

**WIRRAL COUNCIL**

**CONSULTATION PLAN 2019**

**PROPOSAL FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF  
SELECTIVE LICENSING IN DESIGNATED  
WIRRAL AREAS**

## **1.0 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report sets out Wirral Council's Consultation Plan in relation to the potential to continue to operate a scheme in the four original areas or extend to further areas, depending on the data analysis.
- 1.2 The consultation programme will be meaningful and comprehensive, providing interested parties with detailed, accessible information on the proposal and providing a choice of methods for providing their views.
- 1.3 Any concerns raised by stakeholders through this consultation process will be accurately reported to Members in order that due regard can be given and informed decisions can be taken.

## **2.0 CONSULTATION**

- 2.1 Wirral is committed to asking everyone with an interest in the services that the Council provides, including residents, community groups, landlords, partners and staff, to consider proposals and share views so that they can be taken into account by Councillors when they make decisions on the future service delivery.
- 2.2 With particular reference to Selective Licensing, Part 3, Section 80 (9) of the Housing Act 2004 states that before considering making a designation for Selective Licensing the local housing authority must:
  - a) Take reasonable steps to consult persons who are likely to be affected by the designation; and
  - b) Consider any representations made in accordance with the consultation and not withdrawn.
- 2.3 The Department for Communities and Local Government has a procedural document on the subject of selective licensing: *Selective Licensing in the private rented sector. A guide for local authorities March 2015*.
- 2.4 Within this document it is clear that local authorities are required to conduct a full consultation in considering designation of selective licensing. Consultation should include local residents, including tenants, landlords and where appropriate their managing agents and other members of the community who live or operate businesses or provide services within the proposed designation. It should also include local residents and those who operate businesses or provide services in the surrounding area outside the proposed designation that will be affected.
- 2.5 The minimum statutory consultation period, on any proposed Selective Licensing Scheme, required by DCLG is ten weeks. If approved by Members, Wirral's Selective Licensing consultation will commence in August 2019 and end in October or November 2019, depending on the start date.

### **3.0 COMMUNICATIONS**

- 3.1 Consultation should be appropriate to the scale, scope and nature of the project being completed. Effective consultation that is meaningful and genuine depends on all stakeholders being sufficiently well-informed about the project, having clear, concise information, the opportunity to convey their perspectives and their concerns, and developing confidence that their perspectives are being reflected in the design.
- 3.2 It is common for consultation processes to result in changes to the project and to its design. In order to make the maximum contribution to risk management in return for the smallest cost, consultation therefore needs to commence early and continue throughout the project life-cycle.
- 3.3 This is at the heart of Wirral's consultation plan which has been set out for the proposed Selective Licensing Scheme and we will achieve this via:-
- publishing a draft business case outlining the reasons for the proposal, the method used to identify the proposed licensing areas, the components of the fee structure.
  - priming of discussions by providing some initial information about the project;
  - making sure there is ongoing dialogue with consultees throughout the consultation process;
  - participation of those tenants and residents affected or likely to be effected by the proposed implementation in the designated areas;
  - facilitated interactions among participants;
  - making sure that there is sufficient diversity among those groups or individuals being consulted, to ensure that all relevant perspectives are represented, and all relevant information is gathered;
  - making sure that each group has the opportunity to provide information;
  - making sure that the method of consultation suits the consultation group, for example using workshops or focus groups as an alternative to, or even as well as, formal written consultation;
  - making sure that the information provided and the perspectives, concerns and issues raised during the consultation process are analysed and duly considered in the final design and implementation of any scheme taken forward.

3.4 Consultation will be taking place using a survey, which will be promoted through the following methods:

- Wirral Council website: [www.wirral.gov.uk/selective](http://www.wirral.gov.uk/selective) licensing and other social media.
- Direct mail-out to landlords and managing/letting agents.
- Engagement sessions with managing/letting agents.
- Mail drop to all residents and businesses or services within the selected areas.
- Direct mail and email to known local community groups such as tenant or resident groups in the areas and any other community group that may have an interest in Selective Licensing (this includes a number of harder to reach groups) and which may involve officers attending meetings to talk about Selective Licensing.
- Press releases to local media/press.
- Posters erected in local venues such as cafes, pub etc as appropriate in each area.
- Drop in sessions planned for stakeholders directly affected across the proposed areas.
- Communications via LCD screens in council buildings;
- Written papers and presentations where appropriate.
- Telephone or face to face interviews with stakeholders.

3.5 The Council will also ensure a copy of the business case will be available on the internet, or provided in written format if requested. A questionnaire will also be produced, which will be used to gather views from all stakeholders to the proposal.

3.6 All documents will be published on the Council website and promoted to key groups through the methods outlined in Section 4 below.

#### 4.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4.1 To ensure a true reflection of the views of affected groups related to this consultation, it is important that particular groups of stakeholders are effectively targeted with communications about the proposal and given every opportunity to share their views.

4.2 The following groups will receive direct communications about the proposal to request their views:

- **All residents in the proposed Selective Licensing area**  
Notification of the consultation will be sent direct to the homes address of all residents living within the proposed selective licensing areas, inviting them to participate in the consultation. Some of the residents in the existing and proposed Selective Licensing areas may be interviewed on their doorstep in order to reach and gather the views of as many affected residents as possible.

- **Elected Members and local Members of Parliament**  
The Business case and Consultation plan will be submitted to Cabinet for approval to go out to consultation. Following this the Elected members for the proposed areas, the four Members of Parliament and four parliamentary Constituency Managers will be e-mailed detailing the key aspects of the proposal. This e-mail will invite any feedback or comments regarding the proposal. The same will be sent to the Leader of each of the political parties to cascade to their colleagues.
  
- **Businesses/services within the proposed designation areas in Wirral and in the immediately surrounding areas**  
Mail drop - All properties within the proposed streets within the designated areas and in the immediately surrounding areas will be mail dropped a card providing information on the proposals and an invitation to participate. It will be designed to encourage businesses and stakeholders to also visit the website to obtain further information and complete the questionnaire either online or they can request a paper copy if required.
  
- **Social Landlords**  
All social landlords who operate in the designated areas or who could manage stock will be contacted directly by e-mail and advised of the consultation process, business case and will be invited to complete a questionnaire.
  
- **Private Landlords, Letting Agents/Estate Agents and National and Local Landlord Associations**  
Direct mail – all known landlords and letting agents and Estate Agents will be sent an email explaining what the proposal is and how it will affect them as landlords. The email will include links to the website where the full consultation document is available, and will invite completion of the questionnaire.

The National Landlords Association, the Association of Residential lettings Agents, the Guild of Residential Landlords, Residential Landlords Association and the North West Property Owners Association will be contacted directly by email.

A separate invitation will be sent regarding a number of landlord sessions to be held at various venues and various times of the day. These sessions will be aimed predominately at those who are directly affected or are likely to be affected and will be informal so landlords or the public can call in at any time. The sessions will be held so that landlords can find out more about the proposal, ask any questions and provide any comments/feedback. Council staff will be on hand to answer any questions.

- **Landlords recorded on Housing Benefit Records**  
An email will be sent to all landlords who have properties where Housing Benefit is being claimed, directing them to the Council's website.
- **Stakeholders, Partners & Community Groups in the proposed Designated areas**  
Community groups will be contacted by e-mail with details of the proposal. They will be advised of the information available on the website and that information sessions will be held with details to be made available on the Council website.

Stakeholders and interested parties such as Merseyside Police, Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service, Community Action Wirral (CAW) Citizens' Advice Bureau.

Whilst direct consultation will attempt to be as exhaustive as possible, any interested groups not already identified and consulted directly will also encouraged to complete the questionnaire or make comments. Groups not consulted directly are considered likely to hear about the proposal through mediums such as the website, posters and local press releases.

- **Wirral Council Staff**  
An e-mail will be sent to relevant Departments/Teams to advise them of the proposal seeking comments. Relevant areas include but are not limited to – Housing Benefits, Community Patrol, Supported Housing and Homelessness, Streetscene, Environmental Health, Strategic Planning and Development Control. For any team who may experience a significant impact from the proposal, a meeting can be arranged to discuss the implications and to provide an opportunity for Council officers to provide suggestions and feedback on the proposal. Information will be sent through to all staff via the Chief Executive's regular staff e-mail bulletin.
- **All Other Residents in Wirral**  
Press releases will be issued to local media to promote the consultation. Posters will be placed around the proposed Selective Licensing areas advertising the consultation. The Council will create a micro site within the Council's own website where all information regarding the proposal will be posted. LCD screens in Council buildings will display information and highlight the consultation being undertaken. Some key local venues (shops/cafes/pubs) will be asked to display poster/leaflets.

Information will be available on the council website so any people with internet access will be able to find out more about the proposal as well as completing an online questionnaire which also enables the opportunity to add comments. Details will be made available on the website and posters, once they are confirmed, of the number of

information sessions to be held in public places in order to make them as accessible as possible.

▪ **Landlords who operate in neighbouring Local Authority areas**

An email will be sent to all neighbouring authorities inviting them to contact the landlords on their contact lists to participate in the consultation by answering the questionnaire.

- 4.3 Further communication will be sent to a database resident email addresses with information related to the proposal and a direct link to the consultation questionnaire.

**5.0 How issues raised will be dealt with as part of the consultation**

- 5.1 Throughout the consultation process a record of each consultation event or period that has been undertaken and what issues were raised from these will be formally logged. This will detail the date of the consultation, what form the consultation took place, who was consulted and what were the results/issues raised. Different methods of communications will be used as part of the consultation process and a separate consultation report will be produced for each event to enable a 'portfolios' to be produced as one document at the end, with each element represented as a section.

- 5.2 Wirral is committed to ensuring all comments received are recorded and there is a clear audit trail of all decisions made and how consultation responses were taken into consideration and balanced with any evidence and specific information gathered. The consultation report will be published and placed on the website.

**6.0 TIMESCALES AND REPORTING**

- 6.1 The timetable for component elements of the consultation is in the project plan attached.

# **Appendix 1 – Wirral Consultation Plan methods of Consultation and Timetable**

<b>Method</b>	<b>Target Audience</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>officer</b>	<b>When</b>
Devise questionnaires	All stakeholders and members of the public	Devise questionnaires, Set up on-line Prepare for going-live include telephone, email, on-line and post as options to complete the questionnaire.		July 2019
Questionnaires and leaflets	Tenants, Residents, Accredited landlords, as well as letting/ managing agents and businesses/service providers in the area	Questionnaire highlighted to all local residents, stakeholder and businesses also referral to full business case on website if required.		Duration of the consultation
Cabinet report	Cabinet Members	Cabinet report on Business Case and Consultation Plan for Approval to go out to consultation.		July 2019
E-mail/Letter Correspondence	Councillors, Leaders of Three Political Parties Members of Parliament	E-mail/Letters sent detailing aspects of proposal and inviting feedback/comments.		July/August 2019



Registered Providers	Registered providers in proposed area	E-mail sent to all Registered Providers in Wirral who form the strategic Housing Partnership advising of the proposal and seeking views		August 2019
Landlord Working Group	Accredited Landlords and letting/managing agents	Separate to questionnaire sent to all landlords. The landlord working group will be invited to comment specifically on licensing conditions, proposed component fee structure and operation of the scheme via regular working group meetings.		August / September 2019
Wirral Council staff/Teams	All staff but particular emphasis on :- Housing Benefits Community Patrol Supported Housing and Homelessness Streetscene Environmental Health Strategic Planning and Development Management	E-mails sent direct to relevant staff and Project Officer, with one to one meetings to take place if requested and Q & A session.		August – October 2019
National and Regional Landlord Agencies	National landlord Association, Association of Residential Agents, Guild of residential Landlords Residential landlords	Direct letters to all associations advising of proposal and ability to complete questionnaire and invites for meetings with Council officers to discuss partnership working.		August 2019
Landlords Briefing	All known landlords	Email sent to all known landlords		August 2019

Community Groups	Local community groups in the affected areas	Specific letters sent to known community groups operating in the affected areas, attendance of meetings if required.		August / September 2019
Press release and Posters	All Wirral stakeholders	Posters to be placed in service providers i.e. doctors, local venues (cafes/pubs) Press release to be issue to local media.		August 2019
Partner agencies	CAB CAW	Direct letters/e-mails to advise of proposal and also direct to complete questionnaires and feedback. One to one meeting to be held if requested and Q & A session.		August – October 2019
Internet	Residents Landlords Tenants and residents across the borough Community Groups	Information on Wirral website with contact details Information distributed and obtained via social media		Duration of the consultation
Council LED Screens	All users of key Council public buildings	Information on LED screens at One Stop Shops, Libraries and Leisure Centres		August – October 2019
Landlord reminder email	Landlords	Reminder sent to Landlords who have not responded as a reminder that consultation would be ending soon		October 2019
Open forum sessions	Landlords, tenants and business within proposed designated area or likely to be affected	Sessions (daytime and evening) for all stakeholders in the area to attend, included Q & A Sessions		September – October 2019

Unknown landlords in affected areas	Landlords	Letters sent to tenants to forward to landlords regarding the open forums, if there are no details available. Send letters to 'The Landlord' to all empty properties we are aware of. Ask Landlord Association / Letting Agents to advise their members, including those which may not be known to the Council.		August – September 2019
Interviews with stakeholders	Landlords, residents	Face to face interviews or telephone interviews where the questionnaire can be completed with comments to ensure the most people possible will complete the questionnaire		August – October 2019
Email inviting participation in questionnaire	Landlords of neighbouring boroughs	Write to neighbouring boroughs and ask to contact their known landlords to invite to participate in the consultation via questionnaire.		August 2019