

## **MERSEY WATERFRONT REGIONAL PARK**

### **1. Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report advises Committee of progress on the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park initiative and outlines the governance and accountability arrangements for the project. The report contains a number of recommendations to Cabinet. Attached is a report prepared by the Mersey Waterfront Interim Project Director, Louise Hopkins, who is based in the Mersey Partnership and has been seconded from the Mersey Basin Campaign. This report is being considered by all the local authorities.

### **2. Background**

- 2.1 Committee may recall that the Action Plan for The City Region 2002/05 set out a wide range of measures designed to improve the competitiveness of the Mersey economy. The Mersey Waterfront Regional Park is one of two “big ideas” which emerged from the Action Plan. The overall purpose of the Action Plan is to set out the priorities for North West Development Agency (NWDA) investment in Merseyside to 2005.
- 2.2 The proposals for the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park have been developed by a working group involving the Mersey Partnership and all the Greater Merseyside authorities and led by Wirral Borough Council. The Working Group was assisted in its task by the appointment of Amion Consultants who helped prepare a commencement business plan for the project.
- 2.3 A comprehensive report prepared by Louise Hopkins, the Mersey Waterfront Interim Project Director, is being provided to all the local authorities for agreement. This report is attached and contains five recommendations which all the local authorities are being asked to agree. In addition there are specific issues for Wirral relating to the proposition that we act as accountable body and provide project appraisal and management services. This matter is dealt with in paragraphs 2.7, 2.8 and 2.9 of this report.
- 2.4 *Funding & Projects*  
The detailed negotiations have taken place with the NWDA over the commencement business plan. The NWDA has agreed to allocate a total of £8.4M to the project in their corporate plan in the period 2002-05. These resources will, in combination with a wide range of other private and public sector funding streams, support a total investment programme over the three years of approximately £60M. A key test of the credibility of the Mersey Waterfront initiative will be the ability for the project to fully expend the £2.2M

that the NWDA has allocated to the project in 2002/03. Accordingly the project group has developed a range of spending proposals for 2002/03. These are outlined below.

- 2.5 Members will note a wide range of Wirral projects within the overall programme. (See appendix 2 of attached report). It is worth noting that all the matching funding for Wirral projects is being provided from existing resources or private sector leverage.
- 2.6 *Management of the Project*  
It is proposed that Wirral should lead on this project as the overall accountable body. As such, Wirral will play two key roles – as appraisers of individual of individual project applications, and as overall financial administrators. Wirral will draw down funding from NWDA and distribute this to individual organisations (including other Local Authorities) to deliver specific projects and achieve agreed outputs. Through the Wirral Waterfront programme, Wirral will also appraise project applications from outside the Borough on behalf of Mersey Waterfront. The detailed arrangements have yet to be finalised, but it is proposed that Mersey Waterfront will provide direct financial support for the additional staff resources required to undertake the roles outlined above which will be matched by a contribution from existing resources.
- 2.7 *Governance and Accountability*  
In order to expedite expenditure and projects a delegation arrangement is currently being negotiated with the NWDA which would allow Mersey Waterfront the ability to make investment decisions of up to £250,000 without the express consent of NWDA. Any investments in excess of this figure would require individual approval from the NWDA. The Mersey Partnership will act as the overall champion for Mersey Waterfront and will host the Executive Team. The Mersey Partnership will be responsible for the strategic development, co-ordination and administration of the Mersey Waterfront programme, for the preparation of detailed annual business plans, the monitoring and evaluation of the programme, marketing, strategic community engagement and the administration of the Governance structure.
- 2.8 The overall governance of the Mersey Waterfront initiative would be undertaken by establishing a governance council or board. This council would comprise a maximum of 14 representatives from the local authorities (Wirral, Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens, and Halton), the Mersey Partnership, the NWDA, TAG (Technical Advisory Groups) Chairs, and other partners as required. The proposed Mersey Waterfront Council, or Board, will be the overall decision making body. It will be responsible for making recommendations for funding (based on independent appraisals undertaken by Wirral MBC for projects outside the Borough) the endorsement of annual business plans, and provision of strategic guidance on the development of Mersey Waterfront.
- 2.9 *Accountable Body*  
The implementation of the Mersey Waterfront initiative will however require an organisation to stand as accountable body. In the light that Wirral is leading on this initiative it would appear appropriate that Wirral undertakes this responsibility. However, it is thought appropriate that in undertaking this responsibility, the Council agrees a set of arrangements with the other participating local authorities to ensure that the risks that the Council will be undertaking are shared between the other participating authorities.

2.10 All decisions of the governance council or board that require the Authority to act on behalf of the Mersey Waterfront Partnership would be submitted to Wirral's Cabinet for ratification and the consequences of each to the Authority, as accountable body, would be explained at that time.

### **3. Financial & Staffing implications**

3.1 Matching funding for this project will be found from within existing resources. Any additional staff appointed will be funded by a contribution from the Mersey Waterfront match with existing resources.

### **4. Equal Opportunities implications**

4.1 This initiative will have positive equal opportunities implications.

### **5. Human Rights implications**

5.1 There are no direct implications.

### **6. Local Agenda 21**

6.1 This initiative will have significant and positive LA21 implications.

### **7. Community Safety implications**

7.1 There are potentially positive community safety implications.

### **8. Local Member Support implications**

8.1 This report is of interest to all Members.

### **9. Background Papers**

9.1 Papers in Mersey Waterfront Regional Park file.

### **10. Planning implications**

10.1 Many of the proposals will require planning consent.

### **11. Recommendations**

That the Select Committee notes the report and recommends to Cabinet:

11.1 That further to the report prepared by the Interim Project Director of Mersey Waterfront (attached to the report of the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Planning and Economic Development) and in common with the other local authorities Wirral :

- 1 agrees to in-kind match funding commitments towards revenue and management costs; and
- 2 nominates a senior representative to be the single point of contact responsible for ensuring delivery against the Mersey Waterfront programme; and
- 3 nominates a representative of the authority to the Merseyside Waterfront council; and
- 4 agrees (subject to the Authority first entering into a form of agreement with the other local authorities whereby any liability is shared equally between all of the

parties) to the Authority acting as accountable body for the Mersey Waterfront programme; and

- 5 provides written confirmation of Cabinet's decision on the above to Mersey Waterfront; and

#### 11.2 That Cabinet:-

- 1 agrees that Wirral continues to be the lead authority for the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park initiative; and
- 2 agrees that the financial and project appraisal activities outlined in the report are undertaken by the Authority and Wirral Waterfront; and
- 3 agrees to the principle of the Council acting in a form of partnership (to be negotiated) with other local authorities and (subject to the completion of agreements with all of the "partners" whereby any liability is shared equally between them) acting as accountable body for that "partnership" and authorises the Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Planning and Economic Development and the Borough Solicitor and Secretary to negotiate with the other local authorities with a view to provisionally settling the terms of an agreement and asks that a further report be prepared and submitted to this Select Committee and, in due course, to Cabinet outlining the details of the proposed agreement together with any other matters that may arise; and;
- 4 notes the report prepared by the Interim Chief Executive of Mersey Waterfront and, in particular, the list of projects attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

#### **J. WILKIE**

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Planning & Economic Development

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