

Scrutiny: Briefing WIRRAL

Subject:	Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee
Date:	June 2013
From:	Scrutiny Support Team

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1. The purpose of overview and scrutiny

Overview and scrutiny is a vital component of good governance, which has the potential to significantly improve the quality of Council decision-making, service provision and cost-effectiveness. It includes:

- Holding the Executive to account – a primary role is to provide a framework of accountability which seeks to modify executive behaviour and prevent the abuse of power.
- Holding Partners to account – scrutiny provides an opportunity to investigate the work of public, private and voluntary sector partners and their impact on the community.
- Horizon-scanning – looks ahead to future changes in local government in order to help the Council adapt to them. This will usually mean considering future actions by central government which will have repercussions for local government.
- Policy Development and Review – scrutiny contributes to the development of key policies to be included in the Council's policy framework, as well as examining how well a policy has been implemented and if outcomes have been achieved.
- Pre-decision scrutiny – examines the council's proposals, objectives, and draft programmes in order to inform their development before they are delivered. This helps the council to achieve optimum impact by avoiding mistakes and grasping opportunities.
- Post-decision scrutiny – examines the implementation of council policy and performance and enables the council to review the effects of its decision-making
- In-depth review – small groups of councillors will undertake detailed investigations into a specific topic of particular interest to them. The process is member-led and can involve

methods such as informal meetings, mystery shopping, external visits etc. This type of review can facilitate greater involvement of residents and community organisations.

- Performance management and improvement – involves reviewing achievement against Corporate Plan goals and targets. This can be a powerful force for improvement by highlighting areas of poor performance and ways to address this.

2. Service areas relevant to this committee

Environment & Regulation

- **Waste & Environment** – involves maintaining environmental quality standards on the public highway in terms of litter, dog fouling, graffiti, fly posting and tipping. The division also covers the collection of waste and recycling from all households and council facilities, as well as a chargeable service to schools. This service has 3 functions:

- Delivery of frontline operational services through contract management
- Environmental enforcement
- Education and awareness

Working closely with Biffa, the service is responsible for delivering over £3.3M of the Council's 2013/14 savings, which will reduce its overall budget by around 23%. New street cleansing frequencies will be introduced in July, ensuring that resources are targeted towards high profile areas supporting future investment and growth opportunities. As part of these changes, residents and other stakeholders will need to play an active part in reducing litter, if the areas where they live are to continue to enjoy the high environmental quality standards to which they have become accustomed.

- **Parks & Countryside** – The Council's Parks and Countryside Service is responsible for managing Wirral's 1,500 hectares of public open space. This includes parks and countryside areas, coastline and cemeteries and Landican Crematorium.
- **Highways Management** – focuses on the delivery of management and maintenance services for the network through:
 - Contracts – road and drainage maintenance, management of the highway contract and inspection/CRM services
 - Asset - highway policy and law, developer activity, together with specialist assets (street lighting, flood management and coastal defence, bridges and rights of way)
 - Design and Commissioning – management of the capital programme, design of traffic improvement and bridges schemes, ad hoc contract preparation and management for both specialist consultancy commissions and larger highway construction projects.

Key to the development of these services will be to continue to become more agile and responsive, with field-based officers less reliant on an office base, and to become deployed to suit the new neighbourhood working arrangements.

The contract with Colas Ltd ends in March 2014, and procurement is underway for an innovative, replacement contract. Introducing this with reduced Council resources will require strong leadership and management to maintain and improve service levels.

- **Traffic & Transport** - is responsible for improving road safety, maintaining traffic flow, promoting sustainable travel and undertaking enforcement of on-street and off-street Council car parking. Working collaboratively to develop a new transport strategy and secure a strategic investment fund (£800m) for the Liverpool City Region are key

challenges for the Division. Plans are in place to manage and monitor income but many external factors affect the achievement of certain income levels, particularly for parking and network co-ordination. Continuing to link people with jobs and employment sites through transport interventions post 2015 will rely on securing different funding. Targeted programmes of capital projects are successful in reducing road casualties but government grant is reducing so alternative funding needs to be found.

- **Regulation** –responsible for the administration and enforcement of a number of key areas that includes:

- The sale and supply of alcohol
- The provision of entertainment
- Gambling
- Taxis
- Scrap Metal Dealers
- Charitable Collections

The key challenges over the next 12 months will be to reduce the harm caused by alcohol, address issues of alcohol related crime and disorder, street drinking and the availability of alcohol.

- **Trading Standards** – ensuring the right trading environment is in place to protect consumers and encourage, sustain and nurture business growth. There are 10 pillars of an effective Trading Standards service, which include:

- ensuring accurate weighing, measuring, pricing and descriptions
- provision of business compliance advice
- promotion of good practice in the supply of goods and services
- protection of intellectual property rights
- tackling rogue traders
- developing Primary Authority Partnerships
- target sampling and test purchasing
- conducting intelligence led investigations
- tackling underage sales of alcohol and tobacco
- secure business compliance and consumer redress

- **Environmental Health** - responsible for delivering a number of functions, which aim to protect the health and welfare of residents and support businesses, through collaborative regulation, to ensure they comply with the law. Key areas include:

- Food Safety and food borne illness
- Health and Safety intervention, accident investigation and tattoo licensing
- Pollution Control (noise, odour and contaminated land)
- Housing related issues in privately rented properties (illegal eviction, housing disrepair, open to access, refuse & statutory nuisance)
- Animal Control and Welfare (stray dogs, animal related licensing, welfare complaints and farm inspections)
- Pest Control
- Smoke free regulation
- Public Convenience facilities in retail and coastal areas

The key challenges over the next 12 months will be to ensure we deliver statutory duties whilst securing better value for money, as well as adding value in delivering the Council's new responsibilities in respect of Public Health. Our key areas of work also includes the seeking of a new partner or partners to deliver a greater value for money

and more effective stray dog kenneling service and to build on the many new ways of working we have already developed to ensure service continuity and improvement where possible with reduced resources.

Housing & Community Safety

- **Housing Strategy** - develops the housing strategy for the Borough, aimed at meeting the needs of Wirral residents to ensure there is quality housing which is appropriate and affordable. Identifies and secures funding for a range of projects which directly impact upon people's quality of life, an example being the Housing Market Renewal Transitional Funding which enables the Council to complete the acquisition and demolition work that had commenced through this initiative and implement the Council's Affordable Warmth Strategy which provides free insulation schemes, heating grants and loans to ensure that people remain warm in their properties.
- **Supporting People** - ensuring vulnerable people are able to maintain independent living, contribute to their communities and engage in employment, is a key objective of Supporting People.
- **Housing Renewal, including Private Sector Housing** - prioritises the renewal of existing housing areas by tackling issues of property decline and poor environment. Encourage landlords, through the Landlord Accreditation Scheme, to improve housing standards, and address the issue of houses in multiple occupation, through a statutory licensing scheme. Help homeowners to undertake improvements to their properties, through a range of financial assistance, and bring back into use empty residential properties.
- **Community Safety** – The Community Safety Partnership Strategy and priorities are reviewed and published annually. This helps us make sure our efforts are focussed on the issues that are most important to local people. The Partnership continues to coordinate the efforts of the Police, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Community Patrol and the Drugs and Alcohol Team. Wirral's Community Safety Team focuses on delivering against the priorities to ensure long term reductions in crime are achieved.

Regeneration & Economic Development

- **Regeneration & Economic Development** – the number one priority is to deliver the Council's Investment Strategy which seeks to position Wirral as a leading vibrant global location for businesses and visitors. Wirral Waters is moving forward following the granting of planning permissions for the residential schemes at East Float and the International Trade Centre. Now plans for these sites are being developed and investment secured to make these projects a reality. The Enterprise Zone status for the Wallasey and Birkenhead Docks creates an environment for inward investment bringing new employment opportunities for the people of Wirral. Wirral has been successful in securing Regional Growth Funding to develop the Offshore Wind Energy Industry. This capitalises on Wirral's excellent port facilities for maintenance and servicing and will create long term, skilled employment opportunities. The Investment Strategy also seeks to improve access to employment and skills and tackle barriers to work. This includes our successful apprenticeship programme and a focus on our young people to ensure that they have the right skills for the future.
- **Business Support** – The Invest Wirral team continues in its key role of supporting Wirral's existing businesses and over 2,400 companies now benefit from the networks that have been established. A website provides a range of high quality information and

service on all business matters, also setting out the financial assistance that is available to established businesses and those seeking to invest in the borough. There is also a major project under way to provide superfast broadband facilities to support local business and improve our offer for potential inward investors. Schemes are progressing with the private sector to bring new employment opportunities to the Wirral International Business Park in Bromborough, capitalize on opportunities created by the return of the Open Golf Championship in 2014 and support our town and district retail centres which face major challenges.

- **Planning & building control** – providing strategic direction for the future of Wirral in terms of land use planning and housing provision is led by the Directorate through the Local Development Framework, closely linked to the Housing Strategy. A number of our key priorities include:
 - Addressing key issues such as the protection of Wirral's Green Belt and quality environment,
 - Providing appropriate places for businesses to invest and for people to work
 - Providing high quality and affordable homes,
 - Making best use of existing house stock,
 - Preventing and alleviating homelessness
 - Improving energy efficiency to reduce fuel poverty and Wirral's carbon footprint are key priorities.
- **Cultural Services** – The Council manages and promotes a number of museums and performance venues that support cultural development and the arts offer across the borough. The new Floral Pavilion Theatre in New Brighton is a recent example of investment in this area.

Tourism

The rising levels of competition between locations to attract visitors and related spend, combined with a very sensitive financial market, make the promotion of successful destinations of vital economic importance. The Tourism team, within the Neighbourhoods and Engagement Division, is responsible for driving the Borough's visitor economy. Their work is informed by the Wirral Tourism Business Network and the Wirral Visitor Research Study conducted in 2011. An annual implementation plan focuses activity to need within the sector and this includes support for the return of The Open Championship to Wirral next year (ie worth over £70million to the regional economy). The key challenge is the impact of reduced funding for major events due to the demise of regional agencies, however an application for European funds has been submitted via the Local Enterprise Partnership, and positive feedback has already been received. Tourism is currently worth over £285million to Wirral's economy; it employs over 4,200 full time equivalent jobs, has increased by 13% over the past five years and is now the fastest growing visitor economy in the Liverpool City Region.

3. Dates of meetings 2013/14

- Wednesday 10th July
- Tuesday 17th September
- Tuesday 5th November (budget)
- Tuesday 3rd December (budget)
- Monday 27th January (including budget)

- Wednesday 9th April

4. Committee Membership

15 Members			
8 Labour	5 Conservative	1 Liberal Democrat	1 Independent
Cllr. Jim Crabtree Cllr. Paul Doughty Cllr. Steve Foulkes (Vice) Cllr. Rob Gregson Cllr. Anita Leech Cllr. Denise Realey Cllr. Michael Sullivan Cllr. Jerry Williams	Cllr. Steve Williams (S) Cllr. Eddie Boulton Cllr. Gerry Ellis Cllr. Kathryn Hodson Cllr. Peter Kearney	Cllr. Alan Brighthouse (Chair)	Cllr. Mark Johnston

5. Outstanding items from previous scrutiny committees

Previous Committee /Date	Item	Description	New Committee
SC 12/03/13	Wirral Approved Trader Scheme	Committee requested that a further update report be provided to a future meeting.	Regen & Environment
E&R 22/04/13	Benefit Reform and Under-occupation	The Under-occupation Scrutiny Review (April 2013) recommended an Evaluation / Impact Assessment regarding the effect of the reforms in spring 2014.	Regen & Environment
E&R 22/04/13	Draft Gypsy and Traveller Report	Members requested that a report be presented to a future meeting.	Regen & Environment
E&R 22/04/13	Interim Strategic Housing Market Assessment	Members requested that a report be presented to a future meeting.	Regen & Environment
SC June 2012	Highways Representation Panel	At the first meeting of the municipal year, Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Committee appoints the Highways Representation Panel.	Regen & Environment
E&R	Visit to regen / housing sites	Request by committee for site visits	Regen & Environment
E&R 14/11/12	Wirral International Trade Centre	Committee requested further reports to update members regarding the progress being made towards the implementation of the recommendations of the Scrutiny Review (November 2012).	Regen & Environment
E&R 16/01/13	Youth Unemployment in Wirral	Committee requested a further update report be presented in six months i.e. September 2013.	Regen & Environment

6. Key plans and strategies

Key Plans & Strategies	
Investment Strategy	Refreshed Investment Strategy 2011-2016 agreed by Cabinet 21/07/2011. Key priority in the Corporate plan 2013-2016. http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=3498&Ver=4
Local Development Framework	Core Strategy Local Plan, Joint Waste Local Plan. http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/environment-and-planning/planning/local-development-framework/core-strategy-development-plan
Housing Strategy	Long Term (15 year) Strategic document setting out the key vision for housing and strategic objectives for the Wirral area. http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/housing/housing-strategies-policies-partnerships/housing-strategies/housing-strategy-2011-2026
Local Transport Plan	http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/transport-and-streets/transport-policy/local-transport-plan
Corporate Plan	2013-16 Corporate Plan agreed 18th February 2013: http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=3872&Ver=4 Refresh scheduled for December 2013 following Policy Council

7. Key policy drivers

Queen's Speech - Legislation 2013/14
<p>Mortgages / Help to Buy (Announcement)</p> <p>The Government is committed to helping those who want to buy a home, with a £3.5 billion investment in a Help to Buy Shared Equity Scheme, open to all those who aspire to own a new build home, and the Help to Buy Mortgage Guarantee to increase the availability of mortgages on new or existing properties for those with small deposits.</p> <p>Implications: The Local Authority may wish to further explore the potential impact of this announcement on local housing strategies.</p>
<p>Draft Consumer Rights Bill</p> <p>This proposed bill would update consumer-protection laws so they cover digital purchases such as downloaded music and e-books. Trading Standards will be granted new powers, such as being able to get a court to order a trader to pay compensation when consumer law is breached.</p> <p>Implications: This draft bill will provide Trading Standards with new powers and responsibilities. The impact on the existing work of the Trading Standards service may need to be explored as the Draft Bill develops through the legislative process.</p>

Water Bill

This bill will change the way the water industry works. It is intended to make the water sector more resilient in the face of natural hazards such as droughts and floods. It will allow all business, charity and public-sector customers to switch their water supplier, in order to increase competition, and make it easier for new companies to enter the water market. It will also become easier for water companies to trade water with each other, which should help manage drought situations better. The bill will apply to England and Wales, and a small number of provisions will extend to Scotland.

Implications: The Authority will be able to compare its Water Utility bills against tariffs provided by a range of providers. 'Collective Switching' of gas and Electricity utilities for residents is currently being arranged by Energy Projects Plus across the whole of the Liverpool City Region to get the best deal for residents. It is possible that collective switching could also be applied to Water utilities.

Other Policy Drivers

Development of Local Enterprise Partnerships

In the 2012 Autumn Statement, the Government announced that LEPs will receive an additional £250k for each of the next two years. They can use this from April 2013 to build the capacity and capability they will need to develop their Investment Strategies. LEPs are considered to be key strategic drivers. They will:

- Work with local partners to decide which projects to support
- Help to identify match funding
- Oversee arrangements for selecting projects or for using co-financing organisations to procure European Structure Funds (ESF) provision, in discussion with Managing Authorities
- Deliver the milestones and results agreed in their strategy, including making sure that enough money is spent each year to meet annual spend targets
- Involve local partners across the spectrum.

In advance of the forthcoming Spending Review, the **LGA** prepared a submission to HM Treasury seeking to influence government spending and public sector reform. The table below summarises the main proposals of this submission relevant to this committee. The Government's Spending Review is due to be announced on 26 June and an update will be provided at the first meeting of this committee.

Growth

Local growth deal, with a range of economic powers and devolved funding

The LGA is suggesting that local growth deals should include:

- A range of economic powers, including devolution of skills policy and levers for localities to support local businesses to access finance
- A single pot of growth-related funding comprising all of the funding streams recommended for devolution in the Heseltine report
- The onus should be on departments to devolve funding, unless they can demonstrate greater benefit from retaining the funding at national level

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity to reinvest the proceeds of growth in a local area through an “Earnback” principle, including but not limited to business rates Access to deals should be on a non-competitive basis, with notional allocations finalised as part of the deals themselves. Feedback from the business sector is that bidding processes work against the certainty that is needed to attract investment <p>Implications: Wirral recognises that funding centrally allocated to LEP would encourage strategic housing development – but we need to ensure that impact of being able to fund smaller scale local developments is recognised.</p>
State aid clearance for the urban broadband programme	The LGA is also proposing that the government addresses councils’ concerns about the competitiveness of the supply chain in the rural broadband programme to enable councils to assure themselves of value for money when there is only one active supplier.
Remove the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap	It is suggested that removing the Housing Revenue Account borrowing cap would allow councils to invest an additional £7 billion over five years which could result in up to a further 60,000 homes over and above current plans helping to meet the need for affordable homes. The LGA is also suggesting that councils should be allowed to borrow in line with prudential rules and set the right to buy discount and retain 100% of the receipts.
Finance	
Increase the local share of business rates to be retained locally and consider ways of increasing this share	Implications: Wirral’s business rate base suggests that Wirral is unlikely to benefit from moves to allow Council’s to retain a share of locally collected business rates.
Public Sector Reform	
Accelerate Community Budgets programme	Implications: Wirral has expressed an interest in involvement in the newly established Community Budgets network.
Introduce a landfill tax freeze at 2014/15 levels	A landfill tax freeze would contain the Council’s costs to a 3 per cent rise in 2015/16.

8. The role of the Chair

The role of a Policy and Performance Committee Chair is to:

1. Provide leadership and direction to the Committee and act as Champion for the functions falling within its remit.
2. Chair formal and informal meetings connected with the work of the Committee and

ensure that such meetings are conducted fairly, efficiently and follow the Council's Constitution and the law.

3. Identify and help meet the development and training needs of the Committee collectively and its individual members.

Responsibilities:

1. Actively promote the work of the Committee and generally act as a 'Champion' for its activities.
2. Ensure that Committee members lead on developing an effective and prioritised work programme. Ensure the work programme includes service scrutiny/performance management.
3. Encourage the Committee to challenge and scrutinise Cabinet decisions.
4. Encourage the committee to horizon scan and seek opportunities to undertake pre-decision scrutiny in advance of Cabinet decisions.
5. Encourage the Committee to scrutinise the performance of non-Council bodies, for example partnership delivery plans, and the effectiveness of partnership working, to ensure this is adding value.
6. Endeavour to engage all members of the Committee within the scrutiny process.
7. Co-ordinate work with other Policy and Performance Committees and their Chairs and share learning.
8. Ensure that adequate resources i.e. financial and officer support are identified and sought from the Council.
9. Develop a constructive relationship with the Cabinet, especially the relevant portfolio holders, and with the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service in the areas that the Committee scrutinises.
10. Chair formal and informal meetings connected with the work of the Committee in a fair and open manner following the terms of reference of the Committee, the Council's Constitution and the law.
11. Ensure that meetings are conducted in a suitable manner that encourages contributions from all members, co-opted representatives and witnesses.
12. Help achieve more community and partner involvement in the scrutiny process by using alternative venues, co-option and innovative meeting styles.
13. Ensure that scrutiny reviews are more efficient through the application of effective project management.
14. Ensure that 'in depth' scrutiny takes place by using expert witnesses and working with officers to help improve members' knowledge base.
15. Maintain awareness of national and local issues related to the Committee and its work.
16. Keep under review, advise on and agree the training and development requirements of the Committee and its individual members.
17. To be responsible for continuous personal development. Take advantage of learning opportunities to build understanding and knowledge, and to develop relevant skills.
18. To promote and participate in Member training, and attend relevant training events each calendar year.

Skills Required:

In order to fulfil the above responsibilities a Policy and Performance Committee Chair will need to ensure that they develop and maintain the following core skills:

- Actively encourages involvement of others and works collaboratively to analyse information and promote understanding.

- Is open to new ideas and ways of doing things.
- Works closely with others to develop, promote and achieve objectives.
- Leadership and excellent chairing skills

In addition to the above core skills, meeting Chairs may also require the following supporting skills:

- Good communication, including media, presentation and interpersonal skills
- Conflict resolution
- Team working
- Project and time management
- The ability to influence and work constructively with Members, officers, the public and outside organisations.

Behaviours:

To act in accordance with the values and principles required of those operating in public life:

- Openness and transparency
- Honesty and integrity
- Tolerance and respect
- Equality and fairness
- Appreciation of cultural difference
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9. Officer support arrangements

The Chair of the Regeneration and Environment Policy and Performance Committee will be supported by the Strategic Director (Regeneration and Environment). A dedicated support officer will be allocated to the Committee from the Scrutiny Support Team. The key responsibilities of the Scrutiny Support Team include:

- Working with the Chairs of the Policy & Performance Committees and working groups in agenda preparation and work programme coordination, dealing with matters arising from meetings.
- Providing support for the scoping and planning of reviews, including notes of working group meetings, coordination of witnesses, etc.
- Project managing reviews.
- Ensuring Chairs and Members are kept informed of any relevant scrutiny guidance, and that Chairs have the information needed to feel confident in chairing, or being involved in, their relevant committee.
- Undertaking research for policy reviews and general communication purposes.
- Working with Members to draft reports for Policy & Performance Committee reviews.
- Providing assistance to Members with monitoring the progress of recommendations.
- Liaising with officers across the Council about the work of the Policy & Performance Committees.
- Keeping up to date with best practice.
- Providing facilitation of appropriate events for Members and officers involved in scrutiny work.

Additional capacity will be provided by staff from the Directorates as required.

10. Key Contacts

Scrutiny Support

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Committee Services

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