

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET

23RD JUNE 2011

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| SUBJECT: | Neighbourhood Plans and Area Forum Funding |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | All |
| REPORT OF: | Chief Executive |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | Cllr Jean Stapleton, Community and Customer Engagement |
| KEY DECISION: | No |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposed approach for the development of a 'Neighbourhood Plan' for each forum area. It details a proposed consultation programme to involve local residents in the development of these plans.
- 1.2 This report also sets out an approach for distributing forum funding in consultation with the Council's area forums together with proposals for developing the Council's approach to participatory budgeting.
- 1.3 The report finally outlines proposals for the branding and positioning of the area forums, funding and 'Neighbourhood Plans'.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 Cabinet is requested to endorse the approach to developing a 'Neighbourhood Plan' for each of Wirral's area forums and the proposed consultation programme.
- 2.2 Cabinet notes the funding streams that will be subject to consultation through the forums, and is requested to approve the broad principles set out in this report for the use of participatory budgeting to distribute funding at the October 2011 area forum meetings.
- 2.3 Cabinet is requested to approve the essential criteria for allocating funds through the area forums together with the specific aims of the funding streams set out in appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.4 Cabinet is requested to approve the proposed branding and positioning of Wirral's area forums.

3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 The recommendations are to support and enhance Wirral's 11 area forums and to influence the investment of Council resources through the development of 'Neighbourhood Plans'. The recommendations will also increase the transparency and simplify the distribution of funding through the area forums.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

4.1 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

4.1 Wirral's 11 area forum meetings were established in 2001 and are an important mechanism that the Council uses to engage with local residents. In order to continue and support the important role that area forums play, each area forum will be assisted to develop a 'Neighbourhood Plan' through community consultation. Key principles of these plans will be to:

- Accurately reflect the real challenges for the area based on engagement and consultation with local communities
- Set out a vision for a community and identify local priorities within the area
- Robustly influence the way the Council invests resources and delivers services in a local area
- Determine the future distribution of forum funding

4.2 Neighbourhood profiles will be developed for each forum area in discussion with ward councillors and will include overall demographic information, places of interest, information about Council services and an outline of key challenges within the area. The information used within the reports will be drawn from a range of sources including the Council's local development framework and Corporate Plan. Other intelligence available to the Council including Wirral's Child Poverty needs assessment will be included where appropriate.

4.3 Community consultation will be at the core of developing the neighbourhood plans and the June 2011 area forums will be used to inform and engage local residents in the development of the plans. The June area forums will receive a presentation to both inform and involve local residents in the development of 'Neighbourhood Plans', and to ask attendees to identify opportunities for the Council to consult with local residents during the consultation period. Departments will also be asked to identify community events and consultation activities that can be utilised to develop the neighbourhood plans.

4.4 An allocation of £5,000 per area forum has been provided to assist with the development of the 'Neighbourhood Plans' through community consultation. This funding will enable a wide scale programme of consultation and engagement to take place in each forum area between July and September 2011 led by the Council's Community Engagement Team. One Stop Shops, libraries and leisure centres will also be designated places where local residents can provide their views. Consultation plans are currently being drawn up and will be discussed with ward councillors to ensure that the consultation is as inclusive as possible.

4.5 The results of the consultation will be reported to the October 2011 forums and meetings with departments will take place to develop action plans in response to these findings. 'Neighbourhood Plans' will be in place by December 2011.

| Activity | Timescale |
|---|-------------------------|
| Launch of 'Neighbourhood Plan' consultation at June area forums | June 2011 |
| Programme of community consultation events | July to September 2011 |
| Findings to be collated | September 2011 |
| Findings reported to area forums and local action plans developed in response to the findings | October / November 2011 |
| Neighbourhood plans in place | December 2011 |

4.6 It is proposed that 'Neighbourhood Plans' will inform the future agenda setting for the area forums under the four theme areas; Your Council, Your Neighbourhood, Your Economy and Your Family. Agenda items will be included under those titles to allow the agendas to be much more locally focused than at present. Agendas will take into account what is happening in the local area, upcoming events and other items of interest to the forums. The Community Engagement Team will work with the ward councillors and also use intelligence from Council officers to develop these agendas.

5.0 AREA FORUM FUNDING

5.1 Since 2003, the forums have distributed over **£1,470,707** funds to local community and voluntary groups through initiatives such as Funds for You and Big Lunch. The forums have also allocated **£660,000** through consultation with local residents to deliver additional council services through the Council's You Decide initiative.

5.2 The following funding streams will be advertised through Wirral's 11 area forums:

| Lead Department | Funding Stream | Description |
|--|----------------|--|
| Corporate Services | Funds for You | Small grants programme for projects and activities led by voluntary and community groups |
| Corporate Services | You Decide | Funding available for additional Council services or service improvements. |
| Corporate Services | Empty Shops | Funding to provide financial help to re-open or re-use empty shops. (As part of the Government's national Empty Shops initiative, a further £17,500 is also available for empty shops within three specific centres: Bromborough, New Ferry and King Street / Brighton Street This funding will also be allocated through the relevant Area Forums |
| Corporate Services on behalf of NHS Wirral | Public Health | Funding available for voluntary and community groups to improve the health and wellbeing of Wirral residents |
| Technical | Winter | Funding available for extra grit bins. This funding has |

| Lead Department | Funding Stream | Description |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| Services | Resilience | been fully allocated for 2011/12 through consultation at the February 2011 area forums. |
| Technical Services | Promoting Active Travel and Health, Improving Road Safety | Funding available to promote active travel and health, and improving road safety |
| Law, HR and Asset Management | Community Energy Efficiency Fund | Funding 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 |

5.3 In addition to the above amounts, there is a £500,000 allocation to make Wirral's 27 local and district shopping centres more attractive places to visit, shop and do business through a focussed programme of street cleansing including deep clean, gum removal, repairs and environmental enhancements. Consultation is underway with local traders in the forum areas.

5.4 The funding identified within this report has been allocated for two purposes; 1) to fund projects and activities which will have a positive impact within Wirral's communities, and 2) to deliver additional Council services or service improvements that residents would like to see happen in their local forum area.

6.0 FUNDING AVAILABLE TO DELIVER COMMUNITY PROJECTS / ACTIVITIES

6.1 It is proposed that the following 2011/12 funding will be available for allocation using participative budgeting events at the October 2011 area forums:

| | |
|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Funds for You: | £15,500 per forum |
| Public Health: | £4,577 per forum |
| <u>Empty Shops:</u> | <u>£17,500 per forum *</u> |
| Total: | £37,577 per forum |

* Cabinet on 13th January 2011 (minute 279) agreed that funding from the Government's National Empty Shops initiative should be allocated to three specific centres through the relevant area forums as follows:

- Liscard and Seacombe Area Forum: King Street / Brighton Street £17,500
- Bromborough and Eastham Area Forum: New Ferry £17,500, Bromborough £17,500

6.2 It is proposed that the process will be taken forward as follows:

- The funding is allocated at an annual budget setting event hosted by each area forum in October 2011;
- Funding will be advertised at the June area forums with applications invited from July to September 2011 using a simple and transparent application process against a set list of criteria included at appendix 1 of this report;

- The applications will be reviewed by an officer panel which will include representation from the lead department to ensure the essential criteria and required aims set out in appendix 1 of this report are met. Applicants will be informed if they do not meet the criteria and aims of the funding streams and there will be no right of appeal;
- Successful applicants will then be invited to attend and present their proposed project at the October area forum meetings, with local residents attending the meeting given the opportunity to vote for the projects which they would like to see funded;
- The recommendations of the area forum meetings will be reported to Cabinet in November 2011 for approval.

6.3 The Community Energy Efficiency fund will also be advertised at the June area forums with applications from voluntary and community groups invited from June to September 2011 in line with the other funding streams available through the area forums. Applications for this fund will be subject solely to a review by an officer panel against the criteria set out within appendix 1 of this report. Applicants will be informed if they do not meet the criteria and aims of the funding streams and there will be no right of appeal. Recommendations will be reported to Cabinet in November 2011.

6.4 Funding available through the area forums will be widely advertised with publicity for funding events in place to enable maximum attendance. The advertisement and publicity of all forum funding will be led by the Council's Community Planning, Engagement and Communications Team who will also lead on the administration of all forum meetings. Terms of reference for the funding events and protocols for voting will also be drawn up.

6.5 A consistent approach will be developed for the performance and financial monitoring of any funding awarded through the area forums. Standard documentation will also be created including funding offer letters and progress reports.

7.0 FORUM FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR COUNCIL SERVICES OR SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

7.1 The 'Neighbourhood Plan' will help identify the local issues and proposed actions that residents want to see addressed in their local areas. The plans will also help inform the allocation of the following funding during 2011/12 for additional Council services and service improvements: In addition to the £37,577 per forum outlined in section 6.1 of this report, the following funding will be consulted upon through the area forums for local residents to decide how the money is spent on additional Council services or service improvements:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| You Decide: | £20,000 per forum |
| Promoting Active Travel & Health, | £10,000 per forum |
| <u>Improving Road Safety:</u> | <u>£10,000 per forum</u> |
| Total: | £40,000 per forum |

8.0 ADVERTISEMENT OF AREA FORUMS, NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS AND FUNDING

- 8.1 The Area Forums are one of the Council's key mechanisms for a resident to make their voice heard, make a complaint, speak to their local Councillor, get involved in how the Council delivers and designs services and, most importantly, to play a real role in the future of their local community. Forums are also a venue for residents to either play a part in deciding which community projects are funded, and also on certain occasions to bid for funding themselves.
- 8.2 It is proposed that following the June 2011 meetings the forums be advertised as 'Neighbourhood Committees' to tie in with the forums two key engagement priorities for the coming year: neighbourhood plans and funding opportunities. The 'Neighbourhood Plan' project is currently being progressed as outlined in section 2 of this report and will be launched at the June forums alongside the various funding streams outlined in section 5 of this report. All marketing and promotional activity currently undertaken for each individual funding stream will be combined into one major campaign for all funding opportunities and advertised as 'Neighbourhood Funding'.

9.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 9.1 Project and risk planning is in place in relation to the approach set out in this report and will be regularly reviewed to ensure that key risks are addressed through mitigating action.

10.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 10.1 Not applicable

11.0 CONSULTATION

- 11.1 The approach set out in this report has been developed to initiate the widest possible consultation and engagement with local communities. Consultation plans will be drawn up for each forum area and will include consultation events and a targeted programme for engagement with Wirral's Communities.
- 11.2 Appropriate measures will be taken to avoid duplication and maximise consultation responses through aligning engagement with local residents to other consultation activity including Wirral's Child Poverty Strategy.

12.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 12.1 Funding will be available to voluntary, community and faith groups to submit applications through their local area forums.

13.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 13.1 There is a £5,000 policy option allocation per forum area to develop the neighbourhood plans. Existing staffing resources will be used during the consultation and development of the local plans.

14.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

14.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

15.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

15.1 Funding identified within this report will be advertised widely to enable all groups across Wirral to apply for funding. The 'Neighbourhood Plans' will be developed in consultation with all of Wirral's diverse communities. The plans will have an equalities assessment informed by the consultation programme referred to in this report. The consultation will include targeted actions to engage minority communities and target groups.

16.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

16.1 The distribution of the Energy Efficiency fund to Wirral's community groups will have a positive impact to address the impact on climate change in Wirral.

17.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

17.1 The report outlines proposals to enable communities to develop a vision for their community through the development of a 'Neighbourhood Plan'. An important influence on this work will be the take-up of Neighbourhood Development Plans and Orders introduced by the coalition Government in autumn 2010 and to be brought into law through the Localism Bill, currently in Parliament. Neighbourhood Development Plans in this context is to give Parish Councils and constituted Neighbourhood organisations (such as Residents' or Business Associations) the right to prepare a Neighbourhood Development Plan or Neighbourhood Development Order for their area, which goes beyond the provisions made in the Council's Local Development Framework. It will therefore consider town planning controls over development in the local area and may also propose sites on which new development will come forward. The Plan or Order will have to comply with national planning policy and be consistent with strategic policies of the Local Development Framework.

17.2 The 'Neighbourhood Committees' are also an ideal opportunity for Neighbourhood Planning Frontrunners to communicate and engage with local residents about planning development, and where appropriate provide further support to groups considering submitting proposals. In Wirral Devonshire Park Residents' Association (Prenton Ward) and Hoylake Village Life (Hoylake and Meols) have been accepted by Government and funding of £20,000 per proposal has been granted to the Council to support the Front Runners and fund the referendum for each proposal.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Funding criteria and aims

Appendix 1

Essential criteria for funding applications

- Be from an organisation that has a bank account in the name of the group applying for the Fund;
- The activity must be accessible to the general public and not restricted to closed groups or membership organisations;
- The activity must meet one or more of the aims of the Fund being applied for;
- The activity must comply with any relevant legislation and with Council policies and Corporate Plan priorities

Funding cannot be used for the following purposes:

- Religious or party political activities (faith groups are eligible if the activities are available for the general community use and not restricted by affiliation to the faith group/organisation)
- Core staff salaries or core administration costs
- Activities or services that schools have a statutory duty to provide (schools and groups operating from within schools are eligible to apply for funding for additional activities to the statutory provision)

Specific aims by funding streams

Funds for You

Funds for You is available to voluntary, community or faith sector groups and 'not for profit' organisations.

The aim of Funds for You is to:

- Fund projects and activities that will have a positive impact in Wirral's communities

Public Health

Public Health funding is available to voluntary, community or faith sector groups and 'not for profit' organisations.

The aims of the Public Health fund are to deliver one or more of the following outcomes:

- To raise awareness of mental health/mental wellbeing
- To increase physical activity opportunities for adults in the local community
- To increase physical activity opportunities for under five year olds in the local community
- To Increase access to healthy food choices
- To increase healthy cookery training opportunities
- To increase opportunities for young people to access activities that reduce harm and risk taking behaviour related to alcohol misuse

- To increase opportunities for activities to improve mental wellbeing for adults in the local community
- To develop opportunities for self help in the local communities in relation to the above issues

Empty Shops

The Empty Shops fund is available to businesses, voluntary, community or faith sector groups and 'not for profit' organisations. Applications must be State Aid compliant and reflect Wirral Council's local competitiveness protocols.

The Empty Shops fund seeks to deliver activities that contribute to one or more of the following aims:

- Lead to the re-use of empty shops as a result of the grant;
- Increase the vitality of a local shopping centre;
- Encourage more people to visit a local shopping centre;
- Lead to the provision of local employment opportunities.

Energy Efficiency

The Energy Efficiency Fund is available to community groups.

The aim of the Energy Efficiency fund is 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.