WIRRAL

Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	**Thursday, 28 October 2010**
Time:	**6.00 pm**
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

2. **STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME (Pages 1 - 8)**

   Report of the Interim Chief Executive ('Wirral's Future: Be a part of it' Consultation)

3. **CONSULTATION TASK FORCES (Pages 9 - 18)**

   Update Report of the Director of Technical Services/Programme Director (Strategic Change)

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

28 OCT0BER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL SERVICES / PROGRAMME DIRECTOR (STRATEGIC CHANGE)

STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME – UPDATE

1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the Council's Strategic Change Programme.

2   BACKGROUND

2.1   A recent review of the Strategic Change Programme was undertaken at the request of Cabinet on the 24 June 2010. That review was reported to Cabinet on the 22 July 2010 and concluded that "Programme delivery confidence was red" and "delivery of the programme appeared to be unachievable". That Cabinet report appears separately on the agenda for tonight's meeting and members' attention, in particular, is drawn to Section 3 – Outcome of the Review.

2.2   Following that review a number of recommendations were made including that a Strategic Change Programme office be established under the control of the Director of Technical Services to determine and deliver the Strategic Change Programme.

2.3   Cabinet further resolved that a Strategic Change Programme Board (SCPB) be established comprising the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Conservative Group, the Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group, the Chief Executive, and the Lead Chief Officer for the Programme. The SCPB is the executive body responsible to Cabinet for deciding on and delivering the SCP.

3   PROGRESS TO DATE

3.1   The Strategic Change Programme Office (SCPO) has been established under the Director of Technical Services and is based in Cheshire Lines. The primary focus of the SCPO has been to re-state the Strategic Change Programme in order to maximise the successful delivery of outcomes and to procure a corporate project management system to facilitate planning, control and delivery of the programme.

3.2   A corporate project management system (ProjectVision, Cora Systems) has been procured and configured against the delivery arrangements established by SCPB. Training on the use of the system has begun and

is due to conclude on 16th November 2010, for key project managers. Additional training for members and Chief Officers will take place as required.

3.3   A "decision gate" approach to programme delivery had been developed. This approach establishes a number of decisions gates projects have to pass through during the project life cycle. If a project fails to satisfy specific criteria, SCPB will not approve progression to the next stage (see Appendix 1). An assurance framework has been agreed and will be delivered by the Director of Finance, providing independent assurance of the programme to SCPB.

3.4   The Strategic Change Programme Board have provisionally agreed three delivery channels in which the projects will be categorised (see Appendix 2):

- **Strategic Change Projects** – These projects will be managed using the delivery arrangements and assurance framework agreed by SCPB. The progress of these projects will be monitored by SCPB
- **Business as Usual Projects** – those projects which will be primarily managed through normal governance processes i.e. Cabinet decides, Executive Team implements, scrutiny monitors. However, some projects will be significant in terms of the efficiencies to be delivered or the risk to the organisation that SCPB will require some oversight.
- **DASS Programme** - These projects have clear dependencies and linkages to each other and should be managed as a single programme.

3.5   The existing programme agreed by Cabinet 14th January 2010, has been reviewed to establish if projects are still relevant to the Council's objectives, have the ability to be delivered or can be enhanced or stretched to provide additional outcomes. Any new or emerging ideas have also been assessed by SCPB for inclusion. This review has resulted in a restated programme, which has been grouped into the delivery channels outlined above.

3.6   All projects are awaiting SCPB approval. In some cases this approval is the continuance of an existing project, whilst in other cases it will be approval to start project delivery. For clarity, Appendix 3 sets out the project delivery stage and decision gate of each project within the programme.

3.7   There has been a further proposal to group these projects by themes, which may assist in the future development of the programme. These themes are draft at this stage and will be more fully developed following the consultation exercise and refresh of the Council's Corporate Plan; however the draft themes are set out in Appendix 4.

3.8 The processes established in restating the change programme and monitoring its delivery allow for the expansion of the programme, enabling emerging ideas to be developed into new projects under the "project conception" stage (appendix 1&3). These ideas are received from several quarters including the staff suggestion scheme, response from staff to the Leader's emails, the recent MBA projects and members of the public. This process will also be applied to ideas and recommendations resulting from the recent consultation exercise

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The financial implications arising from this report

5 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no staffing implications arising directly from this report.

6 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS / EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 The implementation of the Councils Strategic Change Programme should have positive equal opportunities impact. Equality Impact Assessments will be undertaken where relevant for specific projects and activities.

7 HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

7.1 A Health Impact Assessment will be undertaken for all relevant projects.

8 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 There are no specific community safety implications arising directly from this report.

9 LOCAL AGENDA 21

9.1 There are no local agenda 21 implications arising directly from this report.

10 PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are no planning implications arising directly from this report.

11 ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no anti-poverty implications arising directly from this report.

12 SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS
12.1 There are no social inclusion implications arising directly from this report.

13   LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1   There are no local member support implications arising directly from this report.

14   BACKGROUND PAPERS

14.1   Review of Strategic Change Programme, Cabinet, 22 July 2010

15   RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1   The Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee would be invaluable in supporting the Change Programme by scrutinising the projects classed as Business as Usual / Efficiency Projects. This would enable the Strategic Change Programme Board to focus on monitoring the projects in the Strategic Change Programme.

This report was prepared by Michele Duerden, Strategic Change Programme Office, who can be contacted on 0151 666 3256.

Appendix 1: Decision Gate Framework

STRATEGIC CHANGE PROGRAMME GATES

	PROJECT CONCEPTION	**Gate 1** PROJECT APPROVAL	**Gate 2** PROJECT START UP	**Gate 3** PROJECT DELIVERY	**Gate 4** PROJECT CLOSURE
Key questions SCPB will consider	The SCPB Gate framework will not be involved at this stage	Is there sufficient definition of what the proposal is to enable the board to make an informed, prioritised decision?	Is the programme sufficiently well planned, resourced and evaluated?	Is the board being given sufficient and accurate advice as regards the progress and issues of the programme?	Has the impact of the programme and the key success factors been evaluated and reported accurately to the board?
Documents SCPB require to answer key questions		Outline Business Case.	Project Initiation Document. Full Business Case. Scope. Project Plan. Risk Register. Issues Log.	Updated Project Plans. Highlight Report. Updated Risk Register. Updated Issues Log.	Lessons Learnt. Report Benefits Log.
Documents should evidence		Overview. Key Milestones. Anticipated Outcomes. Resource Implications. Costs. Indicative Timescales. Funding.	Objectives. Scope. Outcomes. Exclusions. Constraints. Assumptions. Stake Holders. Communications Plan. Project Plan. Project Team. Resources.	Milestones achieved. Planned activities. Problems. Issues. Outcomes achieved.	Outcomes achieved. Handover arrangements. Post project review.

Appendix 2: Projects by Delivery Channels

Strategic Change Projects

Ref	Project	Project Manager	Proposed Theme
9	Revenues & Benefits	Malcolm Flanagan	Efficiency
10	CAS: Streetscene	Malcolm Flanagan	Transforming Business Support
11	ICT Strategic Review	John Carruthers	Transforming Business Support
16	Looked After Children	Julia Hassall	Commissioning
17	CYPD Management Review	David Armstrong	Restructuring
19	Disposal of assets	Ian Brand	Efficiency
20	Office Rationalisation	Ian Brand	Efficiency
24	PACSPE	Mark Smith	Commissioning
40	Strategic Sourcing	Ray Williams	Transforming Business Support
58	Shared Services	TBD	Commissioning
60	General Restructure	Chris Hyams	Restructuring
65	Facilities Management	Ian Brand	Efficiency
66	Transforming Business Support	TBD	Transforming Business Support

Efficiency Projects / Business as Usual

Ref	Project	Responsible Officer	Proposed Theme
1	Procurement	Ray Williams	Efficiency
25	Value Engineering	Mark Smith	Efficiency
26	Street Lighting	Kevin Ellis	Carbon Neutral & Zero Waste
27	Traffic Management	Mark Smith	Efficiency
28	HAMS	Shaun Brady	Efficiency
31	Energy Efficiency	Tony Dodd	Carbon Neutral & Zero Waste
39	Printing review	David Taylor Smith	Efficiency
42	Balances & Reserves	Tom Sault	Efficiency
44	Contract Review	Ray Williams	Efficiency
55	Terms & Conditions - including Car Allowances	Chris Hyams	Efficiency
56	Review of Capital Programme	Tom Sault	Efficiency
57	Review of Fees & Charges	Tom Sault	Efficiency

DASS

Ref	Project	Project Manager	Proposed Theme
2	Assistive Technology	Angie Carter	DASS Transformation Programme
3	Market Management	Mike Fowler	DASS Transformation Programme
5	Learning Disabilities	Peter Tomlin	DASS Transformation Programme
6	Reprovision of in-house Care Services	Jenny Ricketts	DASS Transformation Programme
7	Transport	Tracey Rai	DASS Transformation Programme
32	Commissioning & Procurement	Stephen Rowley	DASS Transformation Programme
33	Personal budgets	Francesca Tomlin	DASS Transformation Programme
34	Early Intervention	Maura Noone	DASS Transformation Programme
35	Access 24/7	Rick O'Brien	DASS Transformation Programme
43	Third Sector Contracts	Maura Noone	DASS Transformation Programme

Appendix 3: Projects by Delivery Stage and Decision Gate

		PROJECT CONCEPTION	Gate 1	PROJECT APPROVAL	Gate 2	PROJECT START-UP	Gate 3	PROJECT DELIVERY	Gate 4	PROJECT CLOSURE
Strategic Change Programme										
Carbon Neutral and Zero Waste	Strategic Change Projects									
	Efficiency Projects / Business as Usual							Street Lighting (26) Energy Efficiency (31)		Recycling (29)
Transforming Business Support	Strategic Change Projects	Wider CAS (45) Facilities Management (65) Transforming Business Support (66)				Revenue & Benefits (9) ICT Strategic Review (11) Strategic Sourcing (40)		CAS Streetscene (10) SAR - Transfer of Assets (19) SAR - Office Rationalisation (20)		
	Efficiency Projects / Business as Usual	Policy & Performance (38) CAA - excellent Council (46) Social Media (47) Non-Fixed assets (48) Think Finance (49) Measuring Bus. Impact (50) Stress-related Sick Abs. (52) Community Engagement (53) Rev. Cap. Proj. & Progs.(56) Rev. Fees & Charges (57) Value for Money Profiles (59)		Reserves & Balances (42) Contracts Review (44) Printing Review (39)		Procurement (1)		Value Engineering (25) Traffic Management (27) Highways Asset Mgt (28)		
Restructuring	Strategic Change Projects	Workforce Mgt (63) People strand (63)		Mgt. Restruct. (60)				CYPD Mgt Review (17)		
	Efficiency Projects / Business as Usual			Terms & Conditions (55)						Gen. Restruct. (23)
Commissioning	Strategic Change Projects	Shared Services (58)				PACSPE (24)		Looked After Children (16)		
	Efficiency Projects / Business as Usual									
DASS Transformation Programme		Personalisation (54) Third Sector contracts (43) Co-located Services (51) T		Access 24/7 (35) Commissioning (32)		Early Intervention (34) In-house Services (6)		Assistive Technology (2) People with Learning Disabilities (5) Personal budgets (33) Market Management (3) Integrated Transport (7)		DASS - HR (4)
Dismiss								BSF (18) LLPG/GIS (22)		

Appendix 4: Projects by Proposed Theme

Strategic Change Programme				
Carbon Neutral & Zero Waste	**Transforming Business Support**	**Restructuring**	**Commissioning**	**DASS Transformation**
Efficiency Projects	**Strategic Change Projects**	**Strategic Change Projects**	**Strategic Change Projects**	**Strategic Change Projects**
Energy Efficiency (No.31)	HR & Payroll (No.66)	Restructuring (No.60)	Looked After Children (No. 16)	Assistive Technology (No.2)
Street Lighting (No. 26)	ICT Strategic Review (No.11)	CYPD (No.17)	PACSPE (No.24)	Personal Budgets (No.33)
Related Activities	Strategic Sourcing (No.40)	**Efficiency Projects**	Shared Services (No 58.)	Early Intervention (No.34)
C-Red	Revs and Bens (No.9)	Terms & Conditions (No. 55)	**Related Activities**	Access to Services 24/7 (No.35)
Waste Contracts	CAS/Streetscene (No.10)	**Related Activities**	Public Health	Market Management (No.3)
Merseyside Waste Levy	Transfer of Assets (No.19)	EVR		Transport (No.7)
	Office Rationalisation (No.20)			People with Learning Disabilities (No.5)
	Facilities Management (No.65)			Commissioning (No.32)
	Efficiency Projects			In House Services (No.6)
	Value Engineering (No. 25)			Third Sector Contracts (No. 43)
	Procurement (No.1)			
	HAMS (No. 28)			
	Traffic Management (No. 27)			
	Printing Review (No.39)			
	Review of Provisions & Reserves (No. 42)			
	Contract Review (No. 44)			
	Review of Fees and Charges (No. 57)			
	Review of Capital Programme (No.56)			

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 28TH October 2010

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

'Wirral's Future: Be a part of it' Consultation

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1. **Executive Summary**

   This report sets out the extensive work undertaken to deliver the Council's consultation process 'Wirral's Future: Be a part of it'. The report documents the different stages of the project, the overall methodology used, and the next steps in the process. It highlights the underpinning commitment to make the process inclusive and accessible to the widest possible audience.

2. **Background**

2.1. 'Wirral's Future' is the largest and most far-reaching consultation exercise ever undertaken by the Council. It was initiated at a meeting of Cabinet on the 24th June 2010 by a resolution that instructed the Director of Corporate Services to:

   "…develop, as a matter of urgency, a consultation programme that will enable us to truly engage with Wirral residents, community and voluntary groups and businesses in the future. The programme will be approved by the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and should be implemented at the earliest possible opportunity."

2.2. This decision reflects the Progressive Partnership Agreement set out by the new Administration which emphasised that:

   "The Partnership will be inclusive in its decision making; committed to meaningful, open and transparent public consultation and to ensuring that no part of Wirral is ignored."
   .

2.2. This decision was taken in response to the existing budgetary challenges faced by the Council and the anticipated impact of the autumn Comprehensive Spending Review. This decision was also consistent with the prior agreement of Council at its meeting on 15th February 2010 where it was requested that the Director of Corporate Services

   "…bring forward proposals for enhanced community engagement to ensure that major policy decisions include more robust processes of public consultation, as appropriate, before decisions are taken. Such proposals shall encompass a flexible system of engagement and consultation at appropriate points in the process in order to aid decision making."

3. Consultation Design

3.1. The structure of the consultation programme was determined by the Director of Corporate Services in consultation with the Leader and the Deputy Leader of the Council and founded on the following principles that it must be:

- Innovative using new engagement methods
- Based on comprehensive and accurate data
- To inform the setting of Council priorities and budgets
- Swift and inexpensive but well-executed
- Delivered annually to inform the corporate plan

3.2. The consultation has four distinct phases:

(i) The establishment of independent task forces with a remit to review the Council's Service priorities and delivery around four distinct themes that correspond with the Council's corporate objectives: Economy and Regeneration; Living in Wirral; Adult Social Services and Children and Young People's Services. Task Forces were charged with developing options papers to form the basis of the wider public consultation.

(ii) A wide-ranging public consultation on the options put forward by the Task Forces. As far as practically possible, a comprehensive and far-reaching programme of engagement with residents, staff, businesses and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector.

(iii) Collating the results of the consultation and reporting this back to the Task Forces in order for them to review and refine their options before these are reported as a series of recommendations to Cabinet.

(iv) Reporting back the results of the consultation process to the public once Cabinet has made decisions on the Council's future direction having had regard to the recommendations put forward by the Task Forces and feedback from the consultation.

3.3. In order to meet the timeframe to influence the corporate planning and budget setting process for 2011/12, a multi-disciplinary core project team led by Emma Degg was quickly assembled with the necessary expertise and skills to manage and deliver this programme of work. The core project team officers are Rose Boylan; Mike Callon; Kevin McCallum; Jane Morgan and Tracey Smith. Weekly core project team meetings were instigated to monitor and review progress.

3.4. A detailed project plan and timeframe was developed setting out a 20 week programme of activity with an associated risk assessment and equality impact assessment in line with normal protocols. A research methodology was developed setting out the overall approach and the various methods of engaging stakeholders at different stages of the process. A communications and marketing plan was also produced to ensure the widest possible level of public awareness and involvement in the circumstances.

3.5.   Additional communications and engagement plans were developed in relation to accessing known 'hard to reach' sections of the community including young people, older people, people with physical and learning disabilities and people from black and minority ethnic communities. An initial focus group with representatives from each of these groups was facilitated at the start of the process to ensure that any tailored approaches to maximising engagement could be factored into the overall process.

4.   Task Forces

4.1.   The chairs and individual members of the Task Forces were identified on the basis of having the necessary expertise and experience to ensure a comprehensive review of Council services and the options for change. To emphasise this, invitations were specifically made to individuals and not organisations and this was set out in the terms of reference for the Task Forces which were approved by the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management.

4.2.   The project team was responsible for putting together a long list of potential candidates for the Task Forces. This included service-users, staff and strategic partners in the public, private and voluntary, and community sectors and to reflect the diversity of Wirral's communities.

4.3.   Some Task Force Members were identified or volunteered through existing engagement mechanisms such as the Older People's Parliament, Executive Youth Board and Children in Care Council. Young people participating were supervised and supported at all times by officers from the Children and Young People's Department. Voluntary, community and faith sector representatives were drawn from the Third Sector Assembly (3SA) delegates in accordance with their thematic roles. At their first meeting, Task Forces were asked if they would like to invite anyone else to be involved to ensure appropriate representation. Lists of all Task Force members can be viewed on the consultation website.

4.4.   The Terms of Reference state that Task Forces will make proposals to the Council's Cabinet relating to the future priorities of the Council and options for meeting the budget challenge. The Task Forces are therefore independent advisory groups and not decision-making bodies. Any decisions regarding setting the budget will be subject to the Council's usual scrutiny and decision making processes.

4.5.   Given this, the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management advised that those involved were not subject to the Council's Members Code of Conduct or any requirement to register or declare interests.

4.6.   There was an opportunity to discuss the Consultation process with the District Auditor, and his views are set out in the attached letter.

5.   Task Force Supporting Information

5.1.   A series of issues papers were developed to provide background information to the Task Forces. These were largely drawn from existing Corporate and

Departmental plans and strategies, and contained information about services and associated budgets along with the future challenges for the Council. Task Forces also received presentations from Council officers and additional information to support their discussions about the options available and to enable Task Force members to understand the impact of any potential recommendations to address the budget challenge.

5.2.   All the Task Force meetings were open to the public, and the information relating to the Task Force meetings has been made publicly available on the consultation website including the issue papers, agendas, minutes, presentations and additional information provided. The four options papers summarising the Task Force proposals and which form the basis of the questionnaire are also posted on-line.

6.   Consultation Questionnaire

6.1.   Each Task Force met on three occasions to review Council services in depth and to develop a series of options as the basis for public consultation. An options paper was drafted and approved by each of the task forces following a consistent format based on what the Council *must* continue doing, *should* consider doing differently and *stop* doing.

6.2.   The questionnaire was developed by officers from the project team based on the rationale set out in the research methodology and the various options put forward by the Task Forces. The questions relating to the respective themes were agreed with relevant departmental officers and then circulated to Task Force members for comment and approval.

6.3.   In line with best practice, questions were reviewed by the project team to remove jargon and ensure a consistency of style and approach. The questionnaire was also tested within the marketing and PR team from a perspective of clarity and plain English. In addition to this, before the project began we held some pre-consultation focus groups with 'two groups of young people – the Children in Care Council, and the Youth Executive Board. These focus groups informed our plans for how to engage with young people. Following receipt of the options papers from each task force, we then invited representatives from those same groups to input into the wording and layout of the questionnaire. Both groups made useful suggestions to numerous questions contained in the questionnaire – all of which were taken on board, and led to changes being made.

6.4.   To make it widely accessible, the questionnaire has been made available on-line and in paper format. In line with good practice, we have publicised the fact that it can also be made available in alternative formats where requested. In consultation with Adult Social Services an easy read version of the questionnaire has been designed for people with learning disabilities.

6.5.   In order to gain as diverse and informative range of responses as possible, the questionnaire contains both quantitative and qualitative questions. People can give a simple yes/no response, and also have an opportunity to provide their own comments and additional feedback throughout.

6.6. The survey is also divided into clear sections so that respondents can either choose to complete all of it, or to concentrate on the themes and issues that they have most interest in or understanding of.

7. Community Engagement and Programme of Events

7.1. The project team has also pulled together a database of contact lists from various sources across all Council departments. This single list of over 1500 people and organisations includes statutory partners, voluntary organisations and small community-based groups. A mail out has been coordinated to everyone on the list with a copy of the questionnaire included.

7.2. As part of the marketing and communications plan, a full programme of activities and events is being delivered to raise awareness of the consultation through face-to-face contact with the public and stakeholder groups and forums. This includes outreach work at a range of obvious locations such as libraries, one-stop-shops and leisure centres but also includes locations and events such as supermarkets, coffee mornings, day centres, schools and shopping centres. Events have also been delivered in conjunction with our partners through existing engagement processes and to access hard to reach groups through facilitated group discussion and workshops.

7.3. An outreach team of over 30 staff has been assembled to deliver this programme of work. By the end of the seven weeks of activity, the team will have handed a questionnaire and spoken to over 10,000 people at 140 events. In total, 40,000 questionnaires will have been distributed through partner organisations.

7.4. In addition to outreach activity, there has been a communication strategy to maximise coverage of the consultation through the local press, TV and radio. We have encouraged partners to promote the consultation through internal staff newsletter and through community publications. We have also mapped on-line activity to target local, social media interest groups to encourage their members to access the Council's website to find out more and complete the on-line survey.

7.5. Wirral's approach is generating considerable interest from the Local Government Group (LGG) and other Councils across the country. An increasing number of local authorities are undertaking consultations with residents about setting priorities and future budgets. Comparative analysis of these suggests that Wirral's is one of the most extensive and wide ranging processes, already involving the highest number of residents, and using open ended questions to invite comment and suggestions (rather than simply using a tick box approach).

7.6. The consultation closes on 31st October 2010, and we continue to receive responses on a daily basis. At the time of writing, over 4,500 questionnaires have been completed, representing an above 10% return rate on the 40,000 questionnaires that have been distributed.

8. Consultation Feedback

8.1. A robust system for capturing and analysing feedback has been implemented. A dedicated team of officers from across the council is in place to input all of the responses from the paper questionnaire into the database.

8.2. A structured framework for analysis has been produced and is being used by officers to ensure a consistent and in-depth approach. This will enable quantitative and qualitative analysis and reports to be produced, giving a comprehensive and very detailed level of evaluation.

8.3. After the consultation has closed, officers will produce reports to go to the 4th meetings of the Task Forces. These will enable task force members to consider the survey results and review the initial proposals that were set out in the Options papers. The task force recommendations will then form the basis of the report to be considered by Cabinet at the end of November.

8.4. In line with the principle of openness and transparency that runs throughout the process, all of the comments and feedback will be publicly available.

9. Consultation evaluation

9.1. The original project plan included a proposal to evaluate the whole process in order to learn from it. This will include structured feedback from those involved in the process. The intention is to produce a formal evaluation report with recommendations for future consultations.

10. Financial implications

The Consultation findings will be used to inform future budgetary decision making by the Council.

11. Staffing implications

No implications arising directly from this report.

12. Equal Opportunities/Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

An initial Equality Impact Assessment has already been completed.

13. Community Safety implications

There are no direct Community Safety implications arising from this report.

14. Local Agenda 21 implications

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

15. Planning implications

There are no direct planning implications arising from this report.

16. Anti-poverty implications

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

17. **Human Rights implications**

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

18. **Social Inclusion implications**

There are no implications arising directly from this report.

19. **Local Member Support implications**

Residents from across Wirral have an opportunity to respond to the consultation.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the information provided in the report.

Jim Wilkie
Interim Chief Executive

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Jim Wilkie
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Dear Jim

Recent Meeting re: Grant Awards and the Consultation Framework

Thank you for meeting with me recently to discuss various matters relating to the awarding of a grant to a member of one of the Council Task Forces and to bring me up to date on the Consultation Exercise. It was a most helpful meeting and good to get the views of Bill Norman, Ian Coleman and Emma Degg on the background to both issues.

I am assured having met with you and the other statutory officers that the grants matter was scrutinised thoroughly and that you have each concluded that there are no matters on which you feel you need to advise the Council. I am aware that the Director of Finance had Internal Audit undertake a detailed review of the process and procedures surrounding the award of the grant and that the review concluded that Council procedures had been complied with.

I would like to thank Emma for the detailed explanation of the process and procedures put in place around the Consultation exercise and her explanation of what happens with the output and the timetable for decision making. Again I am assured that whilst the Task Forces are looking at options, the statutory officers are clear that any decisions regarding setting the budget will be subject to the normal scrutiny and decision-making arrangements within the Council.

Local authorities have taken different approaches to tackling the difficult financial decisions facing them. In recent months I have seen some who have acted quickly, in year, to those who have taken a more consultative approach and are awaiting the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review and Local Government Spending allocations before making decisions. In all cases I think there will still be some very difficult decisions to be taken in a very short period of time. We will consider the Council's arrangements in more detail in our 2010-11 value for money work.

I look forward to meeting with you in the near future to discuss future working arrangements.

Yours sincerely

Mr. M. Thomas
District Auditor