

CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

JANUARY – MAY 2006

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1. OUR OUTCOMES IN RESPECT OF THE COUNCIL'S CORPORATE PLAN AND IMPROVEMENT AGENDA

Protecting and improving our environment

The Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) has progressed in accordance with the reviewed Local Development Scheme (LDS). The reviewed LDS was considered by Cabinet in February and subsequently approved by Government Office on 25th May 2006. This will now set the timetable for other elements of the LDF. Comments received by residents during the autumn have been incorporated into a revised The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which will be submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2006. It will then be issued for further public consultation before a Public Examination in October 2006.

Promoting and Supporting the Economic Regeneration of Wirral

A more strategic approach to the marketing of Wirral's tourism offer has been taken to help ensure long-term project sustainability. A more robust Action Plan is now in place, as approved by Cabinet on the 25 April 2006, and this addresses the needs of tourism businesses as well as existing and potential visitors to the borough.

Open 2006

The Open Championship represents an excellent opportunity to showcase Wirral to a regional, national and international audience. A range of activity is now complete including the production of a regional guide and press campaign. The Tourism and Marketing team are working with a range of partners including TMP, Northwest Development Agency and Royal Liverpool Golf Club.

Wirral Maritime Heritage Trail

The current 3 year Objective 1 – European Regional Development Fund project (2006 - 8), secured in October 2005 to Market Wirral for Tourism, includes the creation and development of the Wirral Maritime Heritage Trail (WMHT). The WMHT, which also has a matched contribution from Wirral Waterfront of £40,000, seeks to interpret and commemorate the numerous buildings, places and events of significant local, regional, national and international maritime heritage along Wirral's waterfront. It will also include elements of Wirral's and Liverpool's joint American Civil War status designation and recognition. Key locations for the Trail have now been identified, and a full action plan has been developed, in consultation with Wirral's historic societies and experts. An official launch is planned for November.

Focus on Star Brands

The Tourism Strategy identifies the opportunity to disperse visitors to Wirral from the major 'attack brands' of Liverpool and Chester.

Closer working has been established with TMP through the appointment of a Dispersal Officer who works as an integral part of the Tourism and Marketing team. The Dispersal Officer works closely with the Wirral Tourism Business Network and the Wirral Attractions Consortium and has successfully established the Wirral Restaurant Association. The Officer is currently helping the Tourism team establish the Wirral Coastal Partnership.

In addition, a series of familiarisation trips, highlighting Wirral's Coast and Countryside have been attended by officers from Liverpool and Chester cities, Liverpool Culture Company and the Liverpool Film Office. Discussions have also been held with the Cheshire and Warrington Tourist Board and as a result the marketing of Wirral will form part of Cheshire's Destination Management Plan.

Fantastic Food

Identified in both the Tourism Strategy, and TMP's Destination Management Plan, as an important part of the tourism experience, food tourism is a growing niche in Wirral. With this in mind, a wide range of activities has been developed to exploit Wirral's food and drink offer.

The Wirral Restaurant Association is a joint initiative between the Council and TMP, and it allows for the dissemination of key information on tourism opportunities, current and future, across Merseyside. The Association continues to go from strength to strength and to date, has attracted attendance from 38 Wirral restaurants.

The first Wirral Food and Drink Festival, organised by the successful Farmers Market, will be held at Claremont Farm, on 27 and 28 August 2006. It aims to promote the fantastic range of produce, restaurants, bars, farm shops, and award winning chefs, available regionally. Special events celebrating all things Home Grown will be held during the run up to the Festival.

The Wirral Chef Shine Initiative was launched last year as a showcase for Wirral restaurants and a means for the industry to recognise and reward excellence. The project invites Wirral restaurants to nominate their Chef by proposing a 3-couse meal, together with glass of wine, for a very competitive price. The finalists host a 'Chef Shine' evening, staged two evenings each month during August, September and October. Restaurants are opened up to the general public who are asked to 'score' the menu, and the final results will be revealed at the Wirral Tourism Awards for Excellence 'Chef of the Year' in November.

Encouraging Business Tourism

The Tourism and Marketing team are working more closely with TMP's business tourism team to ensure that the small but interesting venues in Wirral attract our share of the increased interest in Liverpool in the run up to 2008.

Wirral's hotelliers will meet with the team to prepare a strategy to achieve the most from Business Tourism. Initially this will involve a 'brainstorm session" as the

hotelliers look at their geographical location, assets, rates, etc and decide what kind of business activity (eg conference) would best suit their particular offer and could potentially be attracted to their hotels. This is seen as a more proactive approach than has been traditionally relied upon. The Wirral Dispersal Officer and TMP are currently working more closely with the hotelliers to deliver more business to Wirral.

Excellent Events

The first Wirral Supported Events Panel met in April, to evaluate/score Applications against set criteria, and grants have now been allocated for 2006. The Panel includes representatives from the three main political parties responsible for Tourism, officers from Regeneration, Cultural Services and, the Panel is Chaired by the Head of Tourism The Tourism and Marketing. A full events programme is now in place. The Tourism and Marketing team is also developing, in consultation with the Technical Services Department, a Waste Management Strategy for all major events.

Make It Easy

Five key projects aim to improve the connectivity of Wirral's tourism businesses:

www.visitwirral.com

The Tourism and Marketing division regularly updates the www.visitwirral.com website to ensure this essential marketing tool contains the most current and accurate information from our tourism businesses. The site provides information on Wirral's attractions, events, golf courses, etc. and links directly to the other Merseyside tourism websites.

Wirral Bus Tour

The Wirral Bus Tour, developed in partnership with the country's bus tour market leaders, City Sightseeing Worldwide, naturally links some of Wirral's key attractions. This year the Tour includes "stops" at Spaceport, New Brighton, Port Sunlight's Lady Lever Art Gallery and Heritage Centre, Woodside, Birkenhead Park and Wirral Museum in Hamilton Square. It will run throughout the school summer holiday period (ie 15 July to 3 September), and hopes to attract hundreds of new visitors to the borough. Improvements to the marketing and operation of the service are currently being explored.

ICT Kiosks

Work is currently underway with partners Cityspace Limited, to create, develop, deliver and maintain a number of indoor and outdoor ICT Kiosks. The Kiosks will display and give visitors access to information including Wirral's attractions, accommodation, events, places to eat and drink, etc through www.visitwirral.com. Two indoor Kiosks have already been installed at high visitor footfall, strategic locations (ie Port Sunlight Heritage Centre and Wirral Country Park visitor centre) and it is hoped that the network can be developed Wirral-wide. The project has

already brought a private sector investment of £64,000 and it is hoped that the 3year project will bring in additional £125,000.

Also, a small network of temporary Kiosks are planned for The Open, so visitors have access to all their tourism needs, and discussions are taking place with both Cityspace and New Mind (ie the software provider) to make this happen as cost effectively as possible.

Post 2006 EU Funding

There has been significant activity to review Merseyside's funding activity post 2006. Work has also been ongoing to respond to consultations on the issue of Assisted Area Status (areas where businesses can receive support from DTI) and the National Strategic Reference Framework (what and where ESF/ERDF can be spent on post 2006)

Investment Strategy

GVA Grimley/KPMG has recently developed an Investment Framework for Wirral. Key findings were presented to members through a number of seminars to consider in detail the issues emerging. Further engagement with key members will now take place to discuss the challenges, opportunities and agree future actions.

As part of the development of Wirral's Local Area Agreement (LAA) proposals, a partnership of key stakeholders met to develop the Economic Development & Enterprise Block. Key themes of this proposal include increasing the number of employment opportunities that are available to Wirral residents, enabling more people to access jobs and increasing the vocational achievement of the workforce. A LAA reward element target has been agreed, which offers Wirral a financial reward at the end of the agreement provided challenging targets are achieved in relation to the number of business start ups in Wirral.

The production of the Wirral Economic Update in November 2005 set out key economic intelligence, data and analysis relating to economic growth and development, employment and enterprise. An updated version will be circulated in May 2006.

Brand New Brighton

The proposed scheme represents a key opportunity in realising the vision for the physical and economic regeneration of the New Brighton waterfront. The £75M mixed use development proposals for New Brighton seafront have evolved over a 4 year period between Special Initiatives Team (SIT) and the Authority's preferred developer, Neptune Developments. These proposals were the subject of a Public Inquiry in February 2006. We currently await the outcome this inquiry, which it is indicated will be announced "on or before 20 September 2006".

Market Street Improvements

The return of the Open Golf Championship in July 2006 represents a major investment opportunity for the borough. The SIT has been instrumental in bringing

about significant investment in Hoylake. Up to £2.65M of internal and external investment has been secured to bring about considerable qualitative improvements to the public realm along Market St.. The first phase of improvements included improvements to the delineation of the road, new paving, street lamps, street furniture, signage, tree-planting and distinctive new public art features.

The second phase of works are expected to commence once the Championships have concluded. This will encompass continued investment in the public realm along Market St from Cable Rd to Melrose Avenue contiguous with Phase1 and provide a lasting legacy to the town.

The Greater Concourse Project

The Masterplan for the regeneration of Hoylake and West Kirby identified the area around the West Kirby Concourse site as a major opportunity for positive change and the creation of significant investment in the town. The scheme is intended to bring a new, high-quality, bespoke offer to the town centre, providing major economic benefits to West Kirby and contributing to the cohesion and attractiveness of the town as a whole. Amongst the potential outcomes to this project are – a new bespoke health centre and fire station and improvements to the train station and the shops fronting the station. In addition the creation of a new town square in front of the Concourse and potential improvements to the Concourse building itself through measures such as re-cladding to the building frontage are proposed. The public realm benefits would be achieved through the value of the scheme, generated potentially by a new quality retail offer.

The project is supported by partner organisations such as Merseytravel, Bebington and West Wirral Primary Care Trust and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service and the Authority. Partners have agreed a collaborative approach of mutual benefit and a development brief was circulated in January, with initial expressions of interest sought from prospective developers by 10 March 2006. Eight interesting proposals have now been received from reputable developers and are currently being appraised in detail by officers.

Meeting the Housing Needs of Wirral

The North West Regional Assembly submitted the draft review of the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the North West to Government Office North West (GONW), in January 2006. The draft has been issued for public consultation and the Council has to respond to GONW by 12th June 2006. The draft RSS proposes an increase in the housing requirement for Wirral, from 160 net new dwellings per year to 250 net new dwellings. The Council continues to operate its Interim Planning Policy for New Housing, which restricts new housing development outside the regeneration priority areas (particularly the HMRI), with the intention of directing new development to the HMRI.

Continuously Improving Our Services

Phase 1 of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system went live as planned on 1 April 2006 under the 1Business programme. The systems now live are

General Ledger, I procurement and the systems connected with the processing of invoices and financial payments, with the Oracle Payroll Module still to be implemented. Progress is being made since implementation with a key element of the successful "Go Live" being the training of users of the new systems.

Specific 1Business change plans currently in development include social care procurement, Electronic Social Care Record, pest control, adaptations, Building and Development Control, case management, customer access strategy.

A review and reconfiguration of the change programme is also underway, which will include analysis and scoping of those areas, which are likely to generate significant benefits. The results of this work are due to be reported to the Council in the summer of 2006 with a view to identifying further service re-engineering possibilities for budget year 2007/08.

Achievements in relation to improving local democracy include the establishment of the Executive Board of the Cabinet to assist in the streamlining of the decision making process and the formally established an Audit and Risk Management Committee, which will meet throughout the forthcoming Municipal Year.

The Local Government Election on 4 May 2006 was carried out successfully.

Simon Goacher being presented with the Solicitors in Local Government Group's Young Solicitor of the Year Award at the annual weekend school in Warwick on 17 March 2006.

Cabinet agreed the 2006 – 2009 People Strategy in March 2006. The Strategy clearly shows how the Council will continue to value and develop the workforce to achieve success, so that it can continue to deliver high quality services and continue to improve and innovate for the benefit of the people of Wirral.

The Human Resources section has launched a "Lunch Time Learning" scheme. "Lunch time learning" is series of informal and informative workshops to enable Wirral Managers to share information, ideas and best practice through networking with other managers.

The Local Area Agreement was formally signed on March the 23rd 2006.

As part of the LAA process Government Office North West will review the performance of the LAA on a six-monthly basis – with the first review taking place in November. This review will focus upon progress against outcomes and targets including any action needed to address under-performance. It will further monitor the strength of partnership working and spend against the four blocks of the LAA.

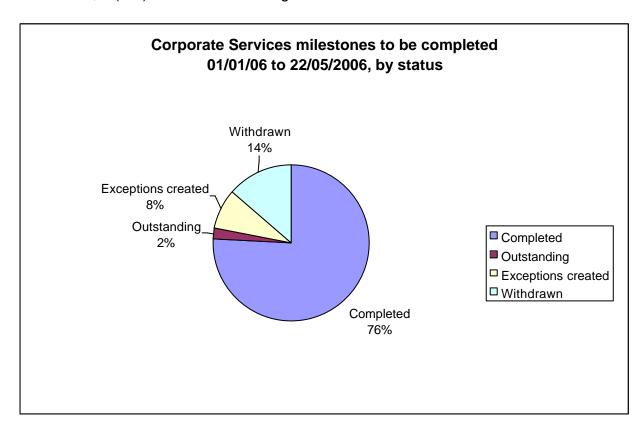
Contained within the agreement are the performance indicators, which make up the Reward Element. These were formally known as Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets. Eleven targets have been successfully negotiated with one target - within the Children & Young People's block – still to be finalised. The successful negotiation of these targets will result in a pump-priming grant in excess of £1 million, with a final reward grant of approximately £9 million upon achievement of targets.

2. PERFORMANCE EXCEPTIONS THIS PERIOD AND PLANNED ACTIONS

The department currently manages the delivery of its Departmental Plan by utilising the Performance Information Management System (PIMS). The system requires individual sections to create an action plan detailing the actions and milestones required to meet departmental aims. Milestones are defined as the key activity/task by which progress of the Action is measured. The system automatically alerts individuals when their milestones are due for completion. If a milestone is not completed on time, it becomes "outstanding" or an exception is created.

An exception is created when a milestone cannot be met for specific reasons. The reasons given during this period range from awaiting input from partner organisations to milestones being partly met but in need of further work.

During the period 1st January 2006 to 22nd May 2006 there were 132 milestones due for completion as per the Corporate Services Departmental Plan. Of the 132 milestones, 3 (2%) remain outstanding.



3. EXTERNAL CHALLENGE AND INSPECTIONS

In order to address the findings of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) corporate assessment a detailed action plan has been developed to address the organisational issues for the Council in completing its improvement journey. Cabinet agreed the action plan on the 8th May and arrangements are now being made to share details of the action plan with partners. The plan will be closely monitored using the Council's Performance Information Management System (PIMS) and the by the Corporate Improvement Group will be fundamental in monitoring and reporting progress.

The government places a duty on the Council to provide clear and accessible information to local people about its performance. In order to comply with this duty the Corporate Services Department produced an A5 summary booklet of performance, which was distributed to all household alongside their Council Tax demands during March 2006.

The revisions to the Council's Local Development Scheme (LDS) have been scrutinised and approved by the Secretary of State. Compliance with the LDS is a statutory requirement. Performance is measured by BVPI 200a to BVPI 200c. The relevant target dates have been achieved with regard to the review of the Local Development Scheme, the preparation of the Statement of Community Involvement and of Supplementary Planning Documents (see section 1 above).

Departmental Management Team has identified the following issues and managed their impact on achieving departmental objectives during this period:

- ❖ Delayed implementation of the Payroll module in the 1Busines programme
- New Brighton inquiry
- Strike action (March 2006)
- Issues relating to the Golf Open e.g. traffic plan and licensing
- LAA stretch targets

The Human Resources section has contributed to the management of the Corporate risk of "Inability to recruit and retain appropriate staff" by implementing a range of control measures such as:

- Continued implementation of the People Strategy and associated action plan;
- Regular review of grades through job evaluation process;
- Continued review of recruitment processes and subsequent action plan and implementation of revision in line with changes in legislation and implementation of Equality Standard and Race equality scheme;
- ❖ Working with external organisation to implement skills audit;
- * Robust capability and disciplinary policies;
- Exit interview policy;
- Partnership working to support New Deal, Modern Apprenticeships and Workstep;
- Strategic HR Group driving the implementation of the People Strategy.

5. USER INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community Engagement, Diversity, Human Rights and User Focus

Ongoing activities to support Wirral's voluntary and community sector organisations continued with the opening of the Grants Programme in October 2005. The Voluntary Sector Liaison Officer support to the sector also aims to develop cohesive, sustainable and effective services. Examples of this include provision of funding advice, involvement in equalities and diversity initiatives on Wirral, and ongoing work to support and develop Wirral Multicultural Organisation.

Co-ordination of Citizens Panel questionnaires continues on a quarterly basis. The Police survey was conducted in January and related community safety results have been distributed to Joint Community Safety Team for calculation of local 'fear of crime' performance indictors. The April survey has recently been distributed to Panel members and contains questions on a range of topics including transport, Streetscene, libraries, local heritage and community involvement. Results are expected in July.

Partnership working

The Audit Commission has recognised the strength of partnership working in Wirral, particularly the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Corporate Assessment report (December 2005) outlined "The Council is committed to community leadership through its LSP and partnership activities. The LSP's ambition for the borough is clear and focuses on outcomes for local people".

The council, in partnership with the LSP has led the development of the Local Area Agreement (LAA). The agreement was formally signed on March the 23rd 2006 and the LSP agreed the membership of the LAA Programme Board, which will oversee the delivery of the LAA. The LAA block leads with LSP partners are currently developing clear action plans for the implementation and delivery of the LAA.

Benefits of joint working are already being realised, for example, partners working together under with the LSP's Thriving Local Economy Partnership, have been successful in securing Neighbourhood Renewal Funding to enable a joint project with Job Centre Plus. This project focuses on tackling worklessness and will also result in the development of a Full Employment Plan.

Officers have been actively involved in a number of key strategic sub-regional and regional partnerships to ensure Wirral's economic needs and priorities are reflected and integrated throughout initiatives including the Regional Economic Strategy (RES), Sub-Regional Partnership Action Plans and the Northern Way through the Liverpool City Region.

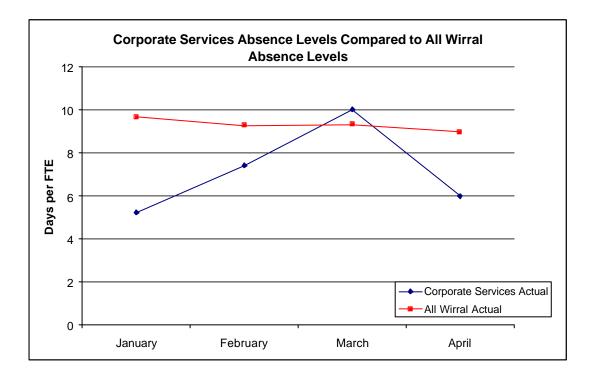
Officers continue to work with partners to develop the Mersey Dee Alliance Business Plan 2005-08 setting out specific actions achieved by the Alliance over the past year and general objectives for the forthcoming period.

Diversity, human rights, equalities standard work

Corporate Services have been actively involved in corporate equalities working groups and equalities training to ensure the development of economic regeneration initiatives fully integrate inclusion and equalities objectives.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES, IMPROVING CUSTOMER SERVICES AND VALUE FOR MONEY

The average number of absences per full time post in Corporate Services for the period January to April 2006 was 7.15 compared with an average across all departments of 9.29. The actual monthly figures for January to April are depicted graphically in the chart below.

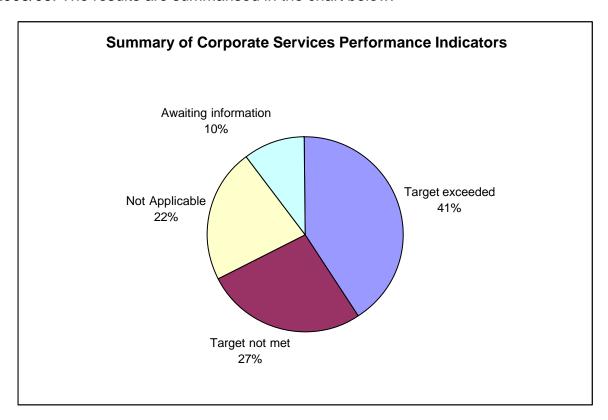


Training is ongoing for all managers in Absence Management with attendance at a half day course being compulsory. Health Initiatives such as Walking Wednesday, Pilates and Fresh Fruit in the workplace have been introduced over the last 12 months and are available to all Wallasey Complex employees.

Support continues through referral to the Occupational Health Unit with 20 current staff referrals. The introduction of a physiotherapy pilot scheme has been very beneficial, enabling many staff to remain within workplace managing their condition and preventing further sickness absence.

7. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Corporate Services currently report on 49 Performance Indicators. An analysis of these indicators was undertaken to establish their performance against target for 2005/06. The results are summarised in the chart below:



The full results, including a commentary on performance is outlined in appendix c.

The following PIs will no longer be reported for the reasons detailed in the appendix:

Local 6214

Local 6215

Local 6216

Local 6219

Local 6220

8. SUMMARY OF NEXT QUARTERS ACTIVITIES

The Forward Planning team will continue to deliver the emerging Local Development Framework, implementing the timetable agreed with the Secretary of State in the approved Local Development Scheme. The final version of the Statement of Community Involvement will be published for comment and submitted to the Secretary of State for independent public examination. Final consultation on the three draft Supplementary Planning Documents will be completed and reported to Members prior to adoption in October 2006.

Major development opportunities in Birkenhead Town Centre, at Woodside, the former Cammell Lairds, and Birkenhead Docks will require extensive input in the next quarter. All of these opportunities are within the HMRI and integration of their development potential with the HMRI will be a major resource issue. Within Birkenhead Town Centre, a car parking strategy is to be developed by Technical Services Department and this will require input from the Forward Planning Team, as will joint Merseyside work on a Transport SPD.

In mainstream HMRI work areas, the need to advance Compulsory Purchase Orders for land assembly will also place high demands on staff resources. Additionally, there is a need to develop a Design SPD to control new development, both inside and outside the HMRI. The Design SPD can also be integrated with an Access Statement and sustainability principles.

The Council is about to commission a Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Market Assessment. Whilst it was intended that these assessments could support submissions to the RSS Examination in Public in September/October 2006, it is now unlikely that can be achieved. However, input to that process will still involve substantial staffing resources in the Forward Planning Team.

Continuing support for 1Business will inevitably involve high demands on staff, both for data transfer but also for system adaptation. Similarly, the introduction of a central GIS team under the discretionary LLPG/GIS 1Business project will involve a thorough assessment of current working practices.

The reconfigured change programme to be agreed followed by development of additional change plans. Completion and launch of revised change management policy and guidance will be undertaken in the next period

The Department for Communities and Local Government (formerly ODPM) requires local authorities to undertake a range of residents' surveys every three years. Wirral Council is required to undertake five surveys: planning, benefits (2 surveys), libraries and a general satisfaction survey.

Corporate Policy will act as the central point of contact for DCLG and Audit Commission correspondence relating to these surveys and will have responsibility

for ensuring the General Survey is undertaken. Due to the sampling methodology guidelines/ requirements for the General survey, it is not possible to use the Citizens Panel as the target sample. In order to ensure best value, resources will be used for the General survey, suspending the autumn Citizens Panel survey.

Wirral's Tourism Strategy identifies both day visits and short stays as the most important opportunities for the development of tourism on the peninsula. Unfortunately, very little statistical visitor information, specific to the borough, is available to forward plan major tourism activity. With this in mind, letters of interest to a number of recognised Market Research organisations were sent, and 3 regionally/nationally recognised MR companies were tendered. After stringent evaluation/scoring against relevant criteria, MORI Ipsos have been secured to conduct an existing visitor survey, a potential visitor survey, telephone surveys and focus group research.

A series of focused, consultation workshops with the key tourism Operators and Stakeholders, led by the Tourism and Marketing team, are planned. They will take place once the Existing and Potential Visitor Survey is complete, the information circulated and feedback has been received. Wirral's Tourism Strategy, and the survey work currently being carried out, will determine workshop themes, and Workshop Leaders will be identified specifically to achieve the best from the workshop days. The conclusions drawn, integrated with the Visitor Survey results, will assist future Wirral tourism development that meets the needs and aspirations of all those involved.

In addition, visitor research will take place at all Core and Supported events this year. The research will help the Tourism and Marketing team to evaluate visitor numbers, spend, appeal, trends, etc. at Core events, and assist the Supported Events Panel with regards to grant applications in 2007.

Wirral's Tourism Strategy identifies Wirral's waterfront and coastline as our greatest asset. The Strategy aims to make the "Wirral Waterside Way" one of the best recreational facilities in the region, with activities including walking, cycling, riding, sailing and golf being encouraged.

The Tourism and Marketing team are currently developing a project, which seeks to create, develop and promote a customer-led, Merseyside-friendly Wirral Coastal Tourism Brand and related Marketing Campaign. This project will be developed in partnership with the Mersey Waterfront Regional Park and Wirral Waterfront, and will be led by the information gathered through a comprehensive Asset Audit, and supported by the results of the current Market Intelligence already mentioned.

The Tourism and Marketing team are helping a private sector partner establish a Cycle Hire Scheme, based at Thurstaston's Wirral Country Park visitor centre, with the potential to expand and incorporate other bases in Wirral. It is hoped a pilot scheme will be ready this Summer so potential can be properly evaluated.

Livesmart, a Liverpool-based company, pioneering a discount card, will present their pre-booking restaurant discount scheme to the next Wirral Restaurant Association. This tourism product offer scheme is designed to build capacity for restaurants at off-peak times and help "cross sell" across the whole of Merseyside. Any Wirral restaurant wishing to join this scheme would be allowed to join for free (ie no cost to the restaurant for the installation of the 'reader'), and free promotion of their product and distribution management. The information collected would then be made available to the restaurants and would be invaluable to forward plan future activity.

Human Resources have continued work on Wirral's People Strategy, ensuring that projects are carried out in line with year 1 actions in all 5 key theme areas. They are also looking at New Ways of Working across the Council, for example home working and teleworking. They are currently developing policies to support this.

The full Best Value Performance Plan, which will include all the statutory performance indicators, will be published by 30th June 2006 and will be presented to Members for consideration at a future date.