



Cabinet Supplemental Agenda

Date:	Thursday, 9 December 2010
Time:	6.15 pm
Venue:	Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall

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AGENDA

3. **WIRRAL'S FUTURE: BE PART OF IT: TASK FORCE OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS (Pages 1 - 32)**

4. **EUROPA BOULEVARD DISPOSAL OF SITES 1 AND 2 (Pages 33 - 44)**

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WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 9TH December 2010

REPORT OF THE INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE

‘Wirral’s Future: Be a part of it’: TASK FORCE OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report documents progress in relation to the implementation of the Council’s consultation programme ‘Wirral’s Future: Be a part of it’ initiated by Cabinet on 24th June 2010.
- 1.2 The report also presents a series of options and recommendations reports from the four Task Forces established as part of the consultation programme to review 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**. These options and recommendations are presented to Cabinet by the Task Forces within the context of the budgetary challenges faced by the Council.
- 1.3 Cabinet is requested to note that all information and reports relating to the consultation have been made publicly available on the Council’s website at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture Task Force meetings were also open to the public.
- 1.4 Wirral’s approach has generating considerable interest from other Councils. Comparative analysis of similar surveys suggests that Wirral’s is one of the most extensive and wide ranging processes with a response rate of 14%.

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.”
- 2.3 This decision was taken in response to the existing budgetary challenges faced by the Council and the anticipated impact of the 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 Programme

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 programme 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 through, as far as practicably possible, a comprehensive and far-reaching programme of engagement with residents, staff, employers and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector.
- (iii) Collation of 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) Ensuring that the results of the consultation process are reported back 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.

4. Project Management

4.1 In order to meet the timeframe to influence the corporate planning and budget setting process for 2011/12, a multi-disciplinary core project team was quickly assembled with the necessary expertise and skills to manage and deliver this programme of work. 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

communications and marketing plan was also produced to ensure the widest possible level of public awareness and involvement in the circumstances.

- 4.2 Additional communications and engagement plans were developed in relation to accessing known 'harder 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.
- 4.3 A full project evaluation will be undertaken further to the end of phase (iv) of the process.

5. Phase (i): Task Forces

- 5.1 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. Task Force members included service-users, staff and partners in the public, private and voluntary, community and faith sectors.
- 5.2 The Terms of Reference put in place for the Task Forces stated that the Task Forces would 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 were established as independent advisory groups and not decision-making bodies. 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.
- 5.3 A series of issues papers were developed to provide background information to the Task Forces. These 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. Issues papers, presentations and additional information presented to the Task Forces are available on the consultation section of the Council website.
- 5.4 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. Options papers were 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 should consider *stopping* doing. These options papers are available on the consultation section of the Council website.

6. Phase (ii): Public Consultation

- 6.1 A questionnaire was developed based on the options put forward by the Task Forces. In order to gain as diverse and informative range of responses as possible, the questionnaire sought to elicit both quantitative and qualitative information about the options. Respondents could give a simple yes/no answer, and also had an opportunity to provide additional comments throughout.
- 6.2 To make it widely accessible, the questionnaire was made available on-line and in paper format. Provision was put in place to make the questionnaire available in alternative formats on request. In consultation with Adult Social Services an easy read version of the questionnaire was also produced.
- 6.3 A full programme of activities and events was delivered to raise awareness of the consultation through face-to-face contact with the public and stakeholder groups and forums. An outreach team of over 30 staff was assembled to deliver this programme of work. This includes outreach work at a range of Council facilities 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 were also delivered in conjunction with our partners through existing engagement processes and to access hard to reach groups through facilitated group discussion and workshops. The outreach team attended over 120 events, speaking to over 10,000 people.
- 6.4 Additional promotion of the consultation was undertaken at minimal cost. For example, LCD screens in Wirral's One Stop Shops were programmed with Wirral Future messages, posters were sent to more than 800 businesses and a direct mailshot of the questionnaire to more than 1,500 Council contacts. The consultation was promoted extensively online using the Council's website, e-mail and social networking websites.
- 6.5 Members of staff were encouraged to take part in the consultation in a variety of ways, including through emails from the Leader and Interim Chief Executive, the launch of a new One Brief system, articles in Council and departmental newsletters as well as a highly visible placement on the intranet for the duration of the period.
- 6.6 More details about how phase (ii) of the programme was delivered can be found in the consultation reports on the website.

7. Phase (iii): Consultation Results

- 7.1 The consultation closed on 31st October 2010. 2,687 questionnaires were completed on-line and 2,972 paper questionnaires were returned, giving a total response of 5659. 40,482 questionnaires were distributed, which gives a total return rate of 14%. The sample of respondents is representative of Wirral's neighbourhoods and diverse communities. More detailed information on the geographical location, age range and ethnicity of respondents can be found in the results result relating to Section A. 11.7% of respondents stated that they considered themselves to be disabled.

- 7.2 Analysis of the questionnaire responses resulted in a series of consultation reports, which were presented to the Task Forces at a series of meetings on 10th, 11th and 12th November. These reports can be found on the consultation website.
- 7.3 Further to receiving the consultation outcomes, each Task Force reviewed and refined the options paper developed earlier in the process to inform the public consultation. Final options and recommendations papers as approved by Cabinet are now presented to Cabinet as Appendices A, B, C and D. These have also been published on the consultation website.
- 7.4 Cabinet is asked to note that further analysis and dissemination of the consultation results will be undertaken to ensure that the concerns and issues highlighted by residents are taken into account by services as appropriate.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's financial planning and decision-making.

9. Staffing Implications

- 9.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's workforce planning and decision making.

10.1 Equal Opportunities Implications / Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 10.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's planning and decision making processes, which are subject to equality impact assessment in line with the Council's corporate approach.

11. Other Implications

- 11.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's planning and decision making in the delivery of services, including those for example relating to Wirral's environment and community safety.

12. Planning Implications

- 12.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's planning and decision making.

13. Anti-Poverty and Social Inclusion Implications

- 13.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's planning and decision making. The Task Forces were concerned to ensure that vulnerable groups would be taken into account in the Council's planning and decision making.

14. Human Rights Implications

- 14.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's planning and decision making processes, which are subject to consideration on the basis of Human Rights.

15. Local Member Support implications

- 15.1 The options and recommendations papers prepared by the Task Forces are presented to Cabinet to inform the Council's financial planning and decision-making, which may have implications for Local Member support.

16. Recommendations

- 16.1 Cabinet is requested to note the options and recommendations presented by the Task Forces at Appendices A, B, C and D in respect of the Council's future plans.
- 16.2 Cabinet requests a review of the consultation process and instructs Officers to ensure that it is embedded within the Council's business planning processes for all future years including the development of a new Corporate Plan.

Jim Wilkie
Interim Chief Executive

Living in Wirral Task Force: Options and Recommendations

Introduction

'Wirral's Future' is the largest and most far-reaching consultation exercise ever undertaken by the Council. The decision to develop it was initiated at a meeting of the Council's Cabinet on the 24th June 2010 in response to the existing budgetary challenges faced by the local authority. The level of engagement undertaken within the scope of the consultation has been significant, with over 40,000 paper questionnaires being distributed, as well as being available online. Through the consultation road show, 10,000 people were directly engaged.

Four independent Task Forces were established with a remit to review the Council's services in relation to four areas: Economy and Regeneration; Living in Wirral; Adult Social Services and Children and Young People's Services. The Task Forces were independently chaired. Task Forces were asked to develop a series of options papers which would form the basis of a wider public consultation and programme of engagement with residents, staff, businesses and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector. The key mechanism for consultation and engagement activities was a questionnaire based on the options papers which contained a general Part A (including questions about satisfaction with Wirral as a place to live) and four themed sections relating to each of the Task Forces. Information relating to the Task Forces and the how the public consultation was undertaken is available at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

Living in Wirral Task Force

Discussions took place across the following areas:

- Wirral's environment
- Culture and leisure
- Housing
- Regulation

The Task Force discussed which services are core to the Council meeting its statutory and legal responsibilities and which are non-essential but important for quality of life in the borough. There was agreement that whilst quality of life services such as cultural, leisure and sporting facilities are of importance, there was greater scope for reviewing these services and looking at alternative ways to deliver them.

Further to these discussions, the Task Force agreed a series of options that they wished to be considered and for consultation with the public. The section of the questionnaire relating to Living in Wirral was developed in accordance with the options proposed by the Task Force. The questions asked and the consultation responses can be found at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

This document revisits the original options proposed by the Living in Wirral Task Force and makes recommendations for the Council's Cabinet. These have been agreed following consideration of the consultation responses at a final meeting of the Task Force.

Options and Recommendations

A number of options within this report relate to charging for services. The results of the consultation suggested that some form of means testing should be employed in these areas. The Task Force made it clear that, while they are not opposed to means testing, any system should be robust, clear and not cost more than the saving it is intended to make.

The Task Force also recommends that any increases, or introductions of, charging should be related back to Question A7 of the consultation (Please rank your Council priorities).

In relation to Wirral's Environment the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 1

Continue to deliver essential and statutory services.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 2

Reduce unnecessary red tape in the light of reduced central government control.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 3

Continue to undertake preventative maintenance on Wirral's roads.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 4

Maintain the current programme of coastal and sea defence work.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 5

Continue the commitment to reduce Wirral's carbon footprint.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 6

Renegotiate the Biffa contract for refuse collection and street cleaning to achieve potential savings of £450,000.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 7

Take a stronger approach to enforcement in relation to trade waste agreements to avoid trade waste being sent to landfill with residents' waste.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 8

Consider increasing fees for a number of optional Council services – for example, minibus driver training, and collection of bulky household waste.

In the absence of a clear mandate from the consultation, this option is recommended for further consultation work to include a full list of potentially chargeable services.

Option 9

Use the outcome of a current pilot to determine whether the Council should dim street lighting across the borough to save money on energy costs.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 10

Consider increasing the ERIC (bulky items collection service) charge, whilst increasing education and enforcement to prevent an increase in fly-tipping.

In the absence of a clear mandate from the consultation, this option is recommended for further consultation work to include a full list of potentially chargeable services.

Option 11

Review existing provision of a free garden waste collection service and consider instead introducing an annual fee for the service which could achieve approx. £800k a year. In doing this, the Council must recognise the need for some concessions and the importance of educating people on other options (e.g. composting) to avoid negative impacts such as rats and mice. It would also need to ban garden waste in green and grey bins to prevent an increase in garden waste going to landfill.

In light of the results of the consultation, this option is not recommended. However, the Task Force recommends the Council undertakes further work to investigate the potential for savings through reducing collections or the cessation of collections during winter months.

Option 12

The Council should review how resources are used to support road safety, reflecting what has most impact whilst also considering public priorities.

The Task Force was presented with prioritisation from the consultation, and this is recommended to the Council's Cabinet, to be used in conjunction with evidential information on the impact of road safety measures.

Option 13

Examine non-statutory Traffic Management services and consider whether money is being spent on the right things.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should consider **stopping**:

Option 14

Free graffiti removal on private property and examine the possibility of increasing on-the-spot fines for issues such as dog fouling and litter picking. It should also increase the involvement of Neighbourhood Groups. It should also look at extending the income generated by providing the service to partner and private organisations, and look to extend the scheme on a commercial basis to other partner and private organisations.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 15

The Council should stop differential charging and introduce standard and fair fees in all Council car parks across the borough, with due consideration to the potential impact on local shopping economies and residential streets.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 16

Look at overheads and delivery costs of all services, and examine where savings could be made by commissioning services externally.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to Culture and Leisure , the Task Force suggests

The Council **must**:

Option 17

Continue to offer a comprehensive library service across the borough. However the Council should consider moving some of its 24 library services into the same buildings as other services such as One Stop Shops, community or children's centres to reduce the amount spent on buildings; and also consider improving technology within libraries in order to reduce staffing costs.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 18

Expand and invigorate the marketing efforts designed to maximise income through sport and recreation centres.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 19

Maintain the Book Start initiative.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 20

Complete Value for Money reviews of the high spend in the areas of sport & recreation and open spaces.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 21

Make projected savings under the Parks & Countryside Services Procurement Exercise and look at any possibilities of increasing these savings.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 22

Improve marketing of its golf and leisure facilities (such as Marine Lake) and consider the introduction of private tuition and holiday clubs to increase income. The Council should also consider a more integrated approach to managing golf courses and all of its leisure facilities to achieve potential efficiency savings.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 23

Look into sponsorship opportunities for galleries and exhibitions.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 24

Continue to transfer the ownership of community centres to community-based organisations where they wish to do so.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 25

Establish what the public's priorities are in terms of Culture and Leisure Services.

Prioritisation of services from the consultation was presented to the Task Force. The Task Force recommends this to Cabinet for consideration.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 26

Direct delivery of the preservation of Wirral's heritage, if it can be more efficiently managed through outsourcing.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to Housing , the Task Force suggests

The Council **must**:

Option 27

Seek to maximize all sources of external funding to improve current and future housing conditions in Wirral.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 28

Maximize the contribution of other partners, including the Registered Social Landlords, Private Landlords and Private Developers to investing in current housing stock in Wirral and providing new housing for future generations.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 29

Ensure that services to prevent people becoming homeless are maintained as this reduces costs further down the line.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 30

Reduce unnecessary “red tape” in the light of reduced central government control.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 31

Review the delivery of a number of housing services including some aspects of the strategic housing function, the private sector housing function and homelessness services to ascertain if there are other partners or organisations who could deliver some or all of these.

This option was upheld in part by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet, however it is recommended that further work is carried out by officers on whether another organisation could monitor and report on the housing needs of the borough.

Option 32

Give the highest priority to its support for vulnerable people through the ‘supporting people’ programme as this can prevent people from falling into higher need status. However, the Council should review the administration of this programme to simplify the funding process and ensure the payment given and the monitoring process deliver the best value for money.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 33

Consider alternative ways of delivering the 'home improvement agency' through external contracts and increased partnership with independent providers.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 34

Accelerate working with partners to bring more empty properties back into productive economic use.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 35

Consider the options for developing "shared services" for example a sub-regional choice based lettings scheme for Merseyside.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 36

Review the private sector landlord accreditation scheme as there is some duplication with a national body that provides this function. Consider charging for accreditation.

This option was referred back to Council officers to investigate where, if any, duplication exists before any recommendations are made.

In relation to Regulation , the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 37

Continue providing regulatory and emergency planning services that are largely statutory, provide an essential preventative function and are considered to be value for money when compared with other local authorities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 38

Review its approach to charging to ensure that services do not run at a loss, and charges reflect the market price.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 39

Review its community safety provision to ensure it is cost effective and demonstrates added value to police services.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

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Economy and Regeneration Task Force: Options and Recommendations

Introduction

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Four independent Task Forces were established with a remit to review the Council’s services in relation to four areas: Economy and Regeneration; Living in Wirral; Adult Social Services and Children and Young People’s Services. The Task Forces were independently chaired. Task Forces were asked to develop a series of options papers which would form the basis of a wider public consultation and programme of engagement with residents, staff, businesses and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector. The key mechanism for consultation and engagement activities was a questionnaire based on the options papers which contained a general Part A (including questions about satisfaction with Wirral as a place to live) and four themed sections relating to each of the Task Forces. Information relating to the Task Forces and the how the public consultation was undertaken is available at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

Economy and Regeneration Task Force

Discussions took place across the following areas:

People

- An increase in self-employment
- Tackling barriers to work and linking people to jobs
- Equip residents with the relevant skills to match employer demand

Places

- Planning for investment
- More and better business space
- Creating the environment for economic growth
- Greater awareness of the Wirral ‘brand’

Business

- Increase the number of businesses
- A larger stock of VAT registered businesses
- More trading in national and international markets
- More inward investment

Further to these discussions, the Task Force agreed a series of options that they wished to be considered and for consultation with the public. The section of the questionnaire relating to Economy and Regeneration was developed in accordance with the options proposed by the Task Force. The questions asked and the consultation responses can be found at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

This document re-visits the original options proposed by the Economy and Regeneration Task Force, and makes recommendations for the Council's Cabinet. These have been agreed following consideration of the consultation responses at a final meeting of the Task Force. The Task Force has also undertaken a prioritisation exercise to indicate to Cabinet how it would rank the options highlighted as a 'must' for the Council.

Options and Recommendations

In relation to People the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 1

Ensure that business growth is linked to reducing worklessness. When we attract new developments, or grow businesses, there is a need to ensure that we link the demands of the investor (in terms of recruitment and workforce) with the local supply side, to help address economic inactivity. This is both in relation to local unemployed people and also for local businesses and the supply chain.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 2

Continue to tackle barriers to work and low skills so that people move from benefits into employment. If this is not addressed, Wirral's economy will continue to under-perform. However, the bulk of any resources and activity to reduce unemployment are driven by Central Government, and are outside the Council's direct influence. It is therefore essential that any Council resources are only used to fill gaps and add value to such mainstream provision.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 3

Ensure that any future Council programmes to tackle worklessness are directly linked to increased employment opportunities, with clear contractual targets for success. It is essential that such Programmes have robust performance management processes in place to ensure that tangible outputs are achieved.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 4

Commission effective outreach and engagement activity to directly target those people and groups who may be 'hard to reach'; or who may not access mainstream services; or may have specific multiple barriers to accessing employment.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 5

The Task Force recommended that the successful Wirral Apprentice programme should continue but that the current eighteen month Council subsidy should be reduced to twelve months.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet with the clarification that the aim of this is not to reduce the funding but to get more people through this programme.

The Council **should**:

Option 6

Ensure a clear understanding of Wirral's existing skills base in terms of what skills Wirral residents have, and where the gaps are. With huge regeneration underway in Wirral, residents who have traditionally commuted out of the area to find work, or are unemployed, will need the right skills to be able to benefit from new opportunities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 7

Using any resources for projects that do not relate to hard tangible job outputs. It should rely on mainstream Government Funding through Organisations such as Jobcentre Plus, the Skills Funding Agency and the National Apprenticeship Service to plan and fund programmes and should only intervene itself when there is a clear need and linked to the filling of available employment opportunities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to Place , the Task Force suggests

The Council **must**:

Option 8

Market a clear 'brand' for Wirral, to raise awareness of the place and what it has to offer to investors nationally and internationally, and centred on the importance of making Wirral a really good place for business. This includes developing a strap-line which can be used by businesses to help market them and Wirral. This was consulted on as part of the business survey.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 9

Continue to play a key role in growing Wirral's economy. There was general agreement that Wirral's economic regeneration needs to be driven by the private sector; private sector growth is the key, but it should be publicly enabled.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 10

Develop a single, seamless approach to supporting investment. It is important that a good structured investment support mechanism is in place to ensure a smooth transition through each stage of the process; a 'One Stop Shop' for investors. This would include dealing with the initial inquiry; to identifying land or premises; to assisting with recruitment and also helping with financial business planning. It is also recommended that the task force and wider business community is kept abreast, and consulted on, the development of this strategy.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that the Council should also keep the business community informed about how this is being taken forward.

The Council **should**:

Option 11

Increase the amount and quality of business space. This includes developing 'incubator' space with shared facilities and business support to help businesses to start up, grow, and become sustainable.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that grants for carbon-reduction schemes linked to developing premises should be accessed where possible.

Option 12

Consider how better integration between the Wirral Biz contract and Invest Wirral activities can be delivered to enable a more coherent and efficient business support offer.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 13

Funding skills/training programmes that do not lead directly to job outputs.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to Businesses , the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 14

Continue to fund Economic Regeneration to support businesses and grow Wirral's economy. A 3-year Investment Framework for Economic Regeneration should be put in place, with secured costs. If Wirral's economy is successfully grown, this should ultimately generate reductions in the overall Council budget, given the wider impact that economic inactivity and related deprivation currently have on other services.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 15

Build in a strategic, staged approach to economic regeneration for the short, medium and longer term.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 16

Continue to offer business support, but review how business grants are targeted to ensure maximum impact on the business in terms of supporting business growth and/or sustainability.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 17

Continue to support business start ups. However there is also a need for a model that supports (i) sustainability and (ii) growth. It is particularly important to support businesses to become employers, as this will help to tackle economic inactivity.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 18

Offer support in the form of advice and grants to enable small businesses to cross the VAT threshold. This is important, given that Wirral's business base is made up a significant proportion of non-VAT registered businesses.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that this support should be targeted for high-growth businesses.

Option 19

Facilitate a volunteer business network to harness the wealth of business skills and expertise that exists in the Borough. This will enable a rich source of support to new and fledgling businesses at various stages of the business cycle.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should:**

Option 20

Play a lead role in supporting International trade links so that Wirral businesses can access new markets and opportunities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force and it was recommended that it should be moved into the 'the Council MUST' section above.

Option 21

Develop a Single Account Management service to improve how businesses are supported throughout the business life cycle. Further consideration should be given to how this is funded – i.e. through Council resources or by charging for the service.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 22

Explore the increasing role of social enterprises and/ or Mutuals to Wirral's economy. This is not only in terms of their contribution to the wider business community, but also their increased role in the future delivery of some Council services.

This option was upheld by the Task Force and it was recommended that it should be moved into the 'the Council MUST' section above.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 23

Investing in the current arrangements for Inward Investment, and explore alternative options to ensure more effective delivery and greater impact and value for Wirral. Robust performance management processes, including use of performance indicators, should be embedded to ensure a demonstrable return on investment.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Adults Social Services Task Force: Options and Recommendations

Introduction

‘Wirral’s Future’ is the largest and most far-reaching consultation exercise ever undertaken by the Council. The decision to develop it was initiated at a meeting of the Council’s Cabinet on the 24th June 2010 in response to the existing budgetary challenges faced by the local authority. The level of engagement undertaken within the scope of the consultation has been significant, with over 40,000 paper questionnaires being distributed, as well as being available online. Through the consultation road show, 10,000 people were directly engaged.

Four independent Task Forces were established with a remit to review the Council’s services in relation to four areas: Economy and Regeneration; Living in Wirral; Adult Social Services and Children and Young People’s Services. The Task Forces were independently chaired. Task Forces were asked to develop a series of options papers which would form the basis of a wider public consultation and programme of engagement with residents, staff, businesses and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector. The key mechanism for consultation and engagement activities was a questionnaire based on the options papers which contained a general Part A (including questions about satisfaction with Wirral as a place to live) and four themed sections relating to each of the Task Forces. Information relating to the Task Forces and the how the public consultation was undertaken is available at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

Adult Social Services Task Force

Discussions took place across the following areas:

- Demand
- Costs
- Income

The Task Force discussed the levels of existing spend on Adult Social Services in Wirral, both in terms of the total population and in comparison with other similar authorities. Particular focus was given to the fact that £40m per year in expenditure was directed towards residential care for 1,800 people. The Task Force also considered that the general demographic of Wirral was that of an ageing population, which could (according to research) mean that care costs double by 2026.

Further to these discussions, the Task Force agreed a series of options that they wished to be considered and for consultation with the public. The section of the questionnaire relating to adult social services was developed in accordance with the options proposed by the Task Force. The questions asked and the consultation responses can be found at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

This document revisits the original options proposed by the Adult Social Services Task Force and makes recommendations for the Council's Cabinet. These have been agreed following consideration of the consultation responses at a final meeting of the Task Force.

Options and Recommendations

In relation to Demand the Task Force suggests
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The Council must:

Option 1

Continue to provide support for vulnerable people falling into the Critical* level of need. Over the past year, 2,403 new care packages have been set up (average 200 per month) with 42 being assessed as having a critical need.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

¹

The Council should:

Option 2

Continue to provide support to people assessed as having Critical and Substantial* need. Out of 23 authorities in the North West, 17 provide support to people assessed as having Critical and Substantial need, with another 6 also providing support to people with Moderate and Low need. However, due to the budget situation nationally this is expected to change.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 3

Continue to develop and promote personal budgets to support people with Substantial need. Personal budgets enable people to procure their own care and have recently been piloted in Wirral. The Task Force suggests the Council reviews the system for personal budget allocations to determine how costs can be reduced.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 4

Develop the voluntary sector to deliver the support needed for people with 'Substantial' and 'Critical' need. It is suggested by the Task Force that the Council and the voluntary sector work together to develop a shared agenda, a Wirral-wide directory of preventative services and seek to develop and bid for external funding to deliver these services.

¹ Fair Access to Care National Criteria

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that particular emphasis must be placed on building the capacity of all partners to enable the delivery of services within the voluntary, community and faith sector.

Option 5

Continue to place an important emphasis on preventative services as these help people to remain living independently and help reduce the costs of care.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **stop**:

No areas were identified within the 'Demand' theme that it was thought that the authority should immediately stop.

In relation to Costs , the Task Force suggests

Within this theme, there is particular emphasis on the possibility of purchasing services from the voluntary, community, faith and independent sector. The Task Force recommends that, across all areas, the Council should retain responsibility for the monitoring of services in terms of delivery, value for money and return on investment.

The Council **must**:

Option 6

Continue to provide Personal Support, particularly to those people identified as having Critical and Substantial need. The Council purchases this support at a cost of around £12.28 per hour, which is extremely competitive with third and private sector providers.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 7

Continue to provide and modernise Day Time activities as the disruption from any attempt to reduce current day time provision now would outweigh any potential financial benefit. Day Centre Services account for £7.9m annual expenditure and provide support for 2,617 people.

The Task Force feels that the implementation of Personal Budgets could potentially see a future decrease in demand for day services in their current form but until this happens the services should be continued.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet, with an emphasis on continuous monitoring of these services in terms of their suitability and cost-effectiveness.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 8

Directly providing residential and respite care. It is instead suggested that these services should be procured from the private and voluntary sector, who will be stringently quality controlled in order to provide the service at identical or improved quality, at a lower cost.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet after reviewing the results of the consultation and considering the greater value for money which can be gained by procuring these services from the private and voluntary, community and faith sectors.

Option 9

The Task Force suggests that the Home Assessment and Reablement Team (HART) should be amended – with the Assessment section retained and the ‘Enablement’ part of the service procured from the voluntary, community and faith sector.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that the entire service should be reviewed to ensure there is no increased bureaucracy.

Option 10

The Task Force suggests that all Home Care and Supported Living services currently directly provided by the Department of Adult Social Services could be better provided in terms of efficiency and cost effectiveness by external providers and that this option should be seriously considered.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 11

The Task Force suggests that the Council stops paying Care Home fees around 10% more than in neighbouring areas. The Task Force recommends reducing these rates to bring them in line with neighbouring Council areas.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to Income , the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 12

The Council must continue to work with vulnerable people to ensure that their benefits are maximised.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It is also recommended that this work should continue be done in partnership with voluntary, community and faith sector partners who provide these services.

Option 13

The Council must continue to charge for people supported in residential care.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 14

Continue to charge for people supported in their own home for which discretionary local rules apply. Currently the Council charges 75% of disposable income. However the Task Force has suggested that this should move towards the 100% in line with some neighbouring authorities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 15

The Council currently charges for Community Meals but this service is also subsidised. The Task Force suggests that this charge should be raised to make this service cost neutral.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 16

The Assistive Technology service is a free, preventative service which provides hi-tech, low impact monitoring of people in their own home. It is currently provided to 1400 people in Wirral. The Council is investing in the service to take the users up to 14,500 over the next three years. The Task Force suggests that the Council, like other neighbouring authorities, should charge a nominal amount for this service.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. It was also recommended that the Council closely monitors uptake of the service to ensure it is not impacted by the introduction of charging. It was also made clear that the equipment itself is not chargeable, only the monitoring aspect.

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Children and Young People Task Force: Options and Recommendations

Introduction

‘Wirral’s Future’ is the largest and most far-reaching consultation exercise ever undertaken by the Council. The decision to develop it was initiated at a meeting of the Council’s Cabinet on the 24th June 2010 in response to the existing budgetary challenges faced by the local authority. The level of engagement undertaken within the scope of the consultation has been significant, with over 40,000 paper questionnaires being distributed, as well as being available online. Through the consultation road show, 10,000 people were directly engaged.

Four independent Task Forces were established with a remit to review the Council’s services in relation to four areas: Economy and Regeneration; Living in Wirral; Adult Social Services and Children and Young People’s Services. The Task Forces were independently chaired. Task Forces were asked to develop a series of options papers which would form the basis of a wider public consultation and programme of engagement with residents, staff, businesses and stakeholders in the voluntary, community and faith sector. The key mechanism for consultation and engagement activities was a questionnaire based on the options papers which contained a general Part A (including questions about satisfaction with Wirral as a place to live) and four themed sections relating to each of the Task Forces. Information relating to the Task Forces and the how the public consultation was undertaken is available at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

Children and Young People Task Force

Discussions took place across the following areas:

- Supporting Wirral’s schools;
- Supporting vulnerable children and families;
- Ensuring that all young people achieve their full potential;
- Who is best placed to deliver services for children and young people? This includes the contribution of the voluntary, community and faith sector and working with partners.

Further to these discussions, the Task Force agreed a series of options that they wished to be considered and for consultation with the public. The section of the questionnaire relating to children and young people’s services was developed in accordance with the options proposed by the Task Force. The questions asked and the consultation responses can be found at www.wirral.gov.uk/wirralfuture

This document revisits the original options proposed by the Children and Young People’s Services Task Force and makes recommendations for the Council’s Cabinet.

These have been agreed following consideration of the consultation responses at a final meeting of the Task Force.

Options and Recommendations

In relation to services to support schools , the Task Force suggests

The Council **must**:

Option 1

Ensure that it provides support to schools based on each school's individual need. Generally, smaller schools need and should be given relatively more support than larger ones.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 2

Review the provision and cost of schools support and services to schools (such as HR services provided by the Council) to reduce costs and/or increase income. Whilst the Task Force accepts that the Council has an obligation to make sure that several statutory services are delivered, this does not mean that it always has to deliver these services itself, and where the Council does provide a non-statutory service to schools, it should never do so at a loss.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force requests that Cabinet takes into account the issues raised by respondents to the consultation relating to maintaining the quality of services to schools, enabling schools to buy in the services they need from others if this will be more cost effective and ensuring that any increases in charges do not have a negative impact on educational standards.

Option 3

Review the additional support provided for children with Special Educational Needs and looked after children to identify whether there could be more opportunities for other organisations to provide these services.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force requests that Cabinet takes into account the issues raised by respondents to the consultation relating to maintaining the quality of services and ensuring that children are safeguarded, and ensuring that other organisations have the necessary support to deliver services. The Task Force also requests that the Council seeks to work with Wirral-based voluntary, community and faith sector organisations in developing these opportunities and recognises the need to consider the implications and costs of delivering transitional arrangements.

Option 4

Encourage schools to work together to purchase services more cost-effectively.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

Option 5

Scrutinise Children's Centres to get better value for money.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **stop**:

Option 6

Delivering support for the Extended Schools and Healthy Schools Programmes, which already have maximum levels of take up in schools.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council should **find alternative ways** of:

Option 7

Delivering activities which are currently running at a loss or have high unit costs, e.g. Oaklands Outdoor Centre and the Schools Music Service

This option was upheld as a recommendation to Cabinet, on the basis of amending it to read that the Council should investigate alternative ways of providing the Oaklands Centre and Schools Music Service in order for services to be continued.

In relation to services to support vulnerable children and families , the Task Force suggests
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The Council **must**:

Option 8

Protect Wirral's children and young people from harm and ensure that vulnerable children and families are supported.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

The Council **should**:

Option 9

Do more with potentially less money, to engage earlier with those at risk and reduce future demand for services. The Task Force recognises that supporting vulnerable children and families is demand-led and that preventing demand will reduce costs in the longer term.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force wished to clarify that ‘doing more with less’ was largely about improving value for money but that also Cabinet might wish to consider investing to save in this area. The Task Force also recommends that Cabinet takes into account the suggestions raised by respondents to the consultation in relation to engaging communities in early intervention activities, including:

- **Increasing outreach activity in local communities to work directly with children and families and make sure that they are accessing the right services and support;**
- **Alongside this, increased promotion of local children’s centre activities to attract harder to reach families;**
- **More effective use of skilled professionals and practitioners in schools and homes.**

The Council should **find alternative ways** of:

Option 10

Providing cost effective care for looked after children, e.g. through increasing fostering and treatment fostering placements and collaborating with other local authorities.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force recognises the existing focus on reducing the cost of care, and the need to safeguard children and young people. The Task Force recommends that Cabinet takes into account the suggestions raised by respondents to the consultation in relation to involving communities more in identifying foster carers.

Option 11

Providing residential care facilities for children with disabilities, e.g. by out-sourcing to the voluntary sector.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force requests that Cabinet takes into account the issues raised by respondents to the consultation in relation to maintaining the quality of services and ensuring that children are safeguarded, and ensuring that other organisations have the necessary support to deliver services.

In relation to services to children and young people outside of school and achieving potential , the Task Force suggests

The Council **must**:

Option 12

Ensure that any statutory youth services are being delivered in Wirral.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force requested that clarification of statutory and non-statutory youth services be included in the report. Statutory Youth Services include the provision

of a Youth Offending Service, provision of information and guidance and promotion of positive activities.

The Council **should:**

Option 13

Scrutinise the impact of the pan-Merseyside Connexions programme to ensure that future contracts for providing advice and guidance to young people continues to provide value for money.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet, with due regard to emerging national guidance.

The Council should **find ways of:**

Option 14

Reducing the non-statutory youth services it provides whilst working with the voluntary and private sectors to develop alternative ways of delivering them.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force requests that Cabinet takes into account the need to have appropriate levels of support in place to facilitate a seamless transition of services.

Option 15

Delivering play services differently and more cost-effectively, making links where possible to other areas of activity.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet.

In relation to the contribution of the voluntary, community and faith sector to delivering services for children and young people , the Task Force suggests
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The Council **should:**

Option 16

Work with the voluntary, community and faith sector to increase their role in delivering services currently delivered by the Council. The Task Force recognises that the Council needs to work with the sector to ensure that the right infrastructure is in place to transfer services effectively.

This option was upheld by the Task Force as a recommendation to Cabinet. The Task Force also requested that the Council seeks to work with Wirral-based voluntary, community and faith sector organisations to progress this.

The Chair of the Task Force stressed that Cabinet must be clear that there were a number of underpinning papers, available on the website, which detail the

rationale for these options and recommendations. These should be read in conjunction with this report and can be viewed at:

<http://www.wirral.gov.uk/my-services/council-and-democracy/have-your-say/wirrals-future-consultation/consulting-children-young-people>

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET – 9 DECEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

LAND AT EUROPA BOULEVARD, CONWAY PARK, BIRKENHEAD SITES 1 and 2

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report advises Cabinet of the result of the marketing exercise in respect of sites 1 and 2 Europa Boulevard and sets out options for the way forward.
- 1.2 Two responses received in response to the marketing exercise are contained in an exempt appendix to the report. They are not for publication because they contain confidential information relating to the business affairs of the organisations concerned.

2. Background

- 2.1 At its meeting on 2 September 2010 Cabinet considered a report on three sites in Council ownership at Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead which set out options available to the Council to re-market the sites in light of current market conditions. Cabinet resolved (Minute 131 refers):

‘That the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be instructed to:

- (1)
 - (i) Market Sites 1 and 2 at Europa Boulevard on the basis reported in paragraph 3.14 and report the outcome of this exercise to a future meeting.
 - (ii) Submit a development brief in respect of Site 3 to a future meeting; and
 - (2) The proposals received for an assignment of the development agreement or the separate sale of Site 1 be declined.’
- 2.2 In asking for a short marketing campaign for sites 1 & 2 Cabinet’s expressed preference was for a solution that secured the development of both sites.
 - 2.3 In the light of Cabinet’s decision, Sites 1 and 2 were advertised nationally in the “Estates Gazette”, the leading publication connected with commercial property and property development. In addition, details were circulated to local agents, and through Invest Wirral.
 - 2.4 Applicants were advised that tenders would be assessed having regard to the following criteria:
Availability of funding
Methodology for Delivery

Track record for similar projects
Identified **Pre-lets**/end users
Capacity
Economic **well being**
Quality of Design
Financial benefit to the Council

3. Current Position

- 3.1 Despite considerable interest in the site, with approximately 30 information packs being sent out, only one valid tender was received. That tender was from Williams Tarr Holdings Limited, which as Cabinet will recall, is the organisation initially associated with the development of Site 1 as a casino for an identified end user, through its contracting arm, Williams Tarr Construction Ltd.
- 3.2 Another party, Neptune Developments Ltd., returned a letter asking that the matter be dealt with differently. Both responses are contained in the exempt appendix to the report.
- 3.3 Williams Tarr have produced a robust plan for the delivery of the casino (which already has planning permission -APP/2007/7492, approved 28th March 2008, subsequently amended by APP10/00666, approved 23rd June 2010). Their proposals for site 2 are however much less certain. There is not a definite end user identified. Their agents have identified a number of operators that are actively seeking premises in the Leisure and food sectors. They make further reference to a live office requirement from a local business, with whom they say they are in active discussions. Williams Tarr suggest that they are inhibited in developing their plans, as they do not yet have an interest in the site. They suggest that the development of site 1 will act as a catalyst for carrying forward development onto site 2.
- 3.4 In order to seek greater clarity over their proposals for site 2, a meeting has been held with representatives of Williams Tarr. They emphasised the extremely difficult market conditions currently prevailing. Because potential tenants are reluctant to commit just on the basis of their tender bid, Williams Tarr are unable to secure pre let agreements with operators. They believe that there is a good prospect of an office tenant, but the party concerned will only consider matters further when Williams Tarr have moved beyond the tender stage. Even if an office tenant is secured, however, a significant challenge will remain, in the current market conditions, to deliver a viable development. A physical start on development of the casino was emphasised by Williams Tarr as the key to rebuilding market confidence in the area. Equally, there is a risk that if the current planning permission cannot be swiftly implemented before it expires at the end of March 2011, the casino operator could withdraw their interest. They are therefore faced with a very narrow "window of opportunity" to start the development, particularly given that there are conditions attached to the planning permission that must be discharged before it can be implemented.

- 3.5 Williams Tarr have been asked if they can provide any evidence of greater certainty as to the end users of site 2. A letter has since been received which is attached at Appendix "A". Whilst this reinforces points made by Williams Tarr in the meeting it gives, for reasons explained in the letter, no greater certainty as to the users for site 2. If further information is received this will be circulated separately to Cabinet.
- 3.6 The letter from Neptune Developments does not meet the requirements of the tender but is dealt with to ensure that Cabinet is aware of all responses. Their letter requests that the Council does not proceed with these sites in isolation. It suggests that the Council should enter into a partnership arrangement for a comprehensive master planning exercise linking across Conway Street and remodelling the area in front of the Vue Cinema. Their proposals are to integrate development sites that are separated by Conway Street. When considering their approach, it should be noted that the Europa Boulevard area was always seen as more leisure and business use orientated, with Conway Street being the natural boundary of the main shopping area – this is reflected in the Unitary Development Plan which in Proposal EM2 identifies Conway Park as a site for business and leisure use rather than retail development.
- 3.7 The Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters (IRS) which was reported to Cabinet on June 24th 2010 (Minute 43 refers) is clear in its proposed objectives in relation to Europa Boulevard:-
- "For Europa Boulevard to become the primary street for new and improved leisure and business activity and to consider the potential to extend to the north to link to the East Float
 - To create a high quality public realm along Europa Boulevard which connects to key destinations, e.g. Hamilton Square, Woodside, the retail precinct, Docks and Waterfront; residential communities.
 - To attract new leisure and business activity along Europa Boulevard, including active uses at ground floor, to strengthen activity between the waterfront and the retail centre"
- 3.8 The casino development would deliver leisure use in accordance with the IRS, and Site 2 has the potential to bring business use with ground floor restaurant-type uses which would complement the adjacent cinema. However, the requirement of the casino operator for ground floor parking reduces the length of active frontage on Europa Boulevard. Vehicle access to the car parking also crosses the Boulevard pavement, affecting the public realm. Planning Permission was granted for this development in March 2008 and so pre-dates adoption of the IRS. In the report to Planning Committee (27th March 2008), it was noted that development of a casino on this site would be acceptable in principle and a casino had been previously approved in the area in an earlier planning permission. The overall design of the building was considered acceptable. The development was also considered to be consistent with the Council's overall vision for Europa Boulevard. National Planning Policy (then PPS6, now PPS4 'Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth') also identifies casinos as uses which should be directed to town centres.

4. Options

4.1 Having regard to the above, the options currently open to the Council are;-

(a) To proceed with Williams Tarr Holdings Limited, or

(b) To reject the tender and then, either:-

- Re-market the sites, or
- Retain the sites to allow market conditions to improve.

These options have been considered jointly with the Interim Head of Corporate Services, and comments upon them are as follows:

Proceed with Williams Tarr

4.2 In accepting the tender from Williams Tarr, the Council can be confident (subject to satisfaction of planning conditions) that the development of the casino will be brought forward. This would introduce long awaited development activity to this area of Birkenhead, with the prospect of job creation during the construction phase and (on estimates provided by the casino operator) some 120 (unspecified mix of full and part time) new jobs once the casino becomes operational.

4.3 Whilst proposals for site 2 are unclear in the tender Williams Tarr is a substantial developer/builder with a proven track record and access to funding. It can be expected that the company would actively pursue the development and delivery of a scheme for site 2, although the outcome for that site is not guaranteed. Nevertheless, if the developer cannot produce a viable scheme for site 2, it could remain vacant, even if site 1 were to be delivered as anticipated.

4.4 The Council would receive capital receipts as outlined in the tender upon the development and disposal of each of the sites. The sums offered are in line with previous expectations from long standing proposals for these sites.

4.5 Development of site 1 will involve diversion of underground services that will also benefit site 2. This could have the effect of reducing development costs for site 2, but it is considered that the cost involved, when apportioned between the two sites, would not represent a major element of the total development costs for site 2.

4.6 A casino on site 1 was a use brought forward by the previous preferred developer. In the view of the interim Director of Corporate Services, it would not be a priority from a regeneration perspective, when developed in isolation from the wider mixed-use scheme that was originally envisaged.

4.7 There is no guarantee that development of site 2 will be secured through acceptance of Williams Tarr's tender, and at this stage from the information provided by the company the prospects must be regarded as uncertain. In the event that development did not proceed on site 2 the Council would have a right to re-acquire it but would then face the prospect of marketing an

isolated site with some concerns as to the prospects of delivering an attractive development and, in particular, whether that development would be viable when dealt with as a stand alone scheme.

Reject the tender

- 4.8 The sites were widely exposed to the market and the marketing exercise produced a single tender. This has shown that the only firm prospect of an early development is the construction of the casino. Re-marketing the sites immediately is – given their national exposure to the development market in the recent exercise – unlikely to produce additional firm proposals for sites 1 and 2. Immediate remarketing on the same basis is therefore not recommended.
- 4.9 If the tender from Williams Tarr is rejected it is recommended that marketing of the sites be delayed to allow market conditions to improve and also for a re-appraisal to take place as to the appropriate way forward. In these circumstances, it is further recommended that re-marketing should take place after the new ASDA store has been opened in the town centre.
- 4.10 Rejection of the tender would mean foregoing the capital receipts offered. It should be noted however that the priority for these sites, together with site 3, has always been to secure development that would stimulate regeneration and complete the development of the Boulevard.

5. Risks

- 5.1 Neither option is risk free. In accepting the proposals from Williams Tarr the major risk, as outlined above, is that the casino development is delivered but that the Council is left with no development on site 2. Site 2 may then remain undeveloped for a number of years. In the future, when the market recovers, the prospect of dealing both sites together could be a far more attractive proposition for developers but that opportunity would have been lost. Dealing with site 2 alone, even in an improved market, may remain an unattractive prospect for developers.
- 5.2 Accepting the tender from Williams Tarr does not guarantee a developer for Site 2, and the company accepts that to deliver a viable development for this scheme in the current market will be challenging. At this stage there are no confirmed end-users for site 2 (which was a requirement in the marketing exercise), but the acceptance of Williams Tarr as the Council's preferred bidder would enable them to negotiate with potential end-users from a more favourable position.
- 5.3 Because the tender has been offered on the basis of a disposal, the Council is limited in the control it can exert through its role as landlord. In the case of site 1 this is not significant, in that a fully designed scheme for an identified user, together with a project plan and evidence of finance, has been presented.
- 5.4 The situation with regard to site 2 is less satisfactory, however. Possible occupiers have been identified, but without evidence of pre lets. Consequently

the Council would be reliant on the developer to work up a viable scheme. Given the current market conditions there could be no guarantee that it would be in the form of the existing planning permission. The Council's sanction would be to take back the site in the event of non-performance, but design and occupation could be only influenced through the planning process.

- 5.5 If Williams Tarr's proposals are rejected it is considered highly likely that the casino operator will withdraw. It has been committed to locating on this site for several years but if there is a further delay it has indicated that it would lose confidence in the deliverability of the site and would consider other options. The job creation prospects outlined above would therefore not materialise in the short term. The casino operator's negotiations had been with the previously identified developer of the site rather than with the Council, but there may be some criticism of the Council's rejection of a funded and viable development that could deliver jobs.
- 5.6 Rejection of the offer risks both Sites 1 and 2 remaining undeveloped for a number of years.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 The prospects for a comprehensive scheme along the lines suggested by Neptune Developments, whilst bold and imaginative, must be regarded as uncertain in current economic circumstances. In any event, there would be procurement issues in dealing with an individual developer. At this stage, the presumption must be that in the first instance an opportunity of the scale outlined in their letter would be given exposure to the market.
- 6.2 The current development market in the Birkenhead area is undoubtedly extremely subdued. If members desire early development, the proposed Casino is the only option currently available. However, no firm proposals have been brought forward for site 2 in accordance with Cabinet's expressed preference to see the development of both sites secured. Williams Tarr has a good track record in the field of development. They could be expected to pursue this opportunity conscientiously but, the Council would only have limited control in these circumstances and no guarantee that a development of site 2 would be delivered. No programme is proposed for the development of site 2.
- 6.3 It is expected that Williams Tarr would pursue proposals for Site 2, but in the current market the prospects for a viable development are uncertain and there is no indication as to when the market will improve.
- 6.4 A casino development has the potential to create jobs in the short term. However, in the opinion of the Interim Director of Corporate Services, such a use is not a regeneration priority for the area and the risk of an undeveloped or undevelopable site 2, is an important consideration. Short term benefits need to be balanced against long term requirements and opportunities which may not exist in the current financial climate.
- 6.5 In all the circumstances it is on balance recommended that Williams Tarr be thanked for their interest and their efforts to bring about a successful

development, but that their tender for the sites be declined. It is further recommended that the sites are not remarketed at this time, pending the opening of the new ASDA store in the town centre and further consideration of the most appropriate way forward.

7. Financial implications

Refer to Exempt Appendix

8. Staffing implications

- 8.1 There are no staffing implications arising out of this report.

9. Local Member Support implications

- 9.1 The sites are located in Birkenhead and Tranmere Ward, but will be of interest to all Members.

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 Reports to Cabinet 2 September, 22 July, 27 May, 15 April, 18 March 2010, 9 December 2009, 4 September, 26 June, 13 March 2008, 20 September 2007, 24 May 2007 and previous reports referred to.

- 10.2 Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters and accompanying Cabinet Report which can be viewed at:-

<http://democracy.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=121&MId=3057&Ver=4>

11. Planning Implications

- 11.1 Conway Park is allocated in the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (adopted February 2000) for a mix of B1 (business), A2 (financial and professional services) A3 (food and drink), D1 (non-residential institutions) and D2 (assembly and leisure) uses subject to other relevant policies in the plan. Planning permissions for the proposed developments are subject to conditions that works are begun no later than 23 March 2011.

- 11.2 The Integrated Regeneration Strategy for Birkenhead and Wirral Waters has now been formally adopted as a material consideration in relation to development proposals in the vicinity of the study area (which includes the Europa Boulevard area).

12. Equal Opportunities implications

- 12.1 None arising from this report

13. Community Safety Implications

- 13.1 None arising from this report

14. Local Agenda 21 Implications

14.1 None arising from this report

15. Social Inclusion implications

15.1 None arising from this report.

16. Anti-poverty implications

16.1 None

17. Human Rights Implications

17.1 None

18. RECOMMENDATION

18.1 That Williams Tarr be thanked for their interest and their efforts to bring about a successful development, but that their tender for the sites be declined and the sites are not remarketed at this time, pending further consideration of the most appropriate way forward.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management

Reference AM/AMN/E02934

Our ref: jcew
1 December 2010

Alisdair McNicol
Wirral Borough Council
Town Hall
Brighton Street
Wallasey
WIRRAL CH44 8ED

Dear Alisdair,

Two Sites at Europa Boulevard Birkenhead

We've had some time to reflect on our meeting on Monday and would like to reinforce a couple of key messages.

Firstly we believe it is fundamental to understand how difficult it is to deliver a viable development in the current economic climate. Two key factors are required for viable development and regeneration to take place: strong occupiers and funding. Our proposal for Site 1 has the benefit of both key factors and can be promptly delivered to secure new employment and wealth creation for Birkenhead. I think it is worth reminding the Council members that ----- Casino's will employ over 100 people at this scheme which will pump over £1 million pounds into the local economy.

Secondly, delivery of a scheme on Site 2 is achievable but only against a background of successful development on Site 1. Potential occupiers for Site 2 have been identified but none will commit until a preferred developer is known and certainly is visible on the delivery of the Site 1 scheme to make the location viable. Funding for Site 2 will only be available once occupiers are identified. No fund will support a speculative development on Site 2 in the prevailing market conditions.

At Wirral Borough Council you have a very real opportunity to secure a multi-million pound private sector investment to help regenerate Birkenhead town centre and secure a significant number of jobs within a short time period. Should this opportunity not be taken the occupier underpinning the viability of the scheme is more than likely to withdraw their support.

These sites have lay fallow through the economic boom time of 2005 – 2007 so to have the opportunity to deliver a commercially viable development in the worst funding climate in recent memory would tell the Market Birkenhead is a viable location and who knows what may come from that.

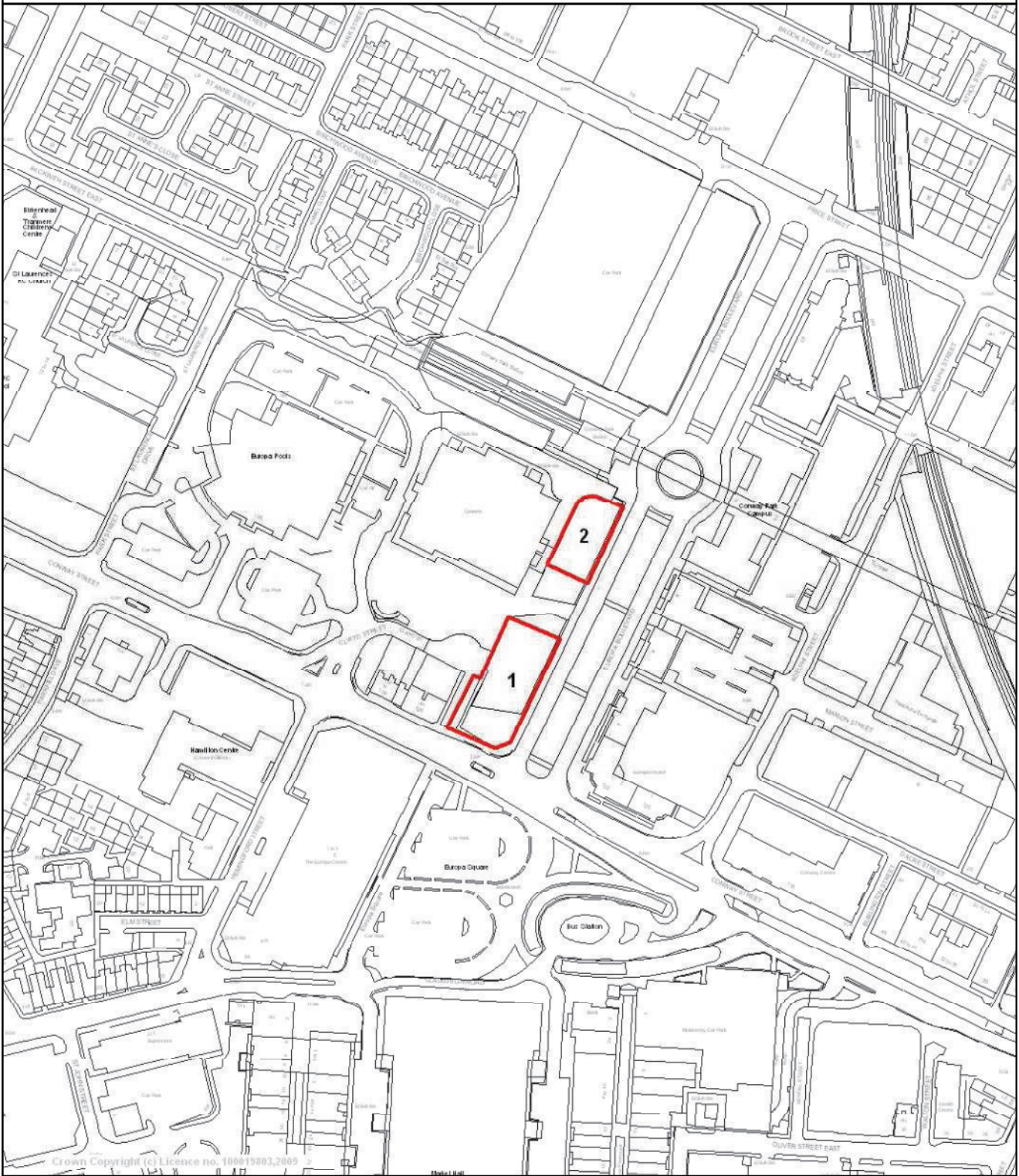
Williams Tarr has the funding capacity and balance sheet to deliver development to these two sites and we would urge Wirral Council to accept our proposal.

Yours sincerely

J C E Wilkinson

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Europa Boulevard, Birkenhead - Sites 1 and 2



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