

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is for Members to note the progress made by the Regeneration Department over the last year.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Departmental Year End Report 2006/07 (Appendix 1) details our performance over the last year and sets out our key objectives for the current year.

3.0 SPECIFIC IMPLICATIONS FOR REGENERATION AND PLANNING STRATEGY

The following summary highlights those areas of the Departmental Plan that will be of principal interest to members of the Regeneration and Planning Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee, namely the work undertaken by the Strategy and Implementation Section (Wirral Waterfront, Neighbourhood Renewal, Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management, and Endeavour).

3.1 What were the key objectives we achieved in the last year?

3.1.1 *Wirral Waterfront SRB6 Programme*

Projects that commenced in the year include the A41 Corridor Improvement Strategy, the refurbishment of Birkenhead Park Rugby Club and the establishment of the Mersey Maritime Institute. This initiative is being delivered in partnership with the private sector to provide, enhance and upgrade provision of maritime education, training and skills development. It will also provide research and consulting services for the maritime cluster and related support sectors throughout the sub-region, to the wider Northwest region and in to national and international networks.

3.1.2 Construction work commenced on the Laird Foundation Engineering and Construction Centre. The project involves the construction of an extension to the Laird Foundation to house a centre providing training in specialist skills such as pipe fitting, mechanical maintenance and fitting, gas fitting and specialist welding. Due for completion in May 2007 the centre will accommodate 60 training places for Pathways residents each year.

3.1.3 Wirral Waterfront continued to successfully deliver projects drawn from the 2006/07 SRB Delivery Plan. The key projects that commenced in the year include the employment of a Play Worker and ICT facilitator at the Livingstone Street Play and Community Centre in Birkenhead. Wirral Waterfront also provided financial support to allow the Riverside and Cavendish Centres to be refurbished as well as purchase essential ICT equipment.

3.1.4 The section has over performed in terms of implementing the Strategic Investment Area (SIA) Programme funded from European Objective One resources and secured £7.3m of ERDF grant in the year against an original target of £6.7m. This funding has been used, amongst other things to acquire and remediate the former MOD oil installation facility on

Old Hall Road, Bromborough. The reclaimed land will provide 8 hectares for re-development within one of only two strategic sites on Wirral. The Riverside Business Park was also completed during the last year. Based at the southern end of the Wirral International Business Park this project consists of two three storey buildings providing 5,230m² of speculative office space. The units are currently being marketed and once occupied have the potential to create up to 275 new jobs.

3.1.5 The section successfully managed the Mersey Waterfront Park commencement project which ended in March 2007. The new 3 year succession programme which attracts a further £10.915m of NWDA funding has now been approved and will run to March 2010. This programme will provide match funding for Wirral's Pride in the Proms Project and New Brighton Phase 1.

3.1.6 *Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management*

The constitution for a permanent board has now been agreed with service providers and community members and this reflects the commitment to increase the representation on the Board to include the community and voluntary sector alongside increased resident numbers. In addition two young people will also become members of the Board and this will be through the implementation of the Young Advisors Project. This involves recruiting young people and offering them training and support to be able to represent the interests of young people within Woodchurch.

3.1.7 Commissioning of further activity to take place in the neighbourhood has been successful and the contracting process is being implemented, with activity now commencing; for example:

- Two Community Support Officers dedicated to the Woodchurch area have provided a highly visible presence to local residents since February 2007
- Activities to prevent the misuse of alcohol and to provide support services at a local level
- Provision of a community mini bus to enable better access to services and to support community cohesion and inclusion
- A range of environmental improvements that involve people of all ages learning horticultural skills as well as improved awareness about recycling opportunities
- Activities to support the health of children and young people that include increased provision of speech and language therapy; protective behaviour training as well as a comprehensive strategy to co-ordinate and fund family nutrition provision
- Activities that enable targeted support for the most vulnerable pupils at schools that takes a holistic approach to improving achievement within and outside of the school environment
- Resources that will give increased support and raise awareness of existing services for victims of domestic violence

3.1.8 A Community Engagement and Empowerment Strategy has been produced that will enable local residents as well as third sector organisations to actively participate in the neighbourhood management process at a variety of levels.

3.1.9 A series of localised action plans have been produced for discrete parts of Woodchurch that have been identified by residents; these include The Meadows and Hoole Road shops. These action plans have brought together key partners to improve the effectiveness of cross agency working whilst engaging residents in the resolution of local issues.

3.1.10 An audit and mapping of local services has been undertaken; information from which is currently being fed into a directory of Woodchurch services for local residents as well as giving Thematic Leads critical information for action planning. In addition to this exercise, service providers have been encouraged to gain a deeper understanding of the issues specific to the Woodchurch area. For example, a number of tours of the Woodchurch estate were organised for the partners involved in neighbourhood management; there were a number of issues highlighted through these tours that were then highlighted as priorities for action.

3.1.11 Neighbourhood Management have added value to the development of Operation Alliance. This partnership between Upton Police Officers, Wirral Partnership Homes and the Anti-Social Behaviour Team was established to tackle anti-social behaviour at a local level using shared intelligence. Neighbourhood Management, through commissioning and linking partners together are raising awareness of services and enabling signposting towards positive activities.

3.1.12 *Neighbourhood Renewal*

The NR Team has worked effectively with thematic partners to complete and deliver the NR commissioned regeneration activity for 2006-2007 which has directly supported and impacted towards the NR floor targets. Activities have included:

- Supporting local residents who are on Incapacity Benefit enabling them to take the first steps back into employment, through the provision of mentoring, one to one support, confidence building and opportunities for work experience, prior to re-engaging with Job Centre Plus and onto Pathways to Work.
- Further support to the Wirralbiz service for additional business start ups in the NR areas, through opportunities for re-allocating underspends. This enabled the Wirralbiz to increase the number of business starts in the NR areas, which had already exceeded initial expectations.
- Developing and maintaining relationships with internal and external partners, particularly to take forward the NR funding for 2006 - 2008.
- Effective partnership working with local neighbourhood partnerships which has ensured appropriate consultation throughout the commissioning and monitoring process, including the support and delivery for the People and Places element of the NR programme.
- Improvements to the general environment and housing conditions, specifically improving decency standards within the private sector with particular emphasis on vulnerable households.
- Developing and expanding the Neighbourhood and Environmental Warden's Services to other areas, primarily covering Birkenhead, Bidston and St James wards.
- Support to partnerships to carry out the annual Performance Management review for 2006-2007, as part of the NR programme process, and to enable further embedding of the NR activity within the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

3.1.13 It is fundamental to understand the impact regeneration activity is having on the ground, to this effect the Performance Management Framework (PMF) was completed in 2007. A number of key NR outcomes are also mandatory for each of the four blocks of the LAA 2007 and the NR Team has worked to ensure that the NR programme had direct links to targets and measures within the LAA. This has provided an integrated system allowing more effective monitoring and progress reporting and has also facilitated the efficient dissemination of lessons learnt at a neighbourhood level into the strategic operation of the LAA.

3.1.14 *Endeavour*

The Endeavour team has completed the procurement of ESF and ERDF projects to deliver the identified outputs and outcomes of the Pathways Neighbourhood Intervention Programme. We have continued to provide management support, advice and guidance to applicants in the development of funding applications and business plans, as a result of this support more than 20 regeneration projects achieved success.

3.1.15 We have worked with partners such as local colleges and training agencies together with a range of community and voluntary groups to provide targeted training programmes that support progression to work. As a result of these interventions 3,422 new training places were created to provide opportunity for 1,090 unemployed people to secure employment and a further 1,675 to gain a qualification.

3.2 What will be the key objectives we will be focusing on over the next quarter?

3.2.1 *Wirral Waterfront and Strategic Investment Area*

We will continue to ensure that the Wirral Waterfront and Strategic Investment Area Programmes are delivered against the agreed Delivery Plans for 2007/08.

3.2.2 *Investment Strategy*

The Regeneration Teams will work with Corporate Services to take forward the Investment Strategy for the Borough.

3.2.3 *Permanent Regeneration Team*

The reduction in time limited funding has significant implications for the future of regeneration in Wirral as most of the staff are funded through these means. Separate reports on this issue are being prepared for more detailed consideration by Members.

3.2.4 *North West Operational Programme*

Applications for the funding programme (which is the successor to the Objective 1 Programme for Merseyside) will be invited in January 2008. Work is already progressing on a number of key economic projects and the team will be preparing detailed project information, lining up match funding and discussing implementation timescales.

3.2.5 *Local Enterprise Growth Initiative (LEGI)*

Although a decision on a third bidding round will not be known until the Comprehensive Spending Review, which is now expected in November 2007, it is important that work commences in advance of this. A team is being put together of partners to build on the unsuccessful Round 2 LEGI bid.

3.2.6 *Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management*

Contracting of all commissioned activity is now completed and activity will continue to be delivered; from this full budget spend will be achieved by the year end. Thematic development sessions will be completed leading to increased focus of activity and cross-theme working for the second year of the programme. Baseline resident perception indicators will be established with six-monthly updates.

3.2.7 *Neighbourhood Renewal*

The commissioning process for unallocated NR funds was agreed by April 2007 and all unallocated grants were claimed, this process will continue for 2007-2008. The NR Team will work with each of the LSP's thematic partnerships to ensure that projects are contracted and will deliver their agreed outcomes by the end of March 2008.

The current NRF grant ceases on the 31st March 2008 and work will take place with the thematic partnerships to ensure sustainability issues which have been outlined in the NR Theme Plans are addressed. In addition the NR Team will work with partners to ensure best practice is identified through the programme and is shared and evaluated, as part of the programme closes and NR exit strategy process.

3.2.8 *Endeavour*

We will continue to work with delivery partners to ensure maximum benefits of the Objective One programme in Pathways areas. In order to achieve this objective we will provide management support and guidance in the delivery of EU projects. In addition, we will administer a performance monitoring system to assess the impact of projects commissioned to deliver the Pathways programme and report progress to the LSP and Neighbourhood Partnerships.

3.3 What will be the resource implications for the next and subsequent years?

3.3.1 *Strategy and Implementation*

Work taken forward through the NR programme, Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management, Wirral Waterfront and Endeavour/Pathways will be managed by the current teams. Funding for these teams is primarily provided through external regeneration funding, namely NR Fund, Neighbourhood Element (NE – funding for the Woodchurch NM programme through the LAA), SRB and Objective 1. Most of this funding is currently due to cease on the 31st March 2008 (Objective 1 funding for the Endeavour team will cease on 30th September 2008). There will be an impact on the ability of the team to deliver the NR, NM, SRB and Pathways programmes, as well as secure further regeneration and investment funding, as staff leave to take up other posts before the end of the programmes. In addition there will be an adverse impact on the ability of the council to deliver the recently agreed Investment Strategy and this is the subject of a further report on the agenda for this meeting.

3.3.2 NRF and NE resources for 2007-08 are now pooled within the Local Area Agreement (LAA). Decisions over governance and structural linkages between the LSP and LAA Programme Board are likely to be taken during 2007 and until then resource allocation of the NR Fund will continue to be overseen by the NR Policy Group, Champions and the LSP. NE funding will continue to be managed by the Woodchurch Neighbourhood Management Board.

4.0 **FINANCIAL & STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The main staffing implication is as set out in paragraph 3.4.1 above, namely that the majority of staff in the Strategy and Implementation section are on time limited contracts which rely on grant funding. Much of this funding is due to come to an end at the end of March 2008 so there is a high risk (as identified in the Departmental Plan and previous reports to this Committee) that staff will leave before that date if other funding cannot be identified. This will have an impact not only on the Council's ability to deliver current regeneration programmes, but also on the delivery of the wider functions of the Strategy and Implementation section in securing additional investment and funding for Wirral.

5.0 **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no specific equal opportunity implications arising directly from this report. However, the Department is responsible for a number of performance indicators that monitor our performance in relation to equality and diversity.

6.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no specific implications arising directly from this report. However, the Department is actively involved in projects that will have major impacts upon the environment and the well being of people in Wirral.

7.0 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

7.1 There are none arising from this report.

8.0 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Department is responsible for a number of important performance indicators and initiatives that relate directly to Community Safety. Full details of which are contained within the attached report.

9.0 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are none arising from this report.

10.0 LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

10.1 This report will be of interest to all Members of the Council

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 Department of Regeneration Departmental Plan 2006/2007, and Performance Report for December 2006, and January/February 2007.

12.0 RECOMMENDATION

12.1 Members are asked to note the performance of the Regeneration Department during 2006/07.

Alan Stennard
Director of Regeneration

This report was prepared by Sally Keating/Juliet Blackburn who can be contacted on 691 8125/8104