

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET - 16 AUGUST 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

DELIVERING THE REGENERATION AGENDA IN WIRRAL

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report asks Members to:

- i) approve proposals for the future development and delivery of Regeneration initiatives as set out in this report and refer the matter to Employment and Appointments Committee in September
- ii) note the emerging Government policy in relation to communities and the probable reduction in time-limited funding from April 2008
- iii) note the policy reviews which are being undertaken by Government in relation to sub-national economic development and regeneration and agree to receive further reports as Government Policy is firmed up and the implications for Wirral become clearer.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 Cabinet, at its meeting on 20 June 2007, considered a report on the need for permanent regeneration staffing and resolved that:

- (1) the work commitments of the Strategy and Implementation section in the Regeneration Department in ensuring that the Council does not face any liabilities in the winding down of the current regeneration programmes and is able to maximise investment opportunities for the Borough in future years, be noted;
- (2) it be noted that the funding for staff within the Strategy and Implementation section is primarily provided through external grant funding which is due to cease on 31 March 2008 (30 September 2008 for the Endeavour Team);
- (3) the principle be agreed of time limited posts within the Regeneration Department be mainstreamed and that additional capacity be created to help deliver the needs of the Investment Strategy;
- (4) the budgetary implications for 2008/09 budget be considered; and
- (5) a further report be brought outlining a proposed staffing structure in more detail.

3.0 DELIVERING THE REGENERATION AGENDA

- 3.1 Government Policy on regeneration is currently a dynamic and evolving process. At present it is expected that there will be a significant reduction in time limited funding and where funding remains available, it is being targeted to fewer areas and to specific policy objectives. The significant influence for this will be the Comprehensive Spending Review to be concluded in the Autumn.
- 3.2 Examples of this change are the proposals for Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF). Government has recently confirmed that it will continue after March 2008 but it is proposing to:
- Focus the fund on improving outcomes in the worst neighbourhood rather than securing change at wider district level.
 - Focus the fund on a smaller number of districts with the most serious concentrations of deprived neighbourhoods.
 - Increase the focus on joining neighbourhoods to areas of opportunity and tackling worklessness.
 - Continuing the focus on specific areas of health, crime and education.
 - Incorporate the delivery strategy within the wider Local Area Agreement framework.
 - Provide a reward structure which can incentivise action in respects of pockets of deprivation wherever they occur, and not just in the areas in receipt of NRF.
- 3.3 However, Government has not yet said how much funding will be available and what areas will benefit. This along with other initiatives will likely remain unknown until the Government's Comprehensive Spending Review is concluded towards the end of this year.
- 3.4 Bearing in mind the reviews which are currently underway by Central Government in relation to sub-national economic development and regeneration to refine how strengthened economic performance in regions, cities and localities throughout the country and deliver regeneration of neighbourhoods and meet community aspiration, the Council needs resources which can:
- Flexibly adapt to emerging policy reviews and manage future delivery requirements as they become known.
 - Align itself with the Local Area Agreement framework so that it can ensure the delivery (either directly or through a commissioning process) of the priorities determined by the LAA.
 - Deliver the Investment Strategy for Wirral (including the Enterprise Strategy and Employment Plan) which has been agreed as a key priority by the Council.

- Efficiently and effectively deliver the currently known regeneration programmes and projects and obligations.

3.5 The following areas have been identified as the key likely policy and delivery priorities for regeneration in Wirral. In providing these priorities, it has to be acknowledged that there are still areas of development, for example around the skills and employment agenda, and areas that are not taken into account at this time, for example the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI) as it is not known whether the Government will provide funding for a third round.

3.6 Major Regeneration Projects

These include the delivery of multi-million pound investment opportunities creating economic wealth and employment opportunities in the Wirral International Business Park (Bromborough). Woodside (Birkenhead), Hoylake and West Kirby (including the Golf Resort), Birkenhead Town Centre New Brighton and support for the Housing Market Renewal Initiative (through commercial and business acquisitions and relocations).

3.7 North West Operational Programme and Strategic Investment Programme

Securing European and North West Development Agency resources will be an important element in delivering the Investment Strategy. The team will need to develop projects with partners, bid for funding and then ensure the delivery of those projects.

3.8 Enterprise, Skills and Employment

The challenges that Wirral faces in these areas have been reported previously via the Enterprise and Full Employment strategies and meeting these challenges will be critical to the success of the Investment Strategy. Although it is not currently proposed that the Council will be a “deliverer” of interventions to tackle these challenges, it is vital that we are able to play a commissioning, co-ordinating and evaluating role. It is proposed that the Wirral Economic Development and Skills partnership identifies the areas for intervention and that the team commission against those areas and monitors the success of the interventions. It is proposed that funds that will be available through the Disadvantaged Area Funding as part of the City Employment Strategy Pilot, any funds via a successor NRF programme, any council mainstream funding and any funding opportunities that arise through the new European Operational Programme are channelled through a commissioning process to meet identified need. However, it is vital, with greatly reduced funding, that the effectiveness and indeed the relevance, of interventions are monitored so that impact can be gauged against the requirements within the Enterprise and Full Employment strategies. In addition, the team will work with co-financing agencies such as the Learning and Skills Council and Department for Work and Pensions to ensure the coherence between interventions delivered in Wirral.

3.9 Business Start Up and Support

Crucial to the Enterprise Strategy and the future employment plan is the creation of new enterprising businesses and grant support (where resources are available) to enable local companies to expand creating local employment opportunities through a continuation of successful projects like Wirralbiz or by close working with Enterprise Managers at the NWDA.

3.10 Renewing and Sustaining Communities

Renewing and sustaining communities is a developing area for Government thinking with the emphasis on empowering local communities and devolving decision making. The

team will need to implement a continuation of the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund and Neighbourhood Management (should Government extend these programmes beyond March 2008) and implement future initiatives which come from DCLG.

3.11 Community Fund (Discretionary Grants)

The Team will oversee the commissioning and monitoring of the discretionary grants which will be made available through the Community Fund. A further report, elsewhere on this agenda, sets out how the Community Fund could be used to support these and other proposals.

3.12 Mersey Waterfront Regional Park

The Council, as Accountable Body, is committed to implementing this pan-Merseyside Initiative until the end of the Succession Programme in 2011. In Wirral there are major projects including Brand New Brighton and Pride in our Promenades to be delivered.

3.13 Policy and Planning work in connection with Wirral Waters

The implementation of Wirral Waters will obviously be delivered by Peel Holdings but the Council will need resources to manage the planning policy and the information to support the major planning applications which are expected over the next few years. In addition, the Council will need to ensure coherence between the Wirral Waters development and other developments across the Borough. The need for clear and coherent Economic Policy to help determine the need for such large developments is absolutely crucial, as too is the need to be able to make the economic case to both public sector partners and central Government.

4.0 **CO-ORDINATING DELIVERY OF THE INVESTMENT STRATEGY AND REGENERATION AGENDA**

4.1 Given the importance attached by Members to the Investment Strategy and to support Members in their future deliberations, it is proposed to form an Executive Management Group to ensure that the Council's delivery of the Investment Strategy and regeneration agenda is effectively co-ordinated. This group would include the following Chief Officers and Heads of Services:

Deputy Chief Executive/Director of Corporate Services (Chair)
Director of Regeneration
Director of Technical Services
Head of Strategic Development
Head of Tourism and Marketing
Head of Housing and Regeneration

4.2 Terms of Reference for this group are currently being developed and will be submitted to Members for endorsement in the near future.

5.0 **DELIVERY AND POLICY: THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE REGENERATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENTS**

5.1 The Regeneration Department will maintain the current responsibility for the delivery of projects; the Corporate Services Department will have the responsibility for policy development.

5.2 Appendix 1 of this report shows the current structure within the Regeneration Department and Appendix 2 shows the proposed structure.

5.3 It is currently proposed that the structure will consist of 18 Full Time Equivalent posts:

2 x Managers (covering neighbourhood and major projects)

13 x Project Delivery Staff (a range of posts requiring commensurate skill levels)

3 x Financial & Monitoring and Performance Management Staff

5.4 The Corporate Services Department will co-ordinate of policy development in terms of planning and economic policy and will be the Council's initial and prime interaction with Peel Holdings. In order to do this it is currently estimated that five additional new posts will be required. These are:

1 Team Leader

2 Policy Planners

1 Economic Policy Officer

1 Administration Officer

5.5 If the proposed outline structure is approved by Members then a detailed report leading to establishment these posts reflecting current and known definite demands on Wirral will be submitted to Employment and Appointments Committee on 24 September 2007.

6.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The cost of the 18 Full Time Equivalent posts in the Regeneration Department is estimated at £777,000. The cost of the 5 Full Time Equivalent posts in the Corporate Services Department is estimated at £222,000.

6.2 There will also be a requirement for an additional estimated sum of £200,000 per annum for specialist consultancy assignments in relation to the Wirral Waters proposals, this will enable these services and support to be brought in as and when necessary.

6.3 It is proposed that these costs will be funded from the Community Fund in the next few years, subject to the agreement of Members' consideration of a report elsewhere on this agenda. The use of funding from this source would support the broad principles set out within the original Community Fund agreement.

6.4 A number of policy areas around the critical areas of enterprise, skills and employment are still developing and it is estimated that a further two or three posts for the delivery and commissioning of initiatives which have not currently been budgeted for may be required. If this proves to be the case than a further report will be brought to Members.

7.0 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 In the present regeneration team there are 26 Full Time Equivalent posts which are to be reduced to 18 Full Time Equivalent posts in the proposed Regeneration Department structure. There will therefore be a requirement to reduce the number of employees within the current Regeneration Team and this will be achieved through the normal consultation channels with Trade Unions and staff.

8.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The work of the team will promote equal opportunities aspirations for all of Wirral's residents.

9.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The delivery of regeneration projects will significantly improve community safety through ensuring good quality and design is built into new developments, regenerating areas where there are currently significant safety issues and by focusing on the causes of anti-social behaviour by tackling employment and environmental issues.

10.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Regeneration projects support and contribute towards the delivery of Local Agenda 21 objectives.

11.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

12.0 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

12.1 The success of the Investment Strategy is absolutely critical to the tackling of economic prosperity within the Borough. The creation of more businesses and the growing success of indigenous businesses is vital to the creating of employment opportunities to tackle both the low job density and high levels of economic inactivity.

12.0 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The work undertaken by the team is critical in promoting social inclusion particularly of those residents who live in the most deprived areas of the Borough.

13.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 This report will be of interest to all members of the Council.

15.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

15.1 Cabinet Report: 20 June 2007 – Item 16, Minute 98 refers

15.2 Information on the Government's reviews and emerging strategies is available at:

http://www.hm-treasurygov.uk/spending_review/spend_csr07/reviews/subnational_econ_review.cfm

14.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

That

(1) proposals for the future development and delivery of Regeneration initiatives as set out in this report be approved and referred to Employment and Appointments Committee in

September;

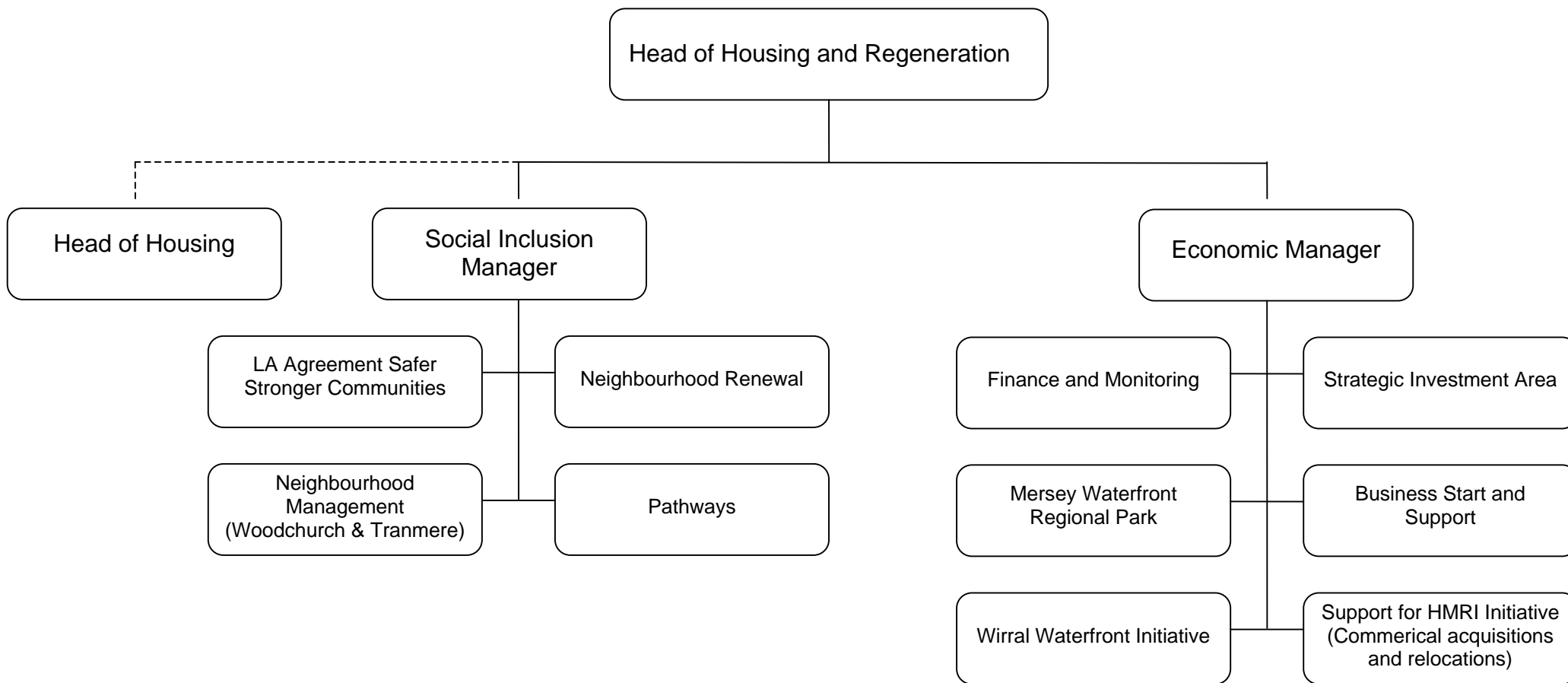
(2) the emerging Government policy in relation to communities and the probable reduction in time-limited funding from April 2008 be noted;

(3) the policy reviews which are being undertaken by Government in relation to sub-national economic development and regeneration be noted and further reports be received as Government Policy is firmed up and the implications for Wirral become clearer.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by David Ball who can be contacted on 691 8395.

**HOUSING AND REGENERATION DIVISION
CURRENT DELIVERY STRUCTURE
AUGUST 2007**



**HOUSING AND REGENERATION DIVISION
PROPOSED DELIVERY STRUCTURE**

