

METROPOLITAN BOROUGH OF WIRRAL

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

11 JUNE 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF REGENERATION

WIRRAL'S HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2006-08 END OF YEAR PROGRESS REPORT 2006-07

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Members on the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral for the period April 2006– March 2007.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) allocated Newheartlands (the Merseyside Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder) the sum of £97.7 million for Housing Market Renewal funding from its Pathfinder Programme for the years 2006 – 2008. Wirral's share of this allocation is £19 million.

2.2 Wirral's Strategic Integrated Investment Framework, for 2006-08 was approved by Cabinet on 16th June 2005. This set out the vision for Wirral's HMRI Strategy, specific housing market renewal objectives, and priorities for investment. Cabinet approved the 2006-08 Programme on 28th June 2006.

2.3 Housing Market Renewal funding for 2006-08 is being matched by £12,000,000 Regeneration Capital Programme funding. The Capital Programme 2006-09, recommended by Cabinet on 1st December 2005, was approved by Council on 19th December 2005.

2.4 In addition, it is anticipated that some £22 million will be invested in New Build development by the Private Sector, Housing Corporation and Registered Social Landlords, in 2006-08 and over £1.2 million will be invested from the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund, North West Development Agency, Warm Front and other private sector sources such as Energy companies, to support Housing Market Renewal.

2.5 The funding has allowed Wirral to continue its successful HMRI programme. By the end of 2006-07, more than 790 homes have been acquired, 440 homes have been cleared and a number of key strategic sites have been assembled. 606 homes have been renovated through the use of grant funding or via the Group Repair Scheme. The "Living Through Change" programme has helped residents to live through large scale change brought about by the Housing Market Renewal programme. It has enabled the maintenance of neighbourhood stability, community safety and environmental standards in areas of acquisition and clearance. Housing Market Renewal in Wirral for 2006 - 2007 continued previous activity and in 2007-08 there will be a specific focus on enabling the building of new homes.

3.0 THE HOUSING MARKET RENEWAL PROGRAMME 2006-08

3.1 The Housing Market Renewal Programme 2006-07 consisted of the following initiatives:

- Tranmere (Church Road) Clearance
- Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Clearance
- Birkenhead (Phase 1) (Ten Streets, Station Road and Tyrer Street) Clearance
- Birkenhead (Phase 2) (Milner/Carrington Streets and Bray/Brassey/Brill Streets) Neighbourhood Options Appraisals
- Egremont (Woodhall/Royston Avenues) Clearance
- Group Repair Improvements at the Triangles, Birkenhead
- Private Sector Home Improvements
- Living Through Change
- Tranmere (Church Road) New Build
- Rock Ferry (Fiveways) New Build
- Staffing and Resources

3.2 The following sections of the report set out the detail of progress on each of the above initiatives, in the period April 2006– March 2007.

3.3 The targets for the 2006-08 Programme and the two financial years that make up the programme were agreed by Cabinet, on 28th June 2006. In summary, the key output targets and performance in 2006/07 are:

	Target 2006-07	Actual Performance 2006-07
Acquisitions	124	139
Demolitions	151	139
Decent Homes Improvements (Private)	35	55
Decent Homes Improvements (RSL)	24	3
Non Decent Homes Improvements	1331	1169
New Build RSL	57	57
New Build Private	18	13

Commentary on actual performance against targets is contained in the sections below.

4.0 **CLEARANCE**

4.1 **TRANMERE (CHURCH ROAD)**

A total of 39 units have been acquired through agreement, including 9 commercial properties, 5 RSL and 25 private homes. Demolition has taken place of 17 properties in Leighton Road, 4 properties in Harland Road and 8 properties in Thompson Street. Very good progress has been made in delivering the entire Church Road programme, with the acquisition of 39 units against a target of 37 and the demolition of 29 units against a target of 24. Funding of £1,251,920 has come from Housing Market Renewal Grant and £1,467,230 from Regeneration Capital. Additional North West Development Agency (NWDA) funding in the sum of £482,026 was secured to acquire 3 retail properties, 2 flats and 2 houses. The site on Leighton Road, together with the adjacent cleared site on Thompson Street, has been made available to Venture and Family Housing Associations to build 12 family houses and 4 bungalows

4.2 **ROCK FERRY (FIVEWAYS)**

A total of 52 private properties have been acquired through agreement against a target of 48. Demolition of 19 properties has taken place against a target of 50. Delays have resulted because utility companies have not been able to make disconnections. However, a large area has been cleared to enable Lovell, the preferred developer to start on site during 2007-08. Funding of £2,187,447 has come from Housing Market Renewal

Grant and £3,334,397 from the Regeneration Capital Programme. Excellent progress has been made with only 27 properties remaining to be agreed to complete the whole scheme.

4.3 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 1)

A total of 14 units have been acquired through agreement (target 12 units), including 1 commercial property, and 13 private homes. Demolition has taken place of 70 units in the Ten Streets area against a target of 60. Funding of £385,222 has come from Housing Market Renewal Grant, £382,465 from the Regeneration Capital Programme and £196,912 from English Partnerships. The remaining acquisitions to be agreed are 1 commercial property on Cleveland Street and the New Dock Inn adjacent to the Station Road/Tyrer Street Statutory Clearance area.

4.4 BIRKENHEAD (PHASE 2)

The programme for 2006-08 will complete the acquisition of units identified for clearance in Phase One of the Housing Market Renewal Programme for Birkenhead.

Phase Two of the programme will focus on addressing the problems of further housing market decline in North Birkenhead and safeguarding the future for residents in the area. £699,899 HMRI funding and £85,471 from the Regeneration Capital Programme has been used for 12 selective strategic acquisitions (target 7 units) in areas of North Birkenhead where two Neighbourhood Option Appraisals are now underway. Recommendations from the Neighbourhood Options Appraisals will be reported to Cabinet later this year.

4.5 WALLASEY

HMRI funding of £865,362, Regeneration Capital Programme funding of £404,860 and £394,643 from English Partnerships has been used to acquire, through agreement, a total of 22 properties against a target of 20. Demolition has taken place of 12 units in Stringhey Road and 9 properties in Montrose Avenue.

4.6 £5,389,894 HMRI funding was used for Clearance. The original HMRI allocation for Clearance had been spent by the end of November because of excellent progress with acquisitions. In order to meet the demand from residents, £320,000 HMRI funding was vired from the Improvements allocation in August and a further £420,000 HMRI funding was vired from other allocations within the programme. Authorisation was sought from Cabinet to bring forward up to £3 million Regeneration Capital funding from the 2007-08 programme. October 2006. Careful scheduling and monitoring was put in place and additional funding obtained from English Partnerships and North West Development Agency (NWDA) meant that this was not required. A total of £5,674,424 Regeneration Capital funding was used for Clearance.

5.0 GROUP REPAIR IMPROVEMENTS

5.1 Phase 1 of the Triangles Group Repair Scheme, in Birkenhead, has been completed and Phase 2 is progressing well. The scheme in total comprises the external renovation of 359 mainly private sector owner occupied houses, with grant support, in line with the North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration. The works include renewal of roofs, fascias, rainwater goods, new windows and doors, repair and redecoration to elevations and boundary walls. The scheme offers a 75% grant with a means tested household contribution of up to 25%. It is anticipated that this will draw in a further £760,000 to the scheme from householder contributions. 92 properties have been completed in Phase 1, 38 of these have achieved the Decent Home Standard, a standard higher than that planned in the scheme. Housing Market Renewal Grant of £1,002,093 and Regeneration Capital funding of £610,973 has been spent in the period 2006 -2007. The take up for Phase 2 of the scheme is 90%. One of the key measures of the success of the Group

Repair scheme, in relation to housing market renewal, is that the work undertaken has had a significant beneficial impact on house prices in the locality and the desirability of the area as a place to live. Planning for the scheme commenced in July 2004 and since then house prices have risen by 50%. The scheme gained the “NewHeartlands Champions” Award at the Strictly Regeneration Awards 2007 ceremony held in Liverpool, at the end of April.

6.0 PRIVATE SECTOR HOME IMPROVEMENTS

6.1 £426,569 HMRI funding has been used to enable improvements to 17 properties of sustainable private sector housing stock to Decent Homes Standard in the Church Road area of Tranmere. The work complements proposed demolition and new build works in adjoining streets. £267,550 of Regeneration Capital funding has been used for other improvements to 74 properties across the HMRI area, to Non Decent Homes Standard. The original planned improvements in Craven and Paterson Streets have been deferred to 2008-10 and the funding vired to the Clearance theme. This decision will mean a more comprehensive scheme will be possible and was based on the wishes of residents in the area.

7.0 RSL HOME IMPROVEMENTS

7.1 £48,535 HMRI funding was used to complete improvements to Decent Homes standard of 3 flats in Lowwood Grove, Tranmere. This work was part of the 2005-06 programme. Improvements to 45 YMCA flats on Quarry Bank were also completed, these were funded through the 2005-06 HMRI programme. The original planned improvements to Decent Homes standard of 24 properties in Craven and Paterson Streets have been deferred to 2008-10 and the funding vired to the Clearance theme. The RSLs will now provide funding to take this scheme forward and it will be linked to the scheme for Private Sector improvements.

8.0 LIVING THROUGH CHANGE

8.1 The Living Through Change Programme covers a number of non-physical interventions aimed at maintaining environmental standards, community safety and community cohesion throughout the Housing Market Renewal areas. In addition, the programme covers some environmental improvements. The programme supports the Clearance, New Build and Improvement programmes and reduces the potential negative impact on residents, in the Housing Market Renewal areas.

During the period April 2006 to March 2007 the following activity has taken place:

- Environmental Wardens have dealt with 1344 fly tipping incidents and secured 344 properties to maintain environmental standards and keep the HMRI area clear of fly tipping.
- Neighbourhood Wardens have dealt with 2232 requests from residents
- The Energy Efficiency programme has installed energy saving measures to 747 homes
- The Target Hardening scheme has fitted security measures in 246 homes.
- The Homemovers Service has completed 131 cases to assist households affected by clearance, with a further 70 cases ongoing.
- The Handyperson Service has carried out basic maintenance works to assist 359 vulnerable people.
- The Landlord Accreditation Scheme has accredited 49 private landlords and 102 properties.
- Two artists were appointed at the end of September, for the Art Regeneration project which took place in the Church Road area for the three months leading up to

Christmas. This involved schools and community groups and was very successful. An exhibition of the artwork was held in January 2007.

8.2 This programme of initiatives is a continuation of the successful schemes implemented in 2004-06 and they have been well received by the local community.

8.3 HMRI funding of £83,128 has been used for Environmental Improvements, including improvement to the lighting in Mersey Park, improvements to Southwick Road car park, Rock Ferry and the Art Regeneration project in Tranmere

9.0 **NEW BUILD**

9.1 As a result of Housing Market Renewal activity, 57 Housing Association homes have been completed in the period April 2006 – March 2007. These include: 10 bungalows and 10 flats on the Cobden Place/Grenville Road site off Old Chester Road, Tranmere, 19 Homebuy houses on the cleared site at Aspendale Road, Tranmere, 6 houses and 6 flats on Grange Mount, Birkenhead for people with learning disabilities and 6 bungalows at the Mother and Baby unit on Wheatland Lane, Seacombe. 13 Private Sector houses have been built adjacent to the HMRI intervention areas – 10 in Chesnut Grove and 3 in Tudor Road, Tranmere.

9.2 The development agreements with Lovell, the Council's Private Sector Development partner for the Church Road and Fiveways areas are very complex documents and, although good progress is being made they are not yet in place.

9.3 Lovell, following consultations with local residents, submitted two outline planning applications for the Fiveways scheme which were approved at Planning Committee on 19th April 2007. The planning application for the Church Road scheme will be submitted in May 2007.

9.4 Private sector confidence is increasing within the Pathfinder area. The Chesnut Grove site, on which 10 new build private dwellings were completed in 2006/07, had lain derelict for 20 years.

10.0 **MARKETING & PUBLICITY**

10.1 A dedicated Marketing Manager has been appointed by NewHeartlands to build upon community engagement and extend communication with residents, media, stakeholders and other partners to promote the positive impact of housing market renewal on Wirral.

10.2 Activity to date includes:

- A 4 page wrap around the front of the Wirral Globe to communicate and inform Wirral residents about housing market renewal and progress to date
- Production of a brand called 'Live Wirral'. The brand will be integrated and used across all communication channels, to ensure consistency and establish a coherent identity
- Production of a communications toolkit incorporating folder, fact sheets, leaflet, exhibition stands and promotional items
- Production of a promotional CD and leaflet to complement all other communications. The CD showcases activity taking place, highlighting the key benefits for residents and businesses and the difference Housing Market Renewal is making to people's lives and the housing market
- Live Wirral campaign including community road show and outdoor advertising campaign

- Launch of the Empty Property Team and live interview on Radio Merseyside
- Winter Wonderland event for Fiveways and Church Road residents
- Series of press releases to promote the core programme and Living Through Change initiatives

10.3 As the programme moves forward, place marketing activities will be progressed in order to promote various Housing Market Renewal locations in advance of the completion of new build properties. The strategy will ensure that key messages are communicated in a positive manner and promotes the key attributes of Wirral as an area in which to live and encourages commercial investment.

11.0 FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

11.1 These are as set out in the report. The table below shows the target and actual funding used in the 2006-07 programme. The amount of funding drawn in to match HMRI was £2.2 million above target and achieved an improvement in the utilisation of HMRI funding.

Funding Source	Target 2006-07		Actual 2006-07	
	£	%	£	%
HMRI	9,200,000	58.5	9,158,425	51.0
Match Funding:				
Regeneration Capital	6,000,000		6,552,947	
English Partnerships	0		591,554	
North West Development Agency	0		482,026	
Neighbourhood Renewal Fund	371,612		439,527	
Warm Front (Government)	140,225		701,401	
Energy companies	14,330		15,197	
Total Match Funding	6,526,167	41.5	8,782,652	49.0
TOTAL	15,726,167	100.0	17,941,077	100.0

12.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme will have a positive impact on some of the most socially and economically deprived areas of Wirral.

13.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Housing Market Renewal will improve the quality of living environments and environmental standards throughout many parts of Wirral. New high quality, decent homes with enhanced energy efficiency standards and better use of renewable building materials will contribute towards Sustainable Development and Climate Change priorities.

14.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

14.1 The HMRI areas are within the following Wards: Bidston and St James; Birkenhead and Tranmere; Rock Ferry, Seacombe; Liscard, Claughton, Oxtun and Bromborough.

15.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

15.1 There will be Human Rights implications under Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol, both of which concern the protection of private property. Article 8 of the convention on Human Rights requires a Local Authority to respect a person's home. A Local Authority may only affect a person's right to respect for his home if it is necessary, e.g. in the interests of economic wellbeing, for the prevention of crime or the protection of health. Having access to a decent home is a basic human right to which HMRI contributes significantly.

16.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

16.1 HMRI will result in some clearance of poorly designed, unsafe or obsolescent areas and the creation of safer, more secure living environments.

17.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

17.1 HMRI aims to bring about a fundamental change in the character of some of the most deprived areas of the Borough. Proposals for new development will be brought forward with the assistance of the preferred private developer and Registered Social Landlords and will be integrated with the Council's Local Development Framework, as either Supplementary Planning Documents or Development Plan Documents. Residential redevelopment should be in conformity with Policy HS4 of the Unitary Development Plan, whilst mixed use development incorporating retail use will be considered against retail policy including Policy SH4 of the Unitary Development Plan. Other uses will be considered against UDP Policy HS15.

18.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

18.1 North Birkenhead Framework for Regeneration, Tranmere (Church Road) Masterplan, Rock Ferry (Fiveways) Masterplan, Strategy for Inner Wirral 2004-14, Wirral's Strategic Integrated Investment Framework for HMRI (2006-08), Wirral's Housing Market Renewal Programme 2006-08.

19.0 RECOMMENDATION

19.1 Members note the progress of the Housing Market Renewal Initiative in Wirral in the period April 2006– March 2007.

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