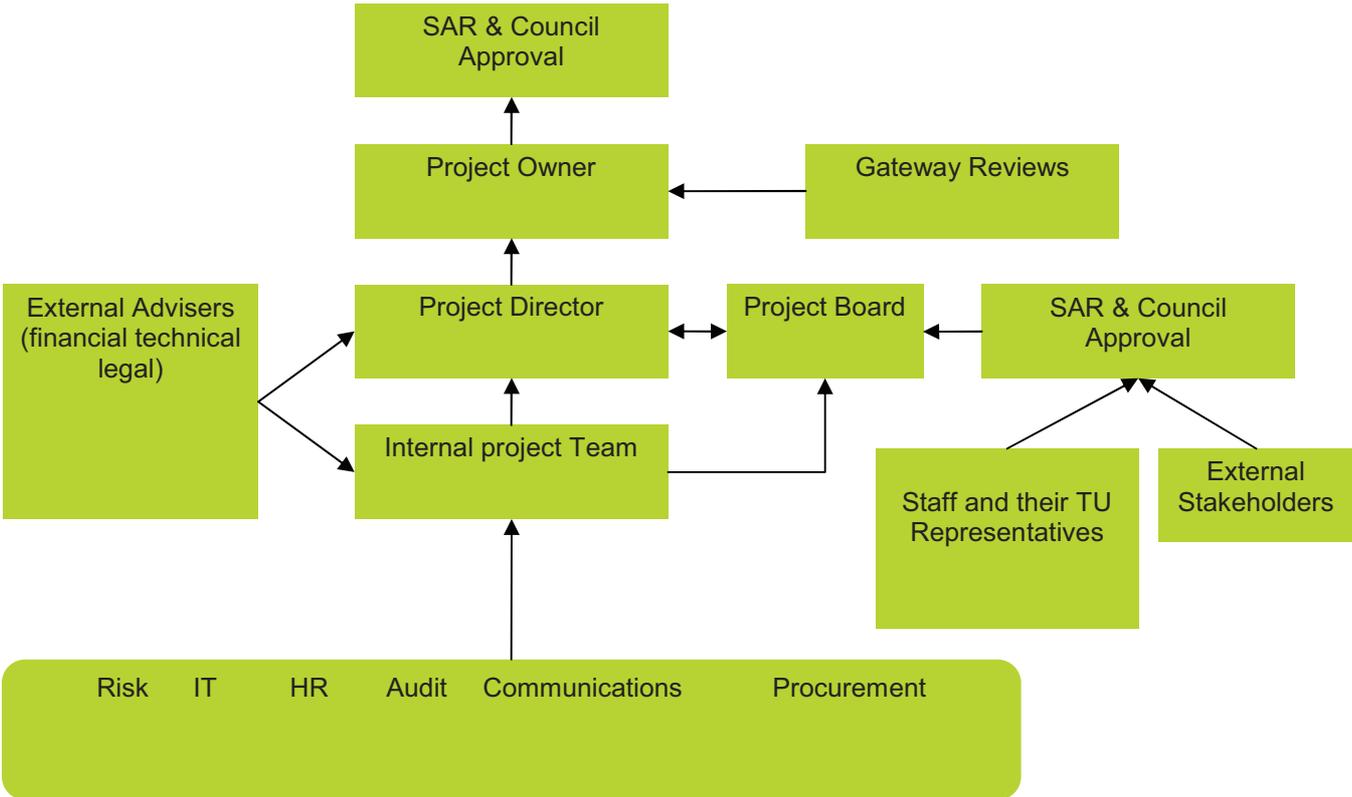
Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

9. Project Management and Organisation

9.1 Project Management and Governance

For the delivery of the office accommodation strategy, it is assumed that WBC will wish to continue to manage the delivery of the project with a methodology consistent with PRINCE 2 principles. This will involve appropriate governance structure and scrutiny as recommended by Local Partnerships (“LP”) and illustrated in the exhibit below.

Fig 9.1: Project Management and Governance



The Project Board is the operational group responsible for the completion and delivery of the project to the Council approval body. The Project Board is also responsible for risk management, stakeholder engagement and reporting to the project owner and Strategic Asset Review Board. It is envisaged that the Project Board will have the following responsibilities in relation to the Project:

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

- Oversight of the functions of the Project Team
- Strategic guidance and direction;
- Recommendations to SAR Board and Cabinet on advisor team, service configuration, site selection and organisation, procurement route and contractor selection and value for money
- Integration of the office accommodation project with the overall SAR.

9.2 Risk Management

High level risks are to be reviewed through the development of the project to procurement and delivery. This will help ensure that the risks are owned by the organisation throughout the project life.

9.3 Project Plan

The indicative key milestones and corresponding dates to be agreed as part of the project plan are set out in the table following and in the time line chart at Appendix D. This should be taken as an indication only and mirrors the timetable assumptions in the financial model.

Fig9.3: Indicative Project Plan

Activity	End date
EC Harris deliver business case in final draft	31 March 2010
Workshop Group to review assumptions and metrics	16 April 2010
Finalise business case for Council Officers	21 May 2010
Business Case included on Cabinet Agenda	24 June 2010
Detailed analysis on Option 3 (viz a viz Options 4,5 and 6)	16 August 2010
Preferred Option included on Cabinet Agenda	2 September 2010
Indicative dates for implementation	
Procurement and funding route agreed	2 September 2010
Confirm Site Location and Commence Planning Application	27 September 2010
RIBA Stages A – C complete	29 October 2010
Achieve Planning Consent	27 June 2011
Select preferred contractor	25 July 2011
Complete Final Business Case	8 August 2011
Contract completion	5 September 2011
Other strategic moves in refurbished estate complete at this point	November 2011
Completion of construction	September 2013
Completion of decanting and commissioning	November 2013
Completion of Benefits Realisation	April 2014

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The project plan sets out a deliverable time frame for the approval processes for the business cases, development of the project brief, supplier negotiations and construction.

9.4 Benefits Realisation

A Benefits Realisation Plan is good practice for all significant public sector projects. This is designed to establish that the project can be delivered not only to time and cost, but also will deliver tangible benefits to the organisation on implementation. The Benefits Realisation Plan for this project also incorporates indirect benefits which have been facilitated, if not directly caused, by the outcome of the accommodation strategy.

Fig 9.4: Benefits Realisation

Benefit type	Benefit descriptor	Why benefit will arise
Direct	Real terms savings on maintenance costs	A key project objective is to reduce overall maintenance costs. The model shows the high impact of maintenance on the existing estate in the do minimum option.
Direct	Operational savings of £1m per annum on the corporate office estate	More efficient buildings on a smaller footprint leading to reduced backlog maintenance and utility costs
Indirect	Efficiencies generated by co-location of directorates	Service and asset configurations coherently organised around the new portfolio
Direct	Savings on staff travel to meetings	Directorates in single or adjacent buildings
Direct	Savings on corporate overheads	Savings on recruitment, sickness absences and staff turnover
Direct	Reduced carbon emissions	More energy efficient building and travel
Direct	Reduced business rate liability	Smaller footplate
Indirect	More effective communications between departments: less down time	General liaison will improve as a consequence of long term working in fewer locations; in particular IT problems will be resolved more efficiently by on the spot application
Indirect	Increased knowledge sharing and smarter project delivery	The layout of the new offices will encourage team working and provide working environments to support this ethos, negotiations with current suppliers are progressing opportunities for this in the existing environment
Indirect	Reduced risk to business continuity and efficiency	Better response co-ordination at times of emergency or peak pressure
Indirect	Greater staff satisfaction and productivity	Research has shown that staff respond positively to better working conditions and this results in lower turnover and higher satisfaction ratings in staff surveys

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Indirect	Bring about improved services to customers	Customer surveys to judge improved responsiveness
----------	--	---

9.5 Post Project Evaluation

The purpose of undertaking a post project evaluation is to assess how well the scheme has met its objectives and detailed criteria, and whether they have been achieved to time, cost and quality. In accordance with current guidance and good practice the project should be evaluated in the following key stages:

Stage 1: Procurement Process Evaluation

A review of the option appraisal, evaluation and selection process will be undertaken on signing the contract to assess the effectiveness of the business case process in meeting project objectives contained in the contract for new development. This part of the review will identify any issues and lessons learned to be disseminated for future major projects. This stage will also enable the project board and any other WBC staff involved in the process to review their own performance to aid in up-skilling staff. This part of the review will also include structured knowledge transfer from the external advisers.

Stage 2: Monitoring project delivery from lease signature to occupation

At this stage the actual project outputs achieved will be reviewed and assessed against requirements, to ensure that they match the outputs initially identified and all objectives on occupying the new accommodation are delivered.

Stage 3: Initial post project evaluation of the service outcomes

This will be undertaken 6 months after full commissioning. The objective will be to determine the success of the process, and what lessons may be learned from it to apply to WBC major project delivery and across other Councils contemplating similar projects.

Stage 4: Follow up post project evaluation

A full follow up will be undertaken 2 years into the operational phase to assess, in a structured way, the long term service outcomes, and ensure that the project's objectives continue to be met. It is envisaged that a similar methodology for this stage will apply to each lease renewal option stage after 5 and 10 years operation.

In each stage the following questions will be addressed:

To what extent have relevant project objectives been achieved and what were the reasons for any shortfall or gains?

To what extent did the project proceed as planned?

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Where any element of the plan was not followed, why this happened?

How future plans should be adjusted if required?

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10. Conclusion and Recommendations

10.1 Conclusion

This Business Case set out to demonstrate:

- The project to reconfigure the office accommodation portfolio for the Council is necessary and timely: continuing in the present estate with the current level of expenditure is unsustainable. Therefore the do minimum option creates the prospect of spending significant amounts of capital to maintain the estate as fit for purpose over the next 25 years with no or minimal efficiency or other savings arising;
- The most economically advantageous configuration solution, combining the delivery of Council objectives for excellence with the ability to deliver savings targets.

In considering the nature of the solution, various estates options were assessed combining the best use of existing accommodation with new build for the balance of the requirement. The end point of this analysis is that, from the information available and based on the set of assumptions set out in this Business Case Option 3 provides the best combination of assets for the new configuration. In summary this is because:

- The do minimum option is unsustainable over 25 years;
- Option 3 enjoys an advantage over the other Options due to its ability to deliver a greater range of benefits while delivering a savings profile. It also has the potential to capitalise on receipts from the sale of the North and South Annexes to Wallasey Town Hall while preserving the Town Hall itself in its current form. This option creates a new build requirement of 8440 sq m.

The NPV of the modelled revenue savings delivered by this option averaged over 25 years is £844,001 compared with the do minimum option. This excludes the windfall capital receipt of £1,032,000 from the sale of the North and South Annexes based on the most recent EUV (in common with all other Options apart from do minimum and Option 2) and a basket of other un-modelled savings.

10.2 Recommendations

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

10.2.1 Option 3 is identified as the strategic direction for the office accommodation needs of the Council. This option retains Wallasey Town Hall, makes better use of Solar Campus, retains Cheshire Lines, refurbishes Westminster House and provides the balance of accommodation in a new build. However, the benefit delivered by this option is only marginally better than other options considered. In view of this, it is recommended that a further detailed analysis is carried out to confirm the benefits of this option viz a viz Options 3,4 and 5.

The following recommendations are also made:

- 10.2.2 Westminster House to be refurbished to accommodate 500 staff, increased from its present complement of 347. This will allow 153 staff to be moved from South Annex to Wallasey Town Hall within 2 years with a consequent saving on utility and FM costs.
- 10.2.3 Acre Lane Professional Excellence Centre to remain on its present site while the office accommodation is developed: the synergies and economies from co-location on an alternative site (possibly alongside the new office building) to be analysed with a view to re-providing the Centre as a phase 2 development.
- 10.2.4 Any further capital expenditure for development or refurbishment at Acre Lane to be the subject of a separate business case that shows that the cost will be recovered with profit derived from additional income over the next 5 years.
- 10.2.5 The gym and hall and associated accommodation at Acre Lane to be demolished realising an immediate business rate saving in year 0 of £6,435 and providing a discounted saving over 25 years of £219,788.
- 10.2.6 Discussions are initiated with the multi agency users of Acre Lane to invite them to make provision for a contribution to the capital cost of the new development.
- 10.2.7 A plan is developed to integrate the activities of the Office Accommodation work streams into the future organisational and staffing model for the Council in order to maximise the opportunities for savings and efficiencies in the new accommodation configuration.
- 10.2.8 Work is undertaken to establish the savings attributable to a reduction in HR overheads applying benchmarked savings from other projects. This should be established as a target for the new development.

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10.2.9 A decision is made concerning the location of the new build based on the information contained in this Business Case and any additional site opportunities that may come to light. Any site analysis should be assessed against the criteria identified in Chapter 7.

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Acronym	In full
BDP	Building Design Partnership
BREEAM	Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method
CAA	Comprehensive Area Assessment
CSR	Comprehensive Spending Review (2007)
CYPD	Children's and Young Persons Directorate (WBC)
DASS	Directorate of Adult Social Services (WBC)
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
FM	Facilities Management
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GIA	Gross Internal Area
HR	Human Resources
IT	Information Technology
JV	Joint Venture
LABV	Local Asset Backed Vehicle
LDF	Local Development Framework
LIFT Co	Local Investment Finance Trust Company
LLP	Limited Liability Partnerships
LP	Local Partnerships
NIA	Net Internal Area
NPV	Net Present Value
OGC	Office of Government Commerce
OEP	Operational Efficiency Programme (of HM Treasury)
PB	Prudential Borrowing
PFI	Private Finance Initiative
PID	Project Initiation Document
PRINCE2	Projects in Controlled Environments (Version 2)
PWLB	Public Works Loan Board
RPI	Retail Prices Index
RSL	Registered Social Landlord
SAR	Strategic Asset Review
SOGE	Sustainable Operation of the Government Estate
SMART	Smart' objectives are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timetabled
VAT	Value Added Tax
WBC	Wirral Borough Council
WPH	Wirral Partnership Homes

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Appendix B

Financial Model (see separate cd)

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Appendix C

Office location map (see separate file)

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Appendix D

Timelines (see separate file)

Wirral Borough Council Strategic Asset Review: Office Accommodation

Appendix E: Commercial In Confidence

Cheshire Lines: Not included

Contacts

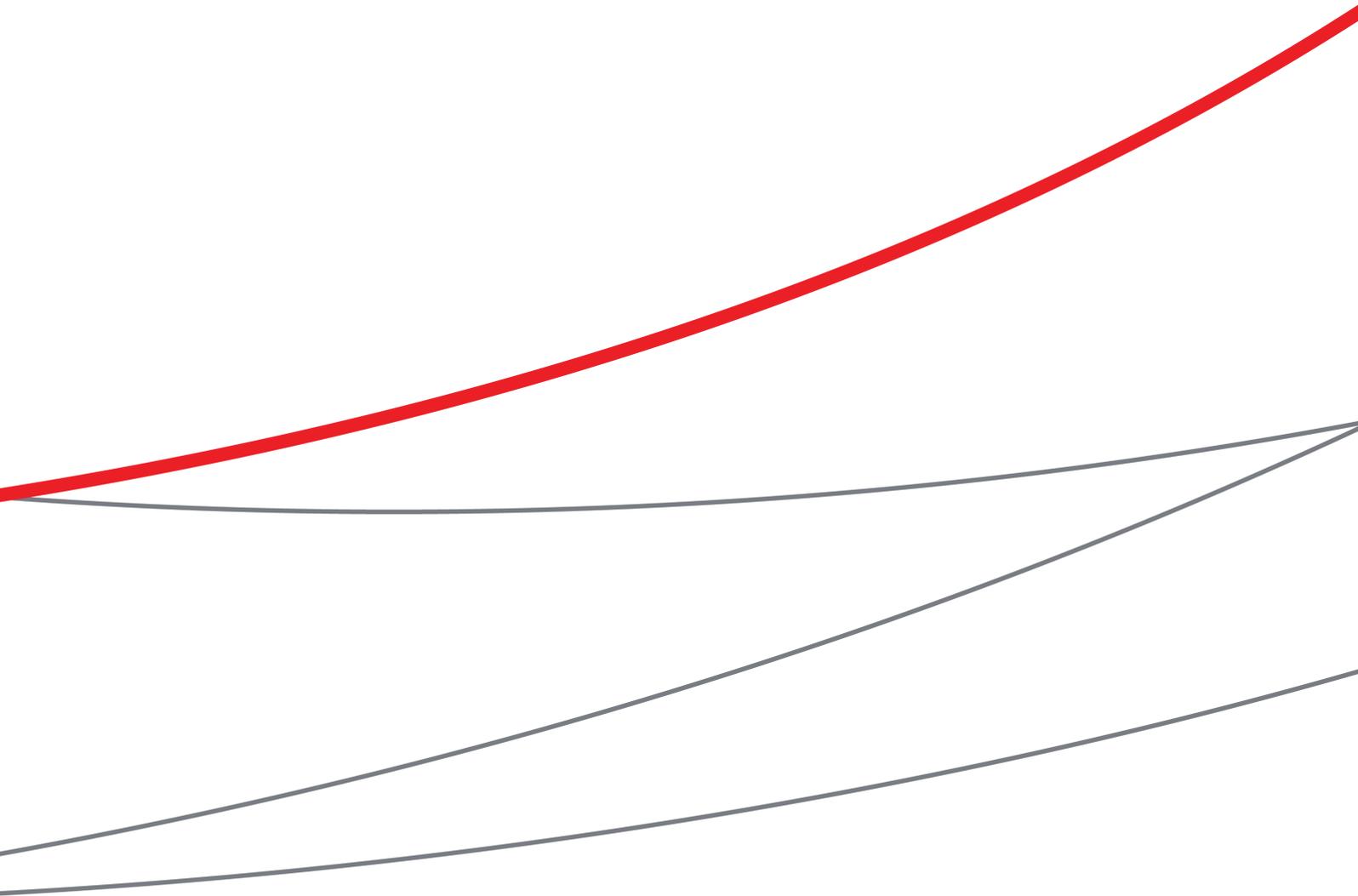
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Office Accommodation Strategy			
SCALE	1:20000	APPROVAL	Area Management, Facilities, Low, HR & Asset Management
DATE	13/01/2015	DESIGNED BY	Town Hall, Market Street, Wallasey, Wirral, CH44 6ED
DRAWN	CHAS MED	CHECKED	CHAS MED
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Appendix D

Wirral Borough Council – Office Accommodation Strategy Indicative Timeline	
Business Case included on Cabinet Agenda	24/06/2010 ♦
Cabinet Decision of Corporate Property Solution	02/09/2010 ♦
Delivery Programme and Procurement Route	02/09/2010 ♦
Location and Site Analysis	24/06/2010 ● 27/09/2010 ●
Concept Design (Strategic Stages RIBA A-C)	02/09/2010 ● 31/03/2011 ● 27/09/2010 ● 27/06/2011 ●
Planning Consent	01/07/2011 ●
Construction Period	01/09/2013 ●
Completion of Strategic Moves in Refurbished Accommodation	30/11/2011 ♦
Westminster House Project	02/09/2010 ● 05/01/2012 ●

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Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

For Lead Person's Reference:

Office Rationalisation Project

**Jacqui Cross (Equality & Diversity Co-ordinator)
Corporate Services, Corporate Policy**

(Final Version) 8 February 2008

Contents	Page
What is an Equality Impact Assessment?	3
Why complete an Equality Impact Assessment?	3
A corporate overview of the process	4
Initial Equality Impact Assessment template	5-10
Full Equality Impact Assessment template	5-13
User reference guide	14

Equality Impact Assessment

What is it?

It is a self-assessment tool to help our council departments and services look at the likely positive and negative impact of their work on staff, members, service users / customers, partnerships, individuals and communities with regards to equality of opportunity in employment and service delivery.

The aim is to identify both positive and negative outcomes, and to take appropriate action to minimise or remove the negative outcomes.

Why do we need to do it?

The council is committed to ensuring that it delivers all of its services in a fair and equal way. It also pledges to develop an inclusive and recruitment and selection procedure aimed at creating a strong and diverse workforce. This two-pronged approach ensures that we work towards removing barriers to our services and actively promote and support diversity.

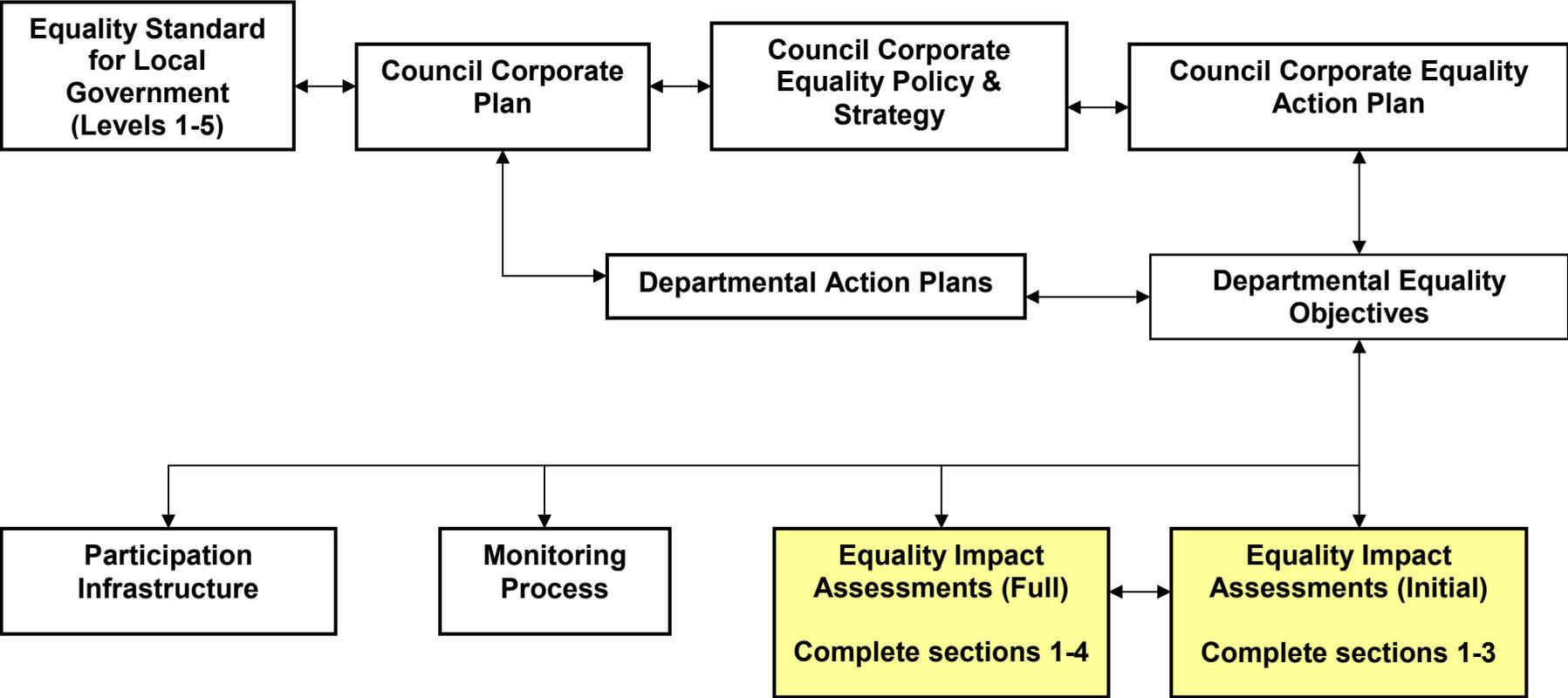
There have been some recent legislative changes in this area, including the requirement to create a gender equality scheme and increased expectations in tackling discrimination on the grounds of religion and faith, disability, age and sexual orientation. The legislation has also brought in the requirement to not only tackle discrimination but to actively promote diversity. This is a significant change to our responsibilities and one that will require us to act in different ways.

The council's equality and diversity policy draws together in one document the legislative process, the council's service delivery commitments, employment commitments and policy statements in relation to the six pillars of the equality standard, which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or Belief
- Gender
- Sexual Orientation

The Equality Standard for Local Government helps us to measure progress towards promoting diversity. The standard has five levels and Wirral council is currently at level two. In order to meet the requirements of the standard we need to ensure we carry out Equality Impact Assessments on all council functions, services, projects, strategies and policies.

Corporate overview of the process



Page 518

Equality Impact Assessment

Section 1: Your details

(1.1) Department: Law, HR and Asset Management

(1.2) Division: Asset Management

(1.3) Assessment Lead: Phil Ashley

(1.4) Telephone: 0151 691 8480

(1.5) Email: philashley@wirral.gov.uk

(1.6) Who else will be involved in the process? (see guidance note 1)

**Ian Brand, Chief Executive, Chief Officers, Members,
Snr Management Working Group,
Local Strategic Partners, EC Harris Consultancy, Trade Unions,
Human resources, Representative Staff Group & Line Managers.**

(1.7) Please sign & date this formPhil Ashley.... (signed) ...3rd June 2010 (date)

Guidance Note 1:

For Initial EIA's it is best practice to involve the service / function manager, equality and diversity lead(s) and relevant frontline staff.

For Full EIA's it is best practice to involve the service / function manager, equality and diversity lead(s), relevant frontline staff, customers, appropriate external agencies, and the voluntary and community sector

Section 2: What is to be assessed?

(2.1) Name of service / function / **project** / strategy / policy to be assessed (see guidance note 2)

Office rationalisation Project

(2.2) Is this a new or existing service / function / project / strategy / policy? (please state)

New – Part of Strategic Asset Review

(2.3) Which equality impact assessment are you completing?

Initial or Full

Guidance Note 2:

Service = your department / service area and its employees

Functions = your department / service area's activities

Projects = your department / service area's work programmes

Strategy = a plan of action intended to accomplish a specific goal

Policy = a plan of action to influence and determine decisions, actions and other matters

Procedure = a series of steps taken to implement a policy

Section 3: Let's do the Initial Equality Impact Assessment

3.1 Could a particular group of people be affected differently in either a negative or positive way by the service / function / project / strategy / policy?

Equality Group	Positive Impact (benefits) Please number each one	Negative Impact (disadvantage) Please number each one	Please rate each negative impact 'low', 'medium' or 'high'
Disabled People	1. Any new building will be DDA compliant 2. Where possible refurbished buildings will be DDA compliant In both instances offering considerable improvement on current environments.	Individual needs will need to be specifically addressed i.e.those with an Access to Work Assessment	Low
Lesbian, Gay & Bisexual People	None	None	N/A
Women	None	None	N/A
Men	None	None	N/A
Transgendered People	None	None	N/A

Black & Racial Minority People (please state which group)	New environments will, where practicable address differing cultural needs.	None	N/A
Older People (60+)	None	None	N/A
Younger People (17-25) and Children Please state male or female	None	None	N/A
Religious / Faith Groups	New environments will where practicable address the needs across the religious & faith spectrum	None	N/A
Other excluded groups (please state)	None	None	N/A

Note: If you have rated any negative impact(s) as ‘High’ please go straight to Section 4 to complete a full assessment.

Note: If you have rated any negative impact as ‘Low’ or ‘Medium please complete the rest of this section on pages 9 and 10.

Guidance Note 3: How to assess negative impacts

Low = It is not discriminatory according to current legislation. However, it might not be seen as being in line with best practice.

Medium = It is not discriminatory according to current legislation. However, it is not in line with the council’s Corporate Equality Policy and/or Strategy

High = It is discriminatory according to current anti-discrimination legislation (i.e. it is unlawful), and therefore contravenes the council’s Equality Policy

3.2 Please list below any actions that you plan to take as a result of any negative impact

Low or medium negative impact	Action required to remove or minimise the impact	Lead person	Timescale	Resource implications	Any other comments
Individual needs will be specifically addressed i.e. those with an Access to Work Assessment	Line Managers to undertake a review of individuals specific needs and report findings to Asset Mgt.	Phil Ashley	3-5 years	Asset Management Members of staff with specific issues & their Line Managers	

3.3 Could you improve the positive impact(s)? Please explain how

Staff awareness and willingness to participate is key to ensuring that any improved environment / working practises enhance the work experience & outcomes for Users of Services.

3.4 If you have identified no negative impact, then please explain how you reached that decision

.

Thank you for completing the initial assessment (please email a copy of this report to jacquicross@wirral.gov.uk)

Please note that the lead assessment person is responsible for ensuring the actions on pages 9 and 10 are incorporated into your departmental plan.

User Reference Guide

Legislation

There are currently 6 strands to the framework of UK equality legislation:

1. Gender: Sex Discrimination Act 1975, Gender Recognition Act 2004
2. Race: Race Relations Act 1976
3. Disability: Disability Discrimination Act 1995
4. Sexual Orientation: Employment Equality [Sexual Orientation] Regulations 2003
5. Religion & Belief: Employment Equality [Religion or Belief] Regulations 2003
6. Age: Employment Equality [Age] Regulations 2006

For further information and to view amendments to the above Acts please visit www.equalityhumanrights.com (Equality & Human Rights Commission).

Equality Standard for Local Government

Improvement & Development Agency	www.idea.gov.uk
Local Government Association	www.lga.gov.uk
Audit Commission	www.audit-commission.gov.uk
Government Equalities Unit	www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

Useful Websites

Age Concern	www.ageconcern.org.uk
Breakthrough UK	www.breakthrough-uk.com
Communities & Local Government	www.communities.gov.uk
Disability Now	www.disabilitynow.org.uk
Discrimination at Work Issues	www.direct.gov.uk
Sexual Orientation Issues	www.lgf.org.uk
Women's Issues	www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk
Trans People's Issues	www.pfc.org.uk
Race Issues	www.runnymedetrust.org
Younger People's Issues	www.nya.org.uk

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

GUINEA GAP BATHS, WALLASEY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval to restore the funding of Guinea Gap Baths to the Council base budget when the current funding runs out at 31 March 2011.

2. Background

- 2.1 As part of the Strategic Asset Review Cabinet resolved on 13 January 2009 that:
“A two year provision be set up to allow Guinea Gap to remain open pending a better understanding of the potential scale of any development along the waterfront and the possibility of bringing forward any Government investment in the Housing Market Renewal Initiative which could contribute towards kick starting any major development initiative.”
- 2.2 In considering the Council Budget 2010/11 Cabinet on 22 February 2010 agreed;-
“In the case of Guinea Gap Baths, Cabinet notes that the original intention was to provide for Guinea Gap baths to remain open while the potential for alternative schemes as part of a longer term waterfront development was explored. The impact of the recession on private sector development now makes this a much more distant possibility. Cabinet therefore, asks the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management to bring a report to Cabinet which will allow the Cabinet to restore the funding of Guinea Gap to the base budget when the current funding runs out.”
- 2.3. The annual running costs for the operation of Guinea Gap Baths, excluding departmental charges are £640,000 and the retention of the Baths requires a comparable increase in the Budget when the current funding expires on 31 March 2011.

3. Financial implications

- 3.1 The Council Budget 2010/11 includes £150,000 to meet the cost of keeping Guinea Gap Baths open until 31 March 2011. In order to retain the Baths beyond that date the sum of £640,000 will be required to the Budget from 2011/12. This was included within the Budget projections 2011-14 report to Cabinet on 18 March 2010.

4. Staffing implications

- 4.1 There are no staffing implications arising from this report.

5. Equal Opportunities/Equality Impact implications

- 5.1 The closure of the facility would have an adverse impact on the provision of swimming facilities for disadvantaged groups.

6. Community Safety implications

6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7. Local Agenda 21 implications

7.1 None arising directly from this report.

8. Planning implications

8.1 None.

9. Anti-poverty implications

9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Human Rights implications

10.1 None arising directly from this report.

11. Social Inclusion implications

11.1 The facility provides open access to all groups

12. Local Member Support implications

12.1 Guinea Gap Baths is located in Seacombe Ward, but this matter will be of interest to all Members.

13. Background Papers

13.1 Item 332 in the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 22 February 2010.

14. RECOMMENDATION

14.1 That Cabinet requests Council, as part of its Annual Budget setting process, to add the sum of £640,000 to the Revenue Budget for 2011/12 onwards in order to meet the running costs of Guinea Gap Baths.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Community Asset Transfer ('CAT') programme agreed through the Strategic Asset Review sets a deadline for transfers. Enquiries have been received as to whether that deadline is to remain. This report identifies issues that would be raised by a change to the existing deadline and seeks guidance on the way forward.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Strategic Asset Review was considered by Cabinet on 27 November 2008
- 2.2 The context for the review was that of an historic estate with a substantial and growing repair backlog, rising costs of owning and managing buildings, limited resources and a pressing need to reduce the number of assets held by the Council.
- 2.3 Prior to the Strategic Asset Review the Council had been developing an approach to community asset transfer and had been successful in obtaining support through the national 'Advancing Assets' programme. The Council's approach was consistent with the national 'Quirk' review of community management and ownership of public assets, which encouraged local authorities to optimise community benefit through transfer of asset ownership and management to community groups. The Advancing Assets programme was, however, comparatively limited in scope.
- 2.4 The Strategic Asset Review recommended a programme to transfer assets to community groups where such groups expressed interest in taking responsibility for those assets. The programme was to be implemented over a period of two years, as an alternative to the immediate closure of neighbourhood facilities. This scale of change was judged necessary to create a sustainable high quality asset base.
- 2.5 Following a period of consultation, Cabinet (at its meeting on 15 January 2010) endorsed the proposed approach to Community Asset Transfer; agreed a list of assets to be transferred; and resolved that the two year time frame for community asset transfer will expire on 16 January 2011.
- 2.6 On 19 March 2009, Cabinet agreed a Community Asset Transfer Policy (subject to transfers of community centres being offered first to

established and viable Joint Management Committees). Cabinet also agreed a mechanism for financial support for transfers to community groups through an application for use of the Community Fund. (The Community Fund was established on the transfer of the Council's former housing stock to Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) to enable VAT monies expended by WPH to be retained for use by WPH and the Council (on a 50:50 basis) in projects in line with WPH's charitable objectives).

- 2.7. Earlier this year, the Council's bid for £4.5million funding from the Community Fund to support the CAT programme was approved by WPH and the Community Fund Joint Working Group. This bid covered the financial years 2009/10 to 2011/12, inclusive; so runs until 31 March 2012.

3. PRESENT POSITION

- 3.1 Officers have been working to achieve transfers of those properties identified through the Strategic Asset Review. In accordance with the Community Asset Transfer policy applications have also been received from community groups for the transfer of additional properties that have been identified as being surplus to Council requirements. The present position is summarised in the attached schedule. This process has revealed that there are very significant issues of backlog repairs at many of the assets scheduled for transfer. The only identified funding source to pay for these repairs is the Community Fund.
- 3.2 A review is currently under way of the operation of the Community Asset Transfer policy and it is intended that this will inform the revised Asset Management Plan which will be brought to Cabinet for approval in the autumn.
- 3.3 Enquiries have however now been made as to whether the Council intends to maintain the deadline for transfers of 16 January 2011 that was imposed by the Strategic Asset Review, together with its intention to close and sell those facilities where the community does not have the capacity or resources to take them over on a sustainable basis.
- 3.4 If members wish to revise the current approach, the options available are to:
- retain the current deadline and pursue the closure of those facilities where a transfer has not been agreed
 - Remove the deadline and the threat of closure if a transfer is not agreed
 - Set a revised deadline by which transfers must have been agreed, failing which Council funding of the facilities will cease and they will be closed and disposed of.
- 3.5 These options assume that the Council would wish to continue to support transfers that are sought by local community groups. Issues raised by these options are as follows:

Retain current deadline

- 3.6 As can be seen from the summary of current discussions, transfer negotiations are at different stages and it is unlikely that all assets will be ready for transfer by 16 January 2011. In that case, those facilities would be closed. Whilst it is judged that the majority of transfers are achievable by the deadline some will take longer than this.
- 3.7 Transfer or closure would be consistent with current budgetary provision.
- 3.8 In the few cases where assets are currently held on lease, those leases (and the responsibilities they create for the premises) would remain in place.
- 3.9 Rigid adherence to the current deadline does not provide for any transitional 'handover' arrangements, the need for which is emerging from the continuing negotiations on the more complex proposed transfers.
- 3.10 It is clear that the current deadline has injected great impetus to the transfer process and has facilitated much more rapid progress than would have been made under a more open-ended arrangement.

Remove the deadline

- 3.11 This would allow more time to develop arrangements for transfer in the more challenging cases.
- 3.12 It would retain facilities that would otherwise be closed and sold.
- 3.13 There would probably be a loss of impetus and focus to the transfer process. It is likely that a significant number of groups would wish to see existing arrangements continue.
- 3.14 There is no budgetary provision to support continued operation of the facilities beyond the existing deadline.
- 3.15 The buildings and financial context that formed a background to the Strategic Asset Review remains, and the financial position facing the Council is likely to become more challenging. Retention of a substantial number of community assets would remove an avenue for addressing these continuing issues.
- 3.16 There is a substantial maintenance backlog on the assets identified for transfer. A mechanism was found using the Community Fund to undertake repairs to the assets that would transfer, and to provide some transitional revenue support to the groups taking them over. If transfers do not proceed that money would not be available, and the liability for and cost of repairs would remain with the Council.

- 3.17 Most significantly, the approved bid to the Community Fund for £4.5 million to support the CAT programme has a deadline for expenditure of 31 March 2012. There is no guarantee that if this funding is unused by 31 March 2012 that it will remain available. This very substantial sum of money probably represents a unique opportunity to invest in community buildings to address historic repair issues and future needs. However, it will only be available where those buildings are transferred to community control.
- 3.18 Therefore, removal of the deadline might risk less of the available £4.5 million of Community Fund monies being invested in community assets. In the current national economic climate, this opportunity, if missed, might not return.

Set a revised deadline

- 3.19 This would allow further time for negotiations and to consider revised options.
- 3.20 There may be loss of impetus and focus in those negotiations.
- 3.21 Further budgetary provision would be required.
- 3.22 Setting an amended deadline or removing the deadline altogether will require a review of current staffing assumptions and the approach to dealing with future support to centres.
- 3.23 At this stage, if the existing arrangements are changed and the deadline for transfers is removed it is unclear how many community groups would wish to proceed with transfers. It is also unclear whether some groups may be more willing to do so if they had more time. Consultation with the community groups affected will be necessary to answer these points.
- 3.24 When these points are clarified it will be possible to model with more accuracy the likely financial and staffing consequences of change.
- 3.25 If Members are minded to set a revised deadline, they may wish to consider the date of 31 March 2012, when the Council's approved bid to the Community Fund for £4.5 million to support the CAT programme expires. This would give community groups more time, but maximise the likelihood that the available funding will be invested in enhancing community buildings.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Good progress has been made with the community asset transfer programme initiated by the Strategic Asset Review. Negotiations with community groups are, however, at different stages, and it is unlikely that all groups will be in a position to proceed by the 31 March 2011 deadline previously set.

- 4.2 Removal or amendment of the current deadline may provide some benefits to the current transfer process, but would also risk losing impetus and potentially ultimately result in fewer assets transferring. There would be significant financial and staffing implications for the Council. Removal of the deadline might also risk less of the available £4.5 million of Community Fund monies being invested in community assets.
- 4.3 No discussions have taken place with affected community groups on the implications of removing or amending the deadline for transfer, but such discussions would be necessary to enable informed financial and staffing projections to be made.
- 4.4 Guidance is requested on the approach to be taken.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Revenue savings to be achieved by vacating assets primarily relate to the actual running costs of buildings (e.g. rates, energy, water, insurance) and from the savings in staff costs that arise when direct service delivery ceases.
- 5.2 Estimated savings for the buildings identified for community asset transfer are approximately £460,000 per annum.
- 5.3 The Strategic Asset Review recognised that in some cases further costs may be incurred in decommissioning and or demolishing buildings after closure. Provision for such costs was to be made through the Efficiency Fund.
- 5.4 Disposal of the assets identified for transfer was also estimated to save the Council expenditure of £2.3m on backlog repair and maintenance, together with future 'life cycle' maintenance costs estimated at £2.4m.
- 5.5 The approved bid to the Community Fund for £4.5 million to support the CAT programme has a deadline for expenditure of 31 March 2012. There is no guarantee that if this funding is unused by 31 March 2012 that it will remain available.

6. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 A mixture of community development staff and caretakers work as part of the Community Services Team. They will be directly affected by the Community Asset Transfer process as they will not have functions once the proposed number of community buildings is transferred.
- 6.2 These staffing issues will be managed through the Council's existing Human Resources policies and processes with reports being brought to the relevant Committee in due course.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None arising directly from this report

8. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

9.1 None arising directly from this report

10. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 None arising directly from this report

11. ANTI POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None arising directly from this report.

12. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None arising directly from this report.

13. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None arising directly from this report.

14. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 This report will be of interest to all members.

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Cabinet 9 July 2008	Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 16 October 2008	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 27 November 2008	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 15 January 2009	Transforming Wirral-Strategic Asset Review
Cabinet 19 March 2009	Asset Management Update

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 That Cabinet determines whether it wishes to remove or revise the previously set deadline of 31 March 2011 for completion of transfers of assets to community groups.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR & Asset Management

APPENDIX

COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER - CURRENT POSITION

Section A

Community Asset Transfer – Joint Management Committee

The properties identified in this section all have Joint Management Committees or strong user groups which already have a significant input in the running of the premises. In each case the group has been given the opportunity to take a transfer or identify a partner. In the event that they are unable to pursue a transfer the property is dealt with in accordance with the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

ASSET	POSITION
Hoylake Community Centre	The JMC is working towards a transfer. The business plan is nearing completion and is expected to be available for consideration shortly. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that significant repairs are required.
Greasby Community Centre	The JMC is working towards a transfer. The business plan is nearing completion and is expected to be available for consideration shortly. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
Westbourne Hall	The JMC is working towards a transfer. The business plan is nearing completion and is expected to be available for consideration shortly. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
Beechwood Recreation Centre and Beechwood Community Centre	The JMC has advised that it is unwilling to take a transfer in its own right. It is, however, supporting a proposal by Beechwood and Ballantyne Community Housing Association to develop the facilities for a number of activities which include a Parkour Training Centre. A business plan and grant application are being developed. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
New Ferry Village Hall	The JMC are considering a transfer. A business plan is being developed. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.

Noctorum Community Centre	<p>The centre is located within Ridgeway High School. There is no JMC in occupation, although the users are in support of a transfer to the school, which the school is also keen to progress.</p> <p>A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.</p>
Gautby Road Play and Community Centre	<p>The JMC was clear that it did not want to take a transfer of the centre in its own right and attempts to identify a partner ultimately proved fruitless. In accordance with the policy, an advert was placed in the local press inviting expressions of interest. North Birkenhead Development Trust submitted the only application and Cabinet of 27 May approved the recommendation that the Trust be invited to progress to the second stage.</p> <p>A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.</p>
Livingstone Street Play and Community Centre	<p>The JMC was clear that it did not want to take a transfer of the centre in its own right and attempts to identify a partner ultimately proved fruitless. In accordance with the policy, an advert was placed in the local press inviting expressions of interest. The closing date has now passed and no applications were received.</p>
Grosvenor Ballroom and Liscard Community Centre	<p>Grosvenor Ballroom and Liscard Community Centre are operated by the same Joint Management Committee. The group is keen to take a transfer with its preference and business plan being developed around a proposal to locate all its activities at the Grosvenor site by the construction of an extension. The condition survey and estimate of the cost of the extension has been completed.</p>
Moreton Community Centre	<p>The transfer of the centre has been approved and completion is imminent.</p>
Delamere Community Centre	<p>There is no JMC in occupation only a loose group of users.</p> <p>Possible Council use of the facility as a Children's Centre and for locality working is being considered. A community group has expressed an interest in the facility and the possibility of the group sharing the facility with the Council is being explored.</p>
Woodchurch Community Centre	<p>The JMC was clear that it did not want to take a transfer of the centre in its own right and attempts to identify a partner ultimately proved fruitless. In accordance with the policy, an advert was placed in the local press inviting expressions of interest. Woodchurch Trust submitted the only application, the potential of which is yet to be determined.</p>

Overton Community Centre	The JMC are considering a transfer. A business plan is being developed. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
Kylemore Community Centre	The JMC does not wish to take a transfer. Wirral Partnership Homes has been identified as a potential partner to take a transfer of the facility in conjunction with the JMC. Details of the transfer are being developed. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
Windsor Close Community Centre	There is no JMC in occupation. Ownership of the Centre was transferred to Wirral Partnership Homes as part of the housing stock transfer, although management of the facility has remained with the Council. Details of handover to WPH are being discussed.
Leasowe Community Centre	The JMC does not wish to take a transfer of the facility and has recently developed a prospectus to identify a partner organisation.
Vale House Community Centre	The JMC is working towards a transfer. The business plan is nearing completion and is expected to be available for consideration shortly. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.
Pensby Community Centre	Transferred in January 2009

Section B

Community Asset Transfer – No Joint Management Committee.

The properties included in this section were identified within the strategic asset review and are not operated by Joint Management Committees. Where an existing group has had a significant input into the running of the facility, it has been given an opportunity to take a transfer. Otherwise, the facility has been advertised in accordance with the CAT policy. The policy details a two stage process, with initial expressions of interest being invited at stage one, with detailed proposals and business plans being required for stage two.

Grange Road West sports Centre, Birkenhead	Second stage submissions and business plans from The Grange Road West Community Partnership and The Birkenhead Community Development Committee have been received. Both parties have
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	<p>been asked for more details in order that their respective proposals can be considered further. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.</p>
Bromborough Social Centre	<p>Second stage proposal has been received from Age Concern Wirral and a recommendation is being made to Cabinet on 24th June that the premises be transferred in accordance with the policy.</p>
65 the Village, Bebington	<p>The property was advertised in the local press in accordance with the policy. An expression of interest was received although it was not considered appropriate to pursue further.</p>
Mayer Hall, Bebington	<p>The property was advertised in the local press in accordance with the policy. Two expressions of interest were received although neither were considered appropriate to pursue further.</p>
Ivy Farm, Arrowe Park	<p>The future of the building is to be evaluated as part of the PACSPE project. Operational use has now ceased.</p>
Seacombe community Centre	<p>No JMC is in place, although the user group has been invited to pursue a transfer and is determining whether it would be viable.</p>
Leasowe Lighthouse	<p>The lighthouse is occupied in part by the Council's Ranger Service. There is considerable input from the Friends of Leasowe Lighthouse and they have been asked to consider whether they wish to take a transfer.</p>
The Grange, Wallasey	<p>The property was advertised in the local press in accordance with the policy. No expressions of interest were received.</p> <p>The future of building will now be evaluated as part of the PACSPE project.</p>
Heswall Hall	<p>The Heswall Halls Steering Group has been established and is working to develop its proposal for transfer.</p> <p>The second stage submission, including a business plan, is expected to be available for consideration shortly.</p> <p>A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that significant repairs are required.</p>
Alexander Hall, Heswall	<p>The proposal from the Heswall Halls Steering Group will include future proposals for Alexander Hall.</p>
Victoria Hall, Bebington	<p>The Victoria Hall Steering Group has been established and is working to develop its proposal for transfer. The second stage submission is under development.</p> <p>A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.</p>

Turntable Building, Birkenhead	The previous community group that occupied the facility was disbanded and the property became vacant in January 2010. Cabinet on 15 th April approved the letting of this building to the Merseyside Model Railway Society. The group is now in occupation on a 3 year lease.
New Brighton community Centre	The premise is already held on a lease. The lessee is working on a business plan to enable the Council to treat the premises in accordance with the policy. A condition survey of the premises has been completed and has identified that repairs are required.

Section c

Community Asset Transfer – Non SAR properties

The properties in this section were not identified by the SAR. They are surplus assets which have been dealt with in accordance with the disposal strategy, which requires that they be considered for Community Asset Transfer and are offered for transfer in accordance with the policy.

River Streets Community Centre, Birkenhead	Wallasey Gymnastics Club has submitted a second stage proposal which is currently being evaluated.
Byrne Avenue Baths, Rock Ferry	The Byrne Avenue Community Trust is developing its stage two proposal and has been asked for further information.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 24th JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

BROMBOROUGH SOCIAL CENTRE, FORWOOD ROAD, BROMBOROUGH

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report seeks approval for a transfer by lease of the Bromborough Social Centre to Age Concern Wirral following an application under the Council's Community Asset Transfer Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting of 15th January 2009, made decisions on a number of its assets as part of the Strategic Asset Review. In the case of Bromborough Social Centre, Members resolved that it be transferred to community management, where the community expresses an interest, within a two year period.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 19th March 2009, Cabinet approved a Community Asset Transfer Policy to ensure that transfers are approached on a consistent basis. This requires interested parties to submit initial expressions of interest in a standard format so they can be appraised and a recommendation made as to which applicant(s) should proceed to a second stage. The second stage would require a much more detailed response to be submitted including a business plan.
- 2.3 In accordance with the policy, Bromborough Social Centre was advertised in the local press which resulted in one expression of interest being received from Age Concern Wirral (AGE CONCERN WIRRAL). The organisation's proposals were considered by a panel and Cabinet on 24 September 2009 endorsed the recommendation that Age Concern Wirral be invited to proceed to the second stage.

3.0 BROMBOROUGH SOCIAL CENTRE

- 3.1 Bromborough Social Centre is a single storey purpose built Community building and is identified on the attached plan. The property has been little used for the last few years with only a few groups occasionally using the premises on an informal basis.

4.0 AGE CONCERN WIRRAL

- 4.1 Age Concern Wirral is a local registered charity and a member of the Age Concern Federation, a network of independent registered charitable organisations which, together, form the largest provider in the country of services for older people. Age Concern Wirral employs 90 paid staff and 376 Voluntary Staff, and its primary objective is to promote the wellbeing of older people throughout Wirral.

- 4.2 Age Concern Wirral currently operates from a number of buildings across the Wirral. It seeks to respond to the needs of over 20,000 older people in the borough by providing a range of services in five main areas:

Care Services:

Day Care for people with dementia
Day Care for physically frail / socially isolated people
Lunch Clubs – 10 around Wirral
Phone Link telephone befriending service
Home Support Respite Sitting Service
Support of Carers – emotional & practical
Carers Club

Support Services:

Information & Advice
Welfare Benefits Advice
Advocacy
Facilitation of Wirral Older Persons Parliament
Senior Citizens Forum
PEACE Project – Elder Abuse Awareness
Mid Life Interventions – Pre-retirement courses
Campaigning

Active Ageing:

Physical activity groups – dancing, exercise, yoga etc
Social and educational groups – computers, bridge etc
Healthy eating café and demonstrations
Health promotion and education
Allotment project
Holiday and travel club

Income Generation:

Charity Shops – 9 around Wirral
Insurance and related products

Operational Development:

Fund-raising
Volunteer Support & Development
Bereavement Support Service
Befriending Service

5.0 **PROPOSAL**

- 5.1 Age Concern Wirral has submitted a proposal which seeks to use the Bromborough Social Centre for its services currently delivered from Bramwell Court, Rock Ferry from which it has been required to surrender its tenancy by the landlord. Age Concern Wirral identified Bromborough Social Centre as suitable for re-provision of its services, prior to the Strategic Asset Review and has maintained its interest in Bromborough Social Centre throughout the Community Asset Transfer process. Bromborough Social Centre is slightly larger than Bramwell Court and will enable Age Concern Wirral to provide additional services. These would include new activities within the Active Age Programme for the 50+ age group which may include arts &

crafts, IT classes, bridge, dancing, physical exercise, smoking cessation and health information sessions etc. Additionally a lunch club or healthy eating café could be provided.

5.2 Age Concern Wirral also proposes that the facilities at Bromborough will be used to develop some new areas of activity which have been requested by local older people and / or key strategic partners:

- Expert patient groups – Age Concern Wirral will seek to work with a range of partners to provide opportunities for patient groups (i.e. condition related – diabetes, stroke etc) to meet to provide peer support, share information and access a range of relevant services and activities.
- Social opportunities for minority groups – research undertaken with Black & Racial Minority Groups and older members of Wirral’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered community has indicated the need for opportunities for socialising. The organisation will work to support the development of relevant social opportunities at Forwood Road in conjunction with older people from these groups.
- Intergenerational activity – in response to needs identified by both Wirral Older People’s Parliament and feedback from existing service users, work will be undertaken to secure funding to develop intergenerational activity, including expanding the Life Diaries Project.
- The facility will be made available to local community groups in evenings / weekends for community use.

5.3 The Director of Adult Social Services supports the proposal. Adult Social Care, along with partners, NHS Wirral, is following a locality model of service delivery in which most operational services are split into localities, and which are integrated as far as possible. Each locality is developing a local focus. The proposal for the centre by Age Concern Wirral will tie into this by delivering a service in this area of the Borough which is not available at present. There are older person’s day services in Birkenhead and in Wallasey. As an organisation, Age Concern Wirral has a high profile, both locally in Wirral, and nationally, and is where many older people will go to for services, advice and information. Although the proposal is for a day service, there will be many other benefits for older people having this organisation in their own locality.

5.4 The Council’s Department of Adult Social Services funds a significant number of services through ACW, including: Care, Information services, carer support, dementia and direct services provided at Bramwell Court and the Devonshire Centre. The funding for Bramwell Court reflects the costs of cost of providing the support as detailed in a service level agreement. An element of this figure relates to the cost of the premises which accounts for ACW’s existing rent for Bramwell Court.

6.0 COMMUNITY BENEFITS

6.1 The activities of Age Concern Wirral by their very nature, have clear benefits to the Community, in particular older people, and the nature of its organisation means that it includes and engages the community both in its governance and activities.

Specifically, Age Concern Wirral has offered the following community benefits within its proposals:

- This proposal will ensure the reuse a former facility for older people.
- The project will maintain a local single access gateway to information and a range of services (both those provided by Age Concern Wirral and by other local statutory and third sector providers) for older people and their carers living in the local area. Age Concern Wirral's approach to service development ensures that local older people are empowered to influence the programme of activity. Specific efforts will be made to ensure that the programme of activity follows a person centred planning model, reflecting the organisation's commitment to Personalisation. Furthermore, the proposed programme will create new opportunities for volunteers to engage in the charity's work.
- This project supports key Local Area Agreement priorities, including supporting older people to maintain their independence and preventing the need for more intensive support and care later in life. Specific health promotion activity will contribute to key targets and indicators concerned with improving men's health. Through having an established base in this area, the organisation will be able to seek new funding to support further activity development.

6.2 In addition, Age Concern Wirral intends to make the facility available to a number of community groups during the evenings and weekends, something which it already does at its facility at the Devonshire Resource Centre. This would enable the existing users to continue to use the facility along with other groups.

7.0 TRANSFER PROPOSAL

7.1 The Community Asset Transfer policy advises that the Council will not normally seek payment from community based groups, unless substantial commercial use of buildings generates large profits in excess of the running costs of the property. However, the Council will normally expect community based groups to be responsible for the running costs of the building, including repairs, maintenance and all insurance.

7.2 Age Concern Wirral's proposal centres around two primary needs which are to relocate from Bramwell Court and to continue to deliver and enhance its current activities. The stage two submission reflects this in its business plan and the responses to the specific stage two questions mostly reflect its wider area of business and activities across the borough. There are a number of benefits described in the report relating to specific proposals for this building. It is also clear that Age Concern Wirral has the ability and experience to operate the premises and have not requested any financial support in developing its business activities at the centre.

7.3 Age Concern Wirral's current capital resources are committed to a major new building project to construct a specialist wing at its Devonshire Resource Centre to provide services for younger people with dementia; as such, the organisation has already brought significant new investment into the Borough for the Dementia project and advises that it is not in a position fund immediate investment in Forwood Road. The existing rent paid by Age Concern Wirral for its current premises in Bramwell Court is recouped from the Council within a service level agreement (SLA). The SLA between DASS and Age Concern Wirral will be affected by the level of rent paid on behalf of

Age Concern Wirral by the Department of Adult Social Services: however, at this stage there may not be an overall reduction in the contract price as a full review of the service is planned for 2010, which should reflect the current level of use of the service and the costs incurred for such. Should Age Concern Wirral occupy the premises on the terms described below, it will be reflected in terms of the SLA.

7.4 In light of the benefits to both the community and the Council it is proposed that the transfer takes place in line with the Community Asset Transfer policy on the terms outlined as follows:

- Term: 99 years
- Rent: Peppercorn
- Liabilities: The lessee to be responsible for all outgoing and maintenance.
- User clause: In accordance with the primary objectives of Age Concern.

7.5 Members will be aware of the Council's obligation to obtain the best price reasonably obtainable on the disposal of its land and property. However, under the General Consent, the Council does have the power to restrict the value of land by imposing restrictions as to its use on the grounds that to do so is in the interest of the economic and / or environmental and / or social well being of the inhabitants of the Borough and provided also that any such restriction in value does not exceed two million pounds, per transaction. Members should be aware that Bromborough Social Centre, if offered for sale without restrictions would produce a capital receipt.

7.6 Age Concern Wirral was the only organisation to submit an expression of interest and no other organisation has approached the Council in the mean time. Should the property not be transferred to Age Concern Wirral, it would be recommended that it is sold on the open market.

8.0 COMMUNITY AUDIT

8.1 In 2009 the Council undertook an audit of community facilities across the Borough. The audit identified 42 facilities within the Bromborough Ward of which 20 facilities offer space for use by community groups for hire charges at varying rates. Both Age Concern Wirral and the Department of Adult Social Services are clear that there is a need for this facility in the Bromborough Area.

9.0 Financial implications

9.1 The Community Asset Transfer Policy advises that the Council will, subject to the availability of funding and the anticipated economic life of the building, carry out essential repairs to the main elements of the building. Such repairs are identified through an independent condition survey.

9.2 Age Concern was satisfied that the Council's in-house survey was sufficient to identify the main elements in the building which require attention. The works identified total £35,000 with the main items being a boiler replacement and electrical rewire. These works would be undertaken prior to transfer and funded from the Community Fund.

9.3 The transfer of this asset on the terms described will result in savings relating to running costs of approximately £10,375.50 per annum, although there is no specific budget for this property.

- 9.4 Backlog maintenance of up to £35,000 will be addressed through use of the Community Fund.
- 9.5 Future life cycle maintenance costs are estimated at £182,000 over the next 10 years. The Council will no longer have responsibility to meet these costs after transfer.
- 9.6 If the Council were to sell the property it could achieve a significant capital receipt. The actual amount would be determined by a marketing exercise, but would not be expected to be less than £100,000.

10.0 Staffing implications

- 10.1 There are no staff currently employed to look after these premises, therefore there are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

11.0 Equal Opportunities implications/Equality Impact Implications

- 11.1 The proposal has benefits for older people in the locality as described in the report.
- 11.2 An initial Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken in respect of the wider Community Asset Transfer process. With regard to this facility, the proposal allows for existing users to be accommodated in the refurbished centre. The proposals for the centre previously described in the report demonstrate the inclusive proposals of Age Concern Wirral.

12.0 Community Safety implications

- 12.1 The occupation of this property will assist in maintaining security of the premises which could otherwise potentially attract anti social behaviour. Reducing the isolation of older people will maintain their presence in the community and enhance their safety.

13.0 Local Agenda 21 implications

- 13.1 None arising directly from this report.

14.0 Planning implications

- 14.1 The property is identified on the Proposals Map with the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) as being a Primarily Residential Area, where provision is made for community facilities. Any future planning application in connection with the proposed use would be subject to UDP Policies HS15 and RE10, which contain criteria to protect residential amenity.

15.0 Anti-poverty implications

- 15.1 The provision of advice and information services via Age Concern will enable more people to take up benefits and other services for which they may be eligible and therefore reduce the risk of poverty.

16.0 Human Rights implications

16.1 None arising directly from this report

17.0 Social Inclusion implications

17.1 The transfer of the asset will enable older people to maintain their independence in the community.

18.0 Local Member Support implications

18.1 The property is located within the Bromborough Ward.

19.0 Background Papers

19.1 Cabinet reports:

27 November 2008 – Strategic Asset Review

15 January 2009 – Transforming Wirral

24 September 2009 – Bromborough Social Centre, Forwood Road, Bromborough

20.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

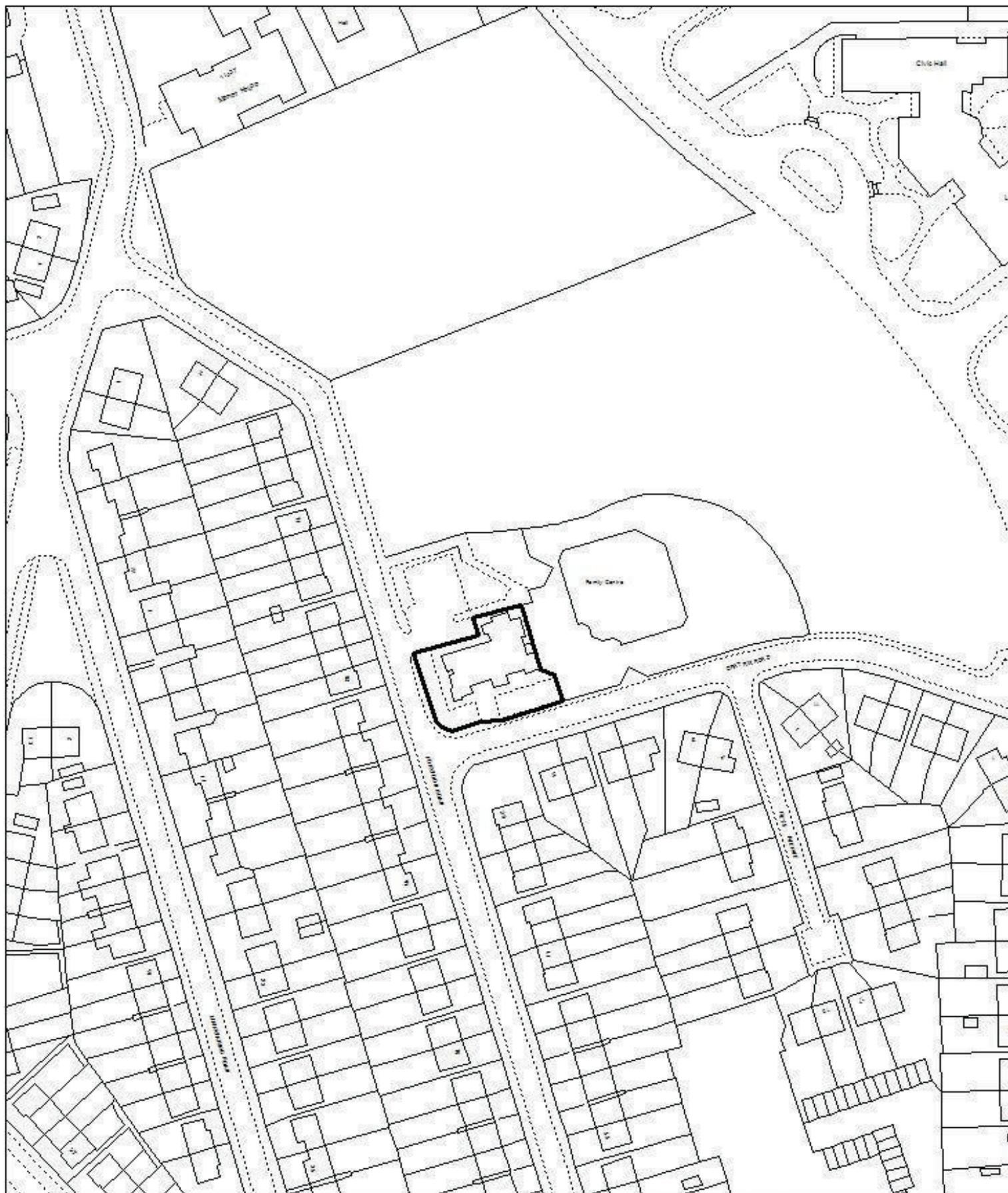
20.1 That a transfer by lease of the Bromborough Social Centre to Age Concern Wirral be agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be authorised to complete the necessary lease on the terms set out in this report.

20.2 That the agreed works to the property be funded from the Community Fund.

Bill Norman

Director of Law HR & Asset Management

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3. Programmes on Offer

- 3.1 The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) have been successfully running the **National Graduate Development Programme** on behalf of Local Government for 8 years offering graduates opportunities across the whole country in roles designed to develop them into the Leaders of the future. The basic Programme comprises a two year fixed term contract with structured six month “placements”. The starting salary is £ 22, 700. Support is given to participating Local Authorities in terms of the recruitment and selection process and the on-going development of the Graduates. A subscription fee of £2,000 per Graduate is required of the participating Council.
- 3.2 The Merseyside Improvement & Efficiency Programme (MIEP) has invested in a collaborative **Merseyside Graduate Programme** 2009 – 2011 which was piloted in Year One by Knowsley Council, Knowsley Primary Care Trust and Liverpool City Council. This has seen a shared cohort of 15 graduates recruited and trained together. The salary has been agreed at £16,830 - £17,161. Now in its second year the feedback from the programme is positive with a recent report claiming efficiencies as a result of the approach. Funding has been made available to continue with the programme allowing other Merseyside Authorities and Partners to now come on board.
- 3.3 Currently each participating employer has funded the salary costs from within their own Departments, finding the posts or opportunities to meet their own specific needs. (e.g. Knowsley asked each Department to identify posts suitable for Graduates and the Graduate stays within the same Department for the whole two years). The entire cohort of Graduates are brought together at regular intervals for training and networking to increase the knowledge sharing potential across Authorities and to find efficiencies by working collaboratively. The Liverpool City Region Employment Strategy and the local economy are supported by the Programme as targeted recruitment encourages the employment of Graduates from the Merseyside area (either those who have studied here or those returning to their homes on Merseyside after studying away).

4. The Proposed Wirral Graduate Programme

- 4.1 It is proposed that Wirral participates in the Merseyside Graduate Programme in order to achieve savings on the recruitment and training costs as a result of collaborative working. It is proposed however that we adopt the Model used in the National Graduate Programme in order to offer our Graduates a wide range of experience whilst sharing the resource and capacity around the Authority. As we currently invest in a

(a sub group of Corporate Equalities & Cohesion Group). This will continue, to ensure that the Programme is supported across all Departments and to maximise the impact of the Programme on under-represented groups. Trade Union colleagues will be engaged with regards to the Programme and consulted as the Programme develops.

8. Conclusion

Workforce Plans indicate that the profile of the organisation is generally aging and that some areas are experiencing difficulties in recruiting specific skill sets. Historically, private sector employers have been the employer of choice for graduates, with local government being seen as less attractive. The National Graduate Programme has redressed this balance to some extent by promoting Local Government as an exciting and rewarding career choice. With the current economic climate and the pressures facing Wirral around external recruitment, the Wirral Graduate Programme will offer opportunities to the some of the brightest and best graduates from Merseyside whilst boosting our internal capacity at a time when it is truly needed.

9. Equal Opportunities/ Impact

An EIA will be required. Recruitment will be co-ordinated with Staff Forums to ensure the widest possible audience is reached and to broaden the opportunity for recruitment from under represented groups in line with our People Strategy and Workforce Plans.

10. Health Implications/Impact Assessment

No implications

11. Community Safety Implications

No Implications

12. Local Agenda 21 Implications

No implications

13. Planning Implications

No implications

14. Anti –Poverty Implications

No implications

15. Social Inclusion Implications

No implications

16. Human Rights Implications

No implications

Appendix A
Proposals for the Wirral Graduate Programme

The main features of the proposed programme are outlined below:-

Length of Programme	Two years fixed term contract with a view that the graduate will have obtained a substantive post in the Council by the end of the period. The two years will be divided up into four x 6 month placements. These placements will be organised to provide experience in the following areas -: Front Line Service Delivery Support Services Strategy Development
Grade of Post	Graduates will start at the top of Band D (£16,830) progressing to the bottom of Band E (£17,161)
Recruitment Pool/ Source	The Programme will be advertised locally via our Website and local press as well as through Merseyside Universities. To support recruitment in under represented groups, advertising will also be carried out in targeted press.
Selection Procedures	An Assessment Centre will be held along with an Interview to select the agreed number of graduates. It is proposed that we recruit 4 Graduates per year on a rolling programme
Training / Development	The Graduates will participate in collaborative skills sessions with Graduates from other Merseyside Graduate Programme Authorities, in line with the requirements of their KIEs and roles. These sessions will be funded by the Merseyside BEST Programme. e.g. Facilitation Skills, Project Management, Critical Thinking, Report Writing Any specific skills training directly related to a placement will be covered by the host Department. It is proposed that the Graduates are considered to join the Wirral Leadership Development Programme after their first year.
Networking	Networking amongst the graduates will be facilitated throughout the Programme both internally and with Graduates on similar programmes across Merseyside. The HR/OD Team will be responsible for managing this process commencing with their Induction.
Roles / Responsibilities	OD Team – will be the functional “home” of the Graduates. The OD Manager is responsible for the Graduates KIEs and overseeing their development throughout the two years. Line Managers – will provide high quality work placements and projects and any job related training. They will be responsible for day to day management and supervision of the graduate. Mentors – will be sourced from across the organisation and will support the Graduate for the full two years. They will be responsible for facilitating development opportunities, providing access to wider networks and offering support where necessary. Programme Co-ordinator – will arrange placements with Departments and ensure the smooth running of the programme on a day to day basis. This will include organising network meetings and training. This duties attached to this role will be picked up by existing personnel from within the HR and OD Teams.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 24 June 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR & ASSET MANAGEMENT

LAND OFF BRIDGE ROAD, WEST KIRBY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the terms of a potential transfer of the land comprising the highway embankment to Bridge Road, West Kirby, from Network Rail to the Council, with a lease thereafter granted to ALDI.

2. Background

- 2.1 The plan attached to this report shows, edged black, a site in West Kirby which ALDI wish to develop as a store with a net sales area of 960 sqm (10,200 square feet) together with associated car parking areas and service facilities.
- 2.2 Planning permission for this scheme was granted on 23rd March 2010, following the completion of a Section 106 agreement.
- 2.3 In order to secure a site sufficient in area to deliver this project, ALDI has been involved in a land assembly exercise. This has required the Company to acquire interests in land from private owners, Network Rail and the Council. This report deals with how the final element of this process may be completed.

3. Current Position

- 3.1 ALDI is now ready to implement its planning permission and build the store. It has already demolished buildings on site and the Director of Corporate Services has made representations to the Company regarding the current condition and appearance of the land. However, a difficulty has arisen in respect of the embankment, shown hatched on the attached plan.
- 3.2 This embankment is a highway embankment supporting Bridge Road as it leads up to the bridge over the railway. It is not adopted highway and it is in the ownership of Network Rail.
- 3.3 In order for this retail development to have sufficient car parking spaces, as approved in the planning permission, it is necessary to excavate this embankment and provide an appropriate retaining wall for the public highway. ALDI is willing to undertake this work and has provided drawings and specifications for the retaining wall.
- 3.4 However, Network Rail is not prepared to dispose of its interest in the embankment to ALDI direct. It has advised all parties that its policy in such matters is only to transfer interests in highway and bridge supporting embankments to Statutory Bodies, in this case the Council.
- 3.5 This means that, on transfer of Network Rail's freehold interest, the Council would become liable for the highway embankment and subsequently for the new retaining wall, when constructed.

- 3.6 ALDI has proposed, as a solution to this problem, that once Network Rail has transferred its freehold interest in this embankment to the Council, the Council then immediately grants a 99-year lease to ALDI, passing all the liabilities for repair and maintenance of the embankment to ALDI. The Director of Technical Services advises that the specification for the highway retaining wall is satisfactory to cover the term of the proposed lease.
- 3.7 ALDI cannot develop this scheme without constructing the 29 car parking spaces which would be created by the excavation of this embankment. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the Council should receive a financial benefit by agreeing to accept the freehold of this land from Network Rail and then, subsequently leasing it to ALDI. This benefit will be in the form of a Premium for Lease payable to the Council, the details of which are included in the exempt Financial Implications of this report.
- 3.8 The grant of this lease will enable ALDI to build the store and redevelop this site in accordance with its planning permission. As the premium for lease, provisionally agreed, is deemed fair and reasonable, it is recommended that these two dependent transactions proceed as outlined in this report.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The Financial Implications of these agreements are detailed in the Exempt Section (Appendix 1) of this report.

5. Community Safety implications

- 5.1 The redevelopment of the site will remove the potential risks associated with empty and demolished properties.

6. Local Agenda 21 implications

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

7. Planning implications

- 7.1 Planning permission for the development was approved in March 2010, following the completion of a Section 106 agreement.

8. Anti-poverty implications

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9. Human Rights implications

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Social Inclusion implications

- 10.1 None arising directly from this report.

11. Local Member Support implications

- 11.1 The development is located in the West Kirby and Thurstaston ward, close to its boundary with Hoylake and Med

12. Background Papers

12.1 None

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 That the Cabinet agrees to accept the freehold of the embankment off Bridge Road, West Kirby, in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this report.

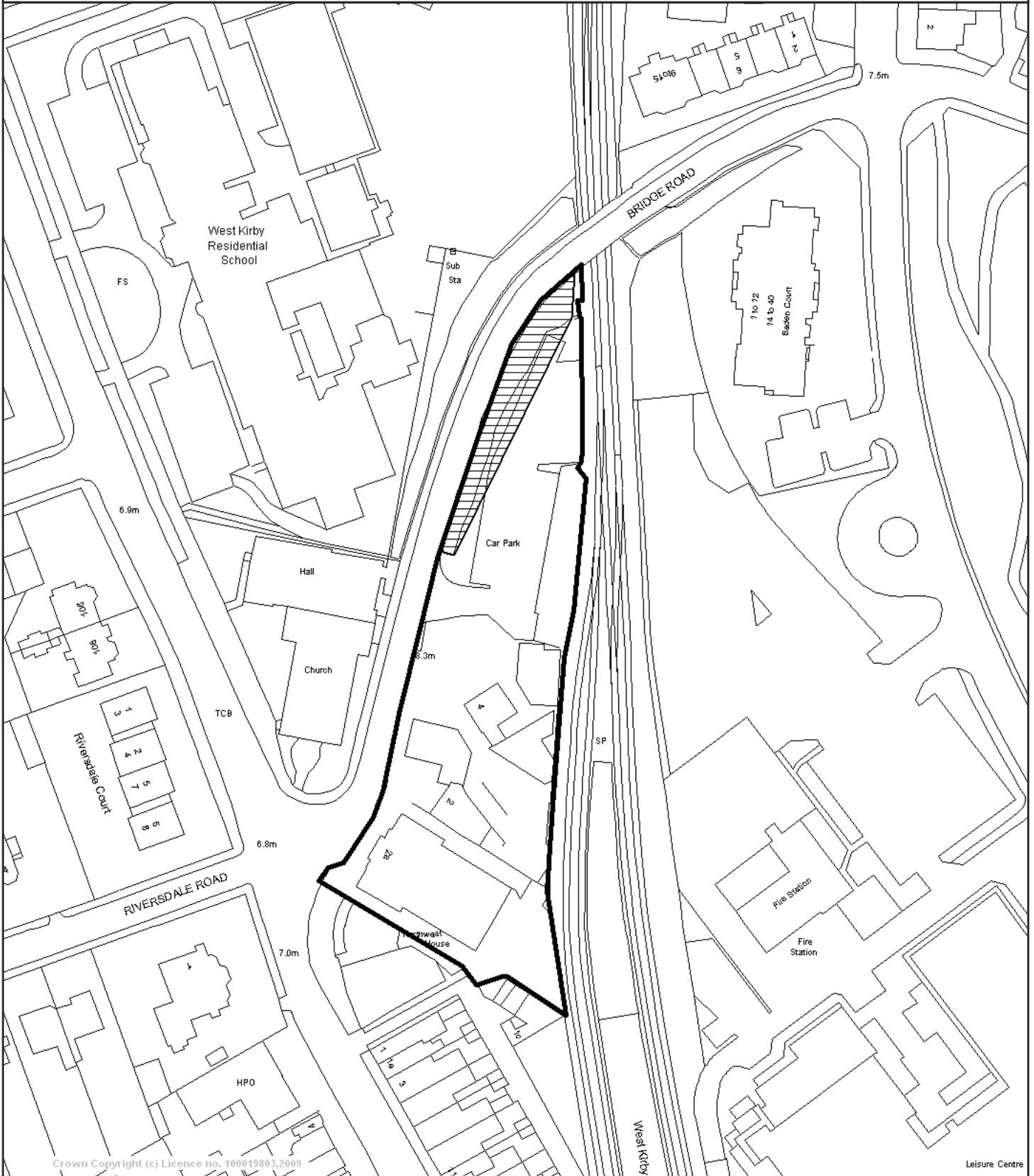
13.2 That, on receipt of the freehold, Cabinet approves the grant of a lease to ALDI for the embankment, in accordance with the terms and conditions set out in this report.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

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Bridge Road, West Kirby



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Leisure Centre



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Scale 1/1250 Date 3/6/2010
Centre = 321309 E 387078 N

Asset Management Section, Dept. of Law, HR and Asset Management, Town Hall, Brighton Street, Wallasey, CH44 8ED
Tel:0151 691 8413 , Fax:0151 691 8427



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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

24 JUNE 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

COLLECTION SUMMARY – 2009-10

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report details the collection of Council Tax, Business Rates, Sundry Debtors and Housing Act Advances. It highlights key collection indicators and trends with regard to irrecoverable sums and requests approval to write off debts in excess of delegation.

2. COUNCIL TAX

2.1. Council Tax Collection

2.1.1. The following statement summarises 2009/10 collection of Council Tax.

	£	£
Arrears Brought Forward at 1 April 2009		12,841,000
Total Charge		<u>175,655,506</u>
		188,496,506
Less Credits Brought Forward at 1 April 2009		<u>885,125</u>
		187,611,381
Less Allowances:		
Exemptions	5,217,368	
Disabled Persons Relief	156,366	
Discounts	21,976,951	
Benefits	29,760,480	
Write-offs	<u>724,252</u>	
		57,835,417
		129,775,964
Add Refunds Made		1,570,013
Add Costs		<u>657,195</u>
		132,003,317
Less Cash Received		<u>119,301,172</u>
Arrears Carried Forward at 31 March 2010		<u>12,702,145.</u>
Number of properties at 31 March 2009		145,427
Number of Benefit Recipients at 31 March 2009		39,106

2.1.2. During 2009-2010 a total of 64,871 reminder notices and 19,749 summonses were issued leading to the Courts issuing 12,707 Liability Orders. 1,604 Attachment of Earnings Orders and 4176 Deductions from Job Seekers Allowance / Income Support were commenced and 9,600 cases were referred to Bailiffs.

2.1.3. Despite the continuing economic downturn in 2009-10 Council Tax collection improved slightly with an increase from 96.7% in 2008-2009 to 96.8% in 2009-

10. It is not expected that there will be a significant increase in collection for 2010-11 but I anticipate collection levels to be maintained.

2.2. Council Tax Irrecoverables

2.2.1. There is no specific power to write off Council Tax debts, which are covered by the general power of administering the financial affairs of the Authority.

Examples of suitable cases for write off are: deceased persons with no estate, persons not traced, Insolvency and minimal sums. All other debts are actively pursued.

2.2.2. The write-off provision for 2009-2010 was £3.9m. Trace and recovery work is ongoing for Council Tax arrears. In 2009/10 £974,708 has been written off and is categorised as follows:

	£
Deceased	148,177
Insolvency	100,373
Miscellaneous	-59,241
1997-1998	256,883
2003-2004	<u>528,516</u>
	<u>974,708</u>

Miscellaneous write-offs include small debits/credits which are uneconomic to pursue, committal sums remitted, recovery costs cancelled, and debts that are statute barred.

2.2.3. The Council Tax computer system was replaced in December 2006 and is designed to hold all old accounts. With the previous system the eighth year debts were archived to a residual collection system. This no longer occurs. However as in previous years the year 8 (2003-2004) accounts were analysed for collection purposes. This resulted in £528,516 of the debt being written off as unable to be traced. The remaining £449,455 will continue to be collected.

2.2.4. The balance on the residual system as at 1 April 2008 was £868,574, which covers the period from 1 April 1997 to 31 March 2000. £62,722 was collected against residual debts on this system. The cash receipts were reduced by £66,073. This was refunded to taxpayers due to successful Council Tax banding appeals. Many of the appeals resulted in repayments as far back as April 1993.

2.2.5. I have under delegated powers, written off the balance of the 1997-98 debt during 2009-10. The debt is 12 years old and this practice is in line with that used for General Rates and Poll Tax debts of that age. £256,883 was written off. The final collection performance for 1997-98 Council Tax was 99.4%.

2.3. Council Tax Statistics

2.3.1. Number of Dwellings

1 April 2009	145,421
1 April 2010	145,427

Number of Dwellings as an Equivalent of Band 'D'

1 April 2009	105,863
1 April 2010	106,283

2.3.2. Year on Year Volume Comparisons

	31.03.07	31.03.08	31.03.09
Direct Debit Payers	86,500	85,995	86,739
Discount Recipients	64,134	70,130	71,686
Inc Pensioners discounts	6,528	7,193	8,797
Exempt Persons	3,530	3,835	4,116
No. of Amended/Copy Accounts	129,477	125,092	160,696
No. of Returned Direct Debit Payments	13,478	10,441	10,779
Payments: Direct Debits	838,589	861,591	865,047
Cash/Cheque	69,694	124,395	77,036
Salaries/Wages	35,582	20,492	17,113
Debit/Credit Card	43,688	45,915	52,012
Paypoint			33,203
Post Office			75,899
Dept Work + Pensions			28,599
Bailiff			21,393
Refunds	6,126	5,972	5,972

3. BUSINESS RATES (NATIONAL NON DOMESTIC RATES)

3.1. Collection

3.1.1. The following statement summarises 2009/10 collection.

	£	£
Opening Debit		75,591,065
Plus Balance Brought Forward		8,417,912
Plus Costs		<u>45,812</u>
		84,054,789
<u>Allowances</u>		
Assessment changes in year	-5,008,877	
Empty relief exemptions	-3,704,982	
Empty relief	-5,096	
Small Business rate relief	-2,112,741	
Charitable Organisations	-3,881,683	
Transitional Relief	562,959	
Part Occupation Property Relief	-280,969	
Write-Offs	-1,962,722	
Hardship	0	
		<u>-16,396,193</u>
		67,658,596
Refunds made		<u>3,078,585</u>
		70,737,181
Less Cash Received		-63,741,213
Less Prepaid March 2009		-197,211
Plus 2010-11 Prepaid		182,632
Less net Interest		<u>-121,050</u>

Balances Carried Forward	6,860,339
Rateable Value 1 April 2009	155,877,636
Number of Properties 1 April 2009	7,922

3.1.2. The Business Rates system is based on a nationally set charge collected locally. In 2009-10 Wirral paid £59.5m into the National Pool. The Government re-distributes the Pool to all Authorities based on population. In 2009-10 Wirral received £123.7m.

3.2. Irrecoverables

3.2.1. Within the collection target is an allowance for irrecoverables or losses on collection. This is calculated as a percentage of anticipated yield and was £608,602 in 2009-10 as compared to £558,522 in 2008-09.

3.2.2. The Government sets these allowances for Authorities. Write-offs above these levels may need to be audited and, if accepted, collection levels are amended. The implementation of a new business rates system during 2008-09 resulted in the processing of few write offs during that year, consequently exceeding the limit during 2009-10 should require no specific action on the part of the Council.

3.2.3. A breakdown of 2009-10 write-offs is given below:-

	£
Absconded/Irrecoverable	818,742
Insolvency	1,142,932
Miscellaneous. (Inc. Deceased)	<u>1,048</u>
TOTAL	<u>1,962,722</u>

3.3. Statistics

Property	2009-10	2008-09
Number of Properties on Valuation List	7,922	8,098
Rateable Value	£155,877,636	£156,791,226
New and Altered Property Notifications	430	516
 Recovery Action		
Summonses	980	1,081
Liability Orders	833	667
Chargepayers on Direct Debit	3,036	3,066

4. SUNDRY DEBTOR ACCOUNTS

4.1. The collection statement for 2009-10 is shown with the 2008-09 comparison.

	2009-10	2008-09
	£	£
Balance Brought Forward at 1 April	27,650,600	21,974,186
Net Amount of Invoices	<u>90,452,390</u>	<u>80,412,203</u>
	118,192,990	102,386,389
Less Write-Offs	<u>364,773</u>	<u>148,006</u>
	117,828,217	102,238,383
Payments Received	<u>92,097,935</u>	<u>74,587,783</u>
Balance Carried Forward at 31 March	25,730,282	27,650,600

4.1.1. The number of invoices and their value raised over the last five years are as follows:

	Invoices	£m
2005-06	32,080	45.9
2006-07	32,720	44.0
2007-08	39,480	69.7
2008-09	38,156	80.4
2009-10	34,230	90.4

4.2 Irrecoverables

4.2.1 Provision for irrecoverable debts has been made and debts identified as irrecoverable are being written off. The amounts written off under delegated powers in operation for 2009-10 (under £1,000) are summarised below:

	Number	£
Absconds	34	7,524
Irrecoverable	198	26,301
Miscellaneous	231	35,100
Insolvency	68	28,123
Deceased debtors and small value	<u>457</u>	<u>12,000</u>
	988	109,048

4.2.2 Sums over the limit of delegation are shown later in the report and require Cabinet approval. These items are within the following categories and are detailed in Appendix 1

	Number	£
Absconds	9	17,500
Irrecoverable	9	12,883
Miscellaneous	17	86,062
Insolvency	19	131,474
Deceased	<u>2</u>	<u>7,806</u>
	56	255,725

4.2.3 Details have previously been requested for debts of over £5,000 which have been submitted for write off and these are detailed below.

Case 1 Department of Technical Services

Invoice dated August 1998 amounting to £5,396.78 in respect of traffic signal installation. As the debt was eleven years old, legal advice was that it was statute barred and the debt should be written off.

Case 2 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated July 2001 amounting to £6,266.54 in respect of repayment of money due to Prenton Infants School. Debtor subsequently died leaving no assets, consequently the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 3 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated May 2006 amounting to £6,345.00 for recovery of a repaid cheque payment. The company subsequently went into liquidation and as there is unlikely to be a dividend to unsecured creditors such as the Council, the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 4 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated April 2005 amounting to £10,738.75 in respect of course fees. The department could not provide sufficient evidence to support recovery through the Courts; consequently it was advised that the debt should be recommended to be written off.

Case 5 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated December 2008 amounting to £17,331.25 in respect of the recovery of money for a vehicle purchased in May 2007. The company subsequently went into liquidation and as there is unlikely to be a dividend to unsecured creditors such as the Council, the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 6 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated October 2007 amounting to £35,438.93 in respect of an equipment and telephones upgrade. The company subsequently went into liquidation and as there is unlikely to be a dividend to unsecured creditors such as the Council, the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 7 Children & Young People's Department

Invoice dated September 2007 amounting to £45,419.63 in respect of work at St Mary's College, Wallasey. The company subsequently went into liquidation and as there is unlikely to be a dividend to unsecured creditors such as the Council, the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 8 Department of Adult Social Services

Invoice dated March 1999 amounting to £11,695.60 in respect of accommodation charges. Legal advice given to the department that there were no available assets, and therefore no prospect of recovery, consequently the debt was recommended to be written off.

Case 9 Department of Adult Social Services

Invoice dated October 2002 amounting to £28,439.25 in respect of accommodation charges. Legal advice is that the invoice is statute barred and that there is no prospect of recovery from the estate of the deceased, consequently the debt was recommended to be written off.

5. HOUSING ACT ADVANCES

- 5.1. The collection statement for 2009-10 is shown with 2008-09 comparison and a five years arrears trend.

	2009-10	2008-09
	£	£
Arrears Brought Forward	2,953	4,025
Charges	<u>61,043</u>	<u>69,723</u>
	63,996	73,748
Cash Collected	<u>61,548</u>	<u>70,795</u>
Arrears Carried Forward	<u>2,448</u>	<u>2,953</u>

Five Year Collection Details

Year	Amount Collectable £	Arrears £	Number of Accounts
2005-2006	181,002	2,384	102
2006-2007	138,806	2,102	73
2007-2008	76,343	4,025	50
2008-2009	73,748	2,953	38
2009-2010	63,996	2,448	28
Total of loans outstanding at 31 March 2009			£149,432
Total of loans outstanding at 31 March 2010			£100,796

5.2. No new advances were made in 2009-10. The number of mortgage accounts continues to decrease as more are redeemed or transferred to other institutions. The caseload retained continues to be monitored to prevent arrears increasing.

6. IRRECOVERABLE DEBTS

6.1. Under delegated powers I have written off as irrecoverable the following:-

	£
Council Tax	974,708
Business Rates	1,962,722
Sundry Debtors	<u>109,048</u>
TOTAL	<u>3,046,478</u>

7. FINANCIAL AND STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1. There are no financial and staffing implications beyond the statements of accounts contained in this report. It is recommended that accounts totalling £255,725.11 be written off.

8. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

8.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

9. LOCAL AGENDA 21 STATEMENT

9.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

10. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

11. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

12. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

12.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

13. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

13.1. There are no specific implications arising out of this report.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1. None used in the preparation of this report.

15. RECOMMENDATION

15.1. That approval be given to write off £255,725.11.

IAN COLEMAN
DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

FNCE/94/10

						5
						-
1	31-Oct-		Phones			£35,438.9
3	07	WE	Upgrade	LIQUIDATION		3
						-
1	26-Sep-		Works Order			£45,419.6
4	07	WE		LIQUIDATION		3
						-
						£133,984.1
						0

Technical Services

	15-Aug-					-
1	07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,012.00
	22-May-					-
2	08	WCT	Fuel	LIQUIDATION		£1,015.11
						-
3	26-Jun-06	GM	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,067.00
	20-Mar-					-
4	07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,078.00
	21-Feb-		Annual			-
5	07	COE	Maintenance	LIQUIDATION		£1,086.88
						-
6	16-Jul-07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,100.00
	04-May-					-
7	06	GM	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,111.00
	01-Sep-		Traffic			-
8	05	JAM	Accident	NO TRACE		£1,238.74
						-
9	08-Jun-07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,265.00
1	11-Mar-		Traffic	INSUFFICIENT		-
0	08	TS	Accident	PROOF		£1,412.53
1	13-Mar-		Traffic			-
1	08	AM	Accident	IRRECOVERABLE		£1,464.90
			Traffic			-
2	04-Jan-07	NE	Accident	IRRECOVERABLE		£1,478.57
1	22-May-					-
3	07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,507.00
1	17-Mar-		Clearway			-
4	06	UU	Order	DEPT ADVISE		£1,524.64
1						-
5	10-Apr-07	PRS	Skip Permits	LIQUIDATION		£1,782.00
1	25-Oct-		Certificate of			-
6	02	LCH	Payment	STATUTE BARRED		£3,842.66
1	17-May-		Traffic			-
7	02	JW	Accident	NO TRACE		£4,725.56
1	24-Aug-		Signal			-
8	98	PD	Installation	STATUTE BARRED		£5,396.78
1			Site Inspection			-
9	05-Jan-07	RED	Fees	LIQUIDATION		£1,052.42

£34,160.79

Finance

	18-Feb-		Overpaid		-
1	04	NDR	Wages	DEPT ADVISE	£3,991.91
	05-Sep-		Balance Car		-
2	97	KO	Loan	IRRECOVERABLE	£1,358.97
	06-Dec-		Balance Car		-
3	93	GS	Loan	DECEASED	£1,539.68
	02-Feb-		Overpaid		-
4	06	JC	Salary	NO TRACE	£1,568.39
	24-Nov-		Overpaid		-
5	05	CG	Salary	SETTLEMENT	£2,173.14
	19-Dec-		Overpaid		-
6	02	JB	Salary	IRRECOVERABLE	£2,745.96
	06-Nov-		Overpaid	INSUFFICIENT	-
7	06	ST	Salary	PROOF	£3,602.07

£16,980.12

Law HR & Asset Management

					-
1	22-Apr-05	TSG	Rent	NO TRACE	£1,128.66
	25-Nov-				-
2	99	SF	Repairs	IRRECOVERABLE	£1,141.74
			Contribution to		-
3	03-Jun-08	BLR	Repairs	LIQUIDATION	£2,934.15
			Clearing		-
4	15-Jun-98	VW	Rubbish	NO TRACE	£4,197.22
					-
5	02-Jul-08	WN	Rent	IRRECOVERABLE	£1,013.01
	09-Feb-			INSUFFICIENT	-
6	89	O	Land Charge	PROOF	£1,013.92
					-
7	02-Jan-08	WN	Rent	IRRECOVERABLE	£1,062.50
					-
8	02-Apr-08	WN	Rent	IRRECOVERABLE	£1,062.50
	31-Mar-		Contribution to	INSUFFICIENT	-
9	06	OM	Repairs	PROOF	£1,353.55
1	28-Aug-		Contribution to	INSUFFICIENT	-
0	03	PW	Repairs	PROOF	£1,832.00

£16,739.25

£255,725.1

Total

1

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